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Garth Williams

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Abstract

This thesis adopts a social-cultural approach to the history of politics to explain contradictions in the “Laurier legend” and connect social and political history traditions. It argues Laurier is best understood as the representative of Québec-Est where he engaged in the social-cultural work of politics, linking citizens to their government.

Québec-Est guided him consistently. It was an urban, working-class, commercial and industrial, French Canadian Catholic riding, devastated by economic decline in the mid-nineteenth century. This social and economic context reduced the immediacy of national conflicts over language and religion and encouraged compromise, to secure government resources needed to renovate the port, bridge the St. Lawrence, build a railway to the west and regain the city’s “rightful” place in Canada. It fostered a political culture characterized by intense partisanship, personal accountability and broad public interest in local businesses – including their labour disputes.

When Laurier was first elected, Québec-Est had relatively close-knit business and social networks. As it grew, social relations became more structured, impersonal, and a greater range of activities reduced public space for politics while the Church successfully resisted and adapted to these modern trends, regaining local influence.

The thesis traces this evolution through changes in the instruments for shaping and expressing public opinion that connected Laurier to Québec-Est: the Liberal party,

the party newspaper, election campaigns and patronage. Much was expressed through conflict between two factions: 'les vrais libéraux,' organized around pre-existing personal networks of businessmen and labourers, and 'les parentistes,' a more impersonal organization of larger, more conservative, businessmen structured around patronage. When one, or both, held sway, Laurier fulfilled the riding's ambitions. When they fought, he could address other concerns.

A definitive 'vrai libéral' victory over 'les parentistes' in 1906 deprived Laurier of a disciplined organization for patronage distribution, encouraging him to rationalize the civil service and newspaper management. He remained loyal to the party, but it had become disconnected from the larger manufacturers, Catholic labour unions and Church organizations with growing influence in the riding. The party's new structure and Laurier's reforms explain his defeat in 1911; he even – very nearly – lost his seat that year.

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Chapter 1

Introduction: The “First Canadian” and a social-cultural history of politics

Standing on the Dufferin Terrace, high above the St. Lawrence, a Canadian visitor to Québec City knows he or she is at the country's front door. To the east, it is easy to see Ile-de-Orléans and imagine the Atlantic beyond; while Montréal, the Great Lakes and the prairies are just visible in the mind's eye, following the great river westward. Monuments to the nation's "founding fathers" surround the Terrace like pillars at the entrance to a grand estate: Wolfe and Montcalm, Laval, and most of all, Champlain, looking towards the city and country he "founded."¹ It is a place for nation builders.

Yet there is no sign of Wilfrid Laurier, a man who represented the city in Parliament for forty-two years, united Canadians, built a populous and prosperous nation, and made a place for Canada in the world. He ranks as one of the few truly "great" Canadian leaders.² But to find his monument, a visitor would have to come down from the heights, gingerly descending the stairs beside the Champlain monument, negotiating the precipitous Côte-de-la-Montagne – where Le Soleil had its offices in Laurier's day – and a second set of near-vertical stairs to Petit Champlain below. In winter, it is possible to slide, even from there, down Sous-le-Fort and St-Pierre to the Ferry Terminal – on the very spot the National Transcontinental Railway (NTR) station once stood and, before that, the Champlain market. From there, a modern day visitor would be well advised to take the No. 1 bus, heading east under the cliffs, past the docks along Dorchester and the Louise Basin beside St-André. Just outside the old town, the bus turns onto St-Paul, passing the train station – formerly the Canadian Pacific Railway (CPR) terminal and,

¹ The expression, "founding fathers," has been used recently by Ronald Rudin to describe Champlain and Laval. Ronald Rudin, Founding Fathers: The Celebration of Champlain and Laval in the Streets of Québec, 1878-1908 (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2003).

² J.L. Granatstein, Norman Hillmer, Prime Ministers: Ranking Canada's Leaders (Toronto: Harper Collins Publishing Limited, 1999) p. 10.

prior to that, the Québec, Montréal, Ottawa and Occidental (QMOO) station. It then joins boulevard Charest – Laurier would have known it as des Fossée, and, further along, St-Antoine – that runs under the Laurentian Autoroute, a modern abomination disconnecting St-Roch and Laurier’s riding of Québec-Est from the historic Lower Town.

There are signs of urban renewal along Charest now, but no mistaking the riding’s past as one of the earliest urban, commercial and industrial, working-class communities in Canada. From the bus, our visitor would notice the narrow streets leading down to the warehouses along the St. Charles river, the small two-story houses crowding in from either side, and catch just a glimpse of old stone buildings, one street down, on St-Joseph – Laliberté’s fashions, the Post Office restaurant – or a brief view of the spire rising from Notre-Dame de St-Roch and, only three stops down, Notre-Dame de Jacques-Cartier. To find Laurier’s monument, our visitor would have to get off at boulevard Langelier, just before the bus turned onto St-Valier to make its way through St-Sauveur – also part of the old Québec-Est, with even narrower streets and a certain residential calm. There, in the middle of Langelier, set just back from the traffic along Charest, is the simple fourteen-foot bronze statue of Wilfrid Laurier. He stands, hands clasped, looking up, like the rest of the community, towards the heights and the historic Upper Town of the nation’s other “founding fathers.”

The contradiction, between Laurier’s statue in Québec-Est and his stature in Canadian history, is just one of many that confound our understanding of the man and the history of Canadian politics. The man is revered in French Canada as the first French Canadian, the first Catholic, Prime Minister. He is revered in English Canada for transcending language and religion. Historians portray him as a purely practical

politician, a “silver-tongued” master of charm, obfuscation and power politics; and, at the very same time, describe him as an ideologue, an unwaveringly conservative Gladstonian liberal. He was a progressive reformer, on one hand, and a corrupt demagogue on the other. His government led the greatest economic expansion in Canadian history, yet he was largely ignorant of economics. He was a protectionist and a free-trader; a Canadian nationalist and an imperialist; the author of Canadian unity and the man who divided the nation; a shill for English Protestants and a slave of French Catholics; an ageless leader and a blundering old man.

These contradictions crept into the Laurier legend almost from the day he died, in February 1919, when his memory became caught up in efforts to rebuild a sense of national unity after the First World War. “Laurier nous a tracé notre devoir,” intoned Le Soleil, in lock step with every other newspaper in the country, “comme lui, nous devons, à l’avenir, unir autour de l’idéal pour lequel il a combattu...l’unité nationale canadienne.”³ For the next fifty years, French and English Canadians, nationalists and imperialists, progressives and conservatives, fought over what, exactly, should characterize a united Canada. His biographers found material to substantiate nearly every perspective in a career that spanned debates on Confederation and conscription, education and income tax. Laurier’s political career continued, in some ways, past his death, by informing contemporary national debate. Such work made his history, and Canadian political history, not so much about the past as about lessons for the future, not so much about political activity as national issues past and present, not so much about

³ Le Soleil, 24 February 1919, p. 4.

representation as character of man and nation. It took Laurier out of Québec-Est, where he was elected eleven times, and made him a national icon.

This work is not a biography of Laurier, it does not try to capture the character of the man or trace his opinion on every issue that came before Parliament. In fact, it relies on much of the excellent published scholarship that already does just that. It is, instead, an effort to resolve some of the contradictions in those works and return scholarly, even public, attention to politics as the work of representation and government, a community activity, part of the daily economic, social and cultural history of Canadians. The present chapter looks at how the “Laurier legend” developed and evolved with political history, why it focused on biography and national politics, and how so many contradictions became part of the story. It reviews, briefly, how the country’s early political history directed Canadian political scientists’ interest in representation down a similar path and details the institutional arrangements governing representation through most of Laurier’s career. Finally, it examines how an alternative, social-cultural, approach to political history might resolve – in the following chapters – some of the contradictions in the Laurier legend without glossing them over, without making Laurier more of a man than he was, and without depriving political activity of its complex foundation in the “drama of everyday lives.”⁴

The national ideal, extolled by Le Soleil as the essence of Laurier’s career, was adopted holus-bolus by Laurier’s first biographers, L.O. David and O.D. Skelton.⁵ Within

⁴ According to American historian Mark H. Leff, social historians considered political history as “elitist, shallow, altogether passé, and irrelevant to the drama of everyday lives.” Mark H. Leff, “Revisioning U.S. Political History,” American Historical Review, Vol. 100, no. 3 (June 1995) p. 829.

⁵ L-O. David, Laurier (Sa vie – Ses oeuvres) (Beauceville: L’Éditeur Limitée, 1919); Oscar Douglas Skelton, Life and Letters of Sir Wilfrid Laurier, Volume I, 1841-1896, Volume II, 1896-1919 (Toronto: McClelland and Stewart Limited, 1965) (1921). Sir John Willison published a biography in 1903.

months of Laurier's death, both men had written biographies that portray him as a "nation-builder" from whom Canadians might learn. David, a personal friend, Liberal activist and Montréal resident, describes Laurier as a French Canadian hero. According to him, Laurier accepted the reality of French-Canadians' minority status in Confederation and, as a direct consequence, recognized the need for compromise in order to hold power and, *more importantly*, the value of holding power.⁶ A detailed portrait of the personal qualities underlying Laurier's success fills half of the book and firmly establishes his bilingual, bicultural, anti-clerical and progressive Rouge heritage – and an unwavering support for Canadian autonomy – as foundations for every author of the "Laurier legend." But David also emphasizes Laurier's loyalty to French Canada in the Riel crisis, the Manitoba Schools Question, the Autonomy Bills, Regulation 17 and Conscription, blaming his defeat, in 1911, on the hatred of English Protestants.⁷ David admits only one "point faible" for Laurier: his decision to build the NTR.⁸

Skelton saw no "point faible" in Laurier's character or his career. One of the men who built the federal public service in the 1920s and 1930s, Skelton describes Laurier as a man much like himself, motivated by the ideals of nationhood and purity in government and politics.⁹ According to Skelton, Laurier's national perspective, strict sense of fairness

However, it was substantially revised and republished in 1927. John Willison, Sir Wilfrid Laurier and the Liberal Party: A Political History (Toronto: G.N. Morang, 1903).

⁶ Significantly, David emphasizes Laurier's view that Bourassa thought he was more powerful than, in fact, he was. David, Laurier..., p. 143.

⁷ Ibid., p. 140.

⁸ Given the history of the NTR as a railway for Québec City (see Chapter 5), one suspects David's loyalties to his own city, Montréal, may have affected his opinion on this issue. Ibid., p. 108.

⁹ For an insightful analysis of Skelton's personal interests on his scholarship, see David M.L. Farr, "Introduction," in Oscar Douglas Skelton, Life and Letters of Sir Wilfrid Laurier, Volume I, 1841-1896, (Toronto: McClelland and Stewart Limited, 1965).

and determined anti-clericism allowed Canada, for a time, to escape racial and religious prejudices. Like David, he blames those prejudices for Laurier's defeat in 1911. But he departs from David by adding praise for Laurier's "national" perspective on railway subsidies in the mid-1880s, the McGreevey and Baie-des-Chaleurs scandals in 1890-1891, and Cabinet formation in 1896.¹⁰ All were moments when Laurier sacrificed partisan or provincial interests. Skelton differs from David, too, in seeing Laurier's positions on religious and educational issues as essentially the best "national" policies rather than the best for which French-Canada could hope. Thus, David and Skelton established Laurier's "legend" as a model for the sort of country Liberals in French Canada and a certain type of progressive in English Canada wanted to build in the early 1920s.

English Canadian Liberals who could not easily put aside their party's schism during the war years had trouble accepting Skelton's idealized version of Laurier's role in building national unity. As a result, two of them, J.W. Dafoe and John Willison, wrote biographies that provide unusual insight into internal party politics.¹¹ They blame the party's defeat and internal divisions, as well as the conscription crisis, squarely on Laurier's Catholicism and his provincial loyalties.¹² Dafoe adds that the "development of internal hierarchies, rigidities and jealousies" slowly made the party a victim of circumstance.¹³ Both men, loyal to their own sense of "progressive Liberalism," also

¹⁰ Skelton, Life and Letters..., Volume I, p. 77 and 147; Volume II, p. 1.

¹¹ J.W. Dafoe, Laurier: A Study in Canadian Politics (Toronto : McClelland and Stewart Limited, 1968) (1922); John Willison, Sir Wilfrid Laurier (Toronto: Oxford University Press, 1927).

¹² Dafoe, Laurier..., p. 77; Willison, Sir Wilfrid Laurier..., p. 371 and 389.

¹³ Dafoe, Laurier..., p. xiii.

made Laurier's contribution to the country's remarkable economic growth a prominent part of their histories.

In French Canada, historian Robert Rumilly reacted to David's idealized portrait of Laurier in much the same way Dafoe and Willison reacted to Skelton's biography.¹⁴ One suspects that Rumilly's sympathy for 'nationaliste' sentiment in Québec in the 1920s and 1930s prompted him to describe Laurier as a model of moderation though a French Canadian hero only at the beginning and end of his career. Despite their differences, David, Skelton, Dafoe, Willison and Rumilly all reserved the highest praise for Laurier's character and his struggles for Canadian autonomy – in their view, the essence of national development during the years in which they wrote.

For a time, Canadians appeared content with these versions of the "Laurier legend" – despite the contradictions. They remained largely unchanged as historians pursued the origins of the nation's economic development during the 1930s or its social and cultural evolution in the 1940s.¹⁵ It was not until the 1950s, when historians turned their attention to regional variations in the Canadian experience that further additions to the story seemed necessary.¹⁶ By adopting a regional focus, Blair Neatby and, ten years later, Paul Stevens, were able to devote greater attention to the formation and disintegration of coalitions inside the Liberal party.¹⁷ Their work reveals the close

¹⁴ Robert Rumilly, Sir Wilfrid Laurier: Canadien (Montréal: Ernest Flammarion, 1931).

¹⁵ Carl Berger, The Writing of Canadian History: Aspects of English-Canadian Historical Writing since 1900 (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1986) pp. 137-186.

¹⁶ Ibid., pp. 238-258.

¹⁷ H.B. Neatby, Laurier and a Liberal Québec: A Study in Political Management (Toronto: McClelland and Stewart Limited, 1973). Originally a PhD. Thesis completed at the University of Toronto in 1962. Paul

integration of federal and provincial politics and a broader range of political issues than previous scholars had included in the “Laurier legend.” In particular, Neatby and Stevens emphasize the importance of the Liberal provincial governments in Laurier’s career. Their work largely confirms, however, the portrait of Laurier painted by David and Skelton and assumes the importance of the political party to national unity – and national politics to the study of history.

The legend of Laurier as the architect of Canadian unity seemed to need much more vigorous support in the 1960s when the Quiet Revolution upset the popular image of a harmonious nation. It convinced historian J.T. McLeod and many others that “there was much to be learned about Canada and Canadian biculturalism from the study of Québec’s greatest statesman.”¹⁸ The Canadian Broadcasting Corporation, the Canada Council, McMillan Publishing and Weekend Magazine funded a seven-year study by journalist Joseph Schull.¹⁹ McLeod and Schull both found enduring principles for Canadian unity in the history of a man who could be a hero for English *and* French Canadians. Their work broke no new ground. But their studies, so similar in motivation and essential conclusions, revealed a significant gap between academic and popular interest in Laurier and Canadian politics. McLeod produced a Ph.D. thesis that was “not a biography or a history” but rather a “study of [Laurier’s] thought.” Although organized around political themes, it illustrated a new academic reluctance to integrate intellectual

Douglas Stevens, “Laurier and the Liberal Party in Ontario, 1887-1911,” Ph.D. Thesis: University of Toronto, 1966.

¹⁸ J.T. McLeod, “The Political Thought of Sir Wilfrid Laurier,” Ph.D. Thesis: University of Toronto, 1965, p. i.

¹⁹ Joseph Schull, Laurier: The First Canadian (Toronto: Macmillan of Canada, 1965) p. i.

and political history and suggests an academic preference for the first.²⁰ Schull's work, destined for a more popular audience, preferred to buttress the Laurier legend with rich anecdotal detail about Laurier, the man, and political intrigue.

Neither approach captured the interest of most Canadian scholars in the 1960s. Confronted with dramatic demographic and social change, and supported by a rapidly expanding university system, the majority turned away from biography, the "Making of Canada" – and Laurier. Inspired by the complexity of Canadian society and a democratic ideal, they saw politics – or political significance – in all forms of social and economic activity. They rejected the elitism of political history to pursue the "drama of everyday lives."²¹ Many of the subjects formerly studied by political historians continued to attract scholarly interest (education, immigration, imperialism, railways and religion, for example), but they no longer centered on politicians or the House of Commons.

A casual observer might be forgiven for assuming that historian John English was commenting on all of historical research when he published, in 1977, The Decline of Politics.²² The book did, in some ways, suggest that politics was less relevant to Canadian history after the First World War than it had been in the days of Macdonald and Laurier. However, English, one of the very few historians writing national political history in the 1970s, broke new ground by arguing that the growing size and complexity of Canadian society in the early twentieth century – especially during the First World War – had

²⁰ McLeod organized Laurier's thought around themes of national unity, federalism, national political parties and imperial relations.

²¹ Leff, "Revisioning...", p. 829. For a very similar Canadian analysis see A.B. McKillop, "Who Killed Canadian History? A View from the Trenches," Canadian Historical Review, Vol. 80, no. 2, (June 1999) p. 274 and 291.

²² John English, The Decline of Politics: The Conservatives and the Party System, 1901-1920 (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1977).

necessitated a change in the party system that Conservative Prime Minister, Robert Borden, attempted to introduce.²³ Borden, he said, tried to reduce the intensity of party spirit in order to expand the functions of government. He failed because of resistance within his party to both the introduction of public service reform and the separation of federal and provincial patronage networks. He failed, too, because of his party's weakness in Québec and his own inability to grasp the depth of 'nationaliste' sentiment in the province.²⁴ Borden's failure, its causes and the return to power of a classic brokerage politician, in William Lyon Mackenzie King, created an image of Laurier anchored in the depths of a necessarily corrupt party system.

English retained a focus on the Prime Minister and national politics that set his work firmly in the well-established tradition of political history in Canada. Yet social historians' challenge to the relevance of that tradition had altered his approach. Although it would not be immediately obvious, English had suggested two new subjects for political history, and the "Laurier legend," that could make them relevant to the "drama of everyday lives."

First, his emphasis on the role of provincial premiers and "outside" interests in Borden's government hinted at the need for greater attention to a broader range of actors in political history. The state, after all, was not one man. This idea dovetailed with social historians' interest in the lives of women, workers and others generally left out of political history and their conviction that public and private worlds were inseparable. A

²³ Alfred D. Chandler, Jr., later elaborated the idea that growth in the size and complexity of society produced significant structural and functional changes in social organizations throughout the industrialized world between 1870 and 1930. Alfred D. Chandler, Jr., Scale and Scope: The Dynamics of Industrial Capitalism (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1990).

²⁴ Throughout the thesis the term 'nationaliste' will be used only to refer to the devout conservative nationalism associated with Henri Bourassa.

number of studies appeared, as a result, providing considerable detail about Laurier's private life and, in particular, an intriguing relationship with Émilie Lavergne, wife of his law partner.²⁵ The intrigue added to popular interest in Laurier and helped produce a portrait of him, as a man, that had been lacking. If anything, however, it only added to contradictions in the "Laurier legend." Was he loyal to his wife or not? We still do not know.

The idea that the state was more than one man coincided also with a growing appreciation among historians and political scientists that "the state is enmeshed in the very warp and woof of our national culture."²⁶ American historian William E. Leuchtenburg suggested that the formation, growth and behavior of the state become central issues for political history. Yet for many scholars, the idea of "bringing the state back in" raised fears of recreating the old, elitist, political history.²⁷ As a result, the history of "state formation" and government growth flourished with little attention to elected politicians or electoral politics.²⁸

²⁵ Laurier had a close relationship with Émilie Lavergne. But scholars have stopped – just – short of describing her as his mistress. He seems, also, to have had a close friendship with his wife, Zoé. Sandra Gwyn, The Private Capital: Ambition and Love in the Age of Macdonald and Laurier (Toronto: McClelland and Stewart, 1984); Charles Fisher, Dearest Émilie: The Love Letters of Sir Wilfrid Laurier to Madame Émilie Lavergne (Toronto: N.C. Press Limited, 1989); Heather Robertson, More than a Rose: Prime Ministers, Wives and Other Women (Toronto: Seal, 1991).

²⁶ William E. Leuchtenburg, "The Pertinence of Political History: Reflections on the Significance of the State in America," Journal of American History, Vol. 73, no. 3 (December 1986) p. 591.

²⁷ The idea of "bringing the state back in" was the subject of a 1982 academic conference that resulted in the publication of an influential book. Peter Evans, Dietrich Rueschemeyer, Theda Skocpol, eds., Bringing the State Back In (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1985). The quotation is from Leuchtenburg, "The Pertinence of Political History...", p. 594.

²⁸ See, for example, the collection of essays in Allan Greer and Ian Radforth, eds., Colonial Leviathan: State Formation in Mid-Nineteenth-Century Canada (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1992).

Research on the growth of government did, however, focus to a remarkable degree on a period that coincided with Laurier's career.²⁹ Researchers recognized that his government initiated a new role, as arbiter over an increasing number of large competing interests, created by the development of industrial capitalism. The role required Laurier's government to enact new legislation, establish new organizational structures and employ a new breed of public servant. Historians saw this evolution as a social process or ideological evolution, dependent on people outside Parliament: businessmen and the new public servants themselves. Laurier was described as an opponent of measures that were, nonetheless, enacted by his government. Historian Paul Craven described government's role in a liberal democracy as securing the necessary social conditions for capital accumulation but he nonetheless credited King, the Deputy Minister of Labour, rather than Laurier, for limiting federal intervention to the preservation of social order. King invoked "community interest" to justify government action but looked to British models for the Fair Wages Resolution and Conciliation Act of 1900. Craven attributed the "most innovative" legislation of the period, the Industrial Disputes Investigation Act, to King's own peculiar ideology. Historians Doug Owsram and Barry Ferguson contended that King's ideological perspective was, in fact, an intermediary position between Laurier's conservatism and a more progressive "new liberalism" espoused by the real reformers, namely social scientists like O.D. Skelton and Adam Shortt (appointed by Laurier to chair the new Civil Service Commission in 1908). Their view of Laurier reflected none of

²⁹ See, for example: Paul Craven, An Impartial Umpire: Industrial Relations and the Canadian State, 1900-1911 (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1980); Doug Owsram, The Government Generation: Canadian Intellectuals and the State, 1900-1945 (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1986); Barry Ferguson, Remaking Liberalism: The Intellectual Legacy of Adam Shortt, O.D. Skelton, W.C. Clark and W.A. Mackintosh, 1890-1925 (Montréal: McGill-Queen's University Press, 1993).

the admiration Skelton, himself, had for the Prime Minister's contribution to government "reform."

The idea of a "new liberalism," justifying a larger social and economic role for government, had particular relevance for the "Laurier legend" and thinking about the state in Québec during the 1970s and 1980s. Since the Quiet Revolution, historians' explanation for that event seemed to hinge on the presence of two contradictory views of the state in Québec history.³⁰ The first was an underlying modern, progressive and anticlerical quality that "revisionist" scholars traced to the Rouge party in the mid-nineteenth century.³¹ The second was a submersion of that very quality in a conservative anti-statist liberalism accepting of widespread Church influence.³² Historians argued that Laurier's 1877 speech on liberalism – credited by David, Skelton, Dafoe, Willison and others for liberating Québec from Church domination – in fact extinguished the Rouge tradition by making peace with the Church.³³ Research revealing close ties between Laurier and Monseigneur Bruchési, the Bishop of Montréal, and a profoundly

³⁰ The key work, explaining both points, is Jean-Pierre Bernard, Les Rouges : libéralisme, nationalisme, et anticléricalisme au milieu du XIXe siècle (Montréal: Les Presses de l'Université du Québec, 1971); Ralph Heintzman explained the ambivalent attitude towards government in "The Political Culture of Québec, 1840-1960," Canadian Journal of Political Science (1983) pp. 3-59.

³¹ Historian Ronald Rudin qualifies these scholars as "revisionist" for their emphasis on studying Québec as a "normal" society. Earlier scholars, he argues, saw Québec as a distinct society. Ronald Rudin, Making History in Twentieth Century Québec (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1997) pp.171-218.

³² The key work is Michel Brunet, "Trois dominantes de la pensée canadienne-française : l'agriculturalisme, l'anti-étatisme et le messianisme," La Présence anglaise et les Canadiens (Montréal : Beauchemin, 1964).

³³ Bernard, Les Rouges....

conservative “liberalism” among Montréal businessmen, seemed to confirm this interpretation.³⁴

By the 1980s, then, Laurier had become a conservative reactionary in both English and French Canadian historiography. Ironically, he was considered an ideologue at least in part because he remained a practical brokerage politician. Yet the contradiction did not worry historians who portrayed him as an important obstacle to government reform by “outsiders.” Like other politicians and party members, he had been largely removed from the history of the state, though the story could not be told convincingly without him. Ironically, too, even without Laurier and his political colleagues, the history of the state seemed to have retained its elitist quality, dependent on ideology to link it to the “drama of everyday lives.”

But English’s work had also pointed in a second direction. His insights into the party system suggested the benefit of research into the social and cultural instruments for linking the “drama of everyday lives” to government. After all, that was the crux of political representation. At the time, American historian Richard Jensen wrote: “the key question, rarely posed, for political history is how the popular will is linked to the state.”³⁵ It was a question inspired by behavioral research in political science that depended on rich statistical data on voting records compiled by the Survey Research Center at the University of Michigan. Without similar data in Canada, however, and a

³⁴ See, for example, Nive Voisine, Histoire du Catholicisme québécois, Tome I, Le XXe siècle, 1898-1940 (Montréal : Boréal Express, 1984); Fernande Roy, Progrès, harmonie, liberté : le libéralisme des milieux d'affaires francophones à Montréal au tournant du siècle (Montréal : Boréal, 1988).

³⁵ Richarg Jensen, “How Democracy Works: The Linkage between Micro and Macro Political History,” Journal of Social History, Vol. 16, no. 3 (Spring 1983) p. 27.

continuing aversion to what was perceived as “elitist” history, even fewer historians showed an interest in partisan or electoral behavior than had been interested in the state.

Historian Marcel Caya was a notable exception. He drew explicitly on contemporary scholarship in political science to trace the early history of Liberal party organization in Québec.³⁶ His work led in the direction suggested by English and away from earlier histories of political parties that, ultimately, focused on the stabilizing function they fulfilled in society as sites of elite accommodation. His work moved away, too, from a focus on party ideals, interests, issues and events. Instead, he drew on a statistical analysis of parliamentary voting records and the work of political scientist Maurice Duverger to explore the formation of parliamentary groups, extra-parliamentary party associations and the liaison between them. Caya argued that “même s’il influence directement la composition de ses équipes de militants, le candidat demeure toujours dépendant de la compétence et de la volonté des ses partisans à influencer et à concrétiser l’appui de l’électorat en sa faveur.”³⁷ The idea provided a new and explicit conceptual basis for reinvigorating political history and the “Laurier legend.” Yet Caya did not link the party organization closely to other social groups and, perhaps as a result, his work attracted little scholarly attention.

Canadian political science, however, had long been interested in the question of representation posed by Jensen. It had a particular meaning in Canada, though, where “representation” had been closely linked to the question of responsible government since the 1820s. This sustained interest in the development and functioning of responsible

³⁶ Marcel Caya, “La formation du parti libéral au Québec, 1867-1887,” PhD. Thesis: York University, 1981.

³⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 23.

government fostered a strong historical and institutional tradition in Canadian political science that began, in the 1950s, with the work of R. McGregor Dawson.³⁸ Dawson, and Norman Ward, a close colleague, detailed the history of political events in the 1870s that produced durable institutional arrangements for representation in the Canadian Parliament.

The pioneering work done by Dawson and Ward is worth a sustained detour in our text as the qualifications for election, the compensation and working conditions for parliamentarians, the qualifications for electors and the regulations governing elections established in the 1870s clearly reflected a belief that Members' real business was in their constituencies. They set institutional parameters that helped shape Laurier's activities as a local representative throughout his career.³⁹ Moreover, much of the later work on representation and political parties in Canada grew out of that done by Dawson and Ward.

The Pacific Scandal and the subsequent election of the Liberal Government in 1873 play a prominent role in Dawson and Ward's explanation for legislation that transformed MP's qualifications and compensation as well as the organization of federal

³⁸ Writing in 1947, R. MacGregor Dawson acknowledged his debt to "some excellent work on Canadian constitutional history." R. MacGregor Dawson, The Government of Canada, Fourth Edition, revised by Norman Ward (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1964) p. v.

³⁹ This idea is, in itself, rather recent in Canadian political science. It is the essence of a "new institutionalism" that David Docherty has used to examine the work-world of parliament. He concludes that, even today, these institutional arrangements encourage MPs to focus on work in their ridings rather than in Ottawa. As a result, he conducted the first sustained research and analysis of an MP's constituency work; American scholars, working in a very different political culture, had initiated such research twenty years earlier. The "new institutionalism" does not, however, go so far as to examine how local politics may have shaped these arrangements in the first place. Dawson's work is still the standard text on such arrangements in political science. David Docherty, Mr. Smith Goes to Ottawa: Life in the House of Commons (Vancouver: UBC Press, 1997) p. xix; Richard F. Fenno, Home Style, (Boston: Little, Brown, 1978); Morris P. Fiorina and David W. Rohde, eds., Home Style and Washington Work: Studies of Congressional Politics, (Ann Arbor: Michigan, 1989).

elections in 1873-74. Ward emphasized, in particular, the Liberal Government's interest – after their experience in opposition – in reducing the political advantage afforded any party by access to the financial resources of government and its contractors. In 1874, the Liberals deliberately dropped the property qualification for MPs, reiterated a provision (first passed in an 1873) that prohibited MPs from simultaneously holding seats in both federal and provincial legislatures (the “double mandate”) and retained a requirement of British citizenship for elected representatives. The 1874 Dominion Elections Act contained no residency or religious qualifications and, inadvertently, neglected to include age or gender qualifications (although these were certainly retained in practice).⁴⁰

Table I

Average length, in days, of each parliamentary session
during Laurier's career, 1874-1919.⁴¹

1874-1878	Third Parliament	73.75	1901-1904	Ninth Parliament	123.75
1879-1882	Fourth Parliament	85.25	1905-1908	Tenth Parliament	162.25
1883-1886	Fifth Parliament	110.25	1909-1911	Eleventh Parliament	179
1887-1890	Sixth Parliament	83	1912-1917	Twelfth Parliament	153
1891-1896	Seventh Parliament	112	1917-1919	Thirteenth Parliament	95
1896-1900	Eight Parliament	147.5			

Mackenzie's Liberals also increased the stipend that MPs received for each session from \$600 to \$1000 for a minimum 30-day session. As the length of the average session increased from 73.75 days in the late 1870s (Third Parliament) to their peak during Laurier's career of 179 days, in the years just before the 1911 election (Eleventh

⁴⁰ The Act, like the provincial legislation, also prohibited Senators, the insane and those convicted of corrupt (for a period of seven years) or illegal (for a period of five years) practices from holding office.

⁴¹ Canada, House of Commons Debates, 1874-1919.

Parliament), Members voted themselves commensurate pay increases.⁴² They raised the stipend to \$1,500 in 1901 and \$2,500 in 1905. In addition, Members received a travel allowance to which was added free rail travel in 1903. Finally, all new Members received a leather trunk and a box of stationery. Although the stipend was generous by any standard, MPs were not expected to earn a living as elected representatives nor reside for any length of time in the nation's capital. Rather, they were merely compensated – and equipped – for an extended first-class business trip to Ottawa.

The 1874 Dominion Elections Act stipulated that official nomination of electoral candidates required the signature of 25 electors and payment of a \$50 fee. These two provisions reduced the government party's electoral advantage by providing an alternative to nominations made exclusively at open-air meetings. Such meetings had always been called and presided over by government appointed returning officers and were open to all manner of manipulation. Candidates could and did organize gangs to prevent other potential candidates and their supporters from attending. The process encouraged organized violence that was most detrimental to the candidate least able to afford strong-armed support (most often the opposition candidate). The fee was meant to discourage “frivolous” candidates who more serious contenders felt obliged to buy off. It was raised to \$200 in 1882 although it was reimbursed to the winner and all candidates receiving at least 50 per cent of the winner's total number of votes. In addition, the 1874 legislation required candidates to name an official agent to authorize and record their electoral expenses and provided punishment if they were not reported within 30 days of the election.

⁴² The average length of the parliamentary session actually decreased during the war years. See Table I.

Mackenzie's Liberals did not alter the provincial franchises that established qualifications for federal electors in 1867. But all provinces required voters to be men, able to meet a property qualification, and have their name appear on an electoral list – most often a municipal or county assessment role revised by a judge (also appointed by the government). This restricted the electorate across the country to roughly 15 per cent of the population. The 1874 Dominion Elections Act did, however, transform the actual voting process by reaffirming an 1872 amendment that limited elections to one day and, for the first time, required a federal election to be held on the same day in every constituency. Moreover, it introduced the secret ballot into Canadian politics. Voters with property in more than one constituency could still vote more than once, but these new measures reduced the government's opportunities for manipulating the strategic interest of voters and, in particular, discouraged the outright purchase of votes. To further reduce that possibility, a series of steps were taken to improve the ballot during the last quarter of the nineteenth century: a counterfoil was added in 1878, heavier paper in 1888, a circle ballot in 1894 and, in 1900, a blackened space around candidates' names.

Thus the 1874 Dominion Elections Act established enduring regulations for candidate and voter qualifications, MPs' compensation and the organization of elections that emphasized the local character of politics. Local interests played an enduring role in defining electoral boundaries too, although there were no rules established for this purpose until 1962. The British North America Act established only that Québec would be granted 65 seats and other provinces would have a number of seats proportionate to

their population in relation to that of Québec.⁴³ A redistribution of seats would be made after each decennial census. Without rules to apply in defining electoral boundaries, the government attempted to gerrymander ridings in 1872, 1882 and 1892. In fact, only the spectacular failure of the 1892 gerrymander discouraged similar efforts in later years. Aside from electoral advantage, however, the principles Sir John A. Macdonald laid down in 1872 set precedents for the definition of ridings in Canada. “While the principle of population was considered to a very great extent,” he said, “other considerations were also held to have weight; so that different interests, classes and localities should be represented, that the principle of numbers should not be the only one.”⁴⁴ In the end, “politicians constructed ridings based on municipal and county boundaries, classes, regions, community of interest, the campaign convenience of legislators and candidates, and the over-representation of rural areas compared to urban ones.”⁴⁵ The practice of under-representing urban populations would ensure that Laurier’s riding, in Québec-Est, remained unchanged from 1860 to 1914.

In addition to establishing a lasting institutional approach to Canadian political science, Dawson and Ward also initiated research on the professional and social quality of representation in Canada. In a 1950 study, Ward found that the House of Commons

⁴³ Norman Ward, “A Century of Constituencies,” in J. Paul Johnston and Harvey E. Pasis, eds., Representation and Electoral Systems: Canadian Perspectives (Scarborough: Prentice-Hall Canada, 1990) pp. 105-122. Originally appeared in Canadian Public Administration, Volume 10 (1967).

⁴⁴ Canada, House of Commons Debates, 1872, p. 926. Quoted in Norman Ward, The Canadian House of Commons: Representation, (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1963) p. 29.

⁴⁵ T.H. Qualter, “Representation by Population: a Comparative Study,” Canadian Journal of Economics and Political Science, Vol. 33 (1967) pp. 248-257, quoted in J. Paul Johnston and Harvey E. Pasis, eds., Representation and Electoral Systems: Canadian Perspectives (Scarborough: Prentice-Hall Canada Inc., 1990) p. 178.

was largely populated by amateur politicians, with little previous political experience, and “falls far short of being truly representative of the Canadian people.”⁴⁶

Since then, research has confirmed that “Members of Parliament, in comparison with the general population, are better educated, have origins in a higher social and economic class, and tend to occupy higher ranks in the social order.”⁴⁷ Moreover, researchers found that Ministers and Prime Ministers are even less representative, forming an “elite within an elite.”⁴⁸ Working in the 1960s and 1970s, scholars interested in social class found that the un-representative-ness of MPs adversely affected their policy decisions. In particular, Members overestimated the economic well-being of Canadians and, as a result, were unlikely to support re-distributive social or economic policies.⁴⁹ In much the same vein, feminist scholars found that “the majority of women do pay a price for men’s domination of the political system.”⁵⁰ Their research confirmed the impression of social historians, that private and public worlds were, indeed, inseparable and that politics was an inherently elitist activity. Conducted firmly within a scholarly tradition that located the meaning of representation in Ottawa, however, it did not look beyond the capital or ask why anyone would elect such people.

⁴⁶ Ward, “A Century of Constituencies,” p. 115.

⁴⁷ C.E.S. Franks, The Parliament of Canada (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1987) p. 66. Franks provides a short bibliography of these studies in endnote number 19 found on the same page.

⁴⁸ Ibid., p. 66.

⁴⁹ Peter A. Hall and R. Peter Washburn, “Elites and Representation: A Study of the Attitudes and Perceptions of MPs” in Jean-Pierre Gaboury and James Ross Hurley, eds., The Canadian House of Commons Observed: Parliamentary Internship Papers (Ottawa: University of Ottawa Press, 1979). The study was conducted in 1975.

⁵⁰ These findings have been compiled by Heather MacIvor, Women and Politics in Canada (Peterborough: Broadview Press, 1996) p. 288.

A second group of scholars pursued Ward's work on the political careers of MPs.⁵¹ They found that most MPs were essentially amateurs, had very little long-term commitment to a political career and faced a remarkably high probability of electoral defeat. Cabinet members, however, and Prime Ministers in particular, made notable exceptions to this rule. "The Prime Minister and party are the central, stable elements of representation," they concluded.⁵² As a result, political scientists interested in improving the quality of responsible government sought to redress the power imbalance between Cabinet and the House of Commons by finding ways to extend the political careers of ordinary Members. In collaboration with those scholars interested in making the House more representative of all Canadians, they developed a considerable literature on "parliamentary reform." Proposals for "reform" included, notably, the introduction of "proportional representation," improved working conditions for MPs and the creation of more "safe seats." Of these, the first two have attracted the most actual research.⁵³ Scholars have devoted little serious study to exploring why or how certain seats – like Québec-Est – become "safe." The historical and institutional traditions in Canadian political science led away from the constituency level studies that might have answered that question.

The interest of political scientists in responsible government did, however, lead advocates for parliamentary reform to re-examine the role of parties in the government of Canada. Writing in 1987, C.E.S. Franks concluded with many of his colleagues that "the

⁵¹ These findings are summarized by Franks, The Parliament..., p. 72-79.

⁵² Ibid., p. 79.

⁵³ On proportional representation, see Henry Miller, ed., Making Every Vote Count: Reassessing Canada's Electoral System (Peterborough: Broadview Press, 1999). On MPs' working conditions, see Docherty, Mr. Smith...

most important determinants of the control and use of power in the Canadian parliamentary system are the political parties. Elections are more a matter of voters choosing between parties and party leaders than between individual candidates.”⁵⁴ It was a view, perhaps accurate in the 1980s, that nonetheless contrasted with the local emphasis in the institutional arrangements for representation. The contrast inspired the parliamentary reform literature, but few researchers sought to understand how such a contradiction came into being. Political scientist Reginald Whitaker’s work on the Liberal party in the 1930s, 1940s and 1950s, published the same year as English’s study, suggested that the transition took place long after either Laurier or Borden.⁵⁵ Yet Caya had found significant organizational changes in the 1870s and 1880s and Laurier’s biographers had long been aware of his role in organizing the first national party convention in 1893, the first national research bureau and newsletter in 1912, and his preparations for the 1919 convention that set Liberal policy for much of the twentieth century.

By the 1980s, the historical and institutional tradition in Canadian political science had reached a limit. Greater attention was needed to party organization and development, political activity outside the House of Commons and, ironically, the critical – almost impossible – role of the Prime Minister in both.

The Société Radio Canada hired historian R  al B  langer to undertake that almost impossible task and write a relevant and entertaining biography of Laurier, incorporating

⁵⁴ Franks, The Parliament..., p. 35.

⁵⁵ Reginald Whitaker, The Government Party : Organizing and Financing the Liberal Party of Canada, 1930-1958 (Toronto : University of Toronto Press, 1977).

new scholarship in economic, social, intellectual and political history.⁵⁶ His remarkable work reflected all the strengths and weaknesses of that scholarship. Its strength lay, especially, in his portrait of Laurier as a man. Bélanger opened the door on Laurier's private life, his evenings at home, travels, health and relationships with Zoé and Émilie. Bélanger put us into Laurier's skin and accepted his contradictions as simply part of human nature.⁵⁷ In fact, he relied on them more than David or Skelton had relied on Laurier's "exemplary character" to explain the course of his career. Bélanger described Laurier as a pragmatic politician, a political strategist "hors pair," for the way he reversed position three times on tariff protection and manipulated both Edward Blake and Israel Tarte. It was a perspective that led him to endorse historian Lionel Groulx's opinion of Laurier as "plus intelligent que courageux, plus souple que volontaire."⁵⁸ Yet Bélanger explained Laurier's 1911 defeat as the result of his inflexible "libéralisme du XIX^e siècle...qui convenait de moins en moins à la nouvelle société industrialisée et urbaine...L'attitude du chef fut jugée peu innovatrice, conservatrice [et] *surtout pas suffisamment canadienne* [emphasis added]."⁵⁹ Reliance on such a significant contradiction in Laurier's character to explain the course of his career strains credulity and suggests that the tradition of "man and nation" in political history had also reached a limit.

⁵⁶ Réal Bélanger, Wilfrid Laurier, quand la politique devient passion (Québec: Les Presses de l'Université Laval, 1986).

⁵⁷ "Dissimuler les défauts, les erreurs, les contradictions de Laurier serait le desservir." *Ibid.*, p. ix.

⁵⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 463; Lionel Groulx, Mes Mémoires, Tome I (Montréal : Fides, 1973) p. 324.

⁵⁹ Bélanger, Wilfrid Laurier..., p. 465.

Nonetheless, contemporary national politics and a sense of “globalization” in the years immediately following publication of Bélanger’s biography combined to renew at least a current of academic interest in Laurier.⁶⁰ English-Canadian “national” historians responded with collected biographies of Prime Ministers that, once again, established the exceptional stature of Laurier’s personal character and assembled every example of his contribution to national unity: a strong national party, national government, national military, national economy and national autonomy.⁶¹ Historians J.L. Granatstein and N. Hillmer, adopting an approach very similar to Skelton’s, wrote a biographical essay that glossed over any deviation from this course in Laurier’s career. Historian Michael Bliss, author of another such essay, praised Laurier though he managed, also, to sharpened the criticism of Dafoe and Willison, heaping scorn on Laurier’s support for measures outside the “national” vision: commercial union, the NTR, the Autonomy Bills and reciprocity. In total contradiction to French Canadian historians, Groulx in particular, Bliss described Laurier as intellectually weak though morally strong.⁶²

English Canadian “national” historians were not, however, the only scholars to respond to national politics at the time with renewed interest in Laurier or Canadian Prime Ministers. The Charlottetown Agreement inspired historian Laurier LaPierre to view Canada as a prototypical political structure for the post-modern world. Its defeat, in the autumn of 1992, prompted him to write a biography of Laurier that made politics

⁶⁰ Michael Bliss is forthright about these motivations for writing Right Honourable Men: The Decent of Canadian Politics from Macdonald to Mulroney (Toronto: Harper Collins Publishing Limited, 1994) p. xiv.

⁶¹ Ibid.; J.L. Granatstien and Norman Hillmer, Prime Ministers: Ranking Canada’s Leaders (Toronto: Harper Collins Publishers Limited, 1999).

⁶² Bliss, Right Honourable Men..., p. 60.

secondary to capturing “the intimacy of [Laurier’s] soul.”⁶³ Like McLeod, he emphasized Laurier’s insistence on minority rights, his anti-clericism and opposition to Henri Bourassa. But, by replacing political with personal details, the work left the reader little but LaPierre’s passion for his namesake and country. Historian Stéphane Kelly adopted a more innovative approach in an age when the nation, as a relevant framework, was increasingly questioned.⁶⁴ Placing Canadian Prime Ministers within a North American context, he concluded that Laurier was the most Jeffersonian of the four “greats” he studied – but could not have held power without alternating between Jeffersonian principles and the Hamiltonian principles he found to be dominant in the Canadian political tradition. Thus, Kelly’s work took contradictions in the Laurier legend to new heights, producing a systematized model for understanding them.

Over 85 years of scholarship, only Bélanger ever wrote a biography of Laurier at a time when contemporary political events did not fundamentally shape his work. It was shaped, instead, by a generation of social and intellectual history. Yet the effect of earlier research – or reaction against it – still informed his biography. As a result, important contradictions remain in the “Laurier legend.” Was he loyal or disloyal to French Canadians? Was he a progressive Canadian Liberal or a conservative Québécois? Was he a pragmatic politician or determined ideologue? And, more fundamentally, do these contradictions depend solely on one’s point of view? This thesis argues: no. Rather, their persistence and our preoccupation with them, suggests that the assumptions and beliefs about what was important – that inspired political scientists’ study of Parliament and

⁶³ Laurier LaPierre, Sir Wilfrid Laurier and the Romance of Canada (Toronto: Stoddart Publishing Company Limited, 1996) p. xiv.

⁶⁴ Stéphane Kelly, Les Fins du Canada: Selon Macdonald, Laurier, Mackenzie King et Trudeau (Montréal: Boréal, 2001).

justified historians' focus on "man and nation" – are no longer sufficient to adequately explain the breadth of contemporary interest in government and politics.

For Laurier's career to have meaning today, it must be grounded in the "drama of everyday lives," outside of the House of Commons, in the economic and social activities informing the values and beliefs, interests and aspirations of the constituents he represented. This is where national issues are grounded and public opinion forms. To understand how public opinion becomes government action, a new political history should trace the evolution of instruments for shaping and expressing public opinion: the party, the party newspaper, the distribution of government resources and elections. It is through those instruments and those people that the state becomes more than one man. In other words, it requires an approach first suggested in Canadian political history by John English.

In fact, in the years shortly after English's work appeared, historians and political scientists began to adopt a social-cultural approach to research that developed his insights further – though they were not applied in biographies of Laurier. Researchers began to use literary criticism and anthropological concepts of culture to understand "l'ensemble des pratiques et des savoirs par lesquels s'installe un milieu de vie."⁶⁵ Very explicitly, historians sought an integrated understanding of economic, social, institutional and intellectual phenomena; and sought to capture, too, the history of cultural institutions and activities – news and entertainment media – as well as non-discursive manifestations of culture such as statues, architecture and ceremonies.⁶⁶ More specifically, interest focused

⁶⁵ Yvan Lamonde, Raymond Montpetit, *Le Parc Sohmer de Montréal: 1889-1919, Un lieu populaire de culture urbaine* (Québec : Institut québécois de recherche sur la culture, 1986) p. 14.

⁶⁶ *Ibid.*, pp. 13-15.

on understanding the “mind set” or “mental predispositions that people hold: particular beliefs [or assumptions] about how the world works [and] certain values they honour.”⁶⁷

This definition of culture, as it will be used here, extends to the actions that stem from these beliefs and values. Indeed, it is through historical action that beliefs and values can best be identified.⁶⁸ They do not, however, exist independently of the economic, social and institutional characteristics of a society. Rather, such structural elements help shape the culture just as they are shaped by it. Within a single collectivity they are confounded.⁶⁹

Political scientists developed the concept of “political culture,” distinct from the broader concept of “culture,” as the basis for research into beliefs and values about the political world.⁷⁰ It is grounded in a society’s economic, social and institutional characteristics and is reflected in the activities and instruments for shaping and expressing public opinion that inform and influence government action. To make such a broad concept meaningful, scholars must pay particular attention to its temporal and spatial characteristics. That is why political scientists most often study political culture through comparisons between national or regional groups, although they have shown that

⁶⁷ In 1979, David J. Elkins and Richard E.B. Simeon referred to culture as a “mind set” or, more specifically, “assumptions about the... world.” David J. Elkins and Richard E.B. Simeon, “A Cause in Search of its Effects or What Does Political Culture Explain?” *Comparative Politics*, Vol. 11, no. 2 (1979), reproduced in Lane Crothers and Charles Lockhart, eds., *Culture and Politics: A Reader* (New York: St. Martin’s Press, 2000) p. 22. It is a definition very similar to that offered much later by Lane Crothers and Charles Lockhart: “mental predispositions that people hold: particular beliefs about how the world works, certain values they honour, and various practical commitments to which they subscribe.” *Ibid.*, p. xv.

⁶⁸ Largely deprived of survey methodology, historical studies of political culture have relied instead on “inferential generalization from known political behaviour.” S.J.R. Noel, *Patrons, Clients, Brokers: Ontario Society and Politics, 1791-1896* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1990) p. 4.

⁶⁹ Elkins and Simeon, “A Cause...” p. 25.

⁷⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 22.

class and ethnic groups can also have distinct political cultures.⁷¹ Historians have tended to emphasize comparisons between time periods and more local studies in their application of the concept – as we will do here.⁷²

Research on the evolution of Canadian political culture during Laurier's career is founded in the economic and social history of the period. It emphasizes the tremendous growth in size and complexity of economic, social and cultural activity at the time. They were years of experimentation as Canadians struggled to adapt, years of conflict over the paths to take, and years of increasing diversity and inequality in the timing and consequences of change. Two major transformations shaped the period. The first began with the end of British and American trade preferences that decimated the timber trade and shipbuilding industry, and forced a shift towards economic reliance on wheat exports and a manufacturing sector just emerging in the first phase of industrialization. It was a shift that made Montréal a metropolitan centre, with Ontario and western Canada its natural hinterland, and took political form in Confederation and the Conservatives' "National Policy." It produced Canada's first factories, labour organizations and, in Québec, made Montréal and Québec City bitter rivals. A second phase of industrialization provoked the second major transformation during Laurier's career. It brought prosperity, based on sharply increased foreign demand for wheat, massive immigration and – with provincial government support – the development of pulp and paper, mining and hydro-electricity. As Laurier came to power, "all boats floated in the rising tide," making Canada a more important part of the British Empire. But this second

⁷¹ *Ibid.*, pp. 22-23; Stephen Welch, The Concept of Political Culture (London: The Macmillan Press, 1993). pp. 6-7, 151-2.

⁷² Welch, The Concept..., pp. 147-158.

stage of industrialization also transformed Canadian society by introducing larger, more technical, more rationally organized businesses and more sophisticated foreign and Canadian labour organizations. It introduced greater diversity and disparity between rural and urban regions, Montréal and other cities, and between social classes.

Based on this broad understanding of the period, scholars began, in the 1980s, to examine the history of political activity and instruments for shaping public opinion from a social-cultural perspective. Among the first instruments studied was the party system that English had suggested was fundamental to any history of the state in Canada. Historian Gordon T. Stewart and political scientist S.J.R. Noel both saw the party system that emerged in the colonial period as the expression of a unique and enduring political culture in Canada.⁷³ Stewart placed greater emphasis on the struggle for responsible government in his analysis than did Noel, mostly, because he used a “court-country” model to analyse party organization in both Canadas while Noel employed an anthropological model of “clientelism” to study exclusively Upper Canadian politics. Despite these important differences, however, they painted strikingly similar portraits of a political culture that found its essential meaning in the control of government patronage. Whether as a result of bitter competition for inadequate resources (as Stewart contends) or as an outgrowth of the economic system (Noel), they both agreed Canadians raised patronage to the level of a “constitutional principle.”⁷⁴

The patronage system determined the style of political leadership, participation and socialization. By 1867, political leaders directed their greatest efforts towards

⁷³ Gordon T. Stewart, The Origins of Canadian Politics: A Comparative Approach (Vancouver: UBC Press, 1986); Noel, Patrons, Clients....

⁷⁴ Stewart, The Origins..., p. 67.

building, maintaining and controlling their parties through the micromanagement of all forms of patronage: government awards, grants, subsidies and contracts; political, public service and judicial positions; and honorary titles. Local “clients” or citizens sought access to such favours through their local “patron” (often an MP) who might be able to grant minor requests or who would turn to a regional “broker” (usually a Cabinet Minister) to satisfy his “client.”⁷⁵ The broker might be able to grant a request or would, in turn, look to the Prime Minister. Both in theory and in practice, the Prime Minister determined the amount of patronage available, retained responsibility for all favours and applied strict rules in awarding them. The system put a premium, then, on party leadership and active government. By insisting that local patronage be given to local men and only to dedicated party workers, the Prime Minister effectively drew anyone seeking government resources into politics, established party discipline and entrenched a local bias in the party system.

In such a political culture, the nation’s history really could be written in a leader’s biography; representation really could be reduced to the study of Parliament, its meaning known, without being stated. According to Stewart and Noel patronage defined even the language of politics and political morality in the nineteenth century. It called forth furious partisan rhetoric either as a result of “all or nothing” political competition for scarce resources (as Stewart suggests) or merely as part of an “archetypically clientelist mode of political discourse” (as Noel contends). Party membership also became an issue of principle and the basis for trust. “A man without a party was derided as a weathercock,

⁷⁵ The language used here is borrowed directly from Noel but does not contradict Stewart’s interpretation.

waiting to shift course according to the party fortunes of the day – ‘an unscrupulous professional man’”⁷⁶

Stewart found little difference in politicians or their approach to patronage in French and English Canada.⁷⁷ Both groups of politicians were, he said, middle class professionals with the same material interests and, as a result, “spoke the same political language.” When Laurier became Prime Minister, he simply copied a system already well established by Macdonald; in fact, according to Stewart, it was a requirement for holding the job. Stewart did find, however, that the system “lost intensity” as Canada grew and diversified after 1900. Yet he did not examine that change and Noel did not pursue his study beyond 1896. Noel argued, however, that Oliver Mowat adapted to growth in the last quarter of the nineteenth century by establishing a more rational, disciplined system than the one Macdonald had created. Historian René Castonguay, examining the role played by Rodolphe Lemieux in Laurier’s Liberal party after 1896, portrays an organization similar to Mowat’s.⁷⁸ Thus, while Stewart’s work raises questions about the organization of the Liberal party under Laurier, Noel and Castonguay suggest answers, though neither addresses the issue head on.

The picture of Canadian political culture drawn by Stewart and Noel rests almost entirely on their studies of the party system and government patronage. In more recent

⁷⁶ Stewart, *The Origins...*, p. 78.

⁷⁷ Although they were more interested in the distribution of government resources between French and English than in the development of a party system, work by historian Jean-Pierre Wallot and economist Gilles Paquet suggests that the struggle for responsible government in Québec had the same influence on the political culture in that province as is suggested by Noel, thus also reinforcing Stewart’s conclusion. Gilles Paquet and Jean-Pierre Wallot, *Patronage et Pouvoir dans le Bas Canada (1794-1812) : un essai d’économie historique* (Montréal : Les Presses de l’Université du Québec, 1973).

⁷⁸ René Castonguay, *Rodolphe Lemieux et le Parti libéral, 1866-1937 : Le Chevalier du roi* (Québec : Les Presses de l’Université Laval, 2000).

years, historians have added considerably to that portrait through research into other aspects of party organization, a broader range of activities and instruments for shaping public opinion as well as the ideas fundamental to political debate. Their work confirms Stewart's view of a sustained similarity between the political culture of English and French Canada, and adds to our knowledge of the way it changed with the economic and social transformation of the country.⁷⁹

Historians Yvan Lamonde and Jeffrey L. McNairn describe the development, in Québec and Ontario respectively, of public opinion and “deliberative democracy” in the middle of the nineteenth century.⁸⁰ Lamonde traces its origin to economic, social and technological changes associated with the first phase of industrialization. He found that bilateral relations between Lower Canada and Rome, the United States, Britain and France all intensified and encouraged a radicalization of first liberal and then conservative ideologies in the province. The result was an intensification of political debate during the Union period that prompted both sides to organize public meetings, form voluntary associations, publish newspapers and open reading rooms. They marked a “décollage culturel” or the formation of a public sphere. Lamonde and McNairn argue that debate in these meetings, associations, newspapers and reading rooms established a political culture that “valued attempts to explain, understand, and build consensus.”⁸¹

⁷⁹ Historian Jeffrey McNairn argues that the development of deliberative democracy, a particular political culture, was not unique to Upper Canada. Rather, it was part of broader intellectual trends of the western world. Jeffrey L. McNairn, The Capacity to Judge: Public Opinion and Deliberative Democracy in Upper Canada, 1791-1854 (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2000) p. 11.

⁸⁰ *Ibid.*; Yvan Lamonde, Histoire Sociale des idées au Québec, 1760-1896 (Québec: Éditions Fides, 2000).

⁸¹ McNairn, The Capacity to Judge..., p. 419.

The idea of “public opinion” first appeared as a rhetorical device to which those excluded from political power or social standing appealed for support.⁸² When conservatives, who initially denied the legitimacy of public opinion, attempted to control, modify and contest its expression by holding their own public meetings, forming their own voluntary associations and publishing their own newspapers, public opinion began to take a particular form, distinct from the clamour of a crowd, and establish its authority in the political culture of both provinces. It won final acceptance in the same bitter political struggles of the 1840s that Stewart credits with making patronage the foundation of the Canadian political system.

McNairn contends that the political culture of “deliberative democracy” began to erode in 1854 with the liberal-conservative coalition, the creation of “party machines” and “vast bureaucracies” to administer government.⁸³ Lamonde, too, recognizes that the transformation of voluntary associations into political clubs, the appearance of “cheap” newspapers, theatre, and the creation of municipal libraries in the place of reading rooms, all contributed to a transformation in the political culture after Confederation.⁸⁴ He found too, a second transformation, towards the turn of the century marked by the appearance of more “popular,” less partisan, newspapers and the appearance of new cultural forms, like professional sport and “le parc Sohmer” in Montréal, that came with the second phase of industrialization.⁸⁵ Media historians have developed at least part of that story too.

⁸² Although the language used in this paragraph is based largely on McNairn’s work, it also reflects Lamonde’s analysis.

⁸³ McNairn, *The Capacity to Judge...*, p. 421.

⁸⁴ Lamonde, *Histoire sociale des idées...*, pp. 465-478.

⁸⁵ Yvan Lamonde and Raymond Montpetit, *Le Parc Sohmer de Montréal, 1889-1919 : Un lieu populaire de culture urbaine* (Québec : Institut québécois de recherche sur la culture, 1986).

Consistent with Lamonde's argument, Jean de Bonville found that the newspaper industry underwent a major transition between 1884 and 1914.⁸⁶ During that time newspapers evolved from "journaux d'opinion," essentially political opinion sheets, into true "journaux d'information," businesses serving a mass market for news, entertainment and advertising. In between the two, during the 1890s and early 1900s, appeared more experimental "journaux populaires," featuring articles on a wider range of topics, less prominent political opinion and more advertising than the "journaux d'opinion," but less structured, less objective and less commercial than the "journaux d'information." Few newspapers survived the transition and those that did contained less political material. Yet de Bonville comments little on the political consequences.⁸⁷ He notes only that Liberal dailies seemed to hold their ground during the period while independents prospered and Conservative journals declined.

Working from a perspective informed by Harold Innis, historian Paul Rutherford argues that "journaux d'information" did convey a "political" message – though not in a strictly partisan sense.⁸⁸ He identified four Victorian bourgeois "myths" that daily newspapers propagated at the time: modernity (including faith in progress, a sense of nationalism and belief in democracy), order, harmony and Canada as a haven of sanity in the world. By the 1890s all newspapers conveyed these underlying messages, he claimed,

⁸⁶ Jean de Bonville, La Presse québécoise de 1884 à 1914 : Genèse d'un média de masse (Québec : Les Presses de l'Université Laval, 1988).

⁸⁷ Historian Minko Sotiron focused more narrowly than de Bonville on the business side of this transformation in the newspaper industry yet he too commented little on the political consequences. Minko Sotiron, From Politics to Profit: The Commercialization of Canadian English-Language Daily Newspapers, 1890-1920 (Montréal: McGill-Queen's University Press, 1997).

⁸⁸ Paul Rutherford, A Victorian Authority: The Daily Press in Late Nineteenth-Century Canada (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1982).

and made them part of the political culture. Rutherford did not, however, portray newspapers as simple tools of a ruling elite, noting that many other factors mediated their influence. They were more successful, he argued, in setting an agenda; mobilizing support; stereotyping issues, opponents and allies; manipulating mood; socializing readers; and, most especially, legitimating people and ideas.

Lamonde, McNairn and Rutherford are all remarkable in the way they use concepts of political culture to link economic, social, intellectual, cultural and political histories. But their work is remarkable, too, for the way it avoids any consideration of patronage or the distribution of government resources. In this regard, it is matched only by the equally valuable and similarly flawed work of Stewart and Noel who give little consideration to party organization or purpose beyond the patronage system.⁸⁹ In fact, historians have almost always treated the worlds of patronage and public opinion as separate and distinct even though politicians are intimately – and simultaneously – involved in both. The connection is not well understood and represents a fundamental weakness in the literature. It is a point made recently by historian Patrice Dutil. He argues that “an ideology cannot be firmly grasped unless the politics that express it, or fail to express it, are understood.”⁹⁰ His comments point to a second major weakness in the literature as well. Studies of both the party system and public opinion have avoided almost any consideration of electoral politics. American research suggests that local

⁸⁹ Noel goes so far as to “question the significance that has traditionally been attached” to what he calls “ideational factors” in political culture. Noel, *Patrons, Clients...*, p. 311.

⁹⁰ Patrice Dutil, *Devil's Advocate: Godfroy Langois and the Politics of Liberal Progressivism in Laurier's Québec* (Montréal: Robert Davies Publishing, 1994) p. 20.

elections were powerfully evocative cultural events that evolved over time.⁹¹ Yet Canadian historical research on local elections has not gone much beyond Dawson's institutional work in the 1950s.⁹² A social-cultural approach to the history of politics should include elections and a consideration of patronage as an instrument for shaping public opinion.⁹³ Both are required to provide an understanding of the relationship between party system and public opinion, between the state and representation.

In fact, Dutil adopted such an approach in his recent biography of Godfroy Langlois, a Liberal politician and newspaper editor in Montréal at the turn of the century. Studying Langlois's participation in the party, the party's newspapers, government patronage and elections at the municipal, provincial and federal levels, Dutil was able to produce a portrait of the party that went beyond the Prime Minister's influence and the complex way it linked Montréalers to their governments. His study reveals a diversity of opinion within the Liberal party, including, most importantly, a current of the progressive, anticlerical Rouge tradition that persisted into the twentieth century. It found expression in opposition to trusts, agitation for educational reforms, for labour legislation and for the municipalization of hydro-electricity. Dutil concludes that Laurier eventually rejected that tradition in 1910 when he forced Langlois out of the party. Yet he suggests Langlois had allies in P-A. Choquette, Charles Langelier and Jules-Alfred Lane, all from

⁹¹ See, for example, Michael E. McGerr, The Decline of Popular Politics: The American North, 1865-1928 (New York City: Oxford University Press, 1986).

⁹² Writing in 1999, Canadian political scientist Anthony M. Sayers concluded: "relatively few systematic attempts have been made to explore the interaction of local and nonlocal factors in the riding campaigns that are the basis of national elections." See Parties, Candidates, and Constituency Campaigns in Canadian Elections (Vancouver: UBC Press, 1999) p. 3.

⁹³ It is possible that the distribution of government resources, on the basis of loyalty, imbued patronage with values that endorsed actions *and* opinion – particularly patronage granted in the form of newspaper advertising.

Québec City and all life-long Liberals. His work encouraged Réal Bélanger to nuance his description of Laurier as a staunchly conservative Gladstonian liberal. In a 1995 article, he recognized an evolution in Laurier's liberalism, from that of a Rouge radical before Confederation to a Gladstonian liberal and finally, after his defeat in 1911, to a more progressive liberal.⁹⁴

Dutil's social-cultural approach offers a more convincing portrait of a party, even a leader, comfortable with a diversity of views than Bélanger's ideological contortions. It is an element of Dutil's work that serves to underscore the importance of the second essential parameter for any social-cultural study: location. Dutil is able to integrate his interests in so many activities often considered separately because he maintains a limited focus on Godfroy and, in particular, municipal politics. His work reinforces our analysis that a more meaningful and consistent understanding of Laurier's career requires a local perspective.

A study of Laurier as "le député de Québec-Est" would seem to fly in the face of the national legend. Yet researchers have, since E.P. Thompson, sought to understand the making of identity and the origins of societal change through local area studies.⁹⁵ In their recent review article, historians Steven High and John Walsh emphasize the contribution of social network theory to historical research by tracing the processes of making community.⁹⁶ They caution, however, that the multiple roles individuals play in society hinders an adequate understanding of community based strictly on a single function or

⁹⁴ Réal Bélanger, "Le libéralisme de Wilfrid Laurier: évolution et contenu (1841-1919)" in Yvan Lamonde, ed., *Combats libéraux au tournant du XXe siècle* (Montréal : Éditions Fides, 1995) pp. 39-72.

⁹⁵ E.P. Thompson, *The Making of the English Working Class* (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1963).

⁹⁶ John C. Walsh and Steven High, "Rethinking the Concept of Community," *Histoire sociale/Social History*, Volume , no. (1999) pp. 255-273.

role. Rather, historians should conceive of community as a “social space” that, as conceived by sociologist Henri Lefebvre, contains “a great diversity of objects, both natural and social including the networks and pathways which facilitate the exchange of material things and information.”⁹⁷ At times, Lefebvre says, “these [networks] are telescoped into one another under the auspices of that privileged actor, the politician.”⁹⁸ That telescoping is, in fact, the social construction of a particular form of community: the political constituency. Since the days of Macdonald, “community of interest” has always been used to define constituencies. They are near perfect examples of the kinds of “social spaces” described by Lefebvre.

Conceiving of a constituency, like Québec-Est, as an evolving social space, rather than a strictly defined geographic area, emphasizes the way in which it is a “mixture of wider and more local social relations.”⁹⁹ This has long been a feature of local studies done by historians.¹⁰⁰ And the idea supports a model of politics, proposed by political scientist Vincent Lemieux, which emphasizes ways in which a political party interacts with other sources of “power” in three “spaces:” a partisan sphere (traditionally the domain of politics and the party), a societal space (bringing together political, business,

⁹⁷ Henri Lefebvre, The Production of Space, translated by Donald Nicolson-Smith (Oxford: Blackwell, 1991)(1974) p. 77.

⁹⁸ Ibid., p. 12.

⁹⁹ Doreen Massey, “Power-Geometry and a Progressive Sense of Place,” in John Bird et al., eds., Mapping the Futures: Local Cultures, Global Change (New York: Routledge, 1993) p. 68. Quoted in Walsh and High, “Rethinking...,” p. 266.

¹⁰⁰ See, for example, Lynne Marks, Revivals and Roller Rinks: Religion, Leisure, and Identity in Late-Nineteenth-Century Small-Town Ontario (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1996); Joy Parr, The Gender of Breadwinners: Women, Men, and Change in Two Industrial Towns, 1880-1950 (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1990); Chad Gaffield, Language, Schooling, and Cultural Conflict: The Origins of the French-Language Controversy in Ontario (Montréal: McGill-Queen’s University Press, 1987).

religious and other spheres of activity), and an extra-societal space (linking a given society with the world beyond). All three are necessary for a local social-cultural study of politics. In fact, recent scholarship on the “making” of community and nation in Québec City emphasizes this very point. Historians H.V. Nelles and Ronald Rudin both reveal the complex web of actors, ideas and interests, from multiple levels, involved in negotiating public celebrations in the city.¹⁰¹

Thus, it is only through a local study of “le député de Québec-Est” that we can hope to resolve contradictions in the “Laurier legend.” Québec-Est is where Laurier stood for election eleven times while his career took him from one side of the House of Commons to another, from provincial politician to national leadership. In moving through local, provincial and national political cultures as well as through cultures of deliberative democracy, “journaux populaires” and mass media, it was at the constituency level that the questions of loyalty and ideology meant the most. Québec-Est provided a consistent context for his “contradictory” actions and ideas over forty-two years. More than that, however, it was at the constituency level where the “drama of everyday lives” became the public opinion that framed national issues, where the people and instruments that shaped and expressed public opinion met their MP and their government.

There is much we do not know about the history of Québec-Est. Unlike the working class districts of Montréal, Québec-Est was often bypassed by historians who looked to the metropolis for the first signs of industrialization, urbanization, working-

¹⁰¹ H.V. Nelles, The Art of Nation Building : Pageantry and Spectacle at Québec’s Tercentenary (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1999); Rudin, Founding Fathers....

class culture as well as religious, political and intellectual currents.¹⁰² Only one monograph, the recently published work of Lucie K. Morrisset, provides a social-cultural view of a part of the riding.¹⁰³ Her study of St-Roch as a “forme urbaine d’un centre-ville” evokes a strong sense of place, in the streets and buildings of the parish that became, during the course of Laurier’s career, the industrial and commercial heart of Québec City. She does not, however, touch on government contributions to the local economy, political activity or the parish’s place in the city, the province or country. Nonetheless, she provides a more integrated view of the riding’s history than the work done in the 1980s. In those years, historians Jean-Claude Dupont and Jacques Mathieu studied the leather trades that thrived in Laurier’s day.¹⁰⁴ Labour historian Jacques Rouillard led researchers interested in the unique “national” labour movement in Québec-Est.¹⁰⁵ Nive Voisine and other historians were drawn to the riding as the birthplace of “l’Action sociale catholique.”¹⁰⁶ Their work creates the impression of a unique and remarkably influential riding. But it was left to the “Ville de Québec” and the “Société historique de Québec” to integrate, as best they could, research on the separate wards or

¹⁰² For example, there is no study equivalent to Yvan Lamonde, Lucia Ferretti, Daniel LeBlanc, La Culture ouvrière à Montréal (1880-1920): bilan historiographique (Québec: Institut québécois de recherche sur la culture, 1982).

¹⁰³ Lucie K. Morrisset, La Mémoire du paysage : histoire de la forme urbaine d’un centre-ville : Saint-Roch, Québec (Québec : Les Presses de l’Université Laval, 2001).

¹⁰⁴ Jean-Claude Dupont and Jacques Mathieu, eds., Les Métiers du Cuir (Québec : Les Presses de l’Université Laval, 1981). See also, Jean du Berger and Jaques Mathieu, Les Ouvriers de Dominion Corset à Québec, 1886-1988 (Québec : Les Presses de l’Université Laval, 1993).

¹⁰⁵ Jacques Rouillard, Les Syndicats nationaux au Québec de 1900 à 1930 (Québec : Les Presses de l’Université Laval, 1979).

¹⁰⁶ Voisine, Histoire du Catholicisme québécois...

separate municipal functions in the city.¹⁰⁷ Prior to that, only the city's commercial history, and its sharp decline, had attracted scholarly attention in work done by historian Fernand Ouellet and economist André Lamelin.¹⁰⁸ One has to go back to the 1930s and 1940s, to find histories that assemble the business, labour, religious and political history of Québec-Est.¹⁰⁹ Written as memoirs or as part of centennial celebrations, these works sought to leave a stamp on history and to hold before a younger generation a past marked by local achievement on the national stage.

Residents erected the statue to Laurier in 1954 as a final effort to keep that memory alive. On the day the statue was erected, Le Soleil ran the headline: "à la mémoire de Laurier." The article began:

Sir Wilfrid Laurier est revenu au milieu des Québécois qui lui étaient si chers. Sur un socle de granit, fixé dans le bronze pour éternité, il regarde maintenant ce comté de Québec-Est qui lui a manifesté une si grande loyauté durant toute sa vie politique....¹¹⁰

¹⁰⁷ In 1987, the "Ville de Québec" published a series, produced under the direction of Danielle Blanchet, that focused on the development of each ward. Danielle Blanchet, Saint-Roch: Un quartier en constante mutation; Saint Sauveur: à l'image du début du siècle; Limoilou: A l'heure de la planification urbaine (Québec: Ville de Québec, 1987). The "Société historique de Québec" published a four volume work on the city's history under the editorial direction of G-Henri Dageneau, La Ville de Québec: histoire municipale (Québec: Société historique de Québec, 1983).

¹⁰⁸ Fernand Ouellet, Histoire de la Chambre de Commerce de Québec, 1808-1959 (Québec: Centre de recherche de la faculté de commerce de l'Université Laval, 1959); André Lamelin, Le Déclin du Port de Québec et la Réconversion économique à la fin du 19^e siècle: Une évaluation de la pertinence de l'hypothèse du 'staple', Cahier 8125 (Québec: Université Laval, Département d'économie, 1971).

¹⁰⁹ Jean-Charles Gamache, Histoire de Saint-Roch de Québec et de ses institutions, 1829-1929 (Québec: Charrier et Dugal Limitée, 1929); Armand Lavergne, Trente ans de vie nationale (Montréal: Les Éditions du zodiaque, 1934); P.-A. Choquette, Un demi-siècle de vie politique (Montréal: Éditions Beauchemin, 1936); Albert Jobin, Histoire de la Congrégation dit de la paroisse de Notre-Dame de Jacques-Cartier (Québec, 1940); Albert Jobin, Histoire de Québec (Québec, 1947); Jean-Charles McGee, Laurier, Lapointe, St-Laurent: Histoire politique de Québec-Est (Québec: Belisle éditeur, 1948); Notre Dame de Jacques-Cartier, 1851-1951 (Québec, 1951); Philéas Garneau, Centenaire de l'arrivée des missionnaires oblats à la paroisse St-Sauveur de Québec (Québec, 1953).

¹¹⁰ Le Soleil, 22 November 1954, p. 1.

Chapter 2

1877 : “Le vrai parti libéral”



Figure 1: “Laurier reçu à la gare par Isidore Thibaudeau et Joseph Shehyn en 1877.”¹

¹ Jean-Charles McGee, Laurier, Lapointe, St-Laurent: Histoire politique de Québec-Est (Québec: Bélisle éditeur, 1948) p. 2.

At two o'clock on Thursday afternoon, November 8, 1877, Wilfrid Laurier stepped onto Grand Trunk Quay to cheers from a throng of electors.² It was his first day as a candidate in Québec-Est. He took his place in a "magnifique voiture" with Isidore Thibaudeau, the resigning MP, Joseph Shehyn, MLA for the constituency, and Édouard Lemieux, President of the organizing committee. It carried them through crowded Québec City streets leading "une masse d'électeurs... quatre de front à triple et quadruple haie." The carriage wound its way along Champlain – "foule aux fenêtres, hourras prolongés et frénétiques" – then St-Pierre, Buade, de la Fabrique, St-Jean and du Palais. At the Albion Hotel, Laurier asked the driver to stop. He stepped down and entered Québec-Est on foot. "Son entrée fut saluée de bravos frénétiques, et tout le reste de la distance jusqu'à la place de la rue St-Ours, ce fut un feu roulant de hourras qui s'exhalaient de poitrines ardentes."

Five thousand people awaited his arrival in front of the Morrisette family home. From the balcony, Lemieux described how Thibaudeau had met with a group of two or three hundred electors – including 50-75 Conservatives – the day after Laurier's defeat in Drummond-Arthabaska to propose offering his seat to Laurier.³ The group had selected

² The paragraphs describing Laurier's arrival in Québec City, are based on the partisan five-column-article devoted to it in L'Événement, 9 November 1877, p. 2. The essential facts are confirmed, however, in a much less partisan, and less detailed, account offered by Le Nouvelliste, 9 November 1877, p. 2. Le Canadien only refers to Laurier's arrival – unconvincingly – as a "piètre affaire," 9 November 1877, p. 2.

³ Laurier had been defeated in a by-election made necessary by his appointment to Cabinet. It was an unexpected loss for the Mackenzie government and the Liberal party due largely to Church influence, the generous contributions of railway magnate Louis-Adélar Senécal and Conservative determination to defeat a weakening government and a promising MP. Réal Bélanger, Wilfrid Laurier: quand la politique devient passion (Québec: Les Presses de l'Université Laval, 1986) pp. 110-112. Reporting on the public meeting, L'Événement, 9 November 1877, states only that Lemieux "rendit compte des démarches qui avaient eu lieu." Details of these arrangements are found in L'Événement, 3 November 1877, p. 2. Conservative participation in the meeting is confirmed in Le Courrier du Canada, 2 November 1877, p. 2.

him to lead a small delegation of prominent citizens from St-Roch (James E. Woodley⁴ and F.W. Roy⁵) and St-Sauveur (Félix Fortin⁶ and Dr. Charles Gingras⁷) to ask for Laurier's candidacy. He described their meeting in Victoriaville with Édouard Émery Richard, MP for Mégantic and Laurier's former law partner, François Langelier, MP for Montmagny, and Ernest Pacaud, Laurier's closest confidant, before seeing Laurier at his home in Arthabaskaville. They had with them a petition signed by 2,000 electors from the riding and "Laurier répondit en termes heureux et émus qu'il se mettait à la disposition des électeurs." Thibaudeau then formally declared "n'avoir rien exigé, n'avoir reçu aucune promesse, et ne rien attendre en retour du sacrifice qu'il faisait dans l'intérêt d'une localité à laquelle il est sincèrement attaché." Founder of the Banque nationale, former Rouge member of the Brown-Dorion and Sandfield Macdonald-Dorion governments, and a vociferous opponent of Confederation, he spoke for "la nation canadienne." Shehyn, speaking third, asked electors to support Laurier "pour le plus grand bien et le plus grand avantage de la division." A self-made man of French-Canadian and Irish descent, a leading wholesaler and President of the Québec Chamber of Commerce, his devotion to Québec City was unquestioned. Laurier followed, speaking, as best he could, over the "frénétiques hourras" of a crowd moved by the same "sentiments patriotiques et nationaux qui l'animent." After repeating his remarks in

⁴ James E. Woodley was an English Baptist shoe manufacturer living in St. Roch North – the only part of the constituency with a significant proportion of English, Scottish or Irish residents. Born in 1839, he was married and had 8 children. Canada, Census of Canada, 1880-1881 (Ottawa: Maclean, Roger and Company, 1881).

⁵ Reference to F.W. Roy as a resident of St-Roch is found in Le Nouvelliste, 8 November 1877, p. 2.

⁶ Félix Fortin was a French-Canadian Catholic shoe manufacturer living in St. Roch South (St. Sauveur) – a predominantly French-Canadian Catholic ward home to many people employed in the boot and shoe industry. Born in 1834, he was married and had 4 children. Canada, Census of Canada, 1880-1881.

⁷ Dr. Charles Gingras was a French-Canadian Catholic living in St. Roch South (St. Sauveur). Born in 1843, he was married and had one child. Their household included his mother and a domestic servant. Ibid.

English, Laurier was followed by Woodley, who endorsed Laurier on behalf of the English-speaking electors and growing boot and shoe industry in the constituency. Finally, Langelier invited the crowd to accompany Laurier to his temporary residence at the home of Guillaume Bresse – the city’s largest shoe manufacturer.⁸

“La journée d’hier restera dans l’histoire politique de cette division électorale,” predicted Hector Fabre in L’Événement the following day, “comme elle restera dans les coeurs, dans les souvenirs, de tous ceux qui ont été témoins de l’enthousiasme de la population [et] de l’éloquence du candidat.”⁹ He was right. That day and the election that followed assumed mythic proportions in Québec-Est and became integral parts of a powerful Liberal tradition in the constituency.¹⁰ They offer unusual insight into the local political culture, the shaping of public opinion at the time and the origin of Laurier’s enduring relationship with Québec-Est.

This chapter examines why those weeks in 1877 proved to be so powerful and establishes a baseline for measuring change in the political culture and the shaping of public opinion in later chapters. It focuses first on the economic and social elements that underlay the fundamental characteristics of the constituency’s political culture. They defined the constituency’s most widely held values and beliefs, established its broadest common interests and provided the ground on which public opinion was made. The

⁸ Born in 1834, Guillaume Bresse was a French-Canadian Catholic shoe manufacturer living Jacques Cartier ward – a predominantly French-Canadian Catholic ward, the business centre of the constituency and “home” of the boot and shoe industry in Québec City. Ibid.

⁹ L’Événement, 9 November 1877, p. 2.

¹⁰ Oscar Drouin, MLA for Québec-Est from 1928 to 1944, and Charles Gavan Power, MP for Québec-Sud from 1917 to 1955, both pointed to Laurier’s campaign in 1877 – and the stories about it – as part of their political education. See, Oscar Drouin, “Préface,” in McGee, Laurier, Lapointe, Saint-Laurent..., pp. 5-8. and NAC, Fonds Charles Gavan Power, MG-27 III-B-19, Volume “Memoirs,” File “Education for Politics: Youth to 1908.”

chapter then turns to the shaping of public opinion in the constituency through the party, press, patronage and, ultimately, the election itself. These tools for making public opinion came together in a particularly potent combination during the 1877 by-election because the local political culture was in a remarkable state of flux. The time was ripe for striking a deep and lasting relationship between Laurier and Québec-Est.

Québec-Est was unlike almost any other constituency in 1877. Industry and commerce dominated the local economy and had for more than 80 years. The first tannery was built on St-Valier in 1795 and the first sawmills, built along the St. Charles River, appeared fifteen years later (see Map 1).¹¹ It was a shipyard owner, John Mure, who donated land for a Roman Catholic church half way between St-Valier and the river in 1811. Monseigneur Plessis, Bishop of Québec, bought land around the lot so that the church could be built in the middle of the street with space available for a presbytery behind and a market square in front. By default then, St-Joseph, the street running along the southern side of the church, became the principal east-west thoroughfare dividing the parish. Notre-Dame de St-Roch, completed in 1818, brought together the tanners and shoemakers of St-Valier and the carpenters and shipbuilders living close to the river. Throughout Laurier's career the location of the church would reflect its central place in the political culture of the local community.

The parish grew rapidly in the early nineteenth century, its industries attracting mostly French-Canadians from nearby rural communities. A business centre formed around the church in the 1830s bringing lawyers, doctors and other notables to the parish.

¹¹ Paragraphs on the history of St-Roch, the principal parish in Québec-Est, are based on Lucie K. Morrisset, La mémoire du paysage : histoire de la forme urbaine d'un centre-ville : Saint-Roch, Québec (Québec: Les presses de l'Université Laval, 2001). Reference to the tannery established in 1795 is found on page 75.

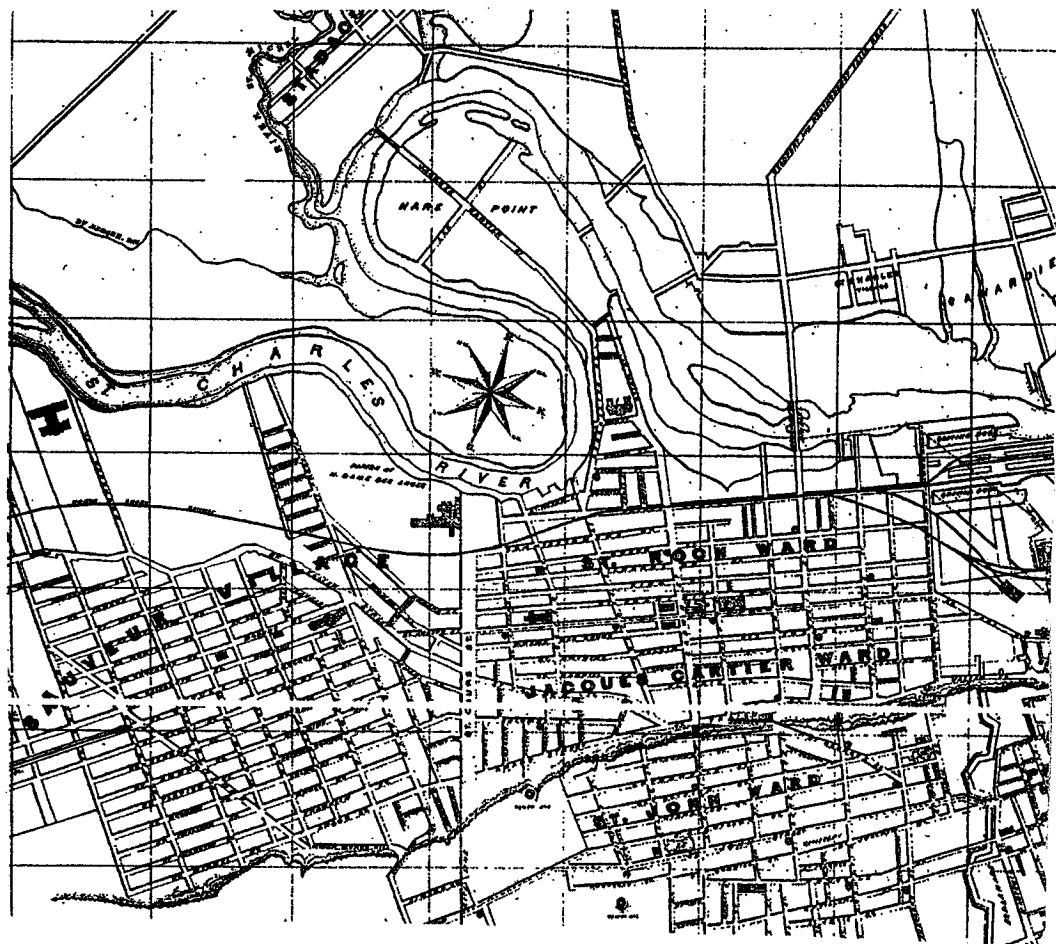


Figure 2: Map of Québec City, 1875¹²

¹² Paul Cousin, "Topographical Plan of City of Québec and St. Sauveur with the General Improvements in the Québec Harbour proposed by F.X. Berlinguet, Esq.," Québec: Cherrier's Québec Directory, 1875. NAC, National Map Collection, NMC 29158.

In 1832, it became a municipality distinct from Québec City. A market building was built in the 1840s on Jacques Cartier Square, facing the church, and a second story was added in 1857 to accommodate an auditorium. The city-owned Salle Jacques-Cartier was destined to be the site of almost all major political events in Québec-Est.

As it prospered, the parish expanded westward until it ran up against the Fief des Recollets. The Recollets' residence, built in 1615, formed the small independent parish of Notre-Dame des Anges. At the urging of Monseigneur de St-Valier, the second Bishop of Québec, the Recollets founded the Hôpital général on the property in 1692 and offered refuge to the city's mentally ill and unwed mothers.¹³ It was a prominent landmark but remained "set off" from the rest of the community and initially at least encouraged local residents to look to Pointe-aux-Lièvres as the most logical place to expand. But construction of a cholera hospital on the point, the Hôpital de la Marine, during the epidemics of 1832 and 1834 discouraged settlement in that area too.¹⁴ Thus, the growing parish of Notre-Dame de St-Roch had little room to grow and, by the 1840s, had become a densely populated urban, working class, community.

A devastating fire, started in Richardson's Tannery on St-Valier, finally forced residents to move out of the parish in 1845. The fire destroyed two thirds of the buildings between St-Ours and de la Couronne south of St-Valier and left 1,200 people homeless. When local authorities passed a regulation prohibiting reconstruction with combustible materials, most of the former residents could not afford to rebuild in the parish and moved onto vacant land west of St-Ours, on the Fief des Recollets and beyond. The area

¹³ Danielle Blanchet, *Saint-Sauveur: à l'image du début du siècle* (Québec: Ville de Québec, 1987) pp. 1-3.

¹⁴ Morrisset, *La mémoire...*, p. 126-127. It is now the site of the federal Department of National Revenue offices in Québec City.

grew rapidly as a wholly French-Canadian working class suburb of St-Roch. Within five years, the population had grown to such an extent that it was difficult for St-Roch's parish priest to minister to the community's spiritual needs. A new church was built and, in 1853, Monseigneur Turgeon, Bishop of Québec, asked the Oblates to assume responsibility for that part of the parish. Their leadership, distinct from that of the Church itself, reinforced differences between the two communities.

In the older part of St-Roch, St-Joseph was widened following the fire – making it a commercial thoroughfare – and many of the lots were sub-divided to make room for more houses and more people. In 1855 the parish was divided into two wards: St-Roch, north of St-Joseph, and Jacques-Cartier, to the south. Thus, by 1855, Québec-Est had begun to take shape. Located below the upper town and beyond the old lower town with their mix of Irish, English, Scottish and French-Canadian residents, it was a predominantly French-Canadian working class industrial suburb. It brought together carpenters and shipbuilders in St-Roch, tanners and shoemakers in Jacques-Cartier, merchants, manufacturers, lawyers and businessmen in both, and could boast a booming industrial suburb of its own west of St-Ours. An English visitor offered a graphic description of the whole area – still known as St-Roch – in 1856:

[It] is as crowded as the upper town, but with a very different population – the poor, the degraded, and the vicious. Here fever destroys its tens, and cholera its hundreds...Here are narrow alleys, with high, black-looking, stone houses, with broken windows pasted over with paper in the lower stories, and stuffed with rags in the upper...Here are ditches and puddles and heaps of oyster-shells, and broken crockery, and cabbage stalks, and fragments of hats and shoes...A little further are lumber-yards and wharfs, and mud and sawdust, and dealers in old nails and rags and bones, and rotten posts and rails and attempts at grass...And then there is the river Charles, no longer clear and bright...but foul, turbid, and polluted with

ship-yards and steam engines and cranes and windlasses on its margin;
and here Québec ends.¹⁵

Two years later, St-Roch and Jacques-Cartier officially became part of Québec City – attracted by the city's fire brigade and promise of an aqueduct. But the newer area, west of St-Ours, continued to resist the taxes and construction codes of the larger municipality. It would pay the price. In 1866, fire razed the area once again taking part of St-Roch and Jacques-Cartier (west of de la Couronne) with it. The survivors rebuilt, adding rail lines along St-Valier and St-Joseph, but rather than join the city, they opted instead to form a separate parish and municipality. With fingers crossed, they named it St-Sauveur.

The distinct history, economy and ethnic composition of St-Roch, Jacques-Cartier and St-Sauveur were recognized in 1860 when the constituency of Québec-Est was formed (St-Roch Nord, on the other side of the St. Charles River, including the tiny settlements of Stadacona and St. Charles Village, was also included). Pitched battles fought between French-Canadian and Irish workers – causing two deaths – during the 1857 election had prompted the decision.¹⁶ The conflict was rooted in competition for work in the port and became violent when Irish stevedores formed the Ship Labourers Benevolent Society (SLBS) that year to exclude non-members from working on the docks.¹⁷ In an effort to stem the electoral violence, the government divided the city into

¹⁵ Isabella Lucy Bird, The Englishwoman in America (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1966) pp. 265-267. Originally published in 1856.

¹⁶ McGee, Laurier, Lapointe, St-Laurent..., p. 23.

¹⁷ Ethnic battles continued until 1879 when the SLBS accepted an arrangement to allow an equal number of French-Canadians and Irish to work on each ship. The SLBS ensured that working conditions in the port were among the best in Canada during much of the nineteenth century. As early as 1867, stevedores earned \$4 a day for an eight-hour day. Yet ethnic conflict in the port continued to spill over into local politics. A sense of the bitterness of these struggles can be found in Albert Jobin, Histoire de Québec (Québec, 1947)

three ethnically distinct ridings. French-Canadians held an overwhelming majority in Québec-Est (85.5 per cent or 24,202 of the 28,305 residents) and a significant majority in Québec-Centre (65 per cent of 18,188) while Irish, English and Scots enjoyed an advantage in Québec-Ouest (62.1 per cent of 13,206).¹⁸ Although present in all parts of Québec-Est, the Irish (2,319) were concentrated in Jacques-Cartier and St-Roch, the English (987) in Jacques-Cartier, and the Scots (525) in Jacques-Cartier and St-Roch Nord. Even together though, their numbers were only significant in tiny St-Roch Nord (population 2,853) where people of British origin accounted for 32.2 per cent of local residents. The largest ward, St-Sauveur (population 9,680), barely surpassed Jacques-Cartier (8,922) in 1871 while the comparatively small number of people living in St-Roch (6,850) reflected a sharp decline in the timber trade and shipbuilding industry that devastated the parish during the 1860s.

In fact, when Laurier took to the hustings in 1877, Quebec-Est was in a transition from an economy built on timber, lumber and sails to one that would be based on leather, shoes, and – his constituents hoped – rails. Public reaction to this crisis had indelibly marked the riding's political culture and defined its basic material interests. It was a crisis that had been provoked, fundamentally, by the industrial revolution in Britain. This had sharply reduced demand for the square timber in the 1860s and, by the 1870s, shipping

pp. 190-194. Jobin was the son and grandson of shipyard workers and became a Liberal then nationalist politician in Québec-Est. He condemned the Irish for responding violently to the formation of a French-Canadian "Union canadienne de débardeurs" in 1879-80 (although he admitted their competition with the SLBS resulted in a temporary 50 per cent pay cut and two-hour increase in the working day for stevedores). He praised Cardinal Taschereau for a pastoral letter issued in 1889 critical of the SLBS for infringing on the freedom to work. See Jacques Rouillard, *Histoire du syndicalisme au Québec: des origines à nos jours* (Montréal: Boréal, 1989) pp. 16-22; J.I. Cooper, "The Quebec Ship Labourer's Benevolent Society," *Canadian Historical Review*, Volume 30 (December 1949), pp. 336-343.

¹⁸ All statistical information is from Canada, *Census of Canada, 1870-1871* (Ottawa: I.B. Taylor, 1873).

out of the port had fallen precipitously.¹⁹ American demand for building materials and construction of the Grand Trunk Railway (GTR), completed in 1860, produced a radical transformation of the forestry industry. Henceforth, lumber cut in distant sawmills was sent largely by rail to booming American cities. That business was centred in Montréal where the GTR crossed the St. Lawrence on the newly constructed Victoria Bridge (completed in 1859). Even shipping lumber was cheaper out of Montréal because local stevedores had not yet organized. The prospect of western immigration increasing the importance of the grain trade – that also passed through Montréal – only promised to further marginalize Québec City. Worse still, the advent of iron ships sharply undercut the shipbuilding industry in Québec-Est. In 1871, the constituency boasted ten shipyards employing 1181 men; by 1881 only three remained with a mere 213 employees.²⁰ Québec City lacked the necessary capital, financial infrastructure, access to raw materials and, most of all, location, needed to adapt and compete in the new economy.²¹ “C’est alors que les faillites devinrent à l’ordre du jour, que l’on vit les magasins se fermer par douzaine, et de milliers de maisons privées de locataires,” wrote François Langelier in 1868.²² “La valeur de la propriété foncière tomba à un taux ridicule [et] la principale source de revenue de notre administration municipale fut diminuée en conséquence... C’est alors que commencèrent les déficits.”

¹⁹ The number of ships leaving the port declined from 854 in 1874 to 433 in 1879. It would fall to 250 by 1890. Fernand Ouellet, Histoire de la Chambre de Commerce de Québec (Québec: Centre de recherche de la Faculté de Commerce de l’Université Laval, 1959) p. 56; Jean Hamelin and Yves Roby, Histoire économique du Québec, 1851-1896 (Montréal: Fides, 1971).

²⁰ Statistical information for 1881 is from Canada, Census of Canada, 1880-1881.

²¹ Ouellet, Histoire de la Chambre de Commerce..., p. 63.

²² François Langelier, Lettre sur les Affaires municipales de la Cité de Québec (Québec : L’Événement, 1868) p. 26.

Local residents were as quick to assign blame for their misfortune as to propose reforms. In fact, Langelier wrote in reaction to a popular proposal to replace the city council with a municipal commission. His commentary reveals much about Liberal concepts of civic responsibility, responsible government and the limits of government authority at the time. They are particularly significant because Langelier, a law professor at the Université Laval, became a central figure in the mainstream of both the Parti national and the Liberal party. From 1882 until his death in 1915, he would serve at one time or another as city councilor, Mayor, MLA and MP, provincial Minister, federal judge and, finally, Lieutenant Governor of the Province.²³ Moreover, he was responsible for bringing Laurier to Québec-Est.²⁴

Langelier blamed the city's decline on "l'égoïsme de la plupart de nos capitalistes."²⁵ "À quel usage emploient-ils leurs capitaux?" he asked rhetorically. "À spéculer sur les fonds publics ou à faire le commerce de bois."²⁶ In his view, they could not be counted on to invest in the new industries the city needed. But he did not see the city's decline as the inevitable result of market forces for which the public had no responsibility and no recourse. Rather, he held an activist and, in certain respects, progressive view of government's responsibility to "veiller à la conservation de la santé

²³ Jocelyn Saint-Pierre, "François Langelier," Dictionary of Canadian Biography (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1998) pp. 593-597.

²⁴ François Langelier's role behind the scenes in bringing Laurier to Québec-Est is detailed in P.A. Choquette, Un demi-siècle de vie politique (Montréal : Éditions Beauchemin, 1936) p. 13; Robert Rumilly, Mercier (Montréal : Éditions du Zodiaque, 1936) p. 89.

²⁵ Langelier, Lettre sur les Affaires municipales..., p. 27.

²⁶ In fact, many recognized Montréal's advantages in the new economy and invested there rather than in Québec City. Brian Young found that Québec City timber merchants William Price, George Pemberton, James Bell Forsyth, William Rhodes, George Beswick and Henry LeMesurier all invested in the GTR. Brian Young, Promoters and Politicians: The North-Shore Railways in the History of Quebec, 1854-1885 (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1978) p. 8.

publique, à la protection de la propriété et de la vie des citoyens...facilite le commerce et les approvisionnements...en imposant des charges aussi légères que possible sur les citoyens.” Langelier rejected the idea of a municipal commission reporting to the provincial government because it could not be held publicly accountable at the local level. “Ce qui fait un bon administrateur,” he argued, “ce n’est pas le talent seulement, c’est de plus l’honnêteté, et surtout l’intérêt ou la responsabilité.” In his view, a public servant paid a guaranteed annual salary lacked sufficient interest in the local impact of his administration; and submission of an annual report simply could not compensate for personal responsibility before the electorate. Thus Langlier’s concept of responsible government was both very personal and very local. It required a personal interest in the effective administration of public affairs and immediate accountability before the public for the results. He rejected the idea of a commission and proposed, instead, redressing the city’s decline by increasing the council’s revenue and ability to invest in the community. Seeing no possibility of increasing property taxes on an already impoverished population, he suggested broadening the tax base by extending the city limits and collecting income tax. By adopting such a practical and progressive approach to public affairs throughout his career, Langelier would carry at least part of the Rouge liberal tradition into Laurier’s Liberal party.²⁷

²⁷ The persistence of a “Rouge” tradition has been the subject of considerable scholarship ever since Jean-Paul Bernard, *Les Rouges: libéralisme, nationalisme et anticléricalisme au milieu du XIXe siècle* (Montréal : Presses de l’Université du Québec, 1971), pronounced it dead with Laurier’s famous speech in 1877. More recent scholarship has shown it to persist in various forms into the early years of the twentieth century but never within the Liberal party. Yvan Lamonde offers an excellent review of this literature in “Le libéralisme et le passage dans le XXe siècle,” in Yvan Lamonde, ed., *Combats libéraux au tournant du XXe siècle* (Montréal : Éditions Fides, 1995) pp. 9-38. Only Réal Bélanger, “Le libéralisme de Wilfrid Laurier : évolution et continue (1841-1919),” in *Ibid.*, pp. 39-72, even hints at a progressive element in Laurier’s politics and only after his defeat in 1911.

Langelier's proposal was, in fact, an essential part of two projects put forward by civic leaders to redress their city's fortunes. The first relied on government support at all levels to draw the nation's staples trades back to Québec City while the second drew on the suddenly abundant supply of cheap labour and municipal government support to attract new industries to Québec-Est.

The first project reprised the city's longtime role as the "natural" outlet for Canadian staple trades. Despite competition from Montréal, local residents saw no reason their city should not remain Canada's entrepôt. They recognized, though, that it would require renovation of the port facilities and construction of railway lines to the United States, to the forests of northern Québec and Ontario and to the wheat fields of the Canadian west – all crossing the St. Lawrence at Québec City and avoiding Montréal. Thus, in the early 1850s, the city council commissioned plans for a bridge and granted a subsidy for construction of the North Shore Railway.²⁸ At the time, Joseph Cauchon, a Conservative politician, led the railway project. He planned to extend its reach by linking it to a second railway, the Lake Huron, Ottawa and Québec Junction Railway. This second railway would connect with the North Shore Railway north of Montréal, follow the Ottawa river to the capital and cross north-eastern Ontario to Georgian Bay to meet steamships carrying western grain. Competition from the GTR, dredging of the St. Lawrence and Cauchon's political weakness in Ottawa led to the demise of both railways

²⁸ The city commissioned Edward Wellman Serrell to draw up plans for a bridge in 1851. William D. Middleton, *The Bridge at Quebec* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2001) p. 8. A year later, the city voted a \$100,000 subsidy for the North Shore Railway. Young, *Promoters and Politicians...*, p. 11. The account, in the next two paragraphs, of early efforts to build a railway from Québec City to the Canadian west is based on Young's work. *Ibid.*, pp. 11-22, 55-73.

by 1861. For the next seventy years, however, they remained the model for Québec City's ambitions.

Cauchon's plans were revived in 1870 when Montreal businessmen took an interest in the Georgian Bay route. Their involvement helped spur a successful campaign for subsidies from north shore municipalities, increased support from Québec City, the active interest of Monseigneur Taschereau, Archbishop of Québec, and a land grant from the province. But Montréal and Québec City interests clashed over the location of the junction with the North Shore Railway. Montréalers wanted to run both lines into their city while it was essential for Québécois to have them meet north of Montréal. By 1872, all Montréal interests had withdrawn from the railways and the provincial government took them over in 1875 – renaming them the Québec, Montréal, Ottawa and Occidental Railway (QMOO). By then Cauchon was a Minister in the Liberal government of Alexander Mackenzie, having fallen out with his Conservative colleagues at least in part over their support for the GTR. It was one of the first signs that railway development would play an important role in weakening Conservative support and fostering an allegiance to the Liberal party in Québec City. In the 1878 annual report of the Québec Chamber of Commerce, Joseph Shehyn, the President and MLA for Québec-Est, reiterated the Chamber's support for the QMOO, construction of a bridge across the St. Lawrence and development of the port. "La chambre y voyait les seuls moyens efficaces pour intégrer solidement l'économie de la région de Québec à celle du Canada."²⁹

Civic leaders also saw potential for development in the city's abundant supply of cheap labour. Langelier took the decisive step in 1864 when he convinced Guillaume

²⁹ Ouellet, *Histoire de la Chambre de Commerce...*, p. 68.

Bresse and Les Frères Côté to build shoe factories in St-Roch.³⁰ Their introduction of “la cordonnerie mécanique” marked the final major step in the industrialization of shoemaking in the city and led almost immediately to remarkable growth in the local economy.³¹ By 1871, there were 49 boot and shoe companies employing 880 adults and 155 children in Québec-Est and, ten years later, 129 companies employing 2700 adults and 206 children. Moreover, rejuvenation of the industry spurred growth in other businesses. By 1881, the shoemakers of Québec-Est lived and worked along-side more tailors, dressmakers, printers, foundry workers and railway car or locomotive workers than ever before.³² At the same time, the construction of a railway terminus just outside St-Roch (for the QMOO) and rail lines along St-Joseph and St-Valier had helped make the constituency the commercial centre of Québec City.³³ By 1881, the populations of St-Roch and Jacques-Cartier were once again roughly equivalent.³⁴

During this renaissance, the city became increasingly French-Canadian. In 1871, French-Canadians represented 68.5 per cent of the city’s population and 85.5 per cent of

³⁰ François Langelier, “Leçons de l’expérience,” *L’Action Catholique*, 29 January 1918, p. 4 and 30 January 1918, p. 8. Reprinted from *La Semaine Commerciale*, 10 September 1897, p. 4. See also Alyne Lebel, “Les facteurs du développement urbain” in G-Henri Dagneau, ed., *La Ville de Québec : histoire municipale*, Tome IV, *de la Confédération à la charte de 1929* (Québec : Société historique de Québec, 1983) p. 37.

³¹ Morrisset, *La mémoire...*, p. 179. For information on the gradual transformation of the boot and shoe industry into one of the leading components of the industrial revolution in Quebec province, see Joanne Burgess, “L’industrie de la chaussure à Montréal: 1840-1870 – de passage de l’artisanat à la fabrique,” *Revue d’histoire d’Amérique française*, Vol. 31, no. 2 (September 1977), pp. 187-210.

³² In 1871 there were 123 tailors, 232 dressmakers and no printers, foundry workers or railway car or locomotive workers in the constituency. In 1881, there were 722 tailors, 575 dressmakers, 172 printers, 164 foundry workers and 156 railway car or locomotive workers. Canada, *Census of Canada, 1870-71*, and Canada, *Census of Canada, 1880-81*.

³³ Morrisset, *La mémoire...*, p. 173.

³⁴ St. Roch ward had 8,055 people in 1881 while Jacques Cartier had 8,313. Canada, *Census of Canada, 1880-81*.

Québec-Est. By 1881, they accounted for 74.4 per cent of the city and 90.3 per cent of the constituency. Québec-Est emerged as the city's largest riding by far; with a population of 31,900, it was home to 51.1 per cent of the city's residents. The constituency was making a successful transition from working class slum to a prosperous, densely populated, manufacturing and commercial centre – and becoming increasingly French-Canadian in the process.

The social and economic characteristics of Québec-Est shaped a political culture marked by that overwhelming French-Canadian majority and its competition, for employment, with Irish stevedores. This competition, in turn, created an intense sense of partisanship in the riding. It was marked too by the constituency's industrial and commercial origins. They set it apart from the rest of the city as much as its location did and created a tradition of both business and working class leadership. The economic crisis in the 1860s and 1870s impoverished workers and created an opportunity for a new generation of business leaders. But the transformation of the riding, which reaffirmed its role as the city's economic motor, also left it more dependent on government support and forever locked into an uphill struggle with Montréal. Although Catholic to the core, even the city's religious leadership was influenced by this rivalry. Finally, although Québec-Est functioned as a densely populated and closely-knit social, economic and religious unit, each part of the constituency had its own history, its own geography and its own occupational, religious and ethnic structure. The challenge for the Liberal party in 1877 was to advantageously manage the instruments for shaping public opinion within this unique political culture.

The Liberal party, however, faced tremendous challenges in the 1870s. It had to adapt to the new institutional arrangement of politics created by Confederation and successfully adapt tools for shaping public opinion to the changing political culture.

Confederation left the Conservatives in control of both federal and provincial governments and, at the same time, ultramontane Church leaders in Montréal and Trois-Rivières launched the Programme catholique against all things liberal. Yet Conservative strength only compounded the Liberal party's internal problems. It had never been held together at the national level by anything but opposition to Confederation and, at the provincial level, lacked financial resources, elected representatives and extra-parliamentary organization. Historian Marcel Caya makes a convincing argument that, in this context, internal re-organization and re-definition became the party's first priorities.³⁵ Moreover, although not the object of his work, Caya's research reveals a strong bias within the party in favour of Québec City that would have a determinant effect on Laurier's choice to make Québec-Est his political home.

Stung by defeat in the 1871 provincial election, a new generation of Liberals had come together to confront the party's organizational challenges before the 1872 federal contest. They met first in the Québec City region (at Montmagny) then in Ste-Hyacinthe and finally in Montréal.³⁶ The meeting in Montréal brought together young Liberals from

³⁵ Caya offers the best-documented study of the party's history currently available. The following paragraphs are based on his research. Marcel Caya, "La formation du parti libéral au Québec, 1867-1887," PhD Thesis: York University, 1981. The significance of party organization in the 1870s is also emphasized by Philip E. Shea, "Electoral Practices in Québec, 1867-1882," M.A. Thesis: McGill University, 1969, p. 48.

³⁶ The meeting in Montmagny drew 2,000 people from Québec City, Lévis, Bellechase and L'Islet on August 1, 1871. The meeting in Ste-Hyacinthe brought together Jean-Chrysostome Langelier, Jean-Baptiste Bourgeois, Alphonse Luisgnan, Paul deCazes, Louis Delorme, Raphael Fontaine and Honoré Mercier. This group was the first to contact Laurier. The meeting in Montréal took place in December 1871. Caya, "La formation du parti libéral...", pp. 116-123.

across the province: Honoré Mercier (Ste-Hyacinthe), François Langelier (Québec City), Wilfrid Laurier (Arthabaskaville), Félix-Gabriel Marchand (St-Jean-sur-Richelieu), Édouard Émile Richard (Mégantic) and Cléophas Beausoleil, François-Liguori Béique, Laurent-Olivier David, Louis-Amable Jetté and Joseph-François Perreault from Montréal. With the support of federal party leader Antoine-Aimé Dorion, they created the Parti national and organized founding meetings in Montréal and Québec City early in 1872.³⁷ In Québec City, the meeting elected only Liberals to the board, most notably: Henri-Gustave Joly (President), François Langelier (Secretary), Wilfrid Laurier, C-A-P Pelletier, Isidore Thibaudeau, Luc Letellier de Saint-Just and Hector Fabre.³⁸ Despite the name change, they did not threaten the Liberal party in any way. They differed only in their determination to accept the new constitutional arrangement and respect, above all, the logic of party government. Thus, they rejected Rouge positions in favour of annexation with the United States and the election of public servants but retained support for economy in government, electoral and educational reform, colonization and the right for Canada to negotiate its own treaties and establish its own tariffs for the protection of Canadian industry. Their platform was shaped first and foremost, however, by their determination to win control of government. They adopted a “national” label to distance themselves from Church condemnation of liberals, broaden their appeal among French-Canadians and distinguish themselves from a Conservative party dominated by federal

³⁷ The meetings took place in Montréal on January 25, 1872 and in Québec City on January 27, 1872. *Ibid.*, p. 127.

³⁸ The others were: Pierre Baillargeon, L. Bourget, J.B. Caron, Dr. DeGuise, T. Fournier, L-H. Fréchette, M.A. Hearn, W. Hossack, C.J.L. Lafrance, J. LeMesurier, J. O’Farrell, J.B. Parkin, J.G. Peachy, M.A. Plamondon, C.H. Pozer, J.B. Pruneau, L.J.A. Simard and H.T. Taschereau. *Ibid.*, p. 128.

politicians.³⁹ They urged electoral reforms – prohibition of the “double mandate” (holding a seat in both the federal and provincial legislatures), introduction of the secret ballot and simultaneous single-day elections – to weaken Conservative strength at the polls. They argued for economy in government – elimination of the conservative Legislative Council, pay-cuts for elected officials, reduction in the number of Ministers and public servants and opposition to the Canadian Pacific Railway (CPR) – for much the same reason. They proposed instead the development of provincial railways and resources (much like Mowat’s government would in Ontario). Caya concludes that, despite its name, the Parti national was far more reformist and autonomist than nationalist.⁴⁰ “National,” in this context, represented a partisan Liberal strategy that stood for the economic and social development of the province outside Montréal.

Yvan Lamonde, a cultural historian, makes it clear that the appearance of the Parti national coincided with a fundamental transformation in the diversity of cultural activities and instruments for shaping public opinion in the province.⁴¹ “Les conditions de production [urbanisation, industrialisation, technologie], de diffusion [organisation, commercialisation, tertiarisation] et de consommation de biens s’appliquent dorénavant au monde de la culture et des formes d’emploi du temps non laborieux.”⁴² As a result, voluntary associations – the motor of a cultural “take-off” in the mid-nineteenth century – lost their “raisons d’être” and status as the primary site for the formation of public

³⁹ *La Nation*, the party newspaper, described it as national in program, not based on race or ethnicity, but on the common good for the country. *La Nation*, 30 January 1872 quoted in *Ibid.*, p. 123.

⁴⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 123.

⁴¹ Yvan Lamonde, *Histoire sociale des idées au Québec (1760-1896)*, Tome I (Montréal : Éditions Fides, 2000) pp. 465-482.

⁴² *Ibid.*, p. 478.

opinion. Cities gradually assumed responsibility for public libraries and the increasingly regular publication of newspapers diminished the need for public reading rooms. Finally, the associations themselves became increasingly politicized. By the 1870s their dominant role in the formation of public opinion had been replaced by political clubs and more broadly-based party newspapers like those established by the Parti national in the 1870s.

Unlike voluntary associations that had served principally to form public opinion through intellectual debate and public discussion, political clubs were organized to shape public opinion by engaging party members between elections, reinforcing their attachment to the party, disseminating party doctrine, raising funds and preparing for elections. The clubs became a training ground for future candidates and organizers. In political clubs “tous les jeunes gens se sont illustrés,” wrote Mercier, “tout en se préparant pour les grandes luttes.”⁴³ Political clubs represented the first step in the creation of an extra-parliamentary party. Because they did not have the organizational strength afforded the Conservatives by their large number of MPs and MLAs, the Parti national took the lead in this major political innovation.⁴⁴ They founded the Club de réforme du Parti national de Montréal in 1872 and the Club de réforme de Québec shortly thereafter.⁴⁵

The Parti national also moved quickly to establish La Nation in Ste-Hyacinthe, Le National in Montréal and to secure the support of L'Événement in Québec City. All three sought to expand their readership and political influence by appealing to a larger

⁴³ NAC, Fonds Rodolphe Lemieux, MG 27-II-D-10, Volume 1, File 2, “Correspondance,” Honoré Mercier to Rodolphe Lemieux, 22 November 1888.

⁴⁴ Shea, “Electoral Practices...,” p. 63.

⁴⁵ Caya, “La formation du parti liberal...,” p. 175.

audience than more polemical party newspapers.⁴⁶ According to media historian Paul Rutherford, they were part of a nation-wide trend among politicians taking advantage of urbanization, industrialization and the transportation revolution to expand their networks of influence. Collectively, they produced a tremendous increase in the number and circulation of Canadian newspapers.⁴⁷ Yet, in other respects, the newspaper business did not change fundamentally until the turn of the century. In the 1870s newspapers remained essentially party organs. They offered the only paid positions in the extra-parliamentary party and, as a result, served as meeting places for party organizers and research offices for party leaders. But their primary role was to shape public opinion through the dissemination and vigilant defense of party doctrine, interests and leaders.

François Langelier and Hector Fabre, owner-editor of L'Événement, were the key organizers for the Parti national in Québec City at this time.⁴⁸ A Conservative supporter of Confederation, Fabre's "volte face" in 1871 surprised local Liberals. Yet he had always espoused an independence that reflected, first and foremost, his business interest in L'Événement. "La surabondance des articles politiques déshabitué le lecteur de les lire," he wrote in the newspaper's first edition. "Nous ne nous croirons pas obligés de publier un long écrit dans chaque numéro. Quand il n'y aura pas de sujet d'article, nous n'en écrirons pas. Nous donnerons des nouvelles à la place."⁴⁹ He was attracted to the

⁴⁶ The Parti national abandoned the Rouge Pays in December 1871. Ibid., p. 132.

⁴⁷ Paul Rutherford, The Making of the Canadian Media (Toronto: McGraw Hill Ryerson Limited, 1978) pp. 48-49.

⁴⁸ Despite his crucial role in the emergence of the "Parti national" in Québec City, Fabre is best known to historians as a journalist and diplomat. His contribution to the political reorganization of Québec-Est is not mentioned by Sylvain Simard and Denis Vaugeois, "Fabre, Hector," in The Dictionary of Canadian Biography, Volume 13, 1901-1910, (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1994) pp. 326-330.

⁴⁹ L'Événement, 13 May 1867, p. 2.

Parti national by its support for electoral reform and interest in business concerns.⁵⁰ The significance of Fabre's decision to join the party is evident in the support he received. Langelier, Letellier and Joly all actively worked on his 1873 campaign in Québec-Comté and, later that year, Mackenzie appointed him to the Senate. When L'Événement ran into financial difficulties in 1876, Laurier wrote to Mackenzie for assistance: "The loss of the paper itself, which is our principal organ in the district of Québec, would be most damaging, but the effect, as tending to show a fluctuation of public opinion against the Liberal party, would be still more damaging."⁵¹ "Il n'y a pas de doute," wrote L-O. David years later, "que l'Événement a beaucoup contribué à rendre le parti libéral populaire, de 1869 à 1878, et surtout à discréditer le parti conservateur."⁵²

At the same time Liberals started to reorganize their party, ultramontane conservatives launched an all-out attack on what they perceived as a rising tide of Catholic liberalism and growing state influence over religious affairs.⁵³ Launched by Monseigneur Laflèche, Bishop of Trois-Rivières, with the support of Monseigneur Bourget, Bishop of Montréal, in 1871, the Programme catholique affirmed the Church's right to intervene in state affairs and exhorted Catholics to vote against all forms of liberalism. Other Bishops, most notably Monseigneur Taschereau, Archbishop of

⁵⁰ Gérard Parizeau, La Chronique des Fabres (Montréal : Éditions Fides, 1978) p. 129-137.

⁵¹ Laurier to Mackenzie, August 9, 1876. Quoted in Eric Vivian Jackson, "The Organization of the Canadian Liberal Party, 1867-1896, with particular reference to Ontario," M.A. Thesis: University of Toronto, 1962, p. 243.

⁵² Larent-Olivier David, Souvenirs et biographies, 1870-1910 (Montréal : Librairie Beauchemin Limitée, 1911) p. 182.

⁵³ Lamonde cites ultramontane concerns with the 1864 federal Marriage Act, the 1866 revision of the Civil Code, the 1867 struggle for confessional schools within the British North America Act and the 1870 decision in the Guibord Case as motives for issuing the "Programme catholique" in 1871. Lamonde, Histoire sociale des idées..., p. 368.

Québec, rejected the Programme, at least ostensibly, because they had not been involved in its preparation. In fact, their opposition was rooted in an ideological and territorial conflict with Bourget that mirrored the economic rivalry between Montréal and Québec City.⁵⁴ Regardless of motivation, though, Taschereau's reaction against the Programme was a blessing for the Liberal party. In a community where the clergy held considerable authority, the Programme could seriously damage the party's chances. In Québec-Est, fully 94.2 per cent of the population was Catholic.⁵⁵

Liberals responded to Church influence over the formation of public opinion in two ways. They resorted to the parliamentary and judicial systems – and eventually the Pope – as means of constraining clerical intervention in elections and they countered with more strategic use of their best speakers. The Dominion Elections Act, one of the first measures the Mackenzie Government passed in 1874, prohibited the use of force or intimidation of any kind to induce someone to vote or abstain from voting.⁵⁶ François Langelier used the Act to contest an 1875 by-election in Charlevoix on the grounds that local clergy had exercised such “undue influence” over electors. Although he initially lost the case before Superior Court judge A.B. Routhier (who had helped draft the Programme), Langelier won on appeal in the Supreme Court where judge Taschereau, the Archbishop's brother, delivered the majority decision.

⁵⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 367.

⁵⁵ Canada, Census of Canada, 1870-1871.

⁵⁶ Liberals, led by Louis-Antoine Dessaulles, editor of Le Pays, had contested the clergy's influence in elections since 1867. Given Dessaulles' leadership, Lamonde very logically links the initiative to the anti-clericism of the older Rouge element in the Liberal party. However, he overlooks Langelier's critical role in its dénouement which suggests, again, that Langelier carried some of the Rouge ideology into the “Parti national” and, later, Laurier's Liberal party. Lamonde, Histoire sociale des idées..., p. 355, 372-377.

Laurier contributed to this struggle by delivering, early in 1877, his now famous speech on political liberalism in Québec City. That year, local Liberals invited the Pope to investigate ultramontanist charges against the party and, while the Vatican's emissary, Bishop Conroy, was in town, they asked Laurier to address the Club Canadien.⁵⁷ On June 26, 1877, before 2,000 people packed into the Académie de musique in the Upper Town, Laurier set out the differences between the anti-clerical Catholic liberalism of France and the reformist political liberalism of Britain espoused by the Liberal party in Québec. The timing of the speech, its clear reasoned message, and Laurier's relentless promotion of it, consolidated his position in the party and marked a turning point for the Liberal party in Québec. For Fabre, Laurier "a ouvert une voie et montré la route à suivre."⁵⁸

The speech illustrates well Laurier's mastery of a speaking style that was crucial to his success. "His eloquence springs rather from the mind than from the heart," wrote his friend L-O. David. "He embraces all sides of a question, seizes its leading principle and draws there from a series of reasonings which are connected together like the links of a chain, of close arguments, whose dryness he tempers with noble thoughts and captivating reflections."⁵⁹ It was a style that stood him in good stead during an election campaign. "He can fight a mob from the hustings with a quiet, steady self-possession that knows no wavering," wrote Willison. "The most brutal partisans yield to his engaging

⁵⁷ Laurier was invited to speak on the topic because he had delivered similar speeches in previous years. He defended the party's liberalism in a very similar speech made upon entering the House of Commons in 1874 and at Ste-Croix de Lotbinière during the 1875 provincial election. It was the timing and circumstances of the 1877 speech that made it so important more than its content. *Ibid.*, p. 374.

⁵⁸ *L'Événement*, 27 June 1877, p. 2

⁵⁹ L.O. David, "Wilfrid Laurier" in Ulric Barth, ed., *Wilfrid Laurier on the Platform, 1871-1890* (Québec: Turcotte and Menard, 1890) p. iv.

persuasiveness and quiet uncompromising firmness.”⁶⁰ At the same time, the logical and ordered structure of his speeches was well suited for reproduction in party newspapers. Historians have used such comments to describe the personal characteristics that made Laurier a successful politician.⁶¹ But these remarks, written specifically to inspire public support for Laurier, are best seen as evidence of the value placed on reasoned public speaking within the political culture of the day.

It was as a public speaker that Laurier first attracted public attention in 1871.⁶² His first parliamentary address, made in the provincial assembly, reflected much of the platform put forward by the Parti national:

Undoubtedly, our situation, viewed from the merely political and social standpoint, is excellent, thanks to the fundamental principle of our constitution – the principle of free and representative government. It is due to this principle that the diverse elements, which compose our population, have been able to unite and form a compact and homogeneous whole, yet leaving to each its character and its autonomy... But there is another side to the situation; there is the economic side and I do not hesitate to say that it seems to me dark, very dark, indeed... It is a humiliating confession to make that, after three centuries of existence, this country is still unable to supply its own wants and that it is still obliged to have recourse to foreign markets, though nature has lavished upon it all the gifts necessary to render it a manufacturing country... It is a duty, especially for us Canadians of French origin, to create a national industry.... alone [the government] can neither create nor develop it, but it can contribute powerfully thereto by the kind of immigration which it introduces into the country... We can... introduce here with good results, I think, an industrial immigration.⁶³

⁶⁰ J.S. Willison, “Mr. Laurier’s home” in *Ibid.*, p. xvi.

⁶¹ Paul Stevens, “Wilfrid Laurier: Politician” in Marcel Hamelin, ed., *Les idées politiques des premiers ministres du Canada*, (Ottawa: Les Éditions de l’Université d’Ottawa, 1969) pp. 69-86.

⁶² Réal Bélanger, *Wilfrid Laurier : quand la politique devient passion* (Québec : Les Presses de l’Université Laval, 1986) p. 81; Oscar Douglas Skelton, *Life and Letters of Sir Wilfrid Laurier*, Volume I, 1841-1896 (Toronto : McClelland and Stewart, 1965) p. 28.

⁶³ Wilfrid Laurier, “Speech on the Address in Reply to the Speech from the Throne,” 10 November 1871, in Barthe, *Wilfrid Laurier on the Platform...*, pp. 1-8.

Laurier concluded by raising the need for electoral and educational reforms. In a matter of minutes, he had made his mark, introduced parliamentarians to his reasoned speaking style and highlighted the issues and ideas he would champion for years to come.

Laurier's views and those of the Parti national resonated well in Québec City where the party had built effective means for shaping public opinion. The party had established a political club and broadly based partisan newspaper in the city, prominent party organizers lived there and the local Church leadership had not made it a sin to vote Liberal. The party faced Conservative leaders frustrated by Montréal interests while their own platform championed the city's most cherished economic ambitions.

It is not surprising, then, that in the 1870s Québec-Est became one of the first constituencies in which the Parti national managed to bring together elements of the old Rouge and Conservative parties. Until that time, it had been dominated by an organization put together by Pierre-Gabriel Huot to fight the Irish in 1857.⁶⁴ Huot, a notary and journalist, controlled the constituency for ten years (1860-70) largely with the strong-armed support of dockyard workers. Initially a Liberal, he had turned against the party in the 1860s when passed over for a Cabinet appointment by the Macdonald-Dorion government.⁶⁵ He supported Confederation and became the constituency's first federal MP, a Conservative, in 1867. The contest to replace him in 1870 revealed a constituency

⁶⁴ Background information on Huot and his political organization in Québec-Est is found in McGee, Laurier, Lapointe, St-Laurent..., pp. 24-46. His political and literary careers and controversial decision to leave the Liberal party are the subject of his profile in Jean Piquefort (A.B. Routhier), Portraits et Pastels Littéraire (Québec: Atelier typographique de Léger, Brousseau, 1873) pp. 102-122. He was a French-Canadian Catholic notary, born in 1826. He and his wife had two children and, in 1881, lived with his mother and a domestic servant "en banlieu" in Québec City – likely St. Roch North or St. Roch South (St. Sauveur). Canada, Census of Canada, 1880-81.

⁶⁵ Piquefort, Portraits et Pastels..., p. 110.

in transition with sharp divisions among Conservative leaders. Adolphe-Guillet Tourangeau, a notary, inherited the Huot organization and the Conservative label as well as the support of Hector Fabre and L'Événement.⁶⁶ He ran against Pierre-Vincent Valin, a shipbuilder, who relied on the support of his workers, Le Canadien, Conservative Minister Joseph Cauchon and the Journal de Québec.⁶⁷ Tourangeau won the by-election in 1870 and was acclaimed in 1872. But the Pacific Scandal that broke across the Conservative party later that year had tremendous impact in a constituency all too familiar with murderous and corrupt elections.

The scandal so exacerbated divisions between local Conservatives that it gave Liberals in Québec-Est an opportunity to challenge the Huot organization.⁶⁸ In doing so, the exceptionally high degree of violence in local elections encouraged them to look for a candidate who lived safely outside the constituency. Their first chance came when the local MLA, Jacques-Philippe Rhéaume (a lawyer supported by the Huot organization), accepted a position on the Seignorial Commission in 1873.⁶⁹ Hector Fabre took the lead by calling a meeting in the tannery of Joseph Plamondon on St-Valier to “former une ligue de citoyens afin d’en finir avec le système de violence et de fraude qui a trop

⁶⁶ Adolphe Guillet Tourangeau was a French-Canadian Catholic lawyer living in Le Palais ward (Québec Centre). He and his wife lived with their six children, a student and domestic servant. Canada, Census of Canada, 1880-81.

⁶⁷ P.V. Valin was a French-Canadian Catholic shipowner living in St. Roch ward. Born in 1827, he and his wife lived with three borders and a domestic servant in 1881. Ibid.

⁶⁸ Background information on the political manoeuvres in Québec-Est from 1873-1877 is found in McGee, Laurier, Lapointe, St-Laurent..., pp. 41-57.

⁶⁹ J.P. Rhéaume was a French-Canadian Catholic lawyer living in Jacques Cartier ward. Born in 1818, he and his wife lived with their four children in 1881. Canada, Census of Canada, 1880-81.

longtemps prévalu dans les élections.”⁷⁰ At the meeting, he nominated Charles-Alphonse-Pantaléon Pelletier as their candidate. Pelletier, a lawyer, militia officer, and President of the powerful Société-St-Jean-Baptiste de Québec, had established a reputation for bravery as the Liberal candidate in a violent 1867 election in Kamouraska. By all accounts, “il n’avait pas froid aux yeux.”⁷¹ With the support of tanners Plamondon and Blondeau as well as Langelier, Fabre, and L’Événement, Pelletier defeated Philéas Huot (who was supported by Joseph-Adolphe Chapleau and the Huot organization).⁷² The campaign turned on public reaction against electoral violence – and an apparent attempt to assassinate Pelletier at the nomination meeting. “La balle a traversé son casque en éraillant la peau de la tête...Pelletier a été jeté à bas le ‘husting’ [et] plusieurs personnes ont été blesses.”⁷³ It was a turning point and became the first part of a “Liberal legend” in Québec-Est. The organization affirmed its place in the constituency by electing Thibaudeau in the 1874 federal election and Shehyn in the 1875 provincial election.

The transition took a few years to complete but was evident in 1877. By then, Tourangeau and Valin – both associated with the shipbuilding industry – had affirmed their allegiance to the Conservative party while Philéas Huot – formerly a moderate Chapleau Conservative – had become a “franc Libéral.”⁷⁴ The process of division was

⁷⁰ McGee, Laurier, Lapointe, St-Laurent..., p. 43. Joseph Plamondon was a French-Canadian Catholic tanner living in Jacques Cartier ward. He and his wife lived with three other people in 1881. Canada, Census of Canada, 1880-81.

⁷¹ McGee, Laurier, Lapointe, St-Laurent..., p. 42.

⁷² Philéas Huot was a French-Canadian Catholic notary living in St. Roch ward. Born in 1843, he lived with his wife, four children and his mother in 1881. Canada, Census of Canada, 1880-81.

⁷³ McGee, Laurier, Lapointe, St-Laurent..., p. 43-44.

⁷⁴ Tourangeau, a Conservative supported by Fabre in 1870, ran against Laurier in 1877. Valin, who ran against Tourangeau in 1870, won the 1874 provincial by-election as a Conservative and ran against Shehyn

similar to that described by historians Blair Neatby and Brian Young but it took place almost ten years before the Conservatives divided over Chapleau's sale of the QMOO and the Riel Affair.⁷⁵ Fabre played the most crucial role by bringing together business-oriented Conservatives associated with the growing boot and shoe industry (rather than the declining timber or shipbuilding interests), the city's financial and commercial interests and former Rouge leaders in the Liberal party.⁷⁶ Moreover, he had convinced them to accept a representative from outside the constituency.

Unfortunately for the generation of Liberals that formed this first incarnation of the Parti national in 1871, their initiative was not well understood by the party's more established leaders. When Alexander Mackenzie came to power on the heels of the Pacific Scandal, he appointed the party's older leaders to Cabinet and, in effect, imposed a hierarchical structure that did not reflect the shape of the party emerging in the province.⁷⁷ Frustrations grew as the older men resigned to take judicial appointments or mismanaged government patronage to the detriment of the party's newspapers and former members of the Parti national.⁷⁸ Thus, for the party, Laurier's appointment as

in 1875. On the other hand, Philéas Huot, Pelletier's Conservative opponent in 1873, stood with the Liberals against Valin in 1874. *Ibid.*, pp. 36-45.

⁷⁵ Neatby attributes the realignment in Québec politics largely to the actions of the Mercier government from 1887 to 1891 but finds antecedents in the politics surrounding the North-Shore Railway (the QMOO) and the execution of Riel. Brian Young paints a similar picture but places greater emphasis on the politics surrounding the development of the North-Shore Railway and its impact on provincial government coffers. See Blair Neatby, *Laurier and a Liberal Québec: A Study in Political Management* (Toronto: McClelland and Stewart, 1973); Brian J. Young, *Promoters and Politicians: The North-Shore Railways in the History of Quebec, 1854-85* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1978).

⁷⁶ Fabre is better known as a journalist and diplomat. His contribution to the political reorganization of Québec-Est is not mentioned by Simard and Vaugois, "Fabre...", pp. 326-330.

⁷⁷ Mackenzie appointed Dorion Minister of Justice, Letellier Minister of Agriculture, Lucius-Seth Huntington President of the Privy Council and, once Dorion stepped down, Télésphore Fournier as Minister of Justice. Caya, "La formation du parti libéral...", p. 175 and 251.

⁷⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 243-252.

Minister of Internal Revenue in 1877 came as a deliverance and his surprising defeat, in the Drummond-Arthabaska by-election called to confirm his appointment, as a crushing disappointment. Desperation was palpable in Laurier's letter to Mackenzie as he contemplated a second campaign: "J'ai reçu des offers de Québec-Est, Mégantic, Montmagny, Iberville. Je ne déciderai rien avant d'avoir votre avis. Une chose reste certaine. Je dois être préparé à un combat aussi violent et insidieux que la dernière fois. Je suis la dernière carte du parti en cette province. Si je péris, le parti est destiné à périr également."⁷⁹

In this context, raising sufficient funds and choosing the most advantageous constituency became critical. "Je ne saurais entreprendre une nouvelle lutte à moins que nous ne soyons déterminés à la mener à bien," wrote Laurier.⁸⁰ Liberals in Québec-Est stepped forward. C-A-P. Pelletier, the constituency's former MLA and recently named Senator and federal Minister of Agriculture, asked Mackenzie for \$2,000, donated \$500 himself and proposed that each of his colleagues contribute \$100 to the campaign.⁸¹ Although Mackenzie rejected the initial request, the party raised approximately \$2,000 in Montréal⁸² and, almost certainly, Thibaudeau raised additional funds from local

⁷⁹ Bélanger, Wilfrid Laurier..., p. 112-113.

⁸⁰ Ibid., p. 113.

⁸¹ Mackenzie made Pelletier, MP for Kamouraska, the Minister of Agriculture on January 26, 1877, and appointed him to the Senate on February 2, 1877. He remained Minister of Agriculture until the Liberal government was defeated in 1878. Jean-Guy Pelletier, "Pelletier, Sir Charles-Alphonse-Pantaléon," Canadian Biographical Dictionary, Volume 14 (Toronto : University of Toronto Press, 1998) p. 834. Pelletier to Mackenzie, 4 November 1877, is quoted in Shea, "Electoral Practices...", p. 98 and Jackson, "The Organization...", p. 218.

⁸² Chapleau reported to Macdonald that the Liberals had raised no more than \$2,000 in Montréal. Shea, "Electoral Practices...", p. 97.

supporters.⁸³ Laurier expected the campaign to cost at least \$15,000⁸⁴ though, in defeat, Tarte estimated that he (Laurier) had spent closer to \$30,000.⁸⁵ These were exceptional amounts for a single constituency campaign but not unheard of for important contests. For example, Conservatives spent \$17,000 in the hotly contested 1878 campaign in Québec-Comté. In 1882, when the election was only slightly less controversial, they spent \$7-8,000 in the constituency. At the time, the average rural campaign cost approximately \$1,000 though urban campaigns cost somewhat more.⁸⁶ Funds went for legitimate expenses such as canvassing, printing and advertising as well as for more questionable ones like treating and, most notably, transporting people to the polls.⁸⁷ With financial support and all the other advantages offered by Québec-Est, it was not long before Laurier selected his riding. He wrote to Pacaud two days after his defeat in Drummond-Arthabaska: “Ne penses plus à Québec-Centre. Quant à Québec-Est, je ne veux pas me hâter de prendre une décision... J’ai l’offre d’Iberville, mais Québec-Est me paraît de toutes façons beaucoup plus avantageux.”⁸⁸

The day following his arrival in Québec-Est, Laurier’s campaign organization was up and running hard. Laurier met with “quelques citoyens et grands industriels de la

⁸³ In 1882 Thibaudeau served as the party’s principal fundraiser in Québec City. Laurier to Blake, 31 May 1882, quoted in Jackson, “The Organization...,” p. 219.

⁸⁴ Bélanger, Wilfrid Laurier..., p. 113.

⁸⁵ Le Canadien, 29 November 1877, p. 2.

⁸⁶ Shea, “Electoral Practices...,” p. 90-91.

⁸⁷ Ibid., p. 88.

⁸⁸ Laurier to Earnest Pacaud, 1 November 1877, reproduced in Lucien Pacaud, Sir Wilfrid Laurier : lettres à mon père et à ma mère, 1867-1919 (Québec: 1935) p. 25. Apparently Mackenzie had already promised Québec-Centre to Jacques Malouin. But Laurier was offered Québec-Est, Iberville, Mégantic or Montmagny. Bélanger, Wilfrid Laurier..., p. 112-113.

division,” learned a great deal about manufacturing in Québec-Est and showed “sa grande admiration pour l’organisation du travail dans ces établissements.”⁸⁹ The influence these manufacturers would have on the election – and the electorate – was almost immediately apparent: “chez M. Woodley, les employés ont fait toute une ovation à l’hon. Ministre.”⁹⁰ Such visits demonstrate the very personal way public opinion was shaped at a time when few people had the right to vote. The franchise was limited to men, at least 21 years old, who owned property valued at \$300 or more, or paid at least \$30 rent each year.⁹¹ In Québec-Est, only 4,487 men or 15.9 per cent of the population could vote.⁹² This ratio was noticeably lower in the predominantly rural area of St-Roch Nord (10.3 per cent) where land was much less valuable. In rural ridings the property qualification was set at a minimum \$200 or \$20 rent per year to take into account the discrepancy in land values, but Québec-Est was not classified as a rural riding.⁹³ Thus, it was possible for Laurier to meet most of his electors personally during the course of the campaign. His friendly manner on these occasions, commented on by numerous observers throughout his career, was a great advantage in such a political culture.⁹⁴ “L’hon. M. Laurier se fait du premier abord autant d’amis dévoués de chacune des personnes qui ont l’honneur de faire sa

⁸⁹ L’Événement, 10 November 1877, p. 2. Octave Migner was a French-Canadian Catholic manufacturer living in Jacques Cartier ward. Born in 1836, he and his wife lived with their two children. Canada, Census of Canada, 1880-81.

⁹⁰ L’Événement, 10 November 1877, p. 2.

⁹¹ The provincial average was 16.2 per cent. Norman Ward, The Canadian House of Commons: Representation (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1963) p. 212.

⁹² NAC, Fonds Office of the Chief Electoral Officer, RG 113-C, Electoral Returns, 1867-1980.

⁹³ Ward, The Canadian House of Commons..., p. 212.

⁹⁴ See, for example, Stevens, “Wilfrid Laurier...,” p. 71.

connaissance; c'est surtout sous ce rapport que la meute conservatrice le trouve dangereux."⁹⁵

The importance of personal contact with the candidate as a method of winning popular support was also evident in the organization of the principal campaign activity: public meetings, held nightly, in "committee rooms" established in the homes of prominent supporters. On the second day of the campaign, two committee rooms were already established in strategic locations at each end of St. Roch: in the homes of M. Robitaille, at the corner of Dorchester and du Roy, and M. Wm. Lemesurier, at the corner of St-Dominique and St-Joseph (see Figure 2 on page 49).⁹⁶ Four more had also been established in St-Sauveur: in the home of M. Belleau (corner of St-Joseph and St-Roch), Mme veuve Bilodeau (on Arago), M. Plante (on St-Valier) and M. Wagner (on Colombe).⁹⁷ During the following week, the organization added committee rooms in the homes of M. Goulet ("forgeron, rue St-Ours, en haut," in St-Roch), M. Conway ("à la barrière St-Valier," St-Sauveur), Dr. Gingras (on St-Valier in St-Sauveur), and on "la rue Bayard" (St-Sauveur), in "village St. Charles" (St-Roch Nord) and in "village Stadacona" (St-Roch Nord).⁹⁸ Laurier spoke at two or three committee rooms a night with teams of prominent Liberals. On November 9, Laurier, Édouard Lemieux, Ernest Pacaud and Philéas Huot spoke to 600 people at M. Robitaille's house in St-Roch. At nine o'clock,

⁹⁵ L'Événement, 10 November 1877, p. 2.

⁹⁶ Ibid. William Fraser Lemesurier was a German Methodist merchant living in Jacques Cartier ward. Born in 1831, he lived with a domestic servant in 1880. Canada, Census of Canada, 1880-81.

⁹⁷ L'Événement, 10 November 1877, p. 2. Angèle Bilodeau was a French-Canadian Catholic merchant. Born in 1832, she lived with her three children in 1880. Canada, Census of Canada, 1880-81.

⁹⁸ Thomas Conway was an Irish Catholic grocer living in St. Roch South (St. Sauveur). Born in 1835, he lived with his two daughters in 1880. Canada, Census of Canada, 1880-81.

Laurier moved on to M. Belleau's house in St-Sauveur where he was joined on the platform by M. Richard, MP for Mégantic, F.X. Lemieux and Achille LaRue.⁹⁹ Laurier did not have to be present for meetings to be held. On November 20, for example, while he spoke in St-Sauveur, Pelletier, Fabre and Huot addressed a meeting in St-Roch. The number of meetings, their location, and the teams of speakers were effective in the predominantly oral and personal political culture. The election appeared to be fought as much by a Liberal team, well known in the constituency, as by Laurier himself. In fact, during the course of the campaign, 51 people spoke for Laurier and 43 for Tourangeau.¹⁰⁰

The number of people attending these meetings demonstrates a widely held belief in the importance of politics and an appreciation for the entertainment it provided. There was, by all accounts, "a generous accompaniment of liquor" and, afterwards, "tavern keepers, those ever-important shapers of public opinion, were handsomely subsidized to exert their powerful influence in the late hours of the evening."¹⁰¹ With Liberals hosting as many as five meetings each night, six nights a week, for a month, the party offered plenty of entertainment and real incentives for at least some form of political participation. Such meetings created opportunities for men from all walks of life (whether electors or not) to come face to face with the manufacturers, merchants, doctors and lawyers in whose homes they met. Women too attended these meetings although all

⁹⁹ L'Événement, 10 November 1877, p. 2.

¹⁰⁰ Le Nouvelliste, 28 November 1877, p. 2.

¹⁰¹ NAC, Fonds Charles Gavan Power, MG-27 III-B-19, Volume "Memoirs," File "Education for Politics: Youth to 1908."

substantive political participation was reserved for men.¹⁰² Moreover, the clear social distinction between the host and speakers, on the one hand, and the audience, on the other, provides ample evidence that only middle and upper class men had any substantial influence in the party. Yet the majority of electors were working people (see Table II)¹⁰³ and, for a month, committee room meetings – like visits to manufactures – gave them an opportunity to share something of their interests, activities and opinions with Laurier and express a sense of community interest that crossed class lines.

Table II

Occupations of electors whose names were added, corrected or removed from the Electoral List in Québec-Est, April 20, 1899.¹⁰⁴

Clerks	148
Skilled Trades	113
Leather Products	78
Construction and Wood Products	49
Textile Products	39
Unskilled Labourers	38
Transportation Sector	37
Public Service Sector	36
Financial Sector	35
Liberal Professions	34
Merchants	32
Manufacturers	12
Managers	7

¹⁰² A record exists of women attending a committee room meeting in L'Ange Gardien with their husbands during the 1878 campaign. Charles Langelier, *Souvenirs politiques de 1878 à 1890 : Récits, études et portraits* (Québec: Dussault et Proulx, 1909). p. 74.

¹⁰³ A list of revisions and corrections accepted for the 1899 electoral list in Québec-Est and St-Sauveur provides names, addresses and occupations for 750 people. Approximately 80 per cent of names added or corrected (696 in all) were working class people (see Table II). The federal franchise remained constant from 1867 to 1917 even though the federal government assumed jurisdiction over the electoral list in 1885 and returned it to the provincial government in 1897. NAC, Fonds Laurier, MG 26-G, Volume 111, p. 33720-33729, Bureau des Réviseurs de la Cité de Québec, 20 April 1899.

¹⁰⁴ *Ibid.*

Despite certain access to funding, the Conservative organization – lead by Israel Tarte – was not quite as well suited to the political culture of Québec-Est.¹⁰⁵ It did not announce a candidate, Tourangeau, until November 11¹⁰⁶ and did not open its first committee room until November 14.¹⁰⁷ While the party was strong in St-Sauveur, it lacked support elsewhere in the riding. It held no committee room meetings in St-Roch or Jacques-Cartier wards until two nights before the election.¹⁰⁸ Instead, Conservatives organized public meetings, called on volunteers from outside the constituency and implemented a creative newspaper strategy. It made for a competitive, hard fought, campaign.

The concentration of Conservative strength in St-Sauveur was evident in the location of their public meetings and their reaction to Liberal organizers in the municipality. Their public meetings were almost invariably held on prominent street-corners in St-Sauveur and, when in St-Roch, rarely took place anywhere other than the factories of Humbert and Trudelle or Beaudoin.¹⁰⁹ They held no meetings in Jacques-Cartier and only one large public meeting at the Salle Jacques-Cartier (chaired by the Mayor of St-Sauveur, François Kirouac). Conservative newspapers were particularly

¹⁰⁵ Chapleau reported to Macdonald that he had raised \$1,000 for the campaign and hoped to raise an additional \$500 in Montréal. Shea, “Electoral Practices...,” p. 97. Two days after the election, Le Courrier du Canada acknowledged that the Conservative campaign was well run by Tarte but that the party “n’avait aucune organisation” in St-Roch. Le Courrier du Canada, 30 November 1877, p. 2.

¹⁰⁶ Le Courrier du Canada, 12 November 1877, p. 2; Le Canadien, 12 November 1877, p. 2.

¹⁰⁷ Le Courrier du Canada, 14 November 1877, p. 2; Le Canadien, 14 November 1877, p. 2.

¹⁰⁸ On the last two nights of the campaign, Conservatives hosted nine committee rooms in St-Roch and ten more in St-Sauveur. L’Ouvrier, 26 November 1877, p. 2.

¹⁰⁹ Le Canadien reported on “Conservative” meetings in St-Sauveur on 5, 9, 12, 13, 15, 17, 20 and 22 November 1877. It reported meetings at the factory of Humbert and Trudelle on 10, 12 and 19 November 1877 and at Beaudoin’s factory on 7, 14, 15, 16 November 1877. It did not encourage electors to frequent the party’s committee rooms until 24 November 1877.

vituperative towards St-Sauveur Liberals, Félix Fortin, Dr. Dion and George LaRue.¹¹⁰

But nothing matched their scorn for Pelletier when he held a public meeting in St-Sauveur on November 18.¹¹¹

Liberals, on the other hand, reserved their greatest contempt for Conservative volunteers from Québec-Centre. Fabre described them as “des gens sans foi ni loi, n’ayant jamais mis le pied dans la division et préférant les hauteurs du Cap Diamant, [qui] vont de porte en porte cabalant, intrigant, cachant leurs menées indignes sous les prétextes les plus spéciaux.”¹¹² Such attacks not only highlighted the Conservatives’ organizational weakness outside St-Sauveur, but also helped Liberals distract attention from insinuations that Laurier – an outsider himself – could not understand the constituency.¹¹³ Liberals responded to such attacks by praising “le jeune Canada personnifié dans la personne de l’hon. Laurier” and by vaunting his prominence in the federal government. Yet this was clearly a defensive position in 1877. Laurier almost certainly benefited more from the strength of his local organization than his position in government.

¹¹⁰ Félix Fortin was often described as “un gros major.” See, for example, L’Ouvrier, 16 November 1877, p. 1. Dr. Dion was characterized as “uppity” by the same newspaper: “Un peu d’instruction et il se prend pour un grand sine.” L’Ouvrier, 8 November 1877, p. 1. Tarte suggested that “le secret du zèle déployé en faveur de M. Laurier” was Liberal opposition to Shehyn in St-Sauveur (he named Dr. Dion and George LaRue). Le Canadien, 3 November 1877, p. 2.

¹¹¹ L’Ouvrier, 19 November 1877, p. 1; Le Canadien, 19 November 1877, p. 2. Both newspapers condemned Pelletier for a long list of sins against the riding.

¹¹² L’Événement, 13 November 1877, p. 2. Power notes that Conservatives, much more effectively than Liberals, used middle class women from Québec-Centre to canvass door-to-door in the early 1900s. The same may have been true in the 1870s. NAC, Fonds Charles Gavan Power, MG-27 III-B-19, Volume “Memoirs,” File “Education for Politics: Youth to 1908.”

¹¹³ “Québec-Est exigera un député qui connaît ses besoins, ses ressources, et qui est en faveur de l’industrie,” wrote Tarte in Le Canadien, 6 November 1877, p. 2. See also, L’Ouvrier, 8 November 1877, p. 1; Le Canadien, 19 November 1877, p. 2.

Conservatives compensated for their organizational weakness by appealing directly to workers through a dedicated newspaper. L'Ouvrier, “organe des classes ouvrières, industrielles et commerciales,” appeared on November 8, 1877, and was published daily until November 27, 1877. Although it posed as an independent workers’ newspaper, L'Ouvrier consistently attacked Laurier as “un beau parleur, mais un petit faiseur” or “le candidat de l’absence de travail.”¹¹⁴ Both characterizations worked well because they personalized the central themes of the Conservative campaign and appealed directly to workers’ material interest. The Conservative campaign focused on how few tangible benefits the Liberal Government had delivered – particularly for the shipbuilding industry – and how detrimental their low tariff policy was for employment in the riding.

There can be no doubt that L'Ouvrier played an effective and central role in the Conservative campaign organization. It was particularly useful because it helped offset temporarily diminished Conservative strength in the Québec City media. During the campaign, otherwise Conservative newspapers, Le Journal de Québec and The Chronicle, offered modest support for Laurier’s policy of a tariff “appropriate for Canada” while the Catholic Nouvelliste adopted a strictly independent position.¹¹⁵ None of these newspapers covered the campaign extensively or played a decisive role. Their attitude reflected real gains made by the Parti national in Québec City as well as divisions within the Conservative party. There remained, however, Le Canadien, Le Courrier du Canada and L'Ouvrier to carry on the “petite guerre” against L'Événement.

¹¹⁴ L'Ouvrier, 8 and 9 November 1877, p. 2.

¹¹⁵ Le Journal de Québec, 2 November 1877, p. 2.

Trade policy, the principal issue dividing the parties in Ottawa, dominated editorials and newspaper coverage during the first week of the campaign. Conservatives emphasized the need for a high tariff to protect manufacturing jobs while Liberals countered that it hurt urban consumers. A Liberal supporter wrote in L'Événement: “Il y a de pauvres femmes qui gagnent à peine leur vie à laver et à raccommoder tout le monde. Lorsqu’il leur faudra payer tous 20 pour cent plus cher, comment les aiderez-vous à combler leur déficit, M. Tourangeau?”¹¹⁶ The author noted that the same predicament faced masons, roofers, cabinet-makers, carpenters and other artisans who did not compete with importers but imported many of their own raw materials instead. It would have been a particularly appealing argument among the artisans and workers employed in Jacques-Cartier and St-Roch. Liberals also pointed out that, in the face of a worldwide depression, a higher tariff had not helped the American economy.¹¹⁷

Yet the principal Liberal advantage in the tariff debate, and their best defence of Mackenzie’s low tariff policy, lay in the fact that employment was much more convincingly discussed in terms of concrete public works than abstract fiscal policy. The Conservative provincial government had a poor record when it came to local public works and had held power much longer than the federal Liberals. Thus, it was possible for the Liberals to hold office in Ottawa and still campaign as an opposition party in Québec City. They blamed Conservatives for destroying the shipbuilding industry; for hiring political partisans from outside the city to work on the QMOO, the Jesuit Estates and the provincial legislature; and for allowing workers to be underpaid so that

¹¹⁶ Coquelicot, “Lettre,” L'Événement, 14 November 1877, p. 2.

¹¹⁷ L'Événement, 14 November 1877, p. 2.

contractors could kick back funds to the Conservative party.¹¹⁸ They reminded workers that Tarte had objected to Liberal plans for refurbishing a steamship in Québec City because he considered the cost of labour too high.¹¹⁹ Moreover, they condemned Conservatives for proposing provincial legislation that would have required construction or renovation of houses with expensive non-combustible materials.¹²⁰

The Conservatives could claim, however, that Mackenzie had been unable to secure access to French ports for Canadian-built ships on the same terms as those built in Britain. Laurier only escaped this charge relatively unscathed because he did not face the voters alone. In previous years, Shehyn had led the city's efforts to amend the British agreement with France and during the course of the campaign many of his letters were published as evidence of Liberal initiatives to redress the situation.¹²¹

In the second week of the campaign, a petition from Irish electors introduced the issue of ethnic equality. They asked Laurier to grant William Bernard O'Donoghue amnesty for his role in a Fenian Raid – just as Louis Riel and Ambroise Lépine had been pardoned for their part in the Red River Rebellion.¹²² At the time, Laurier responded: “s’il n’était qu’un simple membre de la Chambre, il n’hésiterait pas à s’engager à se rendre à leur désir au sujet de l’amnistie... mais aujourd’hui il était obligé de rappeler aux délégués qu’il était ministre de la Couronne et le membre le plus jeune du

¹¹⁸ Ibid.

¹¹⁹ Ibid.

¹²⁰ Ibid., 13 November 1877, p. 2.

¹²¹ Ibid., 14 and 24 November 1877, p. 2.

¹²² Bélanger, Wilfrid Laurier..., p. 113.

Cabinet.”¹²³ This equivocal response demonstrated the clear limitations placed on Laurier by Cabinet office and it prompted the organization of “dissatisfied” Irish voters in St-Roch.¹²⁴ Within a week, however, Laurier was able to announce an amnesty for O’Donoghue – and made the advantages of a Cabinet position obvious to all.¹²⁵ It erased any chance Conservatives might have had of capturing Irish votes in Jacques-Cartier and St-Roch. For days, they questioned the amnesty’s veracity or claimed credit for it themselves.¹²⁶ They even printed a single-edition newspaper dedicated to the issue and launched a scathing ethnic attack on Laurier. The Eclipse claimed to have overheard Laurier say: “the political attitude of the Irish involves no higher consideration than their love of whiskey.” It reminded Irish voters that he had twice voted against the amnesty for O’Donoghue and warned them that “this man, in every move of his political life, has shown himself so bitterly antagonistic to your race, so haughtily contemptuous of your opinions, and, so eager to ostracize and degrade you that it would be virtually political suicide to place any trust in him.”¹²⁷ The amnesty almost certainly helped secure Laurier’s victory but the episode must also have served as an object lesson in the value of early and equitable treatment of ethnic groups.

Thus local issues and the local impact of national issues dominated debate in the same way local identities and personal attachments influenced party organizations. Liberal strength resided in their strong local leadership, sympathy with local artisans and

¹²³ L’Événement, 15 November 1877, p. 2.

¹²⁴ Le Canadien, 17 November 1877, p. 2.

¹²⁵ L’Événement, 22 November 1877, p. 2.

¹²⁶ See articles in L’Ouvrier and Le Canadien, 23, 24, 26, 27 November 1877.

¹²⁷ The Eclipse, 24 November 1877, p. 2.

impoverished consumers, flexibility on ethnic issues and the Conservative provincial government's inability or unwillingness to undertake meaningful public works in the constituency. Clearly, the local political culture produced an election that would result in a strong claim for the constituency and local party members on the successful candidate – even one as prominent as Laurier.

The campaign's defining moment came at the end of the second week in a spectacular “joute contradictoire.” It became an integral part of the “Liberal legend” because it touched nearly every chord in the local political culture. It took place at the centre of the community, where everyone could join in, on Jacques Cartier Square in front of the Church. It brought together the best public speakers of a generation – Laurier, Mercier and Chapleau – at a time when a public speech was still more powerful than any other communications medium. It dramatized the importance of government to the future of the constituency, the confrontational and litigious character of politics and gave free reign to the fierce partisanship that ran through the political culture. Finally, of course, it would become legendary because Laurier won – and Liberals would never let that be forgotten.

The “joute” began with an exchange of letters between agents for Tourangeau (Gaspard Germain) and Laurier (M. Bresse and Dr. Gingras).¹²⁸ They set the ground rules for the meeting. Speakers would address the audience from M. Chamberland's balcony; each party would have two hours and fifteen minutes to put their case; proceedings would begin at 1:00 o'clock and finish no later than 5:30 pm. The formal process for making these arrangements underscored the litigious nature of politics at a time when lawyers

¹²⁸ L'Événement, 14 November 1877, p. 2.

dominated both political parties. But it also suggests that the candidates recognized the potential volatility of “les joutes contradictoires” and shared a common desire to restrain popular emotion, and violence, in the definition of public opinion. While the rules, in themselves, represent an effort to control the public, the time allowed for each speaker reflects a stronger – somewhat contradictory – faith in the value of public demonstration and debate in the expression of popular opinion.

At 1:00 pm, almost 5,000 people gathered on Jacques Cartier Square.¹²⁹

Tourangeau and Laurier spoke first followed by Chapleau and Mercier. But the result of the meeting was determined by a popular reaction, orchestrated by the Liberals, to Charles Thibault. A redoubtable Montréal Conservative, Thibault had played a prominent role in Laurier’s defeat in Drummond-Arthabaska. His tactics during that campaign played on the powerful Catholic influence in the province.¹³⁰ He claimed Laurier had not baptized his children – which was only true because Laurier did not have any! He took advantage of Laurier’s Cabinet position to accuse Laurier of being a protestant... “Minister.” Finally, Thibault had used \$32,000 from Langevin as well as timely infusions of cash from Louis-Adélard Sénécal, a Conservative businessman and railway magnate, to purchase votes outright. Such tactics, and their success, explained the Liberals’ visceral opposition to “undue” Church influence and corrupt electoral practices. In Québec-Est, however, Fabre turned Thibault’s tactics to political advantage. He publicized them widely in L’Événement, labelling Thibault “l’insecticide.”¹³¹ So, when

¹²⁹ Description of this event is based on reports in L’Événement, 16 November 1877, p.2.

¹³⁰ Bélanger, Wilfrid Laurier..., p. 111-112.

¹³¹ See, for example, L’Événement, 22 October 1877, p. 2.

Thibault rose to speak, the crowd responded in unison to Liberal prompters: “Pas d’Thibault! Pas d’Thibault!” and “Thibault don’t bother me.” Their cries turned into song:

Pas d’Thibault! Pas d’Thibault!
Langevin est à l’eau – dondaine
Thibault va s’noyer – dondé.

The crowd improvised torches, burning rolled up copies of Le Courier du Canada and Le Canadien, and carried Laurier home on their shoulders.

A half-century later, Liberals in Québec-Est still told the story and sang the refrain, “Pas d’Thibault,” that carried Laurier to victory.¹³² The symbolism of the event was powerful: local Liberals – French-Canadian and Irish – took revenge on an infamous Conservative manipulator from Montréal and carried Laurier to victory over the best the Conservatives could muster. Organizers may not have preserved the orderliness of the meeting, but that only exposed the litigious veneer on partisan politics for what it was. They secured victory by manipulating the crowd into making a powerful statement of “legitimate” public opinion.¹³³ On that day, it was the party that made Laurier a great orator and a symbol of Liberal triumph.

The official nomination meeting was not held until November 20, long after the tone of the campaign had already been set. By then, Conservatives appeared more desperate. Their supporters suddenly “found” work, bread, molasses, flour and biscuits. There was talk of Sénécal hosting a public excursion the day before the vote.¹³⁴ Rumours

¹³² Drouin, “Préface,” pp. 5-8; NAC, Fonds Charles Gavan Power, MG-27 III-B-19, Volume “Memoirs,” File “Education for Politics: Youth to 1908.”

¹³³ Nazaire Levasseur, a journalist at L’Événement, coined the phrase “Pas d’Thibault” the night before, and, during the contest, Vallée repeatedly attempted to order responses from Conservatives in the crowd. Choquette, Un demi-siècle..., p. 14; L’Événement, 16 November 1877, p. 2

¹³⁴ L’Événement, 17 November 1877, p. 2.

circulated that he would hire 300 to 400 men from Québec-Est to work on the QMOO above Trois-Rivière in order to get them out of the constituency.¹³⁵ Liberals, on the other hand, assumed a triumphant tone. L'Événement trumpeted the unqualified support of “les héros de '37” for Laurier and claimed the Conservatives were losing more than 200 votes a day.¹³⁶ Two days before the vote, L'Événement warned that Conservatives had taken up residence in houses near the polls and would attempt to steal the ballot boxes. Violence was expected. Fabre urged Liberals to head to the polls “en phalanges serrées.”¹³⁷

On Thursday, the newspaper announced a “victoire éclatante” that it considered remarkable given the way the voting had taken place. According to L'Événement, Conservatives had systematically replaced official ballots with ones already marked for Tourangeau, paid \$2 or more for a single vote and used any means possible to prevent Liberals from voting. Electors had offered their blank ballots for sale to the highest bidder.¹³⁸ But, when all the votes were counted, Laurier held a narrow 316-vote majority. His support was strongest in Jacques-Cartier, where he captured 60.9 per cent of the vote and held a majority of 242. In other parts of the riding he won 51.8 per cent of the vote with almost no variation between St-Sauveur (where he lost three polls), St-Roch (where he lost three polls) and St-Roch Nord. Clearly, Laurier’s approach to the tariff, consumers, local employment and the amnesty had at least offset Conservative support

¹³⁵ Ibid., 19 November 1877, p. 2.

¹³⁶ “Honneur à eux, ils demeurent fidèles aux traditions du parti populaire et donnent un noble exemple aux générations qui les suivent!” Ibid., 24 November 1877, p. 2.

¹³⁷ Ibid., 26 November 1877, p. 2.

¹³⁸ Ibid., 29 November 1877, p. 2. This was the first time the ballot was used in a federal election. It consisted of a simple piece of paper, distributed by the returning officer, with official stamp, on which electors wrote in the name of their candidate.

for a higher tariff and Mackenzie's disinterest in the shipbuilding industry. The result also reflected the Liberals' organizational strength across the riding and a campaign strategy well suited to the local political culture.

Laurier captured the spirit of the contest at his victory speech that evening on Jacques Cartier Square. He declared: "j'ai déployé l'étendard libéral au-dessus de l'antique citadelle de Québec, et je verrai à ce qu'il y reste."¹³⁹ He led a procession through the streets of Québec City and, the following day, took a special train to Arthabaskaville with his constituents. The importance of his victory for the beleaguered Mackenzie government provoked celebrations far beyond the riding. Enthusiastic crowds met him in every town on his way to Ottawa. Bonfires lit the way. And in Ottawa, he was paraded through the streets of the city.¹⁴⁰

Laurier's victory in Québec-Est represented a final momentary triumph for Mackenzie but it brought lasting influence to the local party organization. The team became a model for the Liberal party in the years to come and its members would play prominent roles in both Mercier's and Laurier's governments. The key party organizers would forever share a closer, less restrained, relationship with Laurier than other party members. They had earned the right to stand on equal ground with their "patron" because, during the 1877 campaign, he had been as much their client as they were his. Langelier had secured the constituency, convinced him to run in Québec-Est and organized the campaign.¹⁴¹ Thibaudeau gave up his seat, raised money and spoke for

¹³⁹ Bélanger, *Wilfrid Laurier*..., p. 114.

¹⁴⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 114.

¹⁴¹ Choquette, *Un demi-siècle*..., pp. 13-14.

Laurier. At one campaign event, electors even obliged Thibaudeau to report on his business interests in the Caisse d'économie, the Banque de Stadacona and the telegraph office in St-Sauveur.¹⁴² Pelletier, too, raised funds and carried the battle to the centre of St-Sauveur. Pacaud also played an important role. Two days after the election, Laurier wrote to Mme Pacaud: "l'activité, l'énergie, l'enthousiasme que [votre cher mari] a déployé dans cette élection ne sauraient être exprimés par des paroles. Je ne sais vraiment pas comment je pourrai jamais m'acquitter envers lui." Finally, Fabre played a crucial role as editor of L'Événement, party organizer and speaker.

A second group involved in the 1877 campaign would also play important roles in the constituency – and the party – for years to come. They were the lawyers and doctors who spoke in the committee rooms each night. For them, the campaign was an opportunity to meet party leaders, prove their political ability and demonstrate their loyalty. Some of them came from Québec-Est, but the opportunity drew men from constituencies throughout the region. Many involved in the 1877 campaign rose to greater prominence in the party although none of them would ever enjoy the same level of intimacy with Laurier as the first group.

L'Événement described a third group of men, active in the campaign and crucial to the party's success, as "des hommes que l'on trouve toujours en avant quand il s'agit de l'intérêt de St-Roch et de St-Sauveur. Ils sont à la tête de toutes nos industries, ils contribuent puissamment par leur énergie, par leur intelligence, par leur esprit d'entreprise à la prospérité et au progrès de cette importante division."¹⁴³ Men like

¹⁴² L'Événement, 19 November 1877, p. 2.

¹⁴³ Ibid., 5 November 1877, p. 2.

Lemieux, Woodley, Fortin, Roy, Gingras and Bresse lent their own credibility and influence as well as their financial support to Laurier. Their numbers also included those who hosted committee rooms in their homes (Robitaille, Lemesurier, Belleau, Plante, Wagner, Conway and the widow Bilodeau) and others who Laurier would call on at different times: J.B. Laliberté, J. Gauthier, C. Paquet, S.C. Lacroix, J.A. Langlais, Dr. Dion, G. Rochette, J. Blondeau, M. Bouchard, E. Jacot, M. Dugal and J-E. Martineau.¹⁴⁴ Some of these men would play more prominent roles than others but, with the exception of Laliberté and Gauthier, they would never enjoy the same relationship with Laurier as the men who made the party their career.

The election brought new members into the party as well and helped socialize them into the local political culture. Langelier's position at the Université Laval proved invaluable in this regard. He actively involved his students in the political process and their numbers helped swell Liberal ranks. With the party's other "soldiers," they formed a fourth group, enjoying a less personal relationship with Laurier yet still one that created personal ties, party loyalties and some expectation of future benefit. Notable among them in 1877 was Philippe-Auguste Choquette. The campaign was his first political experience and it had a powerful effect on him. He would remain closely associated with Langelier, Laurier and the men who fought the 1877 campaign. He baptized them: "le vrai parti libéral."

¹⁴⁴ Laurier to Pacaud, 26 August 1885. Reproduced in Pacaud, *Lettres à mon père...*, p. 53. J.B. Laliberté was a French-Canadian Catholic and the "largest manufacturer of Furs in Canada" – located at the corner of St. Joseph and de l'Église in the heart of St. Roch ward. NAC, National Map Collection, NMC 17337, "Map of the City of Québec," 1896. Jérémie A. Langlais was a French-Canadian Catholic bookseller living in Jacques Cartier ward. Born in 1837, he and his wife lived with their four children, a clerk and a domestic servant in 1880. Canada, *Census of Canada, 1880-81*.

This new party organization took advantage of its members' personal status and influence throughout the riding, the strategic use of the best Liberal speakers in the region, sufficient financial resources and the appeal of L'Événement to make Laurier "le député de Québec-Est." It confirmed their mastery of the tools for shaping public opinion in a local political culture that was starting to change though it remained firmly set in the history, geography, economy and society of the constituency. Traumatic change in the local economy intensified competition with Montréal and coloured the riding's interest in railway development, port facilities, a bridge across the St. Lawrence, public works and tariff protection as well as stable labour relations. Economic changes also supported the emergence of a new generation of business leaders, a significant population increase, greater instability in the lives of working people, a constituency increasingly French-Canadian and a Catholic leadership at odds with the Programme catholique. Yet stability remained in the strong sense of personal public accountability, local and ethnic identities and political partisanship as well as a familiarity with union organization and an awareness of the city's "rightful" place in the nation. The election came, then, at a most propitious time for 'le vrai parti libéral' and the residents of Québec-Est. They took advantage of the changes and built on the foundations of the riding's past to solidify their place in the national party and make their ambitions integral parts of Laurier's own priorities. It was an auspicious beginning for 'le vrai parti libéral' and the new "député de Québec-Est."

Chapter 3

1877-1896: The Party, the Party Newspaper and Party Patronage

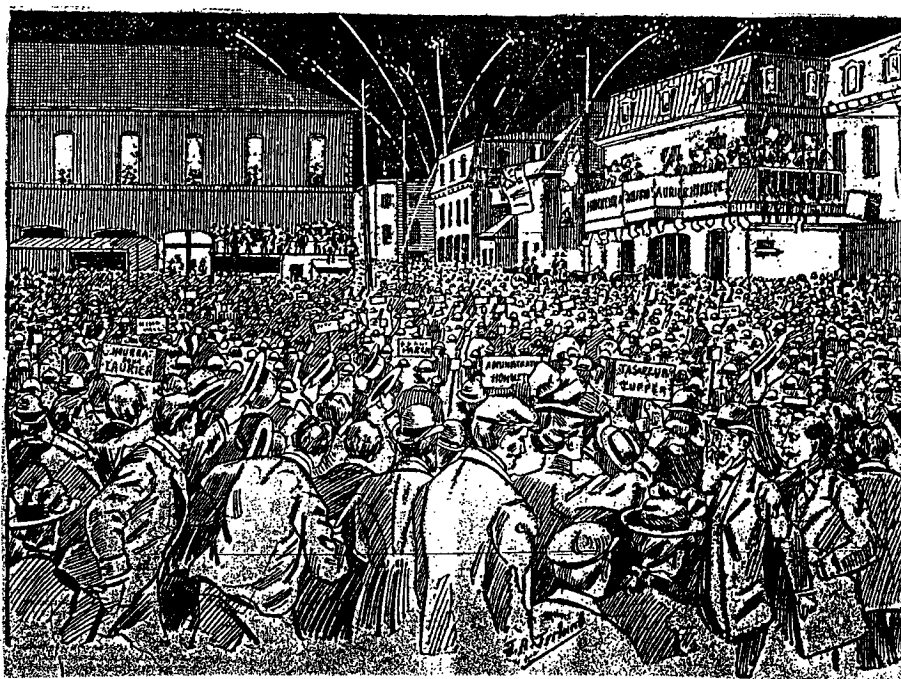


Figure 3: "Croquis représentant l'arrivée de Sir Wilfrid Laurier sur la Place Jacques-Cartier, hier soir."¹

¹ Le Soleil, 4 October 1900, p. 1.

The momentous year immediately following Laurier's first election in Québec-Est highlighted the intense partisanship, effective teamwork and local affinity of 'le vrai parti libéral.' It revealed, too, deep chasms between the local political culture and those of the province and country. Laurier would take the next twenty years to bridge them by manipulating and learning from changes in the party, the party newspaper and patronage – the three principal means of shaping public opinion. The growing size and complexity of Québec-Est and the rest of the country provoked many of these changes. But the lessons were all taught by 'le vrai parti' and came in four distinct stages, each marked by a significant power shift in the reciprocal relationship between 'le vrai parti' and "le député de Québec-Est." Yet, through it all, the relationship endured.

The intense partisanship of the Liberal party came to the fore when Luc Letellier de Saint-Just, the Mackenzie-appointed Lieutenant-Governor of Québec, dismissed the Conservative government of Charles-Eugène Boucher de Boucherville in March 1878. Letellier accused de Boucherville of ignoring his advice and of passing an unconstitutional bill that infringed on judicial and municipal authorities by forcing Québec City and Montréal to honour immediately their commitments to the Québec, Montréal, Ottawa and Occidental railway (QMOO).² He called on Joly to form a new government and prorogued the Legislature a week later. In the ensuing campaign, Joly promised – through strict administration of the provincial budget – to build the railway

² In 1873, Montréal had pledged \$1 million towards construction of the western portion of the QMOO (known at the time as the Montréal Colonization Railway). Québec promised \$1 million for the eastern portion in 1870 (known as the North Shore Railway at the time). Both lines had been taken over by the de Boucherville government in December 1875. Three years later – and as a direct result – the provincial government found itself \$11 million in debt. Montréal still owed \$660,000 and Québec City \$857,000 towards the railway. Brian Young, *Promoters and Politicians: The North-Shore Railways in the History of Quebec, 1854-85*, (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1978) pp. 53, 59 and 87; Robert Rumilly, *Histoire de la Province de Québec*, Volume II, *Le 'Coup d'État'* (Montréal: Éditions Bernard Valiquette, 1942) pp. 123, 127, 130, 144.

without forcing the municipalities' hand and without imposing new taxes. Although privately Laurier disapproved of Letellier's high-handed action, he took to the hustings to prevent federal interference in provincial affairs and to defend the people's right to judge their Lieutenant-Governor.³ With his support, Joly managed to take nine seats from the Conservatives in the Québec City district and retain his hold on power – with a majority of one.⁴ This “coup d'état” underscored the Liberal party's aggressive partisanship and solid base of support in the Québec City district. But it provided ample evidence, too, of a direct connection between the city's economic crisis and support for the concept of provincial autonomy protecting Letellier. Moreover, it revealed the tracks linking barren municipal and provincial coffers to the party's appeal for economy in government, on one hand, and its increasing determination to make the QMOO a national project, eligible for federal support, on the other.

Conclusive evidence of the party's essentially local appeal – if any more was needed – came four months later in the 1878 federal election when voters across Canada overwhelmingly chose Macdonald's new “National Policy” over Mackenzie's cautious, hopeless, inaction.⁵ In Québec, Fabre blamed the Liberal party's crushing defeat on Mackenzie's leadership, the Orange vote in Ontario, poor organization in Montréal and inadequate financial support.⁶ But, fortunately for Laurier, the unique political culture of

³ Robert Rumilly, Le 'Coup d'État' p. 140. Rumilly confirms Laurier's disapproval of Letellier on page 185.

⁴ Ibid., p. 148.

⁵ The Conservatives won 142 seats and the Liberals 64. Desmond Morton, A Short History of Canada (Edmonton: Hurtig Publishers Ltd., 1983) p. 91.

⁶ Liberals lost 17 seats in the province, giving the Conservatives a majority of 29 (47 seats to 18). L'Événement, 19 and 20 September 1878, p. 2.

Québec-Est stood out once again. He doubled his majority of a year earlier thanks to Conservative disinterest and Liberal strength in the riding.⁷ The Conservatives ran Philippe Vallière, a furniture-maker, who appears to have been sacrificed by the party as only Israel Tarte and Dr. Michel Fiset, a prominent St-Sauveur Conservative, appeared with him on the hustings. L'Événement treated his candidacy as something of a joke.⁸ In contrast, the entire 1877 Liberal team surrounded Laurier.⁹ He reminded voters of O'Donoghue's amnesty, Liberal reforms, their efforts to secure free trade with the United States and the independence to negotiate international treaties (a reference to the prejudicial tariff against Canadian shipping in French ports). He also pointed to work done on the city's port facilities and increased spending on local public works.¹⁰ Yet Laurier spoke only twice in Québec-Est. As a Cabinet Minister and party leader, he travelled extensively, speaking on behalf of nearly every candidate in the Québec City district. To maintain his presence in Québec-Est, he relied on daily coverage in L'Événement and the local party organization.

The election set the tone for the first stage in Laurier's relationship with 'le vrai parti' in Québec-Est, a stage that coincided almost exactly with his first full mandate (1878-82). For both, it was a time for building that consolidated their position in the constituency and the city, strengthened the symmetry of their views and forged an even

⁷ Laurier won by a majority of 778 – capturing 61 per cent of the vote. NAC, Fonds Office of the Chief Electoral Officer, RG 113 C, Electoral Returns, 1867-1980.

⁸ It was described as "une comédie en pleine air." L'Événement, 11 September 1878, p. 2.

⁹ At one meeting he was accompanied by: Édouard Lemieux, Isadore Thibaudeau, Charles Langelier, F.X. Lemieux, Guillaume Bresse, Dr. Dion, Joseph Plamondon, Joseph Blondeau, David Létourneau, M. Connolly and John Lemesurier. L'Événement, 12 August 1878, p. 2. McGee reports that C-A-P. Pelletier and François Langelier were also present. Jean-Charles McGee, Laurier, Lapointe, St-Laurent: Histoire politique de Québec-Est (Québec : Belisle éditeur, 1948) p. 69.

¹⁰ L'Événement, 12 August 1878, p. 2.

stronger bond between them. The building began, however, not with the party itself but with “des hommes que l’on trouve toujours en avant quand il s’agit de l’intérêt de St-Roch et de St-Sauveur.”¹¹ These were the local businessmen who established their companies in the late 1850s and 1860s and built them into substantial commercial and industrial enterprises in the 1870s and 1880s. They formed a generation of “self-made-men” – French-Canadians who served as clerks or apprentices before striking out on their own. Their initiatives coincided with the beginnings of the Banque nationale and, although little is known about the bank’s early years, it was almost certainly an important source of capital for them.¹² It was created as an exclusively French-Canadian bank specifically to compete with the city’s only other lending institution, the English-controlled Quebec Bank.¹³ Ulric-Joseph Tessier, a former Mayor of Québec City, Liberal Member of the Legislative Council and Dean of Law at the Université Laval, raised the initial funds and became the bank’s first president in 1860.¹⁴ Its founders included such notable Québec-Est Liberals as Isidore Thibaudeau (member of the first Board of

¹¹ The phrase comes from L’Événement, 5 November 1877, p. 2.

¹² In a history of the bank, written to restore confidence in the institution at the end of the 1870s depression, Auguste Bechard claimed that the Banque Nationale sought particularly to encourage local manufacturers. Ronald Rudin, on the other hand, found that the bank invested heavily in the timber trade. He notes, however, that it met with considerable success in the 1860s and, as a result, attracted a significant number of English investors (30 per cent) by the early 1870s. It is possible that they were responsible for orienting the bank towards the timber trade only after it had given an initial boost to local manufacturers. Regretably, Rudin makes no mention or found no record of the bank’s early borrowers and, since his book was published, the Banque Nationale has closed access to their records. Auguste Bechard, Histoire de la Banque Nationale, (St-Roch-de-Québec: Les Ateliers de Laberge et Gingras, 1878) p. 63; Ronald Rudin, Banking en Français: The French-Canadian Banks of Québec, 1835-1925 (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1985) p.32-33, 69.

¹³ Rudin, Banking en Français..., p.32.

¹⁴ Rudin found that Tessier was primarily responsible for securing \$8,000 contributions from 20 French-Canadian investors. According to Auguste Bechard, Tessier, Thibaudeau and François Vézina (who became the bank’s first cashier) were asked to secure the initial investors. Ibid., p. 33; Bechard, Histoire de la Banque Nationale..., p. 23.

Directors), Édouard Lemieux, George LaRue and J-B. Morissette as well as prominent local businessmen, R. Pamphile Vallée (member of the first Board), J-B. Renaud and N. Germain.¹⁵

Their generation rebuilt the riding, the city and, with Laurier, the Liberal party. They figured prominently in all parts of the local economy. Notable in the boot and shoe industry were Guillaume Bresse, Octave Migner, Joseph Blondeau and Onésime Goulet.¹⁶ Gaspard Rochette and Joseph Plamondon, both well-established tanners by 1880, also played leading roles in the formation of 'le vrai parti.'¹⁷ Prominent retailers included pharmacist W.E. Brunet (who established his business in 1855), jeweller Émile Jacot (1860), baker Louis Falardeau (established in the old Lower Town in 1843 before moving to St-Roch) and painter Joseph Gauthier.¹⁸ Jean-Baptiste-Élie Martineau opened an iron store on St-Joseph in 1867 but earned his place in the riding by founding l'Union St-Joseph in the 1870s. In a parish beset by fire, l'Union St-Joseph became a key

¹⁵ Bechard, *Histoire de la Banque Nationale...*, pp. 20-34.

¹⁶ All established their businesses in the 1860s except Goulet who spent 16 years building La Compagnie Chinic before starting his own "company" in 1882. Ville de Québec, *Centième anniversaire du Conseil de la Cité de Québec* (Québec : Ville de Québec, 1933) p. 42. References to Bresse and Blondeau establishing their businesses in the 1860s are found in Lucie K. Morrisset, *La mémoire du paysage: histoire de la forme urbaine d'un centre ville: Saint-Roch, Québec*, (Québec: Les Presses de l'Université Laval, 2001) p. 178-179. Reference to Migner being a prosperous manufacturer by 1879 is found in Fernand Ouellet, *Histoire de la Chambre de Commerce de Québec, 1809-1959* (Québec: Centre de recherche de la faculté de commerce de l'Université Laval, 1959) p. 64.

¹⁷ Reference to Joseph Plamondon's profession and role in the formation of the party is found in McGee, *Laurier...*, p. 43. François Langelier refers to the "services inappréciables" that Gaspard Rochette rendered the party over the years in a letter to Laurier. NAC, Fonds Laurier MG 26 G, vol. 28, p. 9463, Rochette to Laurier, 3 December 1896.

¹⁸ For Brunet, Jacot and Falardeau see Jean-Charles Gamache, *Histoire de Saint-Roch de Québec et de ses institutions, 1829-1929* (Québec : Charrier et Dugal, Ltée., 1929) pp. 107, 149, 159. For Gauthier, see NAC, Fonds Laurier, MG 26 G, vol. 476, p. 128614, Joseph Gauthier to Laurier, 4 September 1907, and *Census of Canada, 1881*.

institution by offering fire and medical insurance to local residents.¹⁹ Merchants, too, played an important part in the local business community. Notable among them was Joseph Shehyn (McCall, Shehyn and Company, dry goods wholesalers specializing in textiles and clothing, established 1861), Honoré Belleau in St-Sauveur, Napoléon Dussault in Jacques-Cartier and perhaps best known of all, Jean-Baptiste Laliberté (Maison Laliberté, fur manufacturer, established 1867).²⁰

These men set the tone in Québec-Est as businessmen and employers, community members and family men. They built businesses that employed hundreds of people and integrated the riding into the Canadian, North American and international economies. In 1879, Guillaume Bresse and Octave Mignier employed 800 men in Québec-Est.²¹ Bresse owned a tannery in Arthabaska, numerous farms around Québec City, property in Winnipeg and served as a director of the QMOO.²² Jean-Baptiste Laliberté could, by the end of his career, claim to be the “largest manufacturer of furs in Canada.”²³ He employed 500 men and women in Québec-Est, had stores in New York, London, Paris and Leipzig and had served for 25 years as a director of the Banque nationale (including one year as President).²⁴

¹⁹ Gamache, *Histoire de Saint-Roch...*, p. 233.

²⁰ For Shehyn, see Marc Vallières, “Shehyn (Sheehy), Joseph” in *Dictionary of Canadian Biography*, Volume 14, (Toronto, University of Toronto Press, 1998) pp. 925-928. For Belleau and Dussault, see *Census of Canada, 1881*, and *Journal de Québec*, 22 November 1877, p. 2. For Laliberté, see *Le Soleil*, 30 August 1926, p. 1.

²¹ Ouellet, *Histoire de la Chambre de Commerce...*, p. 64.

²² “Bresse, Guillaume,” *Dictionary of Canadian Biography*, Volume 12, (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1990) pp.

²³ “Map of the City of Québec,” NAC, National Map Collection, NMC 17337.

²⁴ *Le Soleil*, 30 August 1926, p. 1.

These men helped build a sense of community in Québec-Est through their businesses and through their participation in local associations and parish organizations. In these organizations they worked closely with the lawyers, doctors, notaries and workingmen of the riding. Onésime Goulet, a shoe manufacturer, is typical in this regard. He served as President of the Société Saint-Jean-Baptiste in Jacques-Cartier and the St-Louis de Gonzague section of the Société St-Vincent de Paul.²⁵ As of 1882, Goulet was also a member of the influential Congrégation des Hommes de la Paroisse de Saint-Roch de Québec – just like Jean-Baptiste-Élie Martineau (who joined in 1864), Joseph Gauthier (1870), Gaspard Rochette (1877) and Napoléon Drouin (1879).²⁶

Established in 1839 and led by Jesuits since 1849, the Congrégation was a defining institution in the riding and the local expression of an elite movement within the Roman Catholic Church dating back to the sixteenth century. Like other such congregations, it brought the parish's leading men together each Sunday before mass to pray, take the sacraments, join in good works and help each other lead Christian lives.²⁷ They set themselves apart from the larger parish by building their own chapel (constructed in 1853 and located half way between the churches in St-Roch and St-Sauveur) and instituting their own religious practices – most notably an annual pilgrimage to Ste-Anne de la Pocatière. Members of the Congrégation forgave each

²⁵ Ville de Québec, Centième anniversaire du Conseil..., p. 42.

²⁶ Joseph-Édouard Désy, S.J., Congrégation des Hommes de la Paroisse de Saint-Roch de Québec (Québec: Imprimeur Léger Brousseau, 1883) pp. 222-230.

²⁷ In 1883, Joseph-Édouard Désy, S.J., argued that the “Congrégation des Hommes de la Paroisse de Saint-Roch de Québec” offered all the same advantages to its members that Saint Bernard had claimed centuries earlier. “On y vit plus purement; On y pêche plus rarement; On y tombe moins grièvement; On s’y relève plus aisément; On y marche plus prudemment; On y repose plus tranquillement; On y reçoit plus avondamment les graces et les faveurs du ciel; On y évite plus facilement le Purgatoire; On y meurt avec plus de confiance et de contentement; Enfin, quond on y meurt, on est couronné plus glorieusement au ciel.” Ibid., pp. 7-8.

other's debts in the aftermath of the 1866 fire²⁸ and supported the foundation of both the École commerciale on Notre-Dame des Anges (offering primary education) and the École normale Jacques-Cartier.²⁹ The Congrégation was marked, particularly, by its first Prefect, Dr. Pierre-Martial Bardy, its long-serving secretary, Félix-Émmanuel Juneau (1842-1886), and its treasurer, François Kirouac (1861-1896).³⁰ Bardy, a former "patriote," founded the Société Saint-Jean-Baptiste de Québec in 1842 and raised funds for the Monument des Braves ("aux héros de 1760") in 1860. Juneau, founded the École commerciale and the Association des Instituteurs (with a library financed by the provincial government) in the 1840s which led to creation of the École normale in 1857 (again, financed by the provincial government). He established the provincial Bureau d'Examineurs in 1849 and became Inspecteur d'écoles in 1857. Kirouac, a grain merchant, was Mayor of St-Sauveur until it merged with Québec City and was a leading Conservative in Québec-Est. In the 1877, 1878 and 1882 federal elections, the majority of known Congrégation members supported Conservative candidates although a substantial number signed for Laurier as well.³¹ Thus, the Congrégation held a central place both ideologically and geographically in the constituency. Its members were devout Catholics and French-Canadian nationalists who had, nonetheless, played a prominent practical role in government-led educational reforms. They represented the riding's elite.

²⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 146.

²⁹ Albert Jobin, *Histoire de la Congrégation et de la Paroisse de Notre-Dame de Jacques-Cartier* (Québec, 1940) pp. 50-53.

³⁰ *Ibid.*, pp. 49-57.

³¹ It is possible to identify 18 Conservatives and 12 Liberals among members of the "Congrégation" in 1883 who signed nomination papers in the 1877, 1878 or 1882 federal elections. The Liberals included, Jean-Baptiste-Élie Martineau, Joseph Lachance, Narcisse Dion, Félix Bigaouette, Théophile Hudon, Joseph Bigaouette, Félix Fortin, Jean-Élie Martineau, jr., Joseph Gauthier, Gaspard Rochette, Napoléon Drouin, Joseph Bédard. Désy, *Congrégation des Hommes...*, pp. 220-230.

In the 1870s and 1880s, the Congrégation also reflected the riding's growing prosperity and influence. Members enlarged the chapel in 1875, raised a banner (with the notable participation of Shehyn and François Langelier) in 1883, built a new altar in 1884 and had another refurbished by Joseph Gauthier in 1889.³² These were years of remarkable growth throughout the constituency. Between 1881 and 1891, the number of boot and shoe manufacturers increased from 129 to 155 while the number of employees went from 2,906 to 3,959.³³ By 1891, there were more dressmakers in the riding (381 employing 800 people as compared to 169 with 578 employees in 1881), more printers (18 with 394 employees versus 8 with 172 in 1881) and, for the first time, a significant number of tinsmiths (54 employing 239 people). Other businesses prospered too as the number of tailors, tanners, carpenters and foundry workers all increased modestly during the 1880s. Thus, Laurier had a prosperous foundation and influential allies in the riding.

The Joly government's defeat on the floor of the Legislature in October 1879, however, deprived the Liberal party of its only source of patronage and made rebuilding a matter of life or death. Laurier assumed leadership of the party's reorganization in the Québec City region and Rosaire Thibaudeau, Isidore's brother, did the same in Montréal. Rebuilding was, however, mostly an effort made by the younger Liberals who had first banded together in the Parti national. They returned to the tactics of 1871, working to win municipal elections, organizing political clubs, launching newspapers and seeking to build coalitions with any willing Conservative.

³² *Ibid.*, p. 29; Désy, *Congrégation des Hommes...*, p. 176.

³³ All figures in this paragraph are found in the *Census of Canada, 1880-81* and *Census of Canada, 1890-91*.

A January 1879 letter from Félix Fortin to Laurier offers a portrait of the organization at work in St-Sauveur:

Je vous annonce une grande nouvelle en vous apprenant que nos amis de St-Sauveur m'ont élu conseiller municipal. Il y a eu deux jours de votation pendant lesquelles il s'est fait un travail géant tant d'un côté que de l'autre. La lutte ayant pris bientôt une caractère apparemment politique parce que mon adversaire était un Conservateur, amené et soutenu par les siens, la majorité s'est bientôt rangée de notre côté... Nos bons amis Jean, Drolet, Couture, Paquet, Jolicoeur, les Dion etc. ont déployé beaucoup de zèle et nos efforts ont été couronnés de succès. Cette petite lutte a eu le bon effet de rallier le parti et de le ravitailler... Ma nouvelle position me permet, je l'espère, de vous être plus utile que ci-devant.³⁴

Like Fortin, François Langelier also turned to municipal politics in the years after Joly's defeat and sought to make the City Council a source of party strength in the region. He ran for election in St-Louis ward in February 1880 and, although defeated, continued to lead the party in municipal elections.

In these years, Laurier relied heavily on Langelier, Fortin and others on the 1877 campaign team to maintain the party's presence and a sense of his own importance in Québec-Est. He had no patronage to offer and, despite rumours to the contrary, had chosen not to establish a residence in the constituency.³⁵ In fact, until becoming Prime Minister, he spent most of his time in Arthabaskaville, working with Joseph Lavergne, his law partner.³⁶ Apparently without disrupting either the practice or his marriage, he also established a close relationship with Lavergne's wife, Émilie. In 1880, he helped organize an agricultural co-operative in Arthabaskaville and the following year was

³⁴ NAC. Fonds Laurier, MG 26 G, vol. 737, p. 207797, Fortin to Laurier, 16 January 1879.

³⁵ Liberals apparently floated this rumour during the 1877 campaign. It was vigorously denied in *L'Ouvrier*, 17 November 1877, p. 1.

³⁶ Although Lavergne undoubtedly did more of the actual legal work, Laurier drew his principal income from the firm until 1896. Réal Bélanger, *Wilfrid Laurier: quand la politique devient passion* (Québec : Les Presses de l'Université Laval, 1986) p. 130.

elected Mayor and County Prefect. Although he travelled frequently to Québec City and spent the parliamentary sessions in Ottawa, Laurier was not “le député de Québec-Est” full time.

To bridge the distance and meet the party’s organizational challenge, Laurier and other Liberals founded the Club de Réforme de Québec in March and L’Électeur in June 1880.³⁷ The Club elected Joly as President, Shehyn and Thibaudeau as Vice-Presidents and chose Letellier as its patron. It was renamed the Club Letellier in April 1881 after he passed away. Almost immediately, the Club initiated the foundation of a local party newspaper because, after Joly’s defeat, Fabre had decided to throw his support to Chapleau and the new Conservative government.³⁸ L’Électeur, financed by Laurier, Langelier, Pelletier, Shehyn and Joseph Plamondon as well as Joly, Ernest Gagnon (MLA for Kamouraska) and prominent Québec City businessmen, D.A. Ross, W. Reid and D.W. Campbell, gave the party a voice once again in Québec City.³⁹ It also gave Laurier an opportunity to establish his closest friend, Ernest Pacaud, in the city.

³⁷ Marcel Caya, “La Formation du parti libéral au Québec, 1867-1887,” Ph.D. Thesis : University of Toronto, 1981, p. 404.

³⁸ Fabre changed allegiances in order to secure Chapleau’s support for his appointment as the first “accredited representative of the government of Québec” in Paris in 1880. Sylvain Simard and Denis Vaugeois, “Fabre, Hector,” Dictionary of Canadian Biography, Volume 13, (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1994) pp. 327-328.

³⁹ It had capital of \$5,000. André Beaulieu and Jean Hamelin, La Presse québécoise des origines à nos jours, troisième tome (1880-1895) (Québec: Les Presses de l’Université Laval, 1977) p. 12. In his memoirs, Choquette claims that a much more local group founded the newspaper: Laurier, Langelier, Pelletier, Charles Langelier (brother of François) F-X. Lemieux, Achille LaRue and himself as well as Gagnon and Joly. See Choquette, p. 50. It seems unlikely however that Choquette could have contributed financially to the newspaper as he was a student at the time. His list may refer to the principal writers who contributed to the newspaper in its first years. Laurier, Gagnon, François and Charles Langelier are given credit for this in Michèle Brassard and Jean Hamelin, “Pacaud, Ernest,” in Dictionary of Canadian Biography, Volume 13 (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1994) p. 804.

Ernest Pacaud was born into a family of “patriotes” that exercised considerable political influence in Drummond and Arthabaska.⁴⁰ Educated at the Séminaire de Nicolet, he articulated as a clerk with his uncle, Édouard-Louis, in Arthabaskaville and opened a successful law practice there in 1872. But Pacaud’s passion was politics. He met Laurier, who was eight years his senior, in 1868 and encouraged him to run for the first time in the 1871 provincial election. “He changed my life,” said Laurier, but the opposite was equally true. Laurier “diluted [Pacaud’s] Rouge ideas” and launched his career in journalism at Le Journal d’Arthabaska in 1877. Their longstanding and intimate relationship gave them confidence in each other and a devout loyalty to one another. In 1887, Laurier wrote: “quant à moi, cher Ernest, tu le sais depuis longtemps, je n’ai pas de meilleur ami que toi. Je te l’ai déjà dit, je le dis encore; si tu étais mon frère, je ne pourrais pas avoir plus d’affection pour toi. Ainsi, je vais te parler à coeur ouvert et sans la moindre réticence.”⁴¹ Their dialogue over the years provides much insight into the warp and woof of Laurier’s relationship with Québec-Est as Pacaud became a uniquely powerful voice for the riding and ‘le vrai parti libéral.’

With Pacaud as editor, L’Électeur gave Laurier access to local information, the only paid political staff he had before 1896 and an indispensable tool for shaping public opinion. The newspaper’s offices quickly became a regular meeting place for local Liberals and their MP. Years later, Pacaud’s son, Lucien, remembered these meetings: “Le parlement fédéral étant prorogé, Laurier se rendait à Québec. Fidèle à une vieille habitude, il venait ainsi rencontrer ses amis, au début et à la fin de chaque session, pour

⁴⁰ Ibid., pp. 802-806.

⁴¹ Lucien Pacaud, Sir Wilfrid Laurier: lettres à mon père et à ma mère, 1867-1919 (Québec : 1935) pp. 70-71.

discuter avec eux de la situation politique. Il se joignait souvent au groupe des ‘intimes’ qui se rencontraient chez mon père chaque dimanche après la messe.”⁴² Even when he was in Arthabaskaville or Ottawa, the local party newspaper kept Laurier in touch by running articles on social, economic, cultural and political events and opinions in the city.

Party financial support meant that Pacaud and his employees worked for the party as well as the newspaper.⁴³ There were obvious benefits for the party leaders. Newspaper revenues helped pay staff salaries and the business gave them ready access to local, provincial, national and even international news. Laurier could call on them for opposition research knowing that the exchange system gave them access to almost all public record of political, economic and social information.⁴⁴ Moreover, the daily contact with local party members, businessmen, government officials and constituents that was part of the editor’s job also facilitated party organization. “C’est [Pacaud] qui de 1878 à 1900 fut l’organisateur des élections dans notre district,” recounted Charles Langelier. “Son activité prodigieuse répandait la contagion et mettait tous les amis en mouvement... C’est lui qui dépêchait des orateurs à droite et à gauche, c’est lui qui trouvait le nerf de la guerre, c’est lui, enfin, qui faisait la bataille dans le journal.”⁴⁵

Positions at L’Électeur were party appointments that Pacaud influenced but Laurier controlled. “Par consideration pour vous,” wrote Pacaud in 1883, “j’ai laissé aller

⁴² Ibid., p. 82.

⁴³ In 1880, the newspaper had four staff members: Pacaud; Ulrich Barthe, journalist; Siméon Marcotte, accountant; and Eugène Leclerc, distribution. Ibid., p. 48.

⁴⁴ For example, in preparing for the parliamentary session in 1887, Laurier asked Pacaud for copies of Conservative newspapers from 1854-55 and statements they made on free trade in 1878. See letter from Laurier to Pacaud, November 28, 1887. Ibid., p. 85-6. For information on the “exchange system” see Paul Rutherford, The Making of the Canadian Media (Toronto: McGraw-Hill Ryerson, 1978) p. 13.

⁴⁵ Charles Langelier, Souvenirs politiques de 1878 à 1890 : Récits, Études et Portraits (Québec: Dussault et Proulx, 1909) pp. 16-17.

notre ancien collègue. C'est un rude sacrifice que vous avez exigé de moi."⁴⁶ Something of the credentials and nature of the work at the newspaper are revealed in an 1898 letter to Laurier from journalist Ernest Chouinard:

Je croyais avoir acquis depuis 1887 quelque mérite au service du Parti libéral, non pas pour avoir cabalé des électeurs, chèque des listes de voteurs ou fait quelques discours dans les luttes électorales, mais pour avoir été chaque jour au poste excusant ses fautes [et] chantant ses louanges. Je croyais avoir un peu payé de ma vie et de mon avenir en m'exposant durant cinq campagnes de presse 1890, 1891, 1892, 1896 et 1897 à l'enmité de vos adversaires comme aux fulminations de l'autorité ecclésiastique. Je croyais enfin avoir rendu au parti libéral de ces services que d'autre savent si bien se faire payer et cela avec d'autant plus de générosité de ma part qu'il me fallait entretemps, vu la modicité de mon salaire, travailler à une autre besogne pour faire vivre ma famille.⁴⁷

As Chouinard's letter testifies, publishing L'Électeur each day was only one of the tasks Pacaud and his staff performed in order to shape public opinion for the party – but it was the most important. Because he shared so many of Laurier's own values and an acute political sense, Pacaud had considerable influence over the newspaper's editorial policy. For example, when the Salvation Army first paraded in the streets of Québec City, in 1887, Pacaud expressed his disgust with local protestors in L'Électeur. When Laurier saw Pacaud's article, he wrote: "Je te félicite de l'attitude que tu as prise relativement à l'Armée du Salut. Ces attaques réitérées sont indignes d'une population libérale comme celle de Québec."⁴⁸ On the rare occasions when Pacaud was uncertain about what position to adopt he never hesitated to ask Laurier. This was evident in 1899 when

⁴⁶ It is uncertain who this person was, although clearly an employee of L'Électeur. It may have been Marcotte, who had been employed earlier with L'Événement as Pacaud is known to have done much of the accounting himself at L'Électeur. NAC, Fonds Laurier, MG 26 G, vol. 1. p. 151. Pacaud to Laurier, 26 October 1883.

⁴⁷ NAC, Fonds Laurier, MG 26 G, vol. 68, p. 21387, Ernest Chouinard to Laurier, 10 March 1898.

⁴⁸ Pacaud, Lettres..., p. 72. Laurier to Pacaud, 29 June 1887.

differences of opinion between Bourassa and Laurier disrupted the party. “Je te remercie de tes dernières lettres,” wrote Laurier. “Il est absolument faux que je préfère le silence sur cette question de la lettre de Bourassa. Je ne veux pas faire de bruit non plus, mais d’un autre côté, j’entends être supporté par mon parti dans l’attitude que j’ai pris.”⁴⁹ Laurier would always insist that L’Électeur serve as a standard-bearer for his own point of view and guide for his party.

In fact, Laurier held an unabashedly partisan concept of the role a journalist should play in Canadian politics. “Il est impardonnable d’attaquer nos amis, même s’il [a journalist] pense qu’ils sont dans le tort,” he wrote Pacaud. “Il doit se mettre à l’unison des Canadiens et...ses écrits doivent servir l’opposition [the Liberals were in Opposition at the time].”⁵⁰ In Laurier’s view, this was simply a realistic perspective: “c’est de la politique canadienne.” Clearly, he saw politics as a contest for the judgement of public opinion – in which a politician put his case before the public in much the same way a lawyer put his case before a judge.⁵¹ Government activities became meaningful through political “litigation” in the “court” of public opinion. Owning a newspaper was necessary to plead in that court. Public opinion did not, however, form on the pages of the newspaper but in the public mind. As Laurier said in 1900, “Public opinion has many ways of expressing itself. There is not only the press, there is what is heard in the street

⁴⁹ NAC, MG 26 G, vol. 128, p. 38287, Laurier to Pacaud, 27 October 1899.

⁵⁰ Pacaud, Lettres..., p. 122. Laurier to Pacaud, 9 February 1890.

⁵¹ Laurier said as much in his 1864 valedictory address at McGill University. He said: “In passing into the domain of politics, the man of law does not change his mission... He only widens the sphere of his activity. The tribunal to which he will address himself henceforth will be public opinion.” John Willison, Sir Wilfrid Laurier (Toronto: Oxford University Press, 1927) p. 37.

and in private conversation, and what one can feel in the air.”⁵² With Liberals playing a leading role in the local economy, local community and parish organizations, with a Liberal club established in the city and his closest confidant installed as editor of the city’s leading Liberal newspaper, Laurier had many of the tools he needed to shape public opinion “in the streets” of Québec-Est. Without government patronage to dispense, however, those same tools had a powerful hold on him as well.

Evidence of Laurier’s close association with ‘le vrai parti’ and Québec-Est in the early 1880s is found in the spectacular way he championed local interests in those years. On April 20, 1881, a week before the opening of the provincial Legislature, he published an article in L’Électeur under the headline: “La caverne des quarante voleurs.”⁵³ It accused the Conservatives of systematic corruption in their administration of the QMOO. “Cette caverne de quarante voleurs...existe bien réellement parmi nous,” wrote Laurier. “Les voleurs qui y cherchent refuge...ne sont pas d’obscurs bandits... Bien au contraire, ils promènent leur effronterie au grand soleil... Cette caverne de voleurs, c’est l’administration du chemin de fer du Nord, et le chef de la bande s’appelle, de son vrai nom, Louis-Adélard Sénécal...” The language used, if not the accusations, went well beyond the bounds of ordinary political debate. Le Journal de Québec replied: “La feuille rouge de Saint-Roch, ne pouvant vivre dans un milieu respectable, veut imiter la presse pornographique et écrire pour la même catégorie de lecteurs.”⁵⁴ It was a scandal. Sénécal

⁵² Laurier quoted in Oscar Douglas Skelton, Life and Letters of Sir Wilfrid Laurier, Volume II, 1896-1919 (Toronto: McClelland and Stewart, 1965) p. 43.

⁵³ L’Électeur, 20 April 1881, p. 2.

⁵⁴ The opinion regarding the norms of public debate and the quote from Le Journal de Québec are found in Robert Rumilly, Histoire de la Province de Québec, Volume III, Chapleau, (Montréal: Éditions Bernard Valiquette, 1942) p. 69.

immediately brought a libel suit against L'Électeur that took months to settle and kept evidence of Conservative corruption before the public for almost a year.

With “La caverne des quarante voleurs,” Laurier passed the litmus test of loyalty to Québec-Est and ‘le vrai parti libéral.’ While Joly was in office, the party had settled – at least temporarily – on a junction between the eastern and western portions of the QMOO north of Montréal at St-Martin. It was a victory for Québec City. But that did not stop Shehyn and the Québec City Board of Trade from opposing Joly when he proposed renting out the QMOO (a measure that would have jeopardized its completion in 1879).⁵⁵ They objected even more strenuously when, later that year, the new Premier, Chapleau, made Senécal the General Superintendent of provincial railroads. The outcry could be heard all the way to Ottawa two years later when Chapleau announced that he had divided the railway, selling the eastern half to Senécal and the western half to the Canadian Pacific. It dashed any hope Québec City might be linked directly by rail to the Canadian west and ruined Conservative credibility in the district a mere three months before the next federal election. Although “La caverne des quarante voleurs” had not stopped the Conservatives, it proved that Laurier would step up to defend the interests of Québec-Est and ‘le vrai parti libéral.’

There were a number of promising signs for Laurier heading into the June 1882 federal election. Shehyn had won by acclamation in the December 1881 provincial election. Langelier had elected enough Liberal aldermen and councillors in the February 1882 municipal elections to be chosen Mayor. Chapleau’s sale of the QMOO in March 1882 poisoned local opinion against the Conservative party. And, at the national level,

⁵⁵ Joseph Shehyn led the Liberal opposition to Joly over this issue but did not break with the party. McGee, Laurier..., pp. 70-71.

the party organization was, for the first time, in the competent hands of William Blake. In June and December 1881, Blake sent circulars to Liberal organizers across the country – including Pacaud – encouraging them and advising them how to prepare for the federal campaign.⁵⁶ Blake urged organizers to establish central, township or ward and polling-division committees in each riding. Each committee would report on public opinion, suggest candidates and ensure that electoral lists were carefully reviewed and revised. Pacaud copied the circular to organizers in the Québec City district in January 1882.⁵⁷ He told them that, in his opinion, the party's program was not the most important factor in an election but rather it was essential to have an efficient organization to revise the electoral lists in each parish, secure campaign funds and circulate its newspapers.

The campaign should have been easy. Yet, in 1882, Laurier faced a remarkably stiff challenge in Québec-Est due to internal dissention over provincial politics and strong opposition from local Castors. Since losing power in 1879, Joly had had great difficulty keeping younger and older Liberals united. Most contentious were efforts made by the younger generation to attract Conservative support. In those years, Mercier had held a number of meetings with Chapleau and other moderates in the Conservative party while Langelier and Pacaud had attempted to attract the Castors, Tarte and de Boucherville.⁵⁸ In Québec City, conflict between the two factions erupted in the Club Letellier and in the offices of L'Électeur. As a result, the Club Letellier folded in November 1882 shortly

⁵⁶ Eric Vivian Jackson, "The Organization of the Canadian Liberal Party, 1867-1896, with particular reference to Ontario," M.A. Thesis: University of Toronto, 1962, pp. 128-141.

⁵⁷ Pacaud reported to Blake that he had implemented Blake's plans in a letter dated 14 January 1882. He sent the circular to local organizers on 2 January 1882. Laurier reported to Blake that it had had the desired effect in a letter dated 24 January 1882. *Ibid.*, p. 138.

⁵⁸ Caya, "La formation du parti libéral...", p. 412-416 and 448-449.

after the federal election.⁵⁹ Conflict at L'Électeur was more serious and required Laurier's careful intervention.⁶⁰ Pacaud complained that Ernest Gagnon, a member of the older generation, former MLA for Kamouraska and business manager at L'Électeur, "n'approuvait pas mes arrangements, que j'allais retirer trop d'argent."⁶¹ To resolve the conflict, Laurier arranged for Québec-Est residents, Joseph Plamondon, Joseph Archer, A-J. Auger and Pacaud to purchase the newspaper from Gagnon in November 1881.⁶² Many of the older Liberals withdrew their support from the party. As a result, in 1882, Thibaudeau refused to provide his customary financial support in the Québec City district.⁶³

Worse yet, Laurier was opposed by Jacques-Philippe Rhéaume.⁶⁴ Rhéaume had served as city councillor for St-Roch ward from 1847 to 1861 and sat as the Conservative MLA for Québec-Est from 1867 to 1873. In 1882, he was President of the Société Saint-Jean-Baptiste de Québec (SSJB) and had just presided over the largest "Fête nationale" ever held. Those 1880 celebrations represented a spectacular response on the part of the SSJB to the industrialization and urbanization of Québec and the emigration of French-Canadians to the United States. It was an effort to reunite all French-Canadians, "tous rangs confondus," to assist in the material, intellectual and moral development of the

⁵⁹ Ibid., p. 448.

⁶⁰ Ibid., p. 447.

⁶¹ Ibid., p. 446. Pacaud to Joly, 29 July 29 1881.

⁶² Beaulieu and Hamelin, La Presse québécoise..., p. 12.

⁶³ Caya, "La formation du parti libéral...", p. 448.

⁶⁴ For biographical information see his entry in Québec, Les Parlementaires depuis 1792. [www.assnat.qc.ca/fra/membres/notices/index.html] July 1992.

nation, preserve a distinct culture and love for the French language and celebrate heroic events and leaders from the past.⁶⁵ The Society arranged special rates for participants on American railways and the ICR.⁶⁶ They convinced businesses to close for two days (Friday and Saturday, June 25 and 26) and even got the Post Office to allow French Canadian employees considerable time off for participation in the festivities.⁶⁷ The skating rink was booked, stands built, fireworks imported and, most famously, the SSJB commissioned Calixa Lavallée to compose a hymn: O Canada.⁶⁸ The program emphasized religious celebrations, the assertion of historic rights, calls for loyalty, opposition to assimilation, greater influence and patronage for French Canadians, and respect for others. It included resolutions for the creation of schools, societies, newspapers and commissions on agriculture and colonization as well as commerce and industry. The celebrations closed with the foundation of l'Union nationale française de l'Amérique du Nord. Rhéaume would be a formidable candidate.

Yet the 1880 celebrations may have hurt Rhéaume too. As accommodating as his organizing committee had been of Irish, American and French participants,⁶⁹ it excluded from the parade a float prepared by the Société de MM Les Cordonniers.⁷⁰ The

⁶⁵ Unless otherwise noted, information on the 1880 "Fête nationale" is found in H-J-J-B. Chouinard, *Annales de la Société Saint-Jean-Baptiste-de-Québec* (Québec: Cie de l'Imprimerie du Soleil, 1903) p. 254-271.

⁶⁶ ANQQ, Fonds de l'Institut canadien de Québec, P108, vol. 1, File "Société Saint-Jean-Baptiste-de-Québec," George Murphy to Alphonse Pouliot, 19 June 1880.

⁶⁷ *Ibid.*, J-B. Drouin to Rhéaume, 1880. W.D. LeSueur to Rhéaume, 22 June 1880.

⁶⁸ *Ibid.*, Alphonse Pouliot to A. Galloway, 12 May 1880. J-B. Plamondon to Rhéaume, 31 May 1880. Dixon Brothers to Rhéaume, 29 May 1880. Calixa Lavallée to Alphonse Pouliot, 28 April 1880.

⁶⁹ *Ibid.*, A.N. Montpetit to Rhéaume, 24 April 1880. Joseph R. Michaud to Rhéaume, 17 May 1880. P. Cousin to Rhéaume, 2 February 1880.

⁷⁰ *Ibid.*, Charles Baillargé to Alphonse Pouliot, 30 April 1880.

committee argued that the black “Soulie Monstre” prepared by the shoemakers would clash with other floats in the parade and prove both dangerous and cumbersome in the city’s small streets. Their decision may have been the proverbial straw that broke the camel’s back, a final indignation for those in St-Sauveur who already felt that money spent on the festival should have been spent on the city’s poor.⁷¹ Whatever the reason, the great “Fête nationale” of 1880 split the SSJB along class and occupational lines and the SSJB de St-Sauveur was established. Almost immediately, a member of ‘le vrai parti libéral,’ Jean-Baptiste Caouette, proposed a new motto for a new SSJB in St-Sauveur: “Religion, Patrie, Colonisation,” which voiced a more practical purpose for French-Canadian nationalism than “Nos Institutions, Notre Langue et Nos Lois.”⁷² For the next twenty-two years, the SSJB de St-Sauveur used all its resources to help local residents escape the city and colonize the Lac-Saint-Jean region.⁷³ In all that time, it would never participate in the parade organized by the SSJB in the Upper Town.⁷⁴

In the 1882 election, Laurier ran a campaign similar to that of 1878. He held one public meeting in the constituency and relied entirely on the 1877 campaign team led by Pacaud, François and Charles Langelier, Pelletier and Shehyn. He won 57.7 per cent of the vote but saw his majority reduced to 467 votes.⁷⁵ Rhéaume won in St-Roch (capturing 5 polls and 51.1 per cent of the vote) and in St-Roch Nord (taking one poll while winning

⁷¹ Chouinard, *Annales*..., p. 530.

⁷² *Ibid.*, p. 529.

⁷³ *Ibid.*, pp. 529-536.

⁷⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 538.

⁷⁵ NAC, Fonds Office of the Chief Electoral Officer, RG 113 C, Election Returns, 1867-1980.

55.2 per cent of the vote). Laurier held his own in St-Sauveur – the largest ward by far – and in Jacques-Cartier, his stronghold since 1877. It would be the only election, ever, in which Laurier lost part of the riding and revealed his core strength among the French-Canadian working-class voters of Jacques-Cartier and St-Sauveur. These were the people that Langelier and ‘le vrai parti libéral’ could deliver in a federal election.

The second stage in Laurier’s evolving relationship with ‘le vrai parti’ began on election night in 1882. The results proved that internal division and lack of patronage (beyond that of the municipal government) still hurt the local party. Until those divisions could be healed and control of provincial or federal patronage regained, the influence of ‘le vrai parti’ over their MP would not be great. Moreover, they would have to rely on Laurier to heal those divisions and win provincial or federal power. Thus the election provoked a subtle shift in their relationship that would be evident in the coming years.

François Langelier did not neglect, however, the opportunity that control of the City Council gave the party to secure its place in local public opinion. As Mayor of the city from 1882 to 1890, he tackled many of the issues facing the city since 1868. His administration straightened out municipal accounting, built and paved sidewalks and roads (including St-Joseph), added a second – larger – aqueduct,⁷⁶ reorganized the fire department (reducing insurance rates), created a health service (1884) and local board of health (1885), brought electric lighting to the City (1887), secured land for a new City Hall (1889) and annexed St-Sauveur (1889). After widening St-Ours into the city’s first boulevard (1890), appreciative citizens of Québec-Est re-named it “boulevard

⁷⁶ Langelier had a 30-inch aqueduct built to provide water to the upper town and redirected all water from the 18-inch aqueduct, built in 1854, to the lower town. G-Henri Dagneau, ed., *La Ville de Québec : histoire municipale. Tome IV, de la Confédération à la Charte de 1929*. Cahiers d’histoire no. 35. (Québec : La Société historique de Québec, 1983) p. 108.

Langelier.”⁷⁷ But Langelier not only changed the face of the city, he changed the faces at City Hall. As late as 1909, men appointed by Langelier still accounted for nine of the 51-member staff at City Hall including the City Clerk, H-J-J-B. Chouinard, the City Engineer, the City Auditor, the Deputy Fire Chief, and the Secretary of the Health Bureau.⁷⁸ His administration used the municipal government to build a practical, visible, durable Liberal legacy in the city.

All the riches of City Hall were not enough, however, to heal every rift within the party. Conflicts between older and younger generations, and between Pelletier and Langelier, continued as disagreements over political tactics and local influence. In October 1883, Langelier and Pacaud threw their support behind Narcisse Belleau, a Castor and resident of Québec-Est, in a federal by-election in Lévis. Pelletier protested that the party had not been consulted and should at the very least have supported a more moderate Conservative.⁷⁹ Laurier stood behind Langelier and Pacaud at the time,⁸⁰ but arranged for them to back a more acceptable Liberal candidate, F-X. Lemieux, in the riding’s provincial by-election three weeks later.⁸¹ Conflict between the two sides erupted again in January 1885 over a municipal contract for construction of the new aqueduct.⁸² The issue assumed greater importance later in the year when L’Électeur ran into financial

⁷⁷ Jocelyn Saint-Pierre, “Langelier, Sir François,” Dictionary of Canadian Biography, Volume 14 (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1998) p. 593.

⁷⁸ ANQQ, Fonds George Garneau, P90, vol. 7, File 4 “Salaires,” Documents “Employés municipaux – états de services – appointments etc., février 1909” and “Liste des employés permanents de la Cité de Québec, 1909.”

⁷⁹ NAC, Fonds Laurier, MG 26 G, vol. 1, p. 143, Pelletier to Laurier, 18 October 1883.

⁸⁰ NAC, Fonds Pacaud, MG 29 D-36, vol. 1, Laurier to Pacaud, 19 October 1883.

⁸¹ NAC, Fonds Laurier, MG 26 G, vol. 1, p. 151, Pacaud to Laurier, 27 October 1883.

⁸² Ibid., p. 241, Pelletier to Laurier, 23 January 1885.

difficulties. Shortly after the 1882 federal election, François Langelier and Pacaud had assumed exclusive control of the newspaper when Charles Langelier, François's brother, purchased Plamondon's, Archer's and Auger's shares.⁸³ But, in 1885, L'Électeur had run out of money. To secure a contribution from Pelletier, Laurier and P.B. Casgrain purchased Charles Langelier's shares and removed him from the Board of Directors.⁸⁴ Casgrain, a friend of Pelletier's and MP for L'Islet, became the newspaper's business manager and, in addition, François Langelier appointed Pelletier as the city's lawyer.⁸⁵ Neither side was entirely happy with the arrangement,⁸⁶ but Laurier used his position as owner of the newspaper to insist on their mutual cooperation. He wrote to Pacaud in February 1886:

L'Événement contient d'odieux articles contre Pelletier. L'Électeur devrait bravement prendre la défense de Pelletier et affirmer que dans le parti libéral il n'y a pas de jalousie et que tous sont heureux des succès que chaque membre du parti peut individuellement obtenir. Il faut donner à Pelletier la large mesure de l'honneur qui lui est dû.⁸⁷

His efforts paid off as, in May 1886, Pelletier agreed to sell his shares to Pacaud and his colleague, Ulric Barthe.⁸⁸ Laurier always knew that Pelletier and Langelier placed greater importance on the party's success than anything else. It was, after all, what had made them allies since 1873. "Pour les exigences du parti," wrote Pelletier, "je serai toujours

⁸³ Beaulieu and Hamelin, La Presse québécoise..., p. 12.

⁸⁴ NAC, Fonds Pacaud, MG 29 D-36, vol. 1, Laurier to Pacaud, March 3, 8, 11, 13 and 31, 1885. The purchase was only completed in January 1886. Beaulieu and Hamelin, La Presse québécoise..., p. 12.

⁸⁵ L'Électeur, 10 October 1885, p. 2.

⁸⁶ Both sides complained to Laurier about each other. NAC, Fonds Laurier, MG 26 G, vol. 1, p. 281, Pelletier to Laurier, 11 November 1885; p. 304, Langelier to Laurier, 2 January 1886.

⁸⁷ NAC, Fonds Pacaud, MG 29 D-36, vol. 1, Laurier to Pacaud, 3 February 1886.

⁸⁸ Beaulieu and Hamelin, La Presse québécoise..., p. 12.

prêt à oublier momentanément et mettre de côté mon amour propre.”⁸⁹ Yet it was their differences during his second mandate that made it easier for Laurier to determine just what, exactly, “les exigences du parti” would be.

His growing authority had been evident since 1884 when he led opposition in the House of Commons against a Conservative bill that appeared to offer almost everything Québec City might hope. It provided the QMOO with a \$12,000 per mile subsidy from Ottawa to Montréal and a \$6,000 per mile subsidy from Montréal to Québec City. Moreover, it promised a small lump sum increase in the federal subsidy to the provinces. Increasing provincial revenues through an increase in the federal subsidy had been the subject of Mercier’s first speech as leader of the provincial party in January 1883.⁹⁰ But Laurier protested that Langevin had promised a \$12,000 subsidy for every mile on the QMOO and that a small one-time increase in the federal subsidy was not what Québec needed.⁹¹ A similar dilemma presented itself a year later when Macdonald tabled a bill that would make the eastern portion of the QMOO part of the CPR. The bill appeared to guarantee, at long last, a direct link between Québec City and the Canadian west circumventing Montréal. But again, Laurier opposed the government – much to the displeasure of local party members.⁹² Laurier argued that he had, in fact, adopted a policy consistent with the best interests of the city because Macdonald had included in the same legislation support for a CPR line running from Montréal to Saint John, New Brunswick,

⁸⁹ NAC, Fonds Laurier, MG 26 G, vol. 1, p. 281, Pelletier to Laurier, 11 November 1885.

⁹⁰ Robert Rumilly, *Histoire de la Province de Québec*, Tome IV, *Les Castors* (Montréal : Éditions Bernard Valiquette, 1942) p. 37.

⁹¹ It became evident, in later years, that Laurier also opposed the federal subsidy as an overt means of controlling the provinces and, hence, infringing on provincial autonomy. *Ibid*, p. 38.

⁹² Pacaud, *Lettres...*, p. 51.

through the State of Maine.⁹³ As Laurier pointed out, the government's support for this "short line railway" effectively "dealt a death blow to their so-called policy of making the harbour of Québec the summer terminus of the Canadian Pacific Railway."⁹⁴

Nonetheless, the confusion gave local Conservatives an avenue of attack that complicated Pacaud's continuing efforts to broaden the party's base.

When Pacaud invited Dr. Michel Fiset, a Conservative, to chair a public meeting – with Laurier – in August 1885, Laurier was "charmé dans un sens" but expressed reservations serious enough to discourage the idea.⁹⁵ The issue became more complicated when residents of both St-Sauveur and St-Roch insisted on having their own meetings with Laurier. "Ce n'est pas un plaisir pour moi de tenir deux assemblées de suite sur le même sujet," replied Laurier, "mais je le ferai de grand coeur pour tout concilier."⁹⁶ Even accepting these arrangements, Laurier tried to minimize the potential for opposition by holding the meeting in St-Sauveur first, on a Sunday afternoon ("de cette manière nos amis de Saint-Roch pourront faire leur pèlerinage"), only meeting in St-Roch on Monday evening. "Vois nos amis immédiatement – cet arrangement doit leur convenir - je compte sur toi comme toujours," concluded Laurier.⁹⁷ Still, he could not convince Shehyn to attend. "Si j'étais certain que vous auriez besoin de mon concours dans cette circonstance," replied Shehyn, "je me ferais un devoir d'assister... Mais comme c'est une allocution de la politique fédérale dont il va s'agir, je ne crois pas que ma présence vous

⁹³ House of Commons Debates, 10 July 1885, p. 2531.

⁹⁴ House of Commons Debates, 10 July 1885, p. 3251.

⁹⁵ Pacaud, Lettres..., p. 51. Laurier to Pacaud, 24 August 1885.

⁹⁶ Ibid., p. 53. Laurier to Pacaud, 26 August 1885.

⁹⁷ Ibid., p. 53. Laurier to Pacaud, 26 August 1885.

est utile d'autant plus que cette politique n'est pas tout à fait de mon assent."⁹⁸ Clearly, local Liberals were not pleased with their MP's votes on the government's railway policy.

There was little the local party could do, however, to ensure that Laurier would vote for local interests over national party interests in the House of Commons while they remained divided and without significant resources of their own. They took the first step towards bridging their differences in October 1885, when they formed a new Club Libéral de Québec.⁹⁹ But it was Riel's execution on November 16, 1885, that really united the party, pushed the Castors out of the Conservative party and brought 'les vrais libéraux' to power in Québec City. Pacaud took immediate advantage of the new political climate, organizing a "Comité national" meeting in Québec City on November 21, 1885 – the day before the famous demonstration on the Champs-de-Mars in Montréal.¹⁰⁰ C-A-P. Pelletier was elected President and, the following day, L-P. Pelletier, President of the Conservative Club Cartier, joined.¹⁰¹ Yet the Comité national remained an essentially Liberal organization in Québec City. When Conservatives attempted to organize a meeting in the predominantly English suburb of Sillery, it was Pacaud, François and Charles Langelier, Pelletier and F-X. Lemieux who prepared the "nationalists" response.¹⁰² Charles Langelier and Lemieux hired Georges Lemelin, "un libéral ardent de St-Roch," to break up the meeting. Upon receipt of funds delivered before three o'clock

⁹⁸ NAC, Fonds Laurier, MG 26 G, vol. 1, p. 249, Shehyn to Laurier, 29 August 1885.

⁹⁹ L'Électeur, 31 October 1885, p. 2.

¹⁰⁰ L'Électeur, 23 November 1885, p. 1.

¹⁰¹ L'Électeur, 24 November 1885, p. 2.

¹⁰² Langelier, Souvenirs..., p. 239-241.

that afternoon, “le général” Lemelin led a group of men up the hill to Sillery and surrounded the meeting hall. On a signal, they tossed cords of firewood through the windows into the heart of the meeting. “La panique fut telle que chacun se sauva à qui mieux mieux.” Liberals gloried in seeing “M. Tarte et ses amis revinrent de cette aventure tout pednauds, ayant l’air de renards qu’une poule aurait pris.” When Mercier took to the hustings in September 1886, only Liberals appeared with him in Québec City (François Langelier, C-A-P. Pelletier, Pacaud and D.A. Ross).¹⁰³

After months of agitation, the 1886 provincial election results were disappointing for Mercier and the ‘le vrai parti libéral.’¹⁰⁴ The Castors held the balance of power, the election results were contested and Mercier was not sworn-in until January 1887. It would take them a few years to secure their hold on the province.¹⁰⁵ Nonetheless, Mercier’s victory and cabinet did reflect the critical role that Québec City and ‘le vrai parti’ had played in the party’s evolution. Shehyn was named provincial Treasurer; Ernest Gagnon, provincial Secretary; and David Ross, Minister without Portfolio. Pierre Garneau, a former Conservative and owner of a large wholesale dry goods business in Québec-Est, was named Commissioner of Crown Lands.¹⁰⁶ Almost their first task was to fight the 1887 federal election.

¹⁰³ L’Électeur, 22 September 1886, p. 1.

¹⁰⁴ Caya, “La formation...,” p. 521.

¹⁰⁵ H.B. Neatby, Laurier and a Liberal Quebec: A Study in Political Management (Toronto: McClelland and Stewart, 1973) p. 28-30.

¹⁰⁶ Robert Rumilly, Histoire de la Province de Québec, Tome V, Riel (Montréal: Éditions Bernard Valiquette, 1942) p. 216.

In Québec City, where Liberal strength had been growing since 1875, the Conservatives were in disarray. La Justice and La Vérité both supported the Liberals.¹⁰⁷ They proclaimed their “droits comme catholiques” to hold independent political views when Monseigneur Laflèche, once again, condemned the Liberal party.¹⁰⁸ For both newspapers, the election essentially pitted a ‘noble and generous nationalist movement’ against the ‘Orange Freemason’ they saw in Macdonald.¹⁰⁹ Le Canadien mocked the conservative nationalists for supporting a party it still considered to be “rouge écarlate” and concentrated its attacks on Laurier’s opposition to a protective tariff.¹¹⁰ Le Courrier du Canada also focused on Laurier’s tariff policy and raised the Liberal leader’s opposition to an increased federal subsidy as detrimental to provincial interests.¹¹¹ But the Conservatives only nominated a candidate, F-X. Drouin, twelve days before the election.¹¹² In desperation, they launched a dedicated newspaper, Le Protectioniste, two days before the vote (much as they had done with L’Ouvrier in 1877). It delivered their most personal attacks, once again accusing Laurier of being an outsider who had done nothing for Québec-Est.¹¹³ Laurier, though, enjoyed the full support of the Mercier government. When he took to the hustings, he had Mercier at his side as well as a number

¹⁰⁷ La Justice was founded in January 1886 by the conservative-nationalist, L.P. Pelletier, in reaction to Riel’s execution and as part of the formation of the “Parti national.” La Vérité was established in 1881 by the religious-nationalist, J.P. Tardivel.

¹⁰⁸ La Vérité, 5 February 1887, p. 2; La Justice, 9 February 1887, p. 3.

¹⁰⁹ La Vérité, 5 February 1887, p. 2; La Justice, 18 February 1887, p. 2.

¹¹⁰ Le Canadien, 3 and 8 February 1887, p. 2.

¹¹¹ Le Courrier du Canada, 14 and 16 February 1887, p. 2.

¹¹² Le Courrier du Canada, 10 February 1887, p. 2.

¹¹³ Le Protectioniste, 19 and 21 February 1887, p. 2.

of Conservatives who had voted against him ten years earlier, notably Pierre Garneau and Joseph-Alfred Langlais. They supplemented his 1877 team led by Pacaud, François and Charles Langelier, Pelletier and Shehyn. With their help, he captured 78 per cent of the vote – fully 20 per cent more than in 1882.¹¹⁴ The relatively small ward of St-Roch Nord, with a significant number of British voters, offered less support, though Laurier still captured 67.8 per cent of the vote. Elsewhere, his support was remarkable: in St-Sauveur, 80.4 per cent; Jacques-Cartier, 78.1 per cent; and St-Roch, 77.5 per cent. This pattern of support across the riding would hold throughout the rest of Laurier's career.

Thus, by 1887, Québec-Est had become a stable, reasonably prosperous, working-class and predominantly French-Canadian constituency – where nearly four of every five electors voted for Laurier. It was an accomplishment for Langelier, Pacaud and 'le vrai parti' as much as Laurier. After years of organizing clubs, public meetings, and elections; establishing L'Électeur; leading the municipal government; involving local manufacturers, workers, the SSJB and the Congrégation des Hommes de Notre-Dame de St-Roch; and after numerous internal squabbles and attempts to attract Conservative supporters, the execution of Riel only provided the final push they needed. As the provincial and federal election results showed, the party's strength was concentrated in the Québec City district.

Nationally, the federal Liberal party went down to bitter defeat in 1887 and, even in the province of Québec, only managed to make gains around Québec City.¹¹⁵ Edward

¹¹⁴ NAC, Fonds Office of the Chief Electoral Officer, RG 113 C, Election Returns, 1867-1980.

¹¹⁵ Neatby suggests that the provincial defeat shows that the Liberals failed to solidify the "Nationalist" coalition in 1886-1887 and credits their success in the Québec City region to Conservative bungling over development of the QMOO. Neatby, Laurier..., p. 34. But the confusion over Laurier's position on that issue suggests that a more plausible explanation lies in the strength of Pacaud's organization in the region. Caya came to a similar conclusion. Caya "La formation..." p. 538.

Blake resigned in June that year and, reluctantly, Laurier became the leader of the Liberal party. It should have been cause for a tremendous celebration in Québec-Est. Instead, it gave rise to a sharp disagreement between Laurier and ‘le vrai parti.’ With uncharacteristic vehemence, Laurier refused Pacaud’s entreaties to hold a large demonstration in Québec-Est. “Je suis tout à fait hostile à une démonstration de ce genre,” he wrote.¹¹⁶ “Je convoquerai une assemblée à St-Roch; ce sera tout.” Instead, he invited “tout ce que la province compte de sommités libéraux” to the village of Somerset – a predominantly English community 25 kilometres from Arthabaskaville.¹¹⁷ His affection for the countryside – and distance from Québec-Est – showed in his speech that day. “I can say that, during the twenty years I have known the fine parish of Somerset, I have been always treated rather as a brother than as a stranger,” he said. By comparison, Laurier referred only briefly to the “signal honor...conferred upon me...to represent what I believe to be the most patriotic constituency in the country, the division of Québec East.”¹¹⁸ Clearly, his message that day was symbolic: ‘I am a national leader, not a French-Canadian nationalist.’

That day in Somerset marked the beginning of a third stage in Laurier’s relationship with ‘le vrai parti’ in Québec-Est. But it was not the national leader who stepped to the fore. Rather, as the constituency prospered and ‘le vrai parti’ took hold of power in the province, the Leader of the Opposition found himself overshadowed. Mercier was able to enact many of the policies Laurier had so long espoused. Pacaud’s

¹¹⁶ Pacaud, *Lettres...*, p. 79. Laurier to Pacaud, 24 August 1887

¹¹⁷ Bélanger, *Wilfrid Laurier...*, p. 152. Somerset is now called Plessisville.

¹¹⁸ Ulrich Barthe, ed., *On the platform...*, p. 354-356.

control of provincial patronage and L'Électeur made him a powerful figure in his own right. And, with a Cabinet dominated by members from Québec City, Pacaud and Mercier delivered many of the local benefits that underlay Liberal appeal in the region for so long. If historian Blair Neatby concluded that Laurier was “not active” during these years, it was largely because Mercier and ‘le vrai parti’ were.¹¹⁹

A month after the rally in Somerset, Mercier gave the whole country a demonstration of real political power at the first ever “Interprovincial Conference.” Magnificent in its conception and execution, the conference encapsulated the vision of ‘le vrai parti libéral’ by bringing to Québec City the premiers of Ontario (Oliver Mowat), Nova Scotia (William S. Fielding), New Brunswick (A.G. Blair) and Manitoba (John Norquay) in an effort to “reconstituer le pacte federal sur ses premières bases et à consacrer d’une manière définitive le principe de l’autonomie des provinces, seules garante des droits de la minorité française au Canada.”¹²⁰ It was a goal infused with the long-held objectives of the ‘le vrai parti’ and Québec City.¹²¹ In concrete terms, the conference sought to relieve pressure on the provincial budget by pressuring Macdonald into increasing the federal subsidy. And, with an eye to the city’s rightful place in Confederation, it sought to “faire disparaître bien des préjugés malheureux...et de faire naître une sentiment d’union, de paix et de conconde, indispensable au bonheur et à la prospérité du pays.” Despite his opposition to a federal subsidy, Laurier attended the

¹¹⁹ Neatby, Laurier..., p. 34.

¹²⁰ L'Électeur, 10 November 1887, p. 1.

¹²¹ It represented the ambitions of Oliver Mowat and Liberals in Ontario, too. After years of struggle with Sir John A. Macdonald, Mowat sought to transfer the federal “disallowance power” from Ottawa to London. Rumilly, Riel, pp. 273-274; Christopher Armstrong, The Politics of Federalism: Ontario's Relations with the Federal Government, 1867-1942 (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1981).

banquet in Montréal at which Mercier released the conference's final report to the national media.¹²² It was, effectively, the first national press conference and Laurier had the role of an extra.¹²³

Laurier found himself one step removed from control of provincial patronage too. Pacaud was Mercier's principal campaign organizer, treasurer and patronage broker. "He appointed office holders, selected candidates in the ridings, awarded contracts and sped up payment of government accounts, collected kickbacks [and] paid the premier's bills."¹²⁴ In 1890, Charles Langelier even gave up his seat in the House of Commons to help Pacaud – taking first the position of President of the Executive Council and, later, provincial Secretary to Mercier. Pacaud's intimate involvement in provincial politics kept Laurier well informed but it preoccupied Pacaud at times and put some distance between him and Laurier. Laurier wrote to him in September 1887: "Je t'ai écrit plusieurs lettres au cours de la semaine dernière. J'ignorais ton absence. Laisse-moi te prier instamment de t'occuper des demandes que je t'y fais. Je me rends bien compte que durant cette période tu n'as guère à toi un seul moment. Je n'en persiste pas moins dans ma demande."¹²⁵ Laurier must also have been aware that Pacaud served two masters when providing political advice. In February 1888, he rejected Pacaud's request to include universal manhood suffrage in the federal party platform because, he claimed, it fell within provincial jurisdiction and "le clergé dans notre province nous ferait une guerre

¹²² L'Électeur, 8 November 1887, p. 1.

¹²³ L'Électeur, 10 November 1887, p. 1.

¹²⁴ Brassard and Hamelin, "Pacaud, Ernest," p. 805.

¹²⁵ Pacaud, Lettres..., p. 84. Laurier to Pacaud, 5 September 1887.

acharnée sur ce point.”¹²⁶ In fact, it fell within federal jurisdiction at the time, but both men must have been as aware of the political risks involved.

Church – and Castor – opposition almost certainly prevented Mercier and Pacaud from adopting universal manhood suffrage in 1888. Once firmly in control of the government, however, ‘le vrai parti libéral’ acted on many of its earliest resolutions – much to the benefit of Québec City. Mercier’s disposal of the Jesuit Estates allowed François Langelier to purchase land for a new City Hall in 1889. And, with money raised by Shehyn, the provincial Treasurer, Mercier subsidized the Québec and Lac-St-Jean Railway in order to develop the agricultural and agro-forest regions in the city’s hinterland. Mercier also opened the first night school in Québec-Est. It was the first successful move towards state involvement in education and fulfilled objectives of both ‘le vrai parti,’ workers in the riding and the Congrégation des Hommes de la Paroisse de Saint-Roch de Québec.

Laurier’s speech to the SSJB de Québec on June 24, 1889, stands in stark contrast to his speech in Somerset two years earlier. Historians frequently cite the speech as evidence of his vision for a country with a “unique et même aspiration” of “justice égale, droits égaux.” And indeed, many pan-Canadian nationalists would be moved by his words. Yet, before much the same audience he spoke to in Somerset, Laurier was considerably more careful about how he approached his subject. He began by declaring his identification with Québec City, the “ville sacrée” of French Canadians. “Des villes comme Montréal,” he declared, “le continent en fourmille...mais il n’y a qu’un Québec.” Its charm he found in the variety of its vistas and in its memories – “charme dont nous, Canadiens d’origine française, nous pouvons seuls jouir dans toute sa plénitude.” When

¹²⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 90. Laurier to Pacaud, 1 February 1888.

he declared, “je suis canadien,” he added immediately, “Mais...la première place dans mon coeur est pour ceux dans les veines de qui coule le sang de mes propres veines.” That night Laurier’s “Canadian” identity sought not only to include others, but also, to ensure that he was included.¹²⁷

During Mercier’s years in government, Laurier’s position in Ottawa left him somewhat outside the circles of power in Québec City and Québec-Est. Yet, his ties with Langelier, Shehyn, Pacaud and other members of ‘le vrai parti’ ensured that he remained in touch with changes in the riding. In many ways, the electric lights installed by Langelier’s administration in 1887 symbolized a period of “prospérité sans précédent” for the party and the constituency.¹²⁸ Québec-Est had overcome the sharp decline in the shipbuilding and timber businesses and could look to the future with confidence in the boot and shoe industry and the merchants of newly paved St-Joseph. By 1891, it was home to 57.4 per cent of the city’s population, having seen the number of residents increase 11.9 per cent (to 36,200) at a time when the city’s overall population increased only 1 per cent.¹²⁹ St-Roch was once again crowded with as many people as Jacques-Cartier, yet even together these two historic wards only barely matched the population of St-Sauveur.¹³⁰ Over the preceding ten years, the percentage of French Canadians in the riding had increased from 90.3 per cent to 94.7 per cent while the number of residents of

¹²⁷ A similar comment might be made regarding his valedictory address at McGill in 1864, a speech cited as evidence of the early development of – and unwavering commitment to – his vision of Canada. J. T. McLeod, “The Political Thought of Sir Wilfrid Laurier,” PhD Thesis: University of Toronto, 1965, p. 72.

¹²⁸ Morrisset, *La mémoire du paysage...*, p. 193.

¹²⁹ By contrast, the population of Montréal increased 39.5 per cent in the decade. *Census of Canada, 1890-1891*.

¹³⁰ In 1890, St-Roch had a population of 8,986; Jacques-Cartier, 8,525; St-Roch North, 3,331; and St-Sauveur, 15,358. *Census of Canada, 1890-91*.

British origin had declined from 2,877 to 1,950. This final, complete, dominance of French Canadians gave a distinct meaning to Québec-Est as the most patriotic constituency in the province.

As Mayor of Québec City, François Langelier responded to the influx of migrants with the most important measure of his administration: the annexation of St-Sauveur. By extending the city's tax base, it accomplished the principal reform he had recommended in 1868 and provided a policy around which both Liberals and Conservatives could rally. Regrettably, however, it was only provoked by another tragic fire. The fire started a little before midnight on May 15, 1889, in a pub on St-Valier, spread to the houses nearby and raged throughout the northern half of St-Sauveur for most of the following day.¹³¹ It destroyed 600 homes north and west of the church.¹³² In the aftermath, the Conservative Mayor, François Kirouac, decided to work with Langelier to unite the two cities and secure access to the city's aqueduct.¹³³ The two mayors formed a joint committee in June to study the project, received its report in September and held a referendum on annexation in St-Sauveur on September 26, 1889. Momentary opposition came from representatives of the poor, devastated, area along St-Valier who still sought to avoid Québec City taxes, hoped the city might build a park in their community and objected to its substantially higher property qualification for municipal elections.¹³⁴ Nonetheless, the

¹³¹ L'Électeur, 17 May 1889, p. 1.

¹³² Ibid., p. 1; Dagneau, La Ville de Québec..., p.123.

¹³³ Even opponents of the annexation recognized this as the principal advantage of the project. L'Électeur, 4 September 1889, p. 2.

¹³⁴ The most serious, though temporary, opposition came from Conservative Dr. Michel Fiset. The only other opponent of note was a Liberal, Philéas Corriveau, President of the local SSJB. They were rivals in the St-Valier district. Ibid., p. 2.

referendum passed with almost unanimous support.¹³⁵ For Québec City, Langelier calculated that it represented a net gain of \$25,000 a year in tax revenue.¹³⁶ In return, St-Sauveur got access to city water, six representatives on the City Council (three for St-Sauveur and three for the newly created St-Valier ward), and a commitment from Québec City to improve the drainage and pave its principal streets, assume its municipal debt of \$41,300 (\$12,500 of which compensated those who lost their homes in the fire), honour the contracts of all municipal employees and allow free access to the Halle St-Pierre for community associations.¹³⁷ In the end, the entire City Council of St-Sauveur supported annexation: Conservatives François Kirouac and Dr. Michel Fiset, as well as Liberals Cléophas Rochette, Joseph Hilarion Patry, Dr. Charles Gingras, Marcel Rochette and Jean Drolet. For St-Sauveur, it represented the culmination of a decade of growth and the promise of “un faubourg vaste, populeux et florissant qui deviendra bientôt un des plus beaux et des plus riches quartiers de la ville, un second St-Roch enfin.”¹³⁸

Thus, like Mercier at the provincial level, Langelier built the party in Québec-Est through a practical approach to development issues that eventually brought conservative nationalists into the fold. He cemented his alliance with Kirouac by supporting Kirouac in the hotly contested 1890 municipal election. That year, L'Électeur supported four Liberals and three Conservatives among the twelve aldermen and councillors elected for wards in Québec-Est.¹³⁹ Of the five it opposed, four were Liberals, including two from

¹³⁵ L'Électeur reported 12 votes against. 27 September 1889, p. 1.

¹³⁶ L'Électeur, 4 September 1889, p. 2.

¹³⁷ L'Électeur, 27 September 1889, p. 1.

¹³⁸ Ibid., p. 2.

¹³⁹ L'Électeur, 18 February 1890, p. 2.

St-Valier ward. The election of those Liberals, opposed by L'Électeur, was the first sign of a new faction in the party: 'les parentistes.'

The annexation of St-Sauveur and the reorganization of local politics were only two of the consequences, though, of the growing size and complexity that marked Québec-Est in the 1880s. In fact, two minor issues in the 1887 federal election suggested consequences that would hold important lessons for Laurier. First, John Woodley, a shoe manufacturer and prominent Laurier supporter in 1877, signed the nomination papers for his opponent, F-X. Drouin.¹⁴⁰ Woodley's defection emphasized the difficulty that local Liberal manufacturers had with Laurier's low tariff policy. The second incident, a Conservative effort to draft a working-class candidate, revealed both the strength of local Liberal support and the appearance of new political issues in the riding. Alfred Robitaille, a workingman, rejected Conservative overtures to run "contre un homme que je respect et que j'estime [dans] une lutte que je sais être inutile et sans résultats."¹⁴¹ Yet Robitaille saw clearly the need for workers' representatives. "L'heure n'est pas loin," he wrote, "où à Québec comme ailleurs, [la classe ouvrière] devra se protéger et avoir ses représentants choisis parmi elle pour faire valoir ses droits auprès des gouvernements." In his view, "les questions politiques mettent dans l'ombre cette grande question du travail qui interesse et passionne l'esprit public."

Robitaille's letter reflected a growing awareness among working-class people of a distinct culture emerging as the result of a second phase of industrialization, mass

¹⁴⁰ Le Protectioniste, 21 February 1887, p. 3; Le Courrier du Canada, 10 February 1887, p. 2.

¹⁴¹ Public letter from Alfred Robitaille to Israel Tarte, the editor of Le Canadien, published in La Justice, 8 February 1887, p. 3.

immigration to the city and formation of a capitalist labour market in the 1880s.¹⁴² Men like George-Élie Amyot (Dominion Corset, established 1886) led the second phase of industrialization in Québec-Est.¹⁴³ It involved a further breakdown of skills, standardization of tasks, introduction of professional managers and use of cost accounting as well as the increased mechanization of work.¹⁴⁴ Amyot, and others like him, made close supervision, piecework and production on demand standard practices in the manufacturing industries of Québec-Est.¹⁴⁵ For skilled workers, this meant a loss of control, conflicts with foremen, frustrations with machines, tensions between experienced and inexperienced workers, dangerous working conditions, low pay, regular periods of overtime and unemployment as well as children and women in the workforce.¹⁴⁶ In 1900, wages in the boot and shoe industry ranged from \$2 to \$6 per week even though a family with five children needed \$8.38 per week just for rent, food and heat.¹⁴⁷ In these conditions, it is not surprising that workers reduced transportation costs by living in St-Sauveur and St-Valier, close to the factories in Jacques-Cartier ward.¹⁴⁸ Working

¹⁴² Yvan Lamonde, Lucia Ferretti, Daniel Leblanc, La Culture ouvrière à Montréal (1880-1920) : bilan historiographique (Québec : Institut québécois de recherche sur la culture, 1982) pp. 41-42.

¹⁴³ For Amyot, see Jean du Berger and Jacques Mathieu, Les Ouvriers de Dominion Corset à Québec, 1886-1988, (Québec : Les Presses de l'Université Laval, 1993) p. 8.

¹⁴⁴ Craig Heron, The Canadian Labour Movement: A Short History (Toronto: James Lorimer and Company, 1989) p. 31. Although this second phase of industrialization began in the 1880s in Québec City, it took a decisive turn with the introduction of machinery made by the United Shoe Machinery Company of Boston in the early 1890s. Nicole Thivierge, "La condition sociale des ouvriers de l'industrie de la chaussure à Québec, 1900-1940," in Jean-Claude Dupont and Jacques Mathieu, eds., Les Métiers du Cuir (Québec : Presses de l'Université Laval, 1981) p. 376.

¹⁴⁵ Berger and Mathieu, Les Ouvriers de Dominion Corset..., pp. 18-19.

¹⁴⁶ Thivierge, "La Condition sociale...", pp. 380-389.

¹⁴⁷ Ibid., p. 395.

¹⁴⁸ See map indicating large numbers of shoemakers living on almost every street in the constituency – although particularly in St-Sauveur – in 1910-1911. Ibid., p. 402.

conditions in the shoe industry also help explain the high number of licenced establishments in Québec-Est.¹⁴⁹ A stereotypical version of the shoemaker's work week was captured in the 1901 song, "la Saint-Crépin:"

Les cordonniers sont pires que des évêques
Tous les lundis, ils s'en font une fête
Et le mardi, ils ont mal à la tête
Le mercredi, ils vont boire chopinette
Le jeudi, ils aiguisent leurs alènes
Le vendredi, ils sont sur la sellette
Et le samedi, petite est la recette.¹⁵⁰

Historian Yvan Lamonde has found that such working conditions produced a distinct working class culture defined by ward, street, home and factory.¹⁵¹ It was a culture that united St-Sauveur, St-Valier, Jacques-Cartier and St-Roch wards in the 1880s and 1890s, and made them fertile ground for the Knights of Labour. Yet working-class culture did not emerge in a vacuum. Rather, it appeared on streets, in wards and in a constituency with a political culture already shaped by a strong sense of personal and community responsibility, local and ethnic identity, and political partisanship. That is why, as labour historian Jacques Rouillard has noted, workers' organizations in Québec City were unlike those in Montréal. While international unions slowly gained ground in

¹⁴⁹ Monseigneur Antoine Gauvreau, the local priest, estimated that there were more than 100 licenced establishments in St-Roch and Jacques-Cartier wards alone in 1900. *Ibid*, p. 406.

¹⁵⁰ "La Saint-Crépin," *Le Samedi* 30 November 1901. Cited in Madeleine Béland "Le Cordonnier dans la chanson populaire" in Jean-Claude Dupont and Jacques Mathieu, eds., *Les Métiers du Cuir* (Québec : Presses de l'Université Laval, 1981) p. 248.

¹⁵¹ Lamonde, *La Culture ouvrière...*, pp. 47-73.

the metropolis, “la ville de Québec s’est révélée le centre par excellence d’organisations nationales.”¹⁵²

One of the ways workers in Québec-Est adapted the political messages of the Knights of Labour to their own political culture was to carry labour issues into municipal politics and the Liberal party. They formed a distinct group of party activists that cut their teeth in the industrial and political struggles of the 1890s before assuming more visible roles – inside and outside the party – in the early 1900s. Most prominent was Omer Brunet. Born in 1860, he was a trained mechanic who worked as a painter before becoming a machine operator at the John Ritchie Company shoe factory.¹⁵³ Brunet set up the first Bureau de placement in St-Roch and helped found the National Trades and Labour Congress (NTLC) after the American Federation of Labour took over the Trades and Labour Congress of Canada in 1902. Brunet organized the first NTLC convention, held in Québec City, the following year. Louis Émond would also play an important role in the city’s labour movement. Born in 1876, Émond worked for fifteen years as a foreman at William Marsh Company, became Vice-President of the “cordonniers-machinistes” (Union des machinistes) and served as president of numerous Church organizations.¹⁵⁴ He was one of the men who led the transition from a “national” to a “Catholic” union movement in the 1910s. Finally, there was Pierre Bertrand. Born in 1875, he was also a “cordonnier-machiniste” and member of the union for fourteen years,

¹⁵² Jacques Rouillard, Les Syndicats nationaux au Québec de 1900 à 1930 (Québec : Presses de l’Université Laval, 1979) p. 21.

¹⁵³ Ville de Québec, Centième anniversaire..., p. 40.

¹⁵⁴ Ibid. p. 34.

becoming President and Agent before opening his own company in 1914.¹⁵⁵ All three men would serve as aldermen for St-Sauveur and all three found support, initially, in ‘le vrai parti libéral.’

The reaction of manufacturers, managers, merchants and clergymen to the appearance of organized labour was shaped by the same political culture. They resented the outside interference in what they perceived to be close-knit and personal working relationships. Having lived through the difficult years of decline in the shipbuilding industry and timber trade, they had a particularly vivid fear of outside threats to the city’s prosperity. Monseigneur Taschereau condemned the Knights of Labour in 1885 and forbade Catholics to join. He, along with the city’s employers, preferred the harmonious vision of labour relations expressed in events such as the the second anniversary celebrations of the Union des Tailleurs de Cuir.¹⁵⁶ In January 1888, the leather workers’ union celebrated at Notre-Dame de Lourdes de St-Sauveur in the presence of Mayor Kirouac, A. Robitaille (President of the SSJB de Québec), A. Corriveau (President of the SSJB de St-Sauveur), J-E. Martineau (President of the Union St-Joseph), and I. Thibaudeau (President of the Banque nationale). In L’Électeur, Pacaud praised the union as a “belle association de bienfaisance” for the community.

Thus, it came as a real surprise to the city’s political class when, only days later, the Typographical Union locals number 159 and 160 of the Franklin Assembly of the Knights of Labour went out on strike for better wages, shorter hours and a reduction in the number of apprentices. Unanimously, the city’s newspaper editors conveyed a deep

¹⁵⁵ Ibid. p. 29.

¹⁵⁶ L’Électeur, 16 January 1888, p. 4.

sense of betrayal at the hands of employees “qui ont passés avec nous à travers toutes les crises.”¹⁵⁷ For the most part, they recognized that their employees had legitimate grievances, but claimed that pay was not an issue. They protested the intervention of a workers’ organization in the personal relationship with their employees. This they considered an “insurrection virtuelle contre les principes d’autorité et de justice sur lesquels repose la société.”¹⁵⁸ With so much at stake, Monseigneur Taschereau issued a second pastoral letter ‘strongly advising’ Catholics not to join the organization.¹⁵⁹

For ‘le vrai parti libéral,’ with close ties to both manufacturers and workers in Québec-Est, the strike was a particularly sensitive and divisive issue. L’Électeur went further than any other newspaper in recognizing the workers’ grievances and in supporting their right to organize, establish their own pay scale and “d’empêcher par une réglementation qui lie leurs membres, la concurrence à vil prix.” At the same time, it also expressed greatest concern over “l’imposition brutale de la volonté d’une des parties à l’autre” as well as the potential impact of a “foreign” organization on other industries and the city itself. This notable, particularly vociferous, neutrality reflected the unique difficulties organized labour posed for ‘le vrai parti’ in Québec-Est.

But it was not the full extent of the newspaper’s reaction. Pacaud believed that a strike at L’Électeur, by employees hired to work for the party as much as the newspaper, represented a challenge to the party – and party politics – as much as his business. And it did, in the close-knit, partisan, political culture of Québec-Est. Pacaud feared “l’ouverture

¹⁵⁷ Le Canadien quoted in L’Électeur, 3 January 1888, p. 1.

¹⁵⁸ Le Courrier du Canada quoted in L’Électeur, 3 January 1888, p.1.

¹⁵⁹ L’Électeur, 9 January 1888, p. 2. Taschereau’s impact on the labour movement was such that, even twelve years later, at his death, members of the central committee refused to attend his funeral. Rouillard, Les syndicats nationaux..., p. 159.

de tout un vaste plan de soulèvement general” and warned workers that, while they had an undeniable right to organize for their own political advantage, they would not be allowed to undermine the political system.

On sait que les ouvriers n’ont pas, comme les classes plus élevées de la société, l’oreille des gouvernements et des parlements... En s’associant entre eux, en mettant leurs fonds en commun, ils peuvent exercer une influence salubre sur la législation par l’entremise des délégués qu’ils envoient dans les capitales à leurs frais pour surveiller leurs intérêts... [Mais] ils devront nécessairement [les] faire passer par le creuset de la législation avant d’en faire une obligation impérieuse pour tout le monde.¹⁶⁰

Pacaud suggested that, “avant de se mettre en grève, les ouvriers devaient en appeler à l’opinion publique, et exposer sous la forme la plus succincte et la plus sobre leurs griefs et leurs demandes.”¹⁶¹ It was a suggestion that clearly sought to extricate the party from a divisive situation by making the public, rather than the party, into judge and jury. But it also sought to assert – and invoke – a principle well grounded in the local political culture in order to preserve that very culture: placing issues of public concern before the court of public opinion. Since the 1870s, in fact, that principle had been institutionalized in a permanent Arbitration Board within the Québec City Chamber of Commerce.¹⁶²

Although it would be twelve years before Laurier passed the Conciliation Act, the principle established in that legislation had long been applied in Québec City.

Regrettably, for the workers, the defects of that legislation were also evident in Québec City in 1888. Pacaud’s status as an employer trumped his concerns as a politician when it came to actually confronting the work stoppage. He stood squarely with his

¹⁶⁰ L’Électeur, 3 January 1888, p. 1.

¹⁶¹ L’Électeur, 10 January 1888, p. 4.

¹⁶² Ouellet, *Histoire de la Chambre de Commerce...*, p. 56; ANQQ, Fonds Chambre de Commerce de Québec, P219, vol. 10, File “Assemblées générales.”

fellow editors when they had the typographers arrested and supported the formation of a new workers' association, a few days later, with regulations approved by the Church.

Despite such concerted opposition, however, the Knights persisted and even prospered, evolving into a uniquely "national" labour movement well suited to the political culture of Québec-Est. Within a few months of the typographers strike, Antoine Langois, a labour organizer in St-Valier, began publishing a weekly newspaper, L'Ouvrier (not to be confused with the newspaper launched by the Conservatives during the 1877 campaign). It sought the amicable resolution of labour disputes, opposed strikes, promoted the prosperity of employers and encouraged temperance and economy among workers.¹⁶³ Yet it also opposed trusts, unfair wages and especially the employment of jobbers instead of full-time union employees. Langois, who praised Mayor Langelier, also urged exclusively agricultural immigration, the construction of railway bridges across the St. Lawrence and St. Charles Rivers and sufficient public works to employ workers throughout the winter. He combined a utopian approach, characteristic of the Knights of Labour but also respectful of the local political culture, with a determination to achieve clear short-term goals. And he succeeded. The newspaper ceased publication almost immediately after Langelier's municipal government announced plans for major roadworks during the winter season. The following year, the same workers who had established the Union des Tailleurs de Cuir in 1886, formed the Union protectrice des monteurs and the Union des machinistes – independent of Church supervision.¹⁶⁴

¹⁶³ L'Ouvrier, 20 October 1888, p. 1. This approach reflected that adopted by the Knights of Labour generally. Gregory S. Kealey, Brian D. Palmer, Dreaming of What Might Be: The Knights of Labour in Ontario, 1880-1900 (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1982).

¹⁶⁴ Charland, "Le Syndicalisme chez les cordonniers..." p. 343.

Workers in Québec-Est showed their determination throughout the 1890s, fighting a series of major strikes in the boot and shoe industry. The most significant occurred in June and July 1891 when the Union protectrice des monteurs approached manufacturers for a ten per cent raise. Manufacturers responded by shutting down factories throughout the city and forming the Association des Manufacturiers de Chaussures de Québec (AMCQ). The AMCQ won a major victory by importing twenty-five new shoemaking machines from the United Shoe Machinery Company and replacing many of their employees. But labour struggles with the AMCQ persisted, sharply dividing the close-knit community and giving rise to periodic calls for arbitration of labour disputes.¹⁶⁵ As “le député de Québec-Est” Laurier became intimately familiar with the bitter consequences of these struggles. In 1894, he called for the creation of a Bureau of Labour Statistics to get a better perspective on the issue and “to bring up the labouring classes of the Dominion to the same standard that they [occupy] in other countries.”¹⁶⁶ It would be one of the first measures adopted by his government in the interest of workers and the resolution of labour disputes. Decidedly, Laurier learned a lot from his riding during those “inactive” years.

Laurier’s relationship with Québec-Est took another turn in 1890-1891 when political scandals undermined ‘le vrai parti’s’ political credibility and shook loose its hold on provincial power. The scandals, in both the Conservative and Liberal parties, effectively rearranged the political map in Québec and made room for another faction in the Liberal party. Somewhat above the fray, Laurier was able to take advantage of the

¹⁶⁵ L’Électeur, 15 June 1894, p. 2.

¹⁶⁶ House of Commons Debates, April 30, 1894. p. 2190.

scandals and resulting struggles within the party to advance a stronger national perspective.

In April 1890, Israel Tarte – jilted by Macdonald in his effort to remove Langevin from leadership of the provincial Conservative party – revealed the corruption of Thomas McGreevey, Conservative MP for Québec-Ouest, in awarding contracts for work on the city’s port. Laurier invited Tarte to join the Liberal Party and, in 1891, had Charles Langelier organize his election in Montmorency.¹⁶⁷ Tarte’s defection devastated the Conservative party in Québec City. In the 1891 election, his newspaper, Le Canadien, recognized reciprocity as the best policy “dans les circonstances actuelles” and praised Laurier for the honour he brought French Canadians.¹⁶⁸ Without Tarte, who had been the party’s principle organizer in the Québec City district, Conservatives did not even contest Laurier’s election that year.

Despite Tarte’s obvious contribution to the 1891 Liberal campaign, and Pacaud’s overtures in the 1880s, Liberals found Tarte a difficult man to trust. He had not joined Mercier’s Parti national. He had been personally responsible for “undue Church influence” in the 1875 Charlevoix election; he had fought L’Électeur daily in Le Canadien; and he had organized nearly every Conservative campaign in the district. As Laurier’s friend and confidant, Pacaud understood the political strategy and even published a regular column by Tarte. But Laurier would forever have to placate the two.¹⁶⁹

¹⁶⁷ Michèle Brassard and Jean Hamelin, “Tarte, Joseph-Israel,” in The Dictionary of Canadian Biography, Volume 13, (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1994) p. 1017.

¹⁶⁸ Le Canadien, 17 and 28 February 1891, pp. 1 and 2.

¹⁶⁹ Laurier even had to negotiate with Pacaud to arrange for Tarte’s column in L’Électeur. Pacaud did not want to offer more than a \$25 retainer and \$2 for each daily dispatch. Tarte was asking for the retainer and

Then, in 1891, a second scandal rocked the party. While Shehyn and Mercier were in Paris negotiating a loan for the province, Pacaud had the government pay \$175,000 in damages to Charles Newhouse Armstrong for excluding him from the Baie des Chaleurs Railway Company.¹⁷⁰ Pacaud took a \$100,000 kickback on the transaction to pay campaign and newspaper expenses, some personal debts and purchase a house – “la maison aux tourelles dorées” – on the Grand Allée for Charles Langelier. Rumours of the transaction leaked out and the Conservative dominated Senate Committee on Railways launched an investigation in August. When their findings became known, the Conservative Lieutenant Governor, Auguste-Réal Angers (Sollicitor General in the de Boucherville government dismissed by Letellier de St-Just), dismissed the Mercier government and the Conservatives easily won the ensuing provincial election. A Royal Commission of Inquiry (chaired by Louis-Amable Jetté) absolved Mercier of any knowledge of Pacaud’s dealings but criminal charges were brought against Pacaud (including an accusation that he took a 20 per cent kickback on government stationary purchased from Joseph-Alfred Langlais). Pacaud was acquitted on all charges but was sharply rebuked by Mercier.

In the 1892 provincial election, Laurier only spoke once in Québec-Est. He defended Mercier, but invited neither Mercier nor Shehyn to join him and openly condemned the transaction between Pacaud and Armstrong.¹⁷¹ He was so discouraged by

\$10 for a political letter, twice a week. NAC, Fonds Pacaud, MG 29 D-36, vol. 1, Pacaud to Laurier, 20 March 1894.

¹⁷⁰ Details regarding Pacaud’s role in the scandal are found in Brassard and Hamelin, “Pacaud, Ernest,” p. 802-806.

¹⁷¹ McGee, *Laurier...*, p. 91.

“cette malheureuse affaire de Québec,” that he would not have held the meeting but for a personal interest in seeing the local candidate, Simon-Napoléon Parent, returned.¹⁷²

Parent, who was already a city councillor, would become Mayor of Québec City, Premier of the province and President of the National Transcontinental Railway. He represented a new generation of businessmen in the riding, leaders in the second phase of the industrial revolution, and would serve as Laurier’s most important political and patronage manager throughout most of his career. It is not possible to understand Laurier’s interest in Parent in 1890 however, without understanding Parent’s roots in St-Valier. St-Valier was the poorest, most devout and most conservative part of St-Sauveur.¹⁷³ Like many others, Parent’s parents had moved to St-Sauveur from the countryside in the 1870s. He went to the local school and, as a young man, opened a grocery store in the ward. He was the type of man who “tutoyait tout le monde [et] assistait aux combats de coqs interdit par la loi.”¹⁷⁴ But he wanted more; and, while maintaining his business, put himself through law school at the Université Laval (winning the Governor General’s medal). He articulated with noted Conservatives, Thomas Chase-Casgrain and Guillaume Amyot, before opening his own office on St-Valier in 1882. The 1889 fire, and subsequent creation of a separate ward for St-Valier and a provincial seat for St-Sauveur, gave him his ‘big break.’ For Parent, politics was – more than anything – a way up the social ladder. He won a seat on City Council in February

¹⁷² Basic biographical information is found in Michèle Brassard and Jean Hamelin, “Parent, Simon-Napoléon,” in Dictionary of Canadian Biography Volume 14 (Toronto : University of Toronto Press, 1998) pp. 818-822.

¹⁷³ It returned conservative nationalists more consistently than any other ward in the riding. See Annex IV: Municipal Elections in Québec-Est, 1878-1919.

¹⁷⁴ Robert Rumilly, Histoire de la Province de Québec, Tome VII, Taillon, (Montréal: Édition Bernard Valiquette, 1942) p. 15.

1890 and, with Laurier's support in the provincial election that year, joined Mercier's caucus. A poor public speaker, only his deep local roots, prodigious work ethic and a chance to win in St-Valier could have recommended him to Laurier at the time. He soon proved, however, to be an outstanding political manager whose skill matched that of the professional managers leading the second phase of industrialization in Québec-Est. With their help, he became Mayor of Québec in 1894 – defeating Jules Tessier, candidate of the 'vrai parti.'¹⁷⁵ His victory gave the new generation of business leaders the same municipal power base that Langelier had given 'le vrai parti' twelve years earlier.¹⁷⁶

Almost immediately Parent applied managerial principles to the operation of City Hall. He streamlined Council meetings, clarified the job descriptions and responsibilities of staff and imposed rules governing the performance of municipal contracts.¹⁷⁷ True to his roots in St-Valier, he also made a modest electoral reform and undertook important public works. First, his revision of the city charter in 1895 replaced councillors with aldermen and established designated seats for each alderman in a ward.¹⁷⁸ Until then, each ward had an alderman, elected by property owners, and two councillors, elected by owners and renters. The councillors were chosen in a single election, the top two vote-getters winning seats. Parent removed the symbolic distinction between aldermen and councillors by calling them all "aldermen;" but he retained the real distinction by

¹⁷⁵ Businessmen won 15 of the Council's 30 seats that year. *L'Électeur*, 20 March 1894, p. 2. Brassard and Hamelin, "Parent, Simon-Napoléon," p. 818.

¹⁷⁶ In 1909, Parent had appointed 18 of the 51 city employees. ANQQ, Fonds George Garneau, P90, vol. 7, File 4 "Salaires," Documents "Employés municipaux – états de services – appointments etc., février 1909" and "Liste des employés permanents de la Cité de Québec, 1909."

¹⁷⁷ *L'Électeur*, 8 June 1894, p. 4.

¹⁷⁸ This change is noted in Dagneau, *La Ville de Québec...*, p. 52 and 58. However, Dagneau does not seem to have understood its significance although it is apparent in the city's voting records. AVQ, Fonds de la Ville de Québec, Série Administration, QA1-6, Élections.

designating the ward's "first" seat for election by property owners only. By designating seats for the "second" and "third" aldermen though, he ensured each would be elected separately. This facilitated the practice, common in St-Sauveur and St-Valier, of electing a workers' representative to what had been the undesignated "third" councillor's seat. Parent also required the city's newspapers to run, for the first time, a full list of candidates and poll locations for each election.¹⁷⁹ To provide local employment, he speeded completion of the new City Hall, initiated extensive roadworks and beautification projects and, in 1896, purchased land between St-Valier and the St. Charles River for creation of Victoria Park. The park project included construction of two new bridges across the St. Charles that facilitated access to St-Roch Nord as well. Certainly, Parent owed his local popularity to more than publicity – though that helped too.¹⁸⁰

Members of 'le vrai parti' distrusted Parent's origins in St-Valier and the Conservative party, his business-like approach to politics and his association with a different type of business leader. He was not a Conservative, not in the way Tarte would always be (although he might have joined the Conservative party had it offered greater opportunity). He was, in fact, a Laurier loyalist, one with exceptional skills for the business of politics and government. He was elected, like the other men on his council, to bring new business principles to politics and he gave Laurier the chance to build a different type of Liberal party. 'Les parentistes' sought power for prestige and personal reward; and they approached government as a business rather than a community activity. Parent's popular roots, legal training and early allegiance to Mercier made him at once an exception and an ideal spokesperson for the group. His ascendancy within the party made

¹⁷⁹ Dagneau, *La Ville de Québec...*, p. 56.

¹⁸⁰ Dagneau attributes his success to publicity alone. *Ibid.*, p. 52.

it easier for Laurier to work with Conservatives, like Tarte, and broaden his base of support.

These were difficult changes for 'le vrai parti' to accept. For years they had fought "la petite guerre" with Tarte, the clergy and the Conservative party. But, in the aftermath of the Baie des Chaleurs scandal, they had little choice. Moreover, they too wanted power. After all, it had been their desire to hold power as well as their ability to adapt to a new political culture that had set them apart from the Rouge in 1871. They understood the costs and benefits of victory. That is why Langelier wrote to Laurier in June 1893 to discuss their friend Mercier.¹⁸¹ At the time, Laurier was in the midst of planning the first national Liberal convention. He wanted it to give a more national, more business-like, structure to the party and, as a result, required a more national, more business-like, platform. Mercier's French Canadian nationalism and reputation for scandal posed a problem and word slipped out that Laurier did not want him to attend.¹⁸² "Il est très froissé de la manière dont il prétend que vous le traitez," wrote Langelier, who warned that Mercier could hurt the party at the next election if nothing was done. But, he added, "[Mercier] se rend parfaitement compte de l'hostilité féroce des Anglais à son égard." Langelier suggested that a reassuring visit from Laurier might satisfy Mercier. In all likelihood the meeting took place as planned. There was no sign of protest when, in January 1894, Laurier outlined the national platform in a major speech at the Chateau

¹⁸¹ NAC, Fonds Laurier, MG 26 G, vol. 7, p. 2525, Langelier to Laurier, 16 June 1893.

¹⁸² To make matters worse, the rumour that Laurier did not want Mercier to attend the conference appeared in L'Électeur. It gave them an unmistakably "official" quality. Ibid.

Frontenac.¹⁸³ It included a revenue tariff amenable to large manufacturers and Laurier hoped it would “cimenter les éléments épars.”¹⁸⁴

Later that year, an incident in the House of Commons revealed the full extent of Laurier’s intention and ability to take a national perspective over local interests in those years. At the same time though, it demonstrated the persistence of ‘le vrai parti,’ their ties to the merchants in Québec-Est and the depth of Laurier’s friendship with Pacaud. In the House, Laurier openly questioned the possibility of anyone establishing a steamship service between Canada and Britain “equal to the fastest and the best which was then plying the ocean” regardless of any federal subsidy.¹⁸⁵ Pacaud telegraphed immediately: “your remarks are killing us.”¹⁸⁶ An angry exchange of letters ensued. “Je crois que vous ne connaissez pas exactement le sentiment de la ville sur cette question,” wrote Pacaud.¹⁸⁷ “La question du pont n’est rien à côté d’un service de paquebots rapides qui ferait de Québec le terminus de la navigation océanique.” Your attitude is the subject of every conversation, he added, “nos amis en sort atterrés; nos adversaires vous accablent de reproches et nos amis refusent de vous défendre.” Laurier could not understand; he never said a fast line service was impossible, just not one as fast as the best from New York.¹⁸⁸ “Mais quand tu me dis que nos amis n’osent ni ne veulent me défendre je me sens toutes les dispositions du monde à les envoyer au diable.” Nonetheless, a month

¹⁸³ For details on the 1893 party platform, see Chapter Five.

¹⁸⁴ Bélanger, *Wilfrid Laurier...*, p. 185.

¹⁸⁵ *House of Commons Debates*, July 11, 1894. pp. 5738-5739.

¹⁸⁶ NAC, Fonds Pacaud, MG 29 D-36, vol. 1, Laurier to Pacaud, 22 March 1894.

¹⁸⁷ *Ibid.*, Pacaud to Laurier, 23 March 1894.

¹⁸⁸ *Ibid.*, Pacaud to Laurier, 24 March 1894.

later, he met, cap in hand, with the most important merchants in the riding to convince them he would do everything possible to establish a fast steamship service for Québec City.¹⁸⁹

Retaining local support while broadening the party's appeal – even at the local level – continued to pose challenges. Towards the end of the year, disagreements between 'les parentistes' and 'le vrai parti,' over candidates, finances and strategy, erupted on the pages and in the boardroom of L'Électeur. They made Laurier's control of the newspaper an even more essential and effective source of influence for him – that he used to reduce the level of discord and intemperate opinion in the party. He argued consistently that internal divisions and 'radical' opinion only reduced the party's credibility and influence with electors. "Il y a tant de recriminations dans nos rangs," he wrote to Pacaud in 1894. "Il faut faire peau neuve, que désormais ton journal ait une allure à lui, supérieur, en dehors et au dessus des vulgarités. Ce n'est pas à dire qu'il n'y aura plus de coups à porter...mais que les attaques soient faites à bon conscient, en connaissance de cause et prévoyant d'avance quel en sera l'effet... Les attaques dans ces cas là auraient d'autant plus d'effet."¹⁹⁰

Foremost in Laurier's mind at the time was a libel case brought against Pacaud by Réal-Auguste Angers. Awarded \$2,000 in damages,¹⁹¹ the case threatened L'Électeur's financial stability and imperilled relations between 'les parentistes,' 'le vrai parti' and Pacaud. The case turned on an article written by François Langelier during a by-election

¹⁸⁹ He met with Pierre Garneau, F-X. Berlinquet and a Mr. Davidson of the Ross Co. Pacaud reported Laurier's approach to them as having shown every respect. *Ibid.*, Pacaud to Laurier, 23 April 1894.

¹⁹⁰ *Ibid.*, Laurier to Pacaud, 27 November 1894.

¹⁹¹ Rumilly, Taillon, p. 256.

in Anger's riding of Charlevoix accusing him of taking kickbacks on contracts at the Beauport Asylum. Although Angers was a Conservative and a bitter opponent of 'le vrai parti,' 'les parentistes' and Laurier had supported Angers in the election.¹⁹² Laurier urged Pacaud to apologise and negotiate a satisfactory resolution.¹⁹³ Pacaud, however, did not have the money and was loath to apologize. Since the party lost control of the provincial government, he had exhausted a \$20,000 reserve and ran up \$28,747 in debt covering party expenses.¹⁹⁴ He wanted Langelier to assume responsibility.¹⁹⁵ Langelier was willing to conduct Pacaud's legal defence but not willing to pay the newspaper's damages. It created bitter feelings between the two men and revealed a glaring inconsistency in the management of a party newspaper. One of the ways L'Électeur supported the party was by paying for articles contributed by its members. In paying, and running an article, L'Électeur assumed responsibility for it. But Pacaud could hardly refuse an article submitted by François Langelier. Only Laurier, above the fray, in Ottawa, could resolve the dispute. He met with Pacaud, Langelier and other Liberals a number of times,¹⁹⁶ offered to contribute \$150 to the settlement,¹⁹⁷ endorsed a \$1,000 loan for the newspaper

¹⁹² Ibid., p. 256.

¹⁹³ NAC, Fonds Pacaud, MG 29 D-36, vol. 1, Laurier to Pacaud, 10 May 1894, and 4 December 1894.

¹⁹⁴ Pacaud claimed to owe Georges Demers (for a second mortgage) \$1000; Société des prêts \$12,000; Dominion Type \$5,500; E.B. Eddy and Rolland Paper \$4,585; Canada Life \$1,662; and various others a total of \$1,000. He paid \$500 in interest every three months. He spent \$15,000 of the \$20,000 reserve held in a New York bank to cover party expenses; the other \$5,000 went to cover the newspaper's debts. In addition, he took out a mortgage on his house for \$5,000 to cover party expenses. Ibid., Pacaud to Laurier, 5 November 1894.

¹⁹⁵ Ibid., Laurier to Pacaud, 4 December 1894.

¹⁹⁶ Ibid., Laurier to Pacaud, 23 and 27 December 1893.

¹⁹⁷ Ibid., Laurier to Pacaud, 10 May 1894.

and, on the eve of the election, had Choquette raise funds from party members.¹⁹⁸ He pleaded with Pacaud to run the paper in a more business-like manner.¹⁹⁹

For François Langelier, the incident was just another sign that public life had changed and he was no longer sure 'le vrai parti' had a place in it. In November 1894, he told Laurier that he would leave politics after the 1896 election regardless of the outcome.²⁰⁰ He lacked sufficient financial and physical means and, more than that, was "dégouté de la politique."²⁰¹ "C'est surtout en politique que les venus de la onzième heure passent avant ceux de la première," he wrote. In victory, he was certain that Laurier would be forced to "favoriser ceux qui pourront être utiles au parti dans le moment." Pacaud, he thought, "aura une influence que vous ne pourriez pas ignorer ni méconnaître parce que, par son journal, il l'a encore sur des amis avec lesquels il vous faudra compter."²⁰² Despite Laurier's protests, Langelier seemed almost resigned to his lot.

As Laurier strengthened his position on the national stage, he was able to exert still more influence over opinion in L'Électeur. In preparation for his tours of western Canada in 1894 and Ontario in 1895, Laurier urged Pacaud to refrain from attacking Conservatives as anti-Catholic or anti-French. "Tous les articles de ce genre sont sûrs de produire dans les autres provinces un contre coup qui sera largement exploité contre nous

¹⁹⁸ Ibid., Laurier to Pacaud, 8 April 1896.

¹⁹⁹ Ibid., Laurier to Pacaud, 17 December 1894.

²⁰⁰ NAC, Fonds Laurier, MG 26 G, vol. 8, p. 3381, Langelier to Laurier, 26 November 1894.

²⁰¹ Langelier claimed to have exhausted his savings, mortgaged his house to the hilt and given up an insurance policy to honour his commitments to the party. Ibid.

²⁰² Ibid., p. 3397, Langelier to Laurier, 1 December 1894.

à cause de mon origine française et de mes croyances religieuses.”²⁰³ He did not want Pacaud to ignore the issue though.²⁰⁴ Rather he suggested an indirect attack, urging Pacaud to copy articles from Conservative newspapers in Ontario identifying them with the Orange Order.²⁰⁵ With the approach of the 1896 election and a dénouement in the Manitoba Schools Question, Laurier became adamant that Pacaud adopt a moderate tone with respect to the clergy. “Nous allons avoir une nouvelle guerre ecclésiastique,” he wrote.²⁰⁶ “C’est justement la raison pour laquelle il ne faut pas se mettre dans le tort par ces écarts de langage. Il faut au contraire...ne donner prise d’aucune manière. Il faut au contraire faire appel à la conscience des vrais catholiques et leur faire comprendre que...nous n’avons aucune hostilité contre le clergé.” By repeating similar suggestions throughout the 1890s, Laurier helped create – if only for his own political advantage – a new type of journalism. Increasingly, successful newspapers in the 1890s would, like L’Électeur, reduce the prominence of partisan argument in order to broaden their political appeal. At the same time, such “journaux populaire” – a term coined by historian Jean de Bonville – sought to increase their advertising revenue by attracting more readers with a greater range of stories.²⁰⁷ They benefited directly from manufacturers’ need to differentiate their products and expand their markets to keep pace with increased production made possible by the technological and managerial innovations of the second

²⁰³ NAC, Fonds Pacaud, MG 29 D-36, vol. 1, Laurier to Pacaud, 17 December 1894.

²⁰⁴ For example, he condemned Monsiegnieur Laflèche for putting more confidence in “l’orangiste Howell que dans le catholique Laurier.” L’Électeur, 28 June 1895, p. 2.

²⁰⁵ NAC, Fonds Pacaud, MG 29 D-36, vol. 1, Laurier to Pacaud, 17 December 1894.

²⁰⁶ Ibid., Laurier to Pacaud, 5 February 1896.

²⁰⁷ Jean de Bonville, La Presse québécoise de 1884-1914: genèse d’un média de masse (Québec : Les Presses de l’Université Laval, 1988).

phase of industrialization. It was a sort of journalism better suited to Parent's type of party than Langelier's.

Just two year's before Laurier's defining victory on the national stage, a new cultural institution took shape in Québec City that bore all the hallmarks of the changing political culture. The 1894 Québec Winter Carnival married the fireworks, parades, spectacle and speeches of a "joute contradictoire" with popular winter games and crafts, military concerts and parades, parliamentary pageantry and a historic cityscape. But it was not only the combination of activities that was new. The Carnival united Québec City residents for the first time in an effort to promote the city's tourism industry and, especially, the newly constructed Chateau Frontenac. In the same way Laurier urged a business-like approach to party organization and political journalism, local residents had begun to take a business-like approach to other community activities. Not surprisingly, Liberals played prominent roles in the Carnival. Laurier was Honorary President of the organizing committee; Shehyn, the Honorary Vice-President; Joly, the President; and Laliberté and a prominent English Liberal, Richard Turner, were Vice-Presidents.²⁰⁸ George LaRue led the fundraising committee with the notable assistance of Laliberté (who raised more than anyone), Napoléon Lavoie, Joseph Gauthier and Philéas Corriveau.²⁰⁹ There were other signs of Liberal ascendancy and harmony too. Officers of the Chamber of Commerce, devoid of Liberals from Québec-Est in the early 1880s, included Martineau and Rochette by 1891 and Gauthier, Barthe, Thibaudeau, Roy and

²⁰⁸ Georgette Lacroix, *Le Carnaval de Québec: une histoire d'amour* (Montréal: Éditions Québecor, 1984) pp. 22-23.

²⁰⁹ *L'Électeur*, 5 February 1894, p. 2.

Tanguay by 1896.²¹⁰ In 1895, the SSJB de St-Sauveur and the SSJB de Québec reunited too.

Laurier's relationship with 'le vrai parti libéral' in Québec-Est had the greatest influence on the course of his career for almost twenty years. The relationship fluctuated with the party's fortunes and changes in the local political culture as they altered the balance of power between him and his supporters. It was a relationship negotiated through the party organization, the party newspaper and the distribution of government resources – the principal tools for shaping public opinion. Without access to government patronage himself and within a party that moved almost seamlessly through municipal, provincial and federal politics, Laurier's power depended on the degree of competition within the party, the members' own access to private resources and government patronage as well as Laurier's influence over the party newspaper, its editorial policy and – to a much lesser degree – the party's position and policies in the House of Commons. There was also, lurking in the background, unspoken, the influence of potential victory and the reward of federal resources.

As the political culture and Liberal party in Québec-Est evolved, new issues became important. The party retained a vital interest in completion of a direct rail link to western and eastern Canada, construction of a railway bridge over the St-Lawrence and development of the port. In Québec City, these projects defined the "national" interest and, in their intrinsic challenge to Montréal, the party's support for provincial autonomy as well. The party's interests first broadened in making common cause with other provincial parties to secure an increase in the federal subsidy. It reflected little change though in the party's material interests. They only changed in the early 1890s with the

²¹⁰ ANQQ, Fonds Chambre de Commerce de Québec, P216, vol. 10, File "Assemblées générales."

second phase of industrialization and the emergence of 'les parentistes' as well as a strong labour movement. The manufacturers and 'parentistes' called for a protective tariff, while labour leaders and, to a lesser extent, 'le vrai parti,' began to voice workers' interests in a bureau of labour statistics, arbitration of labour-management disputes, fair wages, a lower cost-of-living, opposition to trusts, construction of public works and limits on industrial immigration.

The party and the constituency's interests evolved in response to the growing size and complexity of the local community. Both were reflected in the size and organizational structure of Dominion Corset, the local labour unions, the municipal government, the riding and the Carnival. They were reflected, too, in the party organization (both locally and nationally), the management and editorial policy of L'Électeur, and, as we will see in the next chapter, elections. They occurred in a public culture already well defined by the local history, geography, economy and society. Despite the changes, strong local identities (in each ward and in the riding), a strong sense of community responsibility and emphasis on personal accountability remained. Partisanship too, remained intense, though in the early 1890s it became increasingly defined by loyalty to Laurier as he drew people seeking prestige and personal interest into the party and used his control of L'Électeur and a stronger national party organization to arbitrate and moderate internal party disputes. The test, for Laurier, 'le vrai parti' and 'les parentistes' would come in the 1896 election.

At 2:50 in the afternoon on Wednesday May 6, 1896, Laurier stepped onto the platform of the Canadian Pacific Railway Terminal in Québec City to cheers from a throng of electors.² Simon-Napoléon Parent, Alderman for St-Valier, MLA for St-Sauveur and Mayor of Québec City delivered an official welcome. Laurier took his place in “un carrosse trainé par quatre magnifiques chevaux” and led a “cortège grandiose” through the city streets. “Partout le long du parcours, la population manifestait son enthousiasme pour le chef... Tous les échos retentissaient du nom de Wilfrid Laurier.”

For the sixth consecutive time, Laurier began his election campaign in Québec-Est. Yet the symbolism of that day, although familiar, served a new purpose. In the past, it had identified Laurier with his electors; in 1896, it aimed to identify them with him. His cortège did not work its way through Québec-Centre towards St-Ours as it did in 1877. Laurier did not “step down” to enter Québec-Est. Instead, he led the cortège from the train station in Québec-Est to the Chateau Frontenac. He did not ride in a carriage with ‘vrai parti’ stalwarts Thibaudeau, Shehyn and Lemieux. This time, he rode with Parent and Pelletier. Behind him, in place of “les voitures [de] la députation,” was a second carriage with François Langelier, H-G. Joly de Lotbinière and W.G. Ross, a minister in the Ontario government of Oliver Mowat. Laurier drew “un immense hourrah” when he proclaimed, in response to Parent’s address: “le jour où j’aurai remporté les élections... Oliver Mowat formera partie du gouvernement Laurier.”³ Behind Ross, civic leaders

² The description of Laurier’s arrival in Québec City in the following paragraphs is taken from *Ibid.*, 7 May 1896, pp. 1-2.

³ Pacaud reiterated Ontario’s support for Laurier by reprinting an unprecedented full-page biography from *The Globe*. *Ibid.*, p. 3.

from both the English and French communities “occupaient des places dans les voitures qui faisaient escorte à Laurier.”

L'Électeur had signalled the party's new emphasis on Laurier's national prestige two days before his arrival in the city. It presented his visit as part of “une marche triomphale” that began with his tours of western Canada and Ontario in 1894 and 1895.⁴ During those tours, “[Laurier], Canadien français et catholique, ...s'est fait acclamer par les auditoires le plus divers, non seulement comme un orateur distingué et le chef reconnu du parti libéral de tout le Dominion, mais comme le Premier ministre de demain et l'un des hommes dont le Canada tout entier a lieu d'être fier.” He won the respect “de tous ces centres populeux ordinairement les plus antipathiques à notre race et à notre religion.” Now, Pacaud argued, Québec-Est had a duty to support Laurier.

Pour nous spécialement, cet homme est plus qu'un chef, plus qu'un compatriote et un co-religionnaire, c'est notre député, notre représentant au parlement central du pays, celui qui reçoit son mandat des deux quartiers les plus français et les plus catholiques de Québec. Le nom de Wilfrid Laurier est intimement lié avec ceux de St-Roch et St-Sauveur de Québec qui seront appelés, cette semaine...à témoigner de leur confiance et de leur enthousiasme pour notre chef à tous et leur député à eux.

But running simultaneously as both “notre chef à tous et leur député à eux” posed a greater challenge in 1896 than ever before. Although Laurier had often endured sniping as an outsider, changes in the political culture greatly increased the significance of that criticism. This chapter explores the origin and character of those changes, the nature of the challenges they presented and the ways both Laurier and his opponents grappled with them in the 1896 campaign. It portrays the campaign as a central event in a period of transition within the local political culture. It marks a stage of “popular” politics that

⁴ Ibid., 4 May 1896, p. 2.

reflected traditional beliefs and practices as well as new ones that would be part of a political culture just starting to form.

Changes in the local political culture brought about by the second phase in the industrial revolution were already evident in the larger, more complex, party structure that developed in the early 1890s. These same changes provided the principal impetus for altering election practices and campaign strategies in 1896. From 1871 to 1891, the number of people living in Québec-Est rose from 28,305 to 36,200 and reached 39,325 in 1901.⁵ By 1896, the constituency had nearly three times the population of Québec-Centre and four times that of Québec-Ouest.⁶ The number of electors had increased 63.7 per cent from what it was in 1878.⁷ Yet Macdonald had chosen not to alter the riding's boundaries in either the 1882 or 1892 redistributions of federal seats. He obviously preferred to concentrate Liberal support in a single riding. This politically strategic decision had the effect of making it significantly more difficult by the early 1890s for local organizers of either party to meet with individual electors or find homes with sufficient space to host a committee room for even a single poll.⁸

Changes in the organization of work also altered the style of the campaign. The boot and shoe industry, by far the most important in Québec-Est, went through a period of rapid concentration in the 1890s. From 1871 to 1891 the number of firms and the number of people finding work in the industry had increased dramatically but the

⁵ Census of Canada, 1870-71, 1890-91, and 1900-01.

⁶ NAC, Fonds Office of the Chief Electoral Officer, RG 113-C, Electoral Returns, 1867-1980.

⁷ The number of eligible electors in Québec-Est increased from 4,487 in 1878 to 7,346 in 1896. Ibid.

⁸ The average number of electors per poll had increased from 127 in 1887 (5461 electors and 43 polls) to 163.2 in 1896 (7346 electors and 45 polls). Ibid.

organization of the work had remained relatively unchanged.⁹ As a result, the number of workers per firm had not increased significantly: going from an average of 21.1 employees per firm in 1871 to 25.5 in 1891. But, beginning in the early 1890s, the number of firms declined sharply from 155 in 1891 to 35 in 1901 while the number of people employed in the industry remained largely unchanged (increasing slightly from 3,959 to 3,980). On average, there were 113.7 employees per firm in the boot and shoe industry in 1901. A similar concentration occurred in other industries too. For example, in the women's clothing business, the number of firms declined from 381, with 800 employees (2.1 employees per firm), to three firms with 135 employees or 45 employees per firm. The number of firms and people employed in the men's clothing business declined from 173 firms and 774 people (4.5 people per firm) in 1891 to 13 firms and 239 people (18.4 people per firm) in 1901. In the lumber products business, where the number of employees per firm was already high (53.3 employees per firm in 1891), the number of firms and employees increased (from three to six and from 160 to 235 respectively).¹⁰

Newly emerging industries, the first real signs of diversification in the local manufacturing sector, exhibited the same pattern of employment. For example, there were five box, bag and paper businesses with 177 employees (35.4 employees per firm) and three hat, cap and fur companies employing 169 people (56.3 employees per firm) in the constituency in 1901.

The introduction of new technology and the reorganization of work that encouraged and allowed this concentration broke the personal bonds that had

⁹ Statistics used in this paragraph are drawn from Census of Canada, 1870-71, 1890-91, 1900-01.

¹⁰ In this example, the "lumber products" business appearing in the 1901 census is equated with the "sash, door and blind" business described in the 1891 census.

characterized employment in earlier craft-based industries.¹¹ At Dominion Corset, one of the constituency's more prominent employers, separate entrances, work schedules and workspaces for the president, office employees and workers told of new social divisions.¹² According to historians Jean du Berger and Jacques Mathieu, "l'organisation spatiale modelait les relations sociales."¹³ In the factory, occupational groups "se reconnaissaient très peu et se fréquentaient encore moins... Les communications se faisaient dans un sens vertical et se limitaient pratiquement aux seules directives des patrons."¹⁴ For at least one employee, the President "était un homme qui ne nous parlait pas."¹⁵ As a result, the expectation and experience of personal contact between social classes diminished. It prompted workers to look to themselves and gave them the social space to form both a unique working-class culture and trade unions.¹⁶ In the political arena, it essentially prevented the organization of committee rooms in private homes and reduced the value of factory visits done in accompaniment with the employer. Political organizers had to find new ways to communicate with electors.

The effect of these changes on the 1896 campaign was profound. The men who, in the past, had served as the party's principal organizers in Québec-Est, devoted little attention to the riding. They joined, instead, the regional organizing committee or toured

¹¹ Craig Heron, The Canadian Labour Movement : A Short History (Toronto : James Lorimer and Company, Publishers, 1989) p. 31.

¹² Jean du Berger and Jacques Mathieu, Les Ouvriers de Dominion Corset à Québec, 1886-1988 (Québec : Les Presses de l'Université Laval, 1993) pp. 18-21.

¹³ Ibid., p. 19.

¹⁴ Ibid., p. 21.

¹⁵ Ibid., p. 22.

¹⁶ Yvan Lamonde, Lucia Ferretti, Daniel LeBlanc, La Culture ouvrière à Montréal (1880-1920) : bilan historiographique (Québec : Institut québécoise de recherche sur la culture, 1982) pp. 41-42.

with Laurier in Ontario, Québec and New Brunswick.¹⁷ Local party members were invited to hear them speak at the regional headquarters in the Hôtel St-Louis or join excursions to meetings outside the city. The first committee room in Québec-Est only opened on June 9 – well after those in other constituencies.¹⁸ It attracted the party's leading speakers only once and, by the end of the campaign, only seven meetings had been held.¹⁹ Conservatives did no better. They opened only one committee room, at 868 St-Valier in St-Sauveur; Conservative newspapers reported on more Liberal meetings than their own.²⁰

Left largely to their own devices, local Liberals struggled to maintain a united front. Members of the Club Mercier opened the riding's first committee room in an old manufacturing plant in Jacques-Cartier ward on the corner of St-Valier and Turgeon. Three days later, however, 'les parentistes' from St-Sauveur formed a new Liberal club. The Club Laurier included as officers: S-N. Parent (Honorary President), George Paquet (President), Paul Pouliot (First Vice-President), Nazaire Lachance (Second Vice-President), Dr. Charles É. Côté (Secretary), Théophile Armand (Treasurer) and J.N. Thérien (Assistant Treasurer).²¹ The new club reinforced divisions between 'les

¹⁷ The organizing committee was composed of C-A-P. Pelletier, President; Parent; Turner; Rochette; J-B-E. Letellier; Charles A. Parent; Charles Fitzpatrick, MLA; D. Arcand; F-X. Lemieux, MLA; Joly; D.A. Ross; F. Langelier; Amédée Robitaille et Joseph A.W. Lebel, Secretary. *L'Électeur*, 5 May 1896, p. 6.

¹⁸ *Ibid.*, 9 June 1896, p. 2.

¹⁹ Senator Pelletier, F. Langelier, A. Malouin, C. Langelier and J-B. Laliberté spoke at a meeting on June 16, 1896. *Ibid.*, 17 June 1896, p. 1.

²⁰ Opening of the Conservative committee room is reported in *L'Événement*, 9 June 1896, p. extra. Reports of 'numerous' Liberal meetings are given in the same newspaper, 17 June 1896, p. 2. There are no reports of Conservative meetings with prominent speakers.

²¹ Other members of the "Club Laurier" included: Eugene Lamond, Charles Longchamp, Z. Nadeau, J. Robitaille, Célestin Morency, Napoléon Jobin, Clovis Bouffard, Télésphore Poitras, Jacques Légaré, Désiré Charest, H. Thiverge, J.S. Harvey, François Pruneau, A.P. Giroux, Isidore Caouette, Joseph Dion, F.X.

parentistes' and 'le vrai parti libéral,' exacerbating still further the challenges of organizing an effective local campaign. The division seriously weakened the Club Mercier and prompted Pacaud to issue an appeal for new members only months after the election.²²

Without a vigorous local campaign rooted in the personal ties and influence of civic leaders, it was left largely to Pacaud to find other ways to assert Laurier's ties to the community while not undermining his appeal in the rest of the country. Pacaud's solutions drew on the riding's political traditions while, at the same time, they integrated innovations in campaign strategy and practice. His enhanced role, already significant, represents one of the party's principal adaptations to the new political culture. It gave Pacaud the ability to carefully coordinate – rather than harmonize – Laurier's appeal to local, broader ethnic or regional, and national audiences.

Liberal ability to strike the most advantageous balance between these various levels of popular appeal, and alter that balance without opening themselves to public criticism for their inconsistency, was evident in three political meetings Laurier held shortly after his arrival in Québec City. On his first night in town, the predominantly English Liberal Club hosted a meeting at the Academy of Music in the Upper Town.²³

Armand, Théo L'heureux, Napoléon Thérien, Joseph Paradis, F.X. Maheux, Télesphore Gagnon, G. Lachance junior, François Chevrete, Joseph Huppé, Jean Lortie, J.B. Jobin, Wilbrod Pampalon, Alf. Francoeur, Édouard Bolduc, Nazaire Lachance Jr., Sifrois Bussièrès, Omer Côté, A. Pelletier, Prud. Beaudet, O. Gilbert, J. Métayer, Cléophas Blais, F. Gingras, Odilon Falardeau, Joseph Allaire, and F. Routhier. L'Électeur, 13 June 1896, p. 4.

²² Membership had dropped to 300 people while Pacaud suggested it should be closer to 1,000. Ibid., 16 December 1896, p. 4.

²³ Description of the meeting on May 6, 1896, is taken from Ibid., 7 May 1896, pp. 1-2.

“Le haut commerce, la finance, les professions libérales y étaient représentés en grand nombre,” reported L’Électeur. “Les pavillons anglais, français et canadien, cette trinité si belle, flottait aux quatre coins de la salle.” Banners hung on all four walls spoke to local and national issues, to French and English concerns, and even to women’s participation in the political community.²⁴ They read:

Welcome to our chief Wilfrid Laurier
Ladies vote Liberal
Le Pays avant le Parti
Québec Bridge
Justice Égale pour Tous
Vote Liberal for Honest Government

That evening, Laurier attacked the Conservatives for waiting until the last minute to call an election, for their record of increasing taxes and debt, for ruining the country with a protective tariff and for lacking the courage to resolve the Manitoba Schools Question. Laurier emphasized business issues and the need for a tariff “capable de nous procurer les revenus nécessaires sans favoriser aucune classe en particulier.” Ross, by his mere presence, played a key role demonstrating Laurier’s support in Ontario. Langelier linked the most important local development issue to national politics by reminding voters of Tupper’s unfulfilled 1891 campaign promise to build a bridge across the St. Lawrence. Charles Fitzpatrick, the Liberal candidate in Québec-Comté, a devout Irish Catholic and one of Riel’s lawyers in 1885, closed the evening by thanking Laurier and Ross on behalf the English population.

²⁴ It would be another 25 years before women won the right to vote, but the mere mention of women voting represented a substantial change from Laurier’s earlier campaigns. While Pacaud seems to have considered women’s presence as essentially decorative, he also recognized – somewhat ruefully – a potentially substantial political role. “Pour que les orateurs ne puissent pas manquer d’inspiration, les organisateurs avaient eu l’heureuse idée d’invité les dames à cette belle démonstration politique. Les loges et une partie des galeries était remplies par une foule de jolies femmes sympathiques à la cause libérale...On a beau dire, les femmes jouent un rôle prépondérant partout, même en politique.” Ibid., p. 1.

French Canadian nationalism replaced business interests as the central theme at a meeting of the Club Mercier in the Salle Jacques-Cartier the following day.²⁵ Prominent members of Mercier's cabinet, civic leaders, officers of the Club Mercier and students from the Université Laval met Laurier at the Chateau Frontenac and accompanied him to St-Roch. The Manitoba Schools Question dominated speeches by Joly, Laurier and Liberal candidates Rodolphe Lemieux and G.M. Duchène.²⁶ Joly's presence dramatized Laurier's determination to obtain what he called "justice entière" for the Catholic minority in Manitoba. "Je suis protestant," declared Joly, "et j'ai toujours vécu parmi une population catholique et j'ai eu occasion de connaître ses sentiments et d'apprécier sa noblesse comme la sincérité de sa foi. Et, je le déclare ici, je veux que la minorité de Manitoba soit traité avec la même libéralité avec laquelle, nous, protestants, avons été traités parmi vous."

Only the third meeting, at Halle St-Pierre in St-Sauveur, was really a local gathering.²⁷ According to Pacaud, the "brave" population of Québec-Est, "toujours généreuse, a saisi cette occasion pour faire comprendre que si, dans les autres provinces, [Laurier] avait conquis l'estime d'hommes qui ne sont pas de sa race, ses compatriotes savent apprécier sa droiture, son patriotisme, comme son immense talent." The first speech, given by Pelletier, focussed entirely on local issues.

²⁵ Description of the meeting on May 7, 1896, is taken from *Ibid.*, 8 May 1896, p. 1.

²⁶ Laurier was met at the Chateau Frontenac by Gaspard Rochette, President of the "Club Mercier," and the Club's principal officers: P. Corriveau, J.H. Patry, J.A. Langlais and "quelques autres." In addition, there were a number of prominent citizens of St-Roch: Thomas Duchaine, Charles Roy, Jean Drolet, Parent, Joseph Gauthier, and C.A. Parent. They joined Laurier and Henri Joly, C-A-P. Pelletier, Pierre Garneau, Charles Langelier and M. Carroll, MP, M. Vaillancourt, MP, and A. Turgeon, MLA, G.M. Duchène, MLA, F-X. Lemieux, MLA, Jules Tessier, MLA and F. Pinault, MLA. Rudolphe Lemieux was a Montréal lawyer and Liberal candidate in de Gaspé at the time. *Ibid.*

²⁷ Description of the meeting is taken from *Ibid.*, 9 May 1896, p. 1.

Il a rappelé la manière honteuse avec laquelle les ministres fédéraux avaient traité notre ville en lui enlevant successivement la police du port, l'Hôpital de la Marine, en fermant pour ainsi dire le bureau des "cullers" et en envoyant à Toronto les Hussards du Colonel Turnbull que nous aimions tant à voir parader dans nos rues. Il a aussi fait voir l'injustice criante commise par le gouvernement qui avait refusé de venir au secours des malheureuses familles qui ont été ruinés par l'éblouis de la rue Champlain.

Laurier spoke personably to his electors. "Quels changements se sont opérés dans St-Sauveur depuis quelques années... grâce à l'intelligence de ses citoyens," he remarked. "Je ne vois plus au milieu de vous ces patriotes que j'aimais tant à voir, comme, MM. Félix Fortin, Jonas Gosselin, le Dr Dion et ce regretté Cléophas Rochette." F-X. Lemieux, Liberal MLA for Bonaventure and another of Riel's lawyers in 1885, stole the show. He brought a "rire homérique" to the audience when he reminded them of Tupper's unfulfilled promise to build a bridge at Québec. "Il est impossible de ridiculiser plus finement ses adversaires qu'il ne l'a fait là," concluded L'Électeur.

Québec-Est was accustomed to large political rallies that included speeches on a variety of issues but often focused on a dominant theme – much like the meeting in the Salle Jacques-Cartier. They reflected popular belief in large community demonstrations as legitimate expressions of public opinion. But, in 1896, Laurier needed to add a meeting at the Academy of Music to address English electors and others with business interests as well as a meeting in Halle St-Pierre to demonstrate his commitment to his own constituents. It is a strong indication that electors no longer attended political meetings simply out of a broad community interest in politics. By holding three separate meetings, in separate locations, indoors and without the participation of Conservative speakers, Laurier was able to control the balance between local, provincial and national interests and better address their particular concerns. At the same time, though, he was

more protected from contrary elements in public opinion. The meetings gave the appearance of popular expressions of legitimate public opinion, but party control of the proceedings and more limited subject matter undermined their original credibility. These were no “*joute contradictoire*.”

Laurier’s presence and a number of secondary symbols that encouraged the audiences to recognize at least the possibility of a broader interest for themselves also helped the party maintain a reasonably consistent image at these meetings. For example, Fitzpatrick’s prominent role at the Academy of Music reminded audience members of his role in Riel’s defense and the possibility of at least English Catholic sympathy for some French Canadian interests in the Manitoba Schools Question. Similarly, Joly’s presence reminded the audience at the Salle Jacques-Cartier that it was at least possible to be a French Canadian Protestant. Ross’s pledge of Ontario’s support for a French Catholic Prime Minister and Joly’s assurance of Protestant interest in minority rights gave their audiences evidence that others understood and sympathized with their particular concerns. They suggested, too, the possibility of distinct advantages to be gained through Laurier’s broader influence and appeal. Finally, the consistent inclusion of local issues, despite their varying importance, illustrated the party’s long-time commitment to Québec City and helped make those issues part of the national agenda. Thus, by adjusting presentation, controlling the proceedings and coordinating the content at public meetings, Pacaud – and Laurier – adapted to the changing political culture in Québec-Est and made an effective appeal to public opinion.

Pacaud took merciless pleasure in Tupper’s inability to strike such a successful balance. Early in the campaign, before English Protestant electors in Winnipeg, Tupper

asked: “Who can say that, in the interests of public schools, it would be wise to overturn the current government and put in power a Roman Catholic and a French-Canadian as Prime Minister?”²⁸ It was a statement that allowed Pacaud to paint him as two-faced throughout the campaign: a public school supporter when speaking to English Protestants and a proponent of the Conservative’s remedial legislation when speaking to French Catholics. When Tupper visited Québec City on May 18, Pacaud took full advantage by running a cartoon that captures perfectly his view of Tupper’s duplicity (see Figure 5 on page 168).²⁹ It was further evidence that the appearance of consistency and the careful coordination of messages to local, provincial and national constituencies had taken on new importance in the 1896 campaign.

Pacaud applied a similar balance to his treatment of issues in the pages of L’Électeur and introduced important innovations in the newspaper’s format, distribution and content to help, once again, compensate for the lack of a strong local campaign. But these innovations were also required to help him compete in a new business environment that transformed what historian Jean de Bonville calls “journaux d’opinions” into “journaux populaires.”³⁰ It was the first step in the evolution of newspapers towards more modern “journaux d’information.” The transformation began in Montréal and Québec City in the early 1890s, prompted by the coincidence of accelerated urban population growth, higher literacy “rates,” larger information and distribution networks as well as

²⁸ Ibid., 13 May 1896, p. 1.

²⁹ Ibid., 18 May 1896, p. 1.

³⁰ Jean de Bonville, La presse québécoise de 1884 à 1914 : genèse d’un média de masse (Québec : Les Presses de l’Université Laval, 1988) p. 221.



Figure 5: "Sir Charles Tupper parlant à la fois à Winnipeg et à Québec"³¹

³¹ L'Électeur, 19 May 1896, p.1.

innovations in printing and manufacturing technologies and organization.³² The ability to increase production and distribute products more widely drove manufacturers to differentiate them from their competitors' in the larger market. This spurred increased interest in newspaper advertising from manufacturers at the same time better printing and distribution technologies made it possible for newspapers to enlarge their size and extend their reach. Thus, there was important business as well as political motivation for Pacaud's innovations.

In the political arena, the ability of L'Électeur to compensate for a less effective local campaign hinged first on an increasing literacy rate in Québec-Est. In 1891, 67.3 per cent of people living in Québec City could read while, ten years later, that number had increased to 78.2 per cent.³³ In Québec-Est, 75.4 per cent of the total population could read in 1901 or 86.4 per cent of people over five years old. This sudden jump in the literacy rate suggests that the night schools introduced by the Mercier government, and supported by the Congrégation des Hommes de Notre-Dame de St-Roch, had real benefits for many in Québec-Est. By the mid-1890s, these new readers formed a potential market that encouraged Pacaud to give L'Électeur a more popular style. He introduced columns for sports news and articles of specific interest for women. He devoted more space to headlines and, while reducing the size of each page, increased the number of pages to allow for more advertising and more articles. Within two years, from 1891 to 1893, the newspaper's circulation increased 240 per cent.³⁴

³² Ibid. See also, Paul Rutherford, The Making of the Canadian Media (Toronto: McGraw Hill Ryerson Ltd., 1978).

³³ Statistical information in this paragraph is from Census of Canada 1890-91 and 1900-01.

³⁴ Circulation of L'Électeur increased from 5,000 copies daily in 1891 to 12,000 copies in 1893. André Beaulieu and Jean Hamelin, La Presse québécoise des origines à nos jours, Troisième tome, 1880-1895 (Québec : Les Presses de l'Université Laval, 1977) p. 11.

In Pacaud's capable hands, the 1896 campaign became a vehicle for increasing the newspaper's circulation as well as advancing the party's cause. He generated 10,000 new readers in one month by offering a three-month subscription and a 14 by 18 inch portrait of Laurier for 25 cents.³⁵ The tactic was so successful that Conservatives raised it as a campaign issue, arguing that it was illegal to distribute political material in combination with a newspaper through the Post Office.³⁶ Pacaud introduced significant changes in the presentation of political information too. He published the party's new platform in the form of an "advertisement" (set off from other articles) early in the campaign.³⁷ The platform, concise and easy to read, was itself a political innovation that ideally suited popular journalism. As the campaign advanced, Pacaud encapsulated issues for particular audiences in similar advertisement-like blocks crossing two columns. These often appeared on the back pages of the newspaper so that they could be taken out and used as campaign brochures. The strategically timed Saturday June 13 edition (the Saturday edition circulated more widely than the weekday editions) contained no less than eight such "advertisements." Finally, he ran advertisement-like notices under the masthead exhorting people to vote for Laurier and more political cartoons than ever before. "La petite guerre" with opposing newspapers was relegated to page four or deeper.

Pacaud innovated too in the way he made Laurier a central issue in the campaign. By consistently reporting Laurier's public meetings, his editorials and portraits on page

³⁵ The offer was made in *L'Électeur*, 20 May 1896, p. 1 and 1 June 1896, p. 4. Report of the circulation increase is found in the same newspaper, 20 June 1896, p. 4.

³⁶ *Le Courrier du Canada*, 1 June 1896, p. 2; *L'Électeur*, 13 June 1896, p. 1.

³⁷ *L'Électeur*, 23 May 1896, p. 5.

one, Pacaud gave his readers the impression of participating in a triumphant one-man campaign and made Laurier “the” symbol of the Liberal party. In fact, his bicultural heritage made Laurier an attractive symbol in popular journals across the country and helped the party maintain at least the appearance of a consistent appeal in every province. Laurier’s “trust me” position on the Manitoba Schools Question (the central policy problem confronting electors) only reinforced the importance of his personal history, character and leadership in the campaign.

Issues did not come and go on the pages of L’Électeur with the cut and thrust of “la petite guerre” as they had in earlier campaigns. Instead, the number and placement of articles on a particular issue enhanced or diminished the prominence of that issue in the newspaper without it ever being entirely absent. This was an adjustment that reflected Pacaud’s desire to communicate effectively with a larger potentially less attentive audience and was supported by new technology that facilitated publication of a larger newspaper. Among the most significant of these issues were tariff policy, government spending and political corruption, as they all continued to differentiate the two parties. Pacaud managed the potentially difficult shift in Liberal policy towards a “revenue tariff” that would provide adequate protection for manufacturers by featuring endorsements from leading Canadian industrialists.³⁸ In his own editorials, Pacaud largely avoided discussing the overall impact of tariff protection but continued to condemn the effect a high tariff had on social groups that had long supported the Liberals’ “free trade” policy: consumers, farmers, workers and families.³⁹ No such dexterity was required in

³⁸ As an example, a list of 24 industrialists supporting the Liberal position was printed in Ibid., p. 1.

³⁹ See for example, Ibid., 12 and 28 May 1896, p. 1 (farmers); 13 May 1896, p. 4 (workers); 13 June 1896, p. 1 (consumers and families).

denouncing Conservatives for raising the national debt from \$140 million to \$253 million and increasing annual government spending from \$28 million to \$38 million.⁴⁰

L'Électeur repeatedly detailed amounts “wasted” on government newspapers, lawyers, travel and even the funeral arrangements for Sir John Thompson.⁴¹ Such attacks fit well with articles warning of Conservatives’ electoral corruption and intimidation.⁴² But, after the McGreevey and Baie des Chaleurs scandals, both Liberal and Conservative newspapers stopped short of engaging in truly virulent personal attacks.⁴³

Towards the end of the campaign, Pacaud shifted the balance of his coverage towards issues and arguments of more provincial or local appeal in response to Conservative charges that Laurier had betrayed his race and religion. In particular, French-Canadian, Catholic and local pride in Laurier became the central message of articles on the Manitoba Schools Question.⁴⁴ Much as Laurier had suggested in 1894, Pacaud ran endorsements from Liberals and racial or religious insults from Conservatives outside the province.⁴⁵ He introduced new issues too. On June 11, L'Électeur featured statistics revealing the gross under-representation of French Canadians in the federal

⁴⁰ They also accused the government of providing unnecessary subsidies to the CPR, wasting land in the North West, making poor investments with public money and creating a costly system for revising the electoral list. Ibid., 5 June 1896, p. 1.

⁴¹ Ibid., 16 June 1896, p. 4 and 17 June 1896, p. 2.

⁴² Ibid., 9 June 1896, p. 2; 10 June 1896, p. 1; 22 June 1896, p. 1-2; and 24 June 1896, p. 4.

⁴³ The only exception was an article in Le Courrier du Canada reminding Québec City voters of the Baie des Chaleurs scandal. Le Courrier du Canada, 17 May 1896, p. 1.

⁴⁴ See for example, L'Électeur, 22 June 1896, p. 1. “Si Laurier n’est pas élu demain, s’il manque de l’influence auprès des libéraux anglais, si, encore une fois les Canadiens français sont condamnés à l’infériorité et à l’impuissance dans la confédération, ce sera la faute du clergé...”

⁴⁵ Orange support for the Tories in Ontario and Manitoba was brought to the fore in an article in Ibid., 18 May 1896, p. 1. Endorsements of Laurier’s leadership from Ontario Liberals appeared in Ibid., 20 May 1896, p. 1; 29 May 1896, p. 1; and 18 June 1896, p. 1.

public service.⁴⁶ And, a week later, it condemned Conservative inclinations to participate in “foreign” wars.⁴⁷ On June 15, Pacaud threw down the gauntlet, telling electors, “si vous croyez que M. Laurier n’a pas le droit d’être Premier ministre à cause de la religion qu’il professe et de la langue qu’il parle, donnez raison alors à Sir Charles et votez pour son candidat.”⁴⁸ With victory on the line, Laurier still appealed to electors in Québec-Est as one of their own. They would not let him alter either his identity – or theirs.

L’Électeur returned to local development issues, too, towards the end of the campaign. To be sure, Tupper’s unfulfilled promise from the 1891 campaign to build a bridge across the St. Lawrence at Québec City was a favourite subject throughout the campaign.⁴⁹ But other local issues assumed greater prominence as the campaign advanced prompted, on occasion, by Conservative attacks on Laurier’s local record but more often simply as evidence of the party’s deep roots in Québec-Est and broad civic determination to become Canada’s national entrepôt. Development of the QMOO, expansion of port facilities, creation of a rapid steamship service to Europe and an increased number of public works were all justified, first and foremost, in terms of local employment. Under the headline “Du travail pour nos ouvriers,” an unsigned letter to the editor caressed, once again, the dream of a direct railway line to the “Grand Ouest:”

Le chemin de fer du Grand Nord nous ramènerait notre commerce envolé, nous donnera une part du commerce du Grand Ouest, commerce que nous n’avons jamais eu, ouvrant à notre activité un nouveau pays agricole dont le commerce de pulpe et l’industrie laitière nous serons tributaires; que sa construction, l’érection immédiate de ses usines, fournirait pour longtemps

⁴⁶ Ibid., 11 June 1896, p. 4.

⁴⁷ Ibid., 17 June 1896, p. 1.

⁴⁸ Ibid., 15 June 1896, p. 1.

⁴⁹ Articles appeared in Ibid., 12, 16, 27 May and 6, 18, 19 June 1896.

de l'ouvrage à nos travailleurs... Voici une entreprise publique dont dépend peut-être l'avenir de notre ville [et dont] tout Québec l'approuve.⁵⁰

Two remarkable articles printed just days before the election put these local interests in starkly partisan terms. On June 18, Pacaud used the same language as Pelletier had earlier in the campaign to described how the Conservative government had treated the city: “ostracisée, blackboulée sur toute la ligne.”⁵¹ The following day, Pacaud contrasted these injustices with the way Liberals at all levels had treated the city since the Mackenzie government was elected in 1874. The list included Liberal government investments in the port, railways, bridges, libraries, social assistance, the Université Laval, the Institut des Travailleurs, the City Hall and “\$20,000 répandu dans Québec-Est en toutes sortes d'œuvres de charité et d'éducation par l'entremise de son digne député l'hon. M. Shehyn.”⁵² It was the closest L'Électeur would come to recreating the sort of local team campaign of the late 1870s and 1880s. Taken together, the two articles reminded electors of the party's loyalty to Québec City, holding out the promise victory might bring, and tied Laurier to a well-defined local agenda.

These local appeals, in the dying days of the campaign, make it clear that the political culture of Québec-Est had only begun to change. There remained an attachment to the local community, a sense of public accountability and strong feelings of ethnic and religious identity. There remained, too, a well-defined local agenda for economic development that was still seen as the principal means of ensuring stable employment as well as financial prosperity. On the surface, public meetings, political speeches and the

⁵⁰ Ibid., 6 June 1896, p. 2.

⁵¹ Ibid., 18 June 1896, p. 1. For Pelletier's remarks, see quotation on page 165, referenced in footnote 27 on page 164.

⁵² Ibid., 19 June 1896, p. 1.

party newspaper still played prominent roles in shaping the campaign. But the absence of a strong local organization, an enhanced role for Pacaud, recognizable changes in public meetings and political coverage and, most of all, the prominence of Wilfrid Laurier, revealed the beginnings of deep change in the political culture. Liberals drew on long-held traditions and beliefs to adapt. But there were others, particularly in the Church, who decried their innovations. They saw in them a dangerous intensification of party spirit and feared, most of all, Laurier's popular image. "C'est oublier soi-même," wrote J-P. Tardivel, editor of La Vérité.⁵³

Despite this apparent intensification of party spirit, newspaper editors did not engage in their "petite guerre" nearly as much as in earlier campaigns. Like L'Électeur, the principal Conservative newspapers, Le Courrier du Canada and L'Événement, had adjusted their format and content to the new economic and cultural demands of the 1890s. All three editors recognized that there was no longer any economic or even much political advantage to be gained in exchanging long angry editorials. Thus, for the first time, the two parties' campaigns began to take on some of the appearances of advertising campaigns, each progressing in parallel tracks rather than in the dialogue that had characterized past elections. Unfortunately, for the Conservatives, Tupper lacked Laurier's bicultural appeal and his ability to maintain at least the appearance of consistency while adjusting the local, provincial or national emphasis in his presentation to suit an audience's interests. Conservative organizers were unable to make him into the kind of symbol that could lead an advertising-type campaign and help compensate for the

⁵³ La Vérité, 20 June 1896, p. 3.

absence of a strong local organization. Worse yet, they were increasingly drawn into focusing on Laurier – and his image – as the campaign progressed.

But it was the clergy who took greatest exception to Liberal campaign tactics and Laurier's popular appeal. Not only did they threaten Church interest in remedial legislation, but as visible adaptations to the changing political culture, they also appeared to threaten the foundation of Church influence in the local, largely oral, political culture of earlier times. Thus, the Bishops launched an old-style campaign against the Liberals that, to the degree it was effective, underscored once again the embryonic stage of change in the political culture. Early on, they challenged the Liberals directly and engaged them throughout the campaign in a vigorous political debate. Moreover, they had an organization with strong local roots (in each parish), capable speakers (priests and bishops) and a devoted audience, in church, each Sunday. Liberals feared their influence. Even rumours that the Council of Bishops would issue a pastoral letter urging voters to support the Conservatives brought dire warnings in L'Électeur that the Church would be wiser not to provoke a Protestant backlash.⁵⁴ Apparently, at least one of the bishops recognized that the argument had some merit.⁵⁵ Pacaud's relief was palpable when, in the end, the letter only asked "tous les prêtres de s'abstenir eux-mêmes de tout commentaire." Pacaud praised the Church and held out the prospect of future Liberal support, saying that, with the pastoral letter, "la malaise et la défiance...vont disparaître pour faire place à une respect plus grand, une affection plus vive, une considération plus

⁵⁴ L'Électeur, 16 May 1896, p. 1.

⁵⁵ Monseigneur Émard, Bishop of Valleyfield refused to sign the first "sévère" draft of the pastoral letter written by Monseigneur Laflèche. As a result, the tone was softened in the published version. Robert Rumilly, Histoire de la Province de Québec, Tome VIII, Laurier (Montréal : Éditions Bernard Valiquette, 1942) p. 59.

élevée pour la hiérarchie qui nous commande tous, Conservateurs comme Libéraux, dans le domaine spirituel.”⁵⁶

Pacaud’s hopes of seeing the clergy step back from politics did not last long though. In a sermon published the next day in Conservative papers across the province, Monseigneur Laflèche condemned Laurier’s determination to address the Manitoba Schools Question not from a Catholic or Protestant perspective, but from a position of justice, liberty and tolerance. “C’est dire,” he claimed, “qu’un Catholique n’est pas tenu d’être catholique que dans sa vie privée.” He could not object more strongly to the dissolution of a unique community identity and the Conservative press required no further encouragement. Le Courrier du Canada condemned Laurier as “un homme sans cœur...sans principes, sans convictions, sans patriotisme.” L’Électeur replied by portraying Laflèche as leader of the old guard, a man isolated among his peers, who only weakened Church influence by his incursions into politics. Pacaud even went so far as to threaten publication of “des notes piquantes d’intérêt sur le digne évêque,” a step that provoked the threat of censure from Monseigneur Bégin. But Pacaud succeeded in making the propriety of clerical intervention in politics part of the issue. In the same article, L’Événement found itself obliged to condemn Laurier’s radicalism and affirm “le droit et le devoir [du clergé] de protéger les intérêts religieux des fidèles.”⁵⁷ Le Courrier du Canada even devoted whole articles to the clergy’s right to participate in politics “par les faits que l’action du clergé est éminement civilisatrice.”⁵⁸

⁵⁶ L’Électeur, 18 May 1896, p. 1.

⁵⁷ L’Événement, 9 June 1896, p. 2.

⁵⁸ Le Courrier du Canada, 18 June 1896, p. 2.

Conservatives also attacked Liberal efforts to exclude the clergy from politics by condemning the intensification of party spirit they saw in Liberal tactics. Thus, much like Liberals in the 1870s, they made “national” interest the central issue of the campaign. It was, in effect, the principal Conservative adaptation to the changing political culture. Laurier’s opponent in Québec-Est, Cléophas Leclerc, made his appeal in its most forceful and modern terms. In a manifesto released on June 5, he declared: “le drapeau que j’arbore n’est ni rouge ni bleu.”⁵⁹ He promised to vote only for remedial legislation, to resign once it was passed and to withdraw should Laurier support it. “Comme tout catholique devrait le faire,” said Tardivel, “il se sortait entièrement à l’esprit du parti...et ne descend dans l’arène politique que pour accomplir un devoir de conscience.”⁶⁰

The relative weakness of Conservative and clerical appeals in the new political culture of 1896 was evident on election night. The Manitoba Schools Question did not matter nearly as much as Laurier. In Manitoba, more people preferred to vote for the Conservative’s remedial legislation, overturning their government’s own policy, rather than see Laurier elected; while, in Québec, the appeal of a French-Canadian Prime Minister delivered 49 of the province’s 65 seats to the Liberals even though the party opposed remedial legislation that would preserve Catholic schooling in Manitoba.⁶¹ It was no contest in Québec-Est where Laurier captured 76 per cent of the vote. For the first and only time, St-Roch Nord voted for Laurier in equal proportion to other parts of the

⁵⁹ L’Événement, 5 June 1896, p. extra.

⁶⁰ Reported in L’Événement. *Ibid.*

⁶¹ Without accounting for change in the country’s political culture, Desmond Morton simply described the result in Manitoba as “ironic”. Desmond Morton, A Short History of Canada (Edmonton: Hurtig Publishers Ltd., 1983) p. 117.

constituency.⁶² Yet the lack of a strong local campaign produced what would be the lowest turnout in any of Laurier's elections: only 57.4 per cent of electors cast a ballot. It reflected a changing political culture that had only begun to take hold in the constituency as in the rest of the country.

That night, Pacaud undertook an initiative that captured perfectly the changing political culture by demonstrating the application of new technology and popular journalism to the older conception of politics as the expression of community-wide public opinion. That evening, Pacaud wanted to "faire quelque chose de grand."⁶³ So, while Laurier celebrated with supporters at the Salle Jacques-Cartier in St. Roch, his wife joined Pacaud, Pelletier and thousands of others on the terrace in front of the Chateau Frontenac. There, Pacaud had installed facilities for two telegraph lines and "une lanterne magique" with a large screen on which to project the results from constituencies across the country as they came in. More than 1,000 chairs were placed on the terrace "pour les femmes" while others could see the screen from the terrace, des Carrières and des Glacis streets as well as the hotel. "L'Électeur n'en fait pas une manifestation politique," explained Pacaud. "Nous voulons être agréables à tout Québec, adversaires comme amis. Les portraits des chefs conservateurs seront mis en lumières comme ceux des chefs libéraux." He succeeded brilliantly in reflecting a still present belief in the importance of politics for the entire community and the possibility of a community-wide public opinion.

⁶² Laurier captured 69.6 per cent of the vote in St. Roch North, 68.9 per cent in Jacques Cartier, and 72.5 per cent in St. Roch. As he did in every election from 1887 to 1904, Laurier captured a much greater percentage of the vote in St. Sauveur: 80.4 per cent. NAC, Fonds Office of the Chief Electoral Officer, RG-113-C, Electoral Returns, 1867-1980.

⁶³ L'Électeur, 22 June 1896, p. 1.

The cartoon on page one of L'Électeur the following day (see photo at beginning of the chapter) expresses the same belief in a tangible public opinion; it shows public opinion – not the Liberals – literally kicking the Conservatives from office. It was only fitting then that St-Jean-Baptiste Day, a community holiday, should become the day of real celebration. Recognizing the likelihood of volatile public demonstrations on election night, a community decision had been made earlier in the campaign to restrict St-Jean-Baptiste day celebrations in Québec-Est to a mass at Notre-Dame de St-Roch.⁶⁴ However, given the results, an expression of national and community spirit could not be restrained. That evening all Québec-Est celebrated. “Une nuit incomparable,” enthused Pacaud, “au moins 30,000 personnes dans les rues...les acclamations...la musique...la lumière multicolores produit par des feux de Bengal, le bruit des détonations.”⁶⁵ The crowd gathered at 7:00 pm on “Place d’Armes, la terrasse et jusqu’au carré en face de la basilique.” Accompanied by Parent, Pelletier and Langelier, Laurier arrived with a team of four white horses at the Salle Jacques-Cartier about ten o’clock followed by a mile-long cortege of 50 carriages with two horses, 372 “voitures” and three bands. “De toutes les fenêtres de la rue St-Joseph tombaient des bouquets de fleurs.” Laurier made a short speech then, after making his way to the train station, and thanking his electors once again, he proclaimed: “Québec peut compter maintenant obtenir justice.”

As in the campaign though, balancing local and national interests would test his ability to adapt to a changing political culture once in government. The problems would begin almost immediately, with the formation of a Cabinet and the first, key, patronage appointments in the riding. Yet, as always, Laurier’s freedom to satisfy interests other

⁶⁴ Ibid., 18 May 1896, p. 4.

⁶⁵ Ibid., 25 June 1896, p. 1.

than those of Québec-Est and Québec City, would hinge on local party unity. When they were united, the Prime Minister would become, again, “le député de Québec-Est.”

The 1896 federal election left Laurier with undisputed control of the government party and agenda at the national level. Within months, every provincial government would be in Liberal hands, too.² It was an exceptional moment. In Québec City, the Conservative party and the Church had both been soundly beaten while the relative weakness of the ‘vrai parti’ and Parent’s strength gave Laurier both the freedom and means to act decisively on the national stage. Only Pacaud might challenge the influence of Laurier’s allies, Tarte and the provincial premiers, in that arena. Laurier was free to focus on a national agenda defined by ethnic and religious reconciliation, economic development and the assumption of national autonomy. Liberals in Québec-Est would simply have to trust that he had as much interest in their own long-established agenda: development of the port; construction of direct rail lines to west and east joined by a bridge across the St. Lawrence; local employment through public works and; more problematically, amicable labour relations advantageous to both manufacturers and workingmen. His choices between national and local agendas in the years ahead would test the significance, for ‘le vrai parti,’ of holding national power.

The chapter begins by examining Laurier’s first two years in power when he was free to fulfill national or local agendas with almost unfettered control of the party, the party newspaper and government patronage. It focuses on the political circumstances and culture that made those circumstances possible as well as the management and effect of patronage in Québec-Est. The chapter then turns to consider reaction within the party, the community and the country that began to strengthen the ‘vrai parti’ in 1898. That year marked a major turning point in the course of Laurier’s government. For the next five

² When Liberal Premier Félix-Gabriel Marchand was elected on 11 May 1897, the party controlled all provincial governments in the country.

years, Laurier and Pacaud maintained a precarious and fluctuating balance between the economically and socially conservative 'parentistes' and the more progressive secular French-Canadian nationalists in 'le vrai parti.' Together, they overwhelmed opposition from Bourassa's nascent 'nationaliste' movement and shaped major elements of Laurier's national agenda. If ever Liberals in Québec City and Québec-Est had the power to exercise national leadership, it was from 1898 to 1903.

Thus the chapter focuses on Laurier's role and that of the party in the distribution of government resources and the choices made between local and national agendas. It approaches the manner and effect of those decisions as not only an expression of a particular political culture but also an effort to shape public opinion within it. Those resources had such influence on Canadian society and political parties that this is sometimes overlooked. For example, historians sometimes obscure the differences between the political cultures in which Laurier and Macdonald worked by emphasizing that Laurier essentially learned what he needed to know about patronage management from Macdonald.³ Focussed on the role of patronage in shaping the party system, political scientist S.J.R. Noel and political historian Gordon T. Stewart provide a better framework for understanding Laurier's own efforts.⁴ In particular, they recognize that the practice of patronage management evolved over time and focus our attention on, first, those who managed the distribution of government resources and, second, the

³ Robert Craig Brown and Ramsay Cook, Canada 1896-1921: A Nation Transformed (Toronto: McClelland and Stewart Limited, 1976) pp. 7-8. Desmond Morton refers to Laurier as both Macdonald's successor and his heir. Desmond Morton, A Short History of Canada (Edmonton: Hurtig Publishing Ltd., 1983) pp. 117 and 121.

⁴ S.J.R. Noel, Patrons, Clients, Brokers: Ontario Society and Politics, 1791-1896 (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1990) and Gordon T. Stewart, The Origins of Canadian Politics: A Comparative Approach (Vancouver: UBC Press, 1986).

qualifications one required to secure them. Yet to understand patronage as an instrument for shaping public opinion within a political culture, it is also necessary to ask what patronage was granted, what the government accomplished with it in society (not just in the party) and how well? By addressing these questions, the chapter focuses on the intimate connection between patronage and public opinion and explores the way that relationship reflected local politics and the local political culture during Laurier's first years in power. In this way, too, it serves as a baseline for understanding changes in the distribution of government resources and the political culture in later years.

Anyone who has read Laurier's papers at the National Archives of Canada will soon realize that he had almost total responsibility for the management of a vast range of government resources when he came to power in 1896.⁵ The extent of those resources still reflected Canada's status as a British colony, but included Cabinet appointments, public service positions, employment with government-funded railways and contractors, direct federal expenditures, subsidies, loans, guarantees and regulatory measures as well as symbols of state power. Laurier's authority over their distribution was firmly rooted in a still widely held belief in the value of individual public accountability. Perhaps the most fundamental characteristic of the country's political culture, it was neatly captured in an application of responsible government that extended electoral authority through the party into every government activity. Macdonald had even referred to party control of

⁵ "The distribution of patronage was the most important single function of the government." Oscar Douglas Skelton, *Life and Letters of Sir Wilfrid Laurier*, Volume II, 1896-1919 (Toronto: McClelland and Stewart, 1965) p. 103. "Le patronage. Cette activité devient tôt l'une des ses principales occupations à la tête du pays. Il y consacre tout simplement un temps énorme. Aucun autre sujet n'est plus important dans sa correspondance." Réal Bélanger, *Wilfrid Laurier: quand la politique devient passion* (Québec: Les Presses de l'Université Laval, 1986) p. 221.

government resources as a “constitutional principle.”⁶ It was a principal that encouraged participation in public life but sharply divided Canadians along party lines and between those included and excluded from participation in the political system. Almost as a matter of principal then, Laurier fired Conservatives when he took power in 1896. He relied exclusively on the Liberal party “machine” to distribute government resources.

But the term “machine” can be easily misunderstood.⁷ The Liberal party in Québec-Est did not so much resemble a mechanical tool as a social club that brought together various circles of friends. Indeed, party members consistently referred to each other as “friends” rather than “colleagues.” It had some machine-like elements: its members were often motivated by material rewards distributed through a network of brokers controlled by Laurier to obtain votes and win elections. But its members were also motivated by friendships based on ideological, material and personal interests as well as policy goals. They held power in their own right as a result of their own resources and political influence. It is precisely for this reason that they were entrusted with government patronage and why it functioned as a tool to shape public opinion.

As we have seen, however, there were two distinct factions within the local Liberal party in 1896, each formed at a different time in the evolution of the local political culture. To understand the involvement of each in the distribution of government resources and the making of public opinion, it is helpful to identify them with two

⁶ Stewart, *The Origins...*, p. 67.

⁷ It is often associated with urban American politics that are consumed with the role of political “bosses” and gloss over institutional, temporal and cultural differences. They bear little resemblance to Canadian political parties. Noel, *Patrons...*, p. 276-281.

separate types of political parties defined by political scientist René Lemarchand.⁸

Lemarchand describes a “neo-traditional” party machine as one that has been built on “pre-existing clientele clusters and networks.” When Laurier first ran in Québec-Est he benefited greatly from the networks already established by Thibaudeau, Sheyhn and especially François Langelier and Pelletier. This rather loose network grew to include such prominent politicians as Choquette and Charles Langelier as well as businessmen like Jean-Baptiste Laliberté, Joseph Gauthier and Gaspard Rochette. They shared a Rouge heritage and held liberal democratic values, French-Canadian nationalist convictions and supported greater separation of Church and state. They had formed Langelier’s municipal government and worked with “Castors” like Pierre Garneau to secure power with Mercier. In Québec-Est, they were active in the Congrégation des Hommes de la Paroisse de Saint-Roch de Québec and prominent in Jacques-Cartier and St-Roch wards. In the city, they would come together in the law firm of Choquette, Armand Lavergne, Allyn Taschereau and Lucien Pacaud (son of Ernest Pacaud) and, most importantly, in the Club Mercier.⁹

But Laurier had also tried to build a more dependent party organization, or “orthodox” party machine, during his years in opposition. He took the first step in 1880 when he established L’Électeur and hired his closest friend and confidant, Earnest Pacaud, to be its editor and chief party organizer in the district. Over the years, however, Pacaud’s Rouge heritage and need for government patronage had made him a close

⁸ René Lemarchand, “Political Clientelism and Ethnicity in Tropical Africa,” in Steffen W. Schmidt et al., Friends, Followers and Factions: A Reader in Political Clientelism (Stanford University Press: Berkley, 1977) p. 114-5. See also Noel, Patrons..., p. 277. Noel uses the distinction between party “types” to differentiate between Mowat’s Liberal party and Macdonald’s Conservative party in Ontario.

⁹ See letterhead on NAC, Fonds Laurier, MG 26-G, Volume 363, p. 96935. Choquette to Boudreau, 26 April 1905.

associate – though not entirely a member – of ‘le vrai parti.’ Laurier had greater success in building an “orthodox” party organization around Simon-Napoléon Parent. As city councillor for St-Valier and MLA for St- Sauveur since 1890, and Mayor of Québec City since 1894, Parent had his own circles of influence that grew in 1897, when he became Minister of Lands, Forests and Fisheries in Marchand’s provincial government. But he owed his position to Laurier and his influence to administrative skill. ‘Les parentistes’ often shared his early ties to the Conservative party and close connections to the managers and manufacturers in St-Sauveur.¹⁰ They associated true “national” strength largely with economic prosperity and included such prominent men as G-E. Amyot. They held sway in St-Sauveur and St-Valier and came together in the law firm of Parent, Charles Fitzpatrick, Louis-Alexandre Taschereau, Ferdinand Roy and Lawrence Arthur Cannon as well as the Club Laurier.¹¹

Thus Laurier headed a local party that included both “neo-traditional” and “orthodox” components and one key individual, Ernest Pacaud, who’s loyalty to Laurier ensured a place for both factions in L’Électeur. In the “popular” politics of 1896, Laurier relied on Pacaud as much as Pacaud relied on him. But the rivalry between ‘le vrai parti’ and ‘les parentistes’ reduced the influence of both groups. Members of ‘le vrai parti,’ in particular, suffered from the weakening of personal ties in the community.¹² ‘Les parentistes,’ whose influence relied more on access to power, had actually benefited from

¹⁰ Parent himself had articulated with T.C. Casgrain and Guillaume Amyot. Michèle Brassard and Jean Hamelin, “Parent, Simon-Napoléon,” in The Dictionary of Canadian Biography, Volume 14, 1911-1920 (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1998) p. 818.

¹¹ Ibid.

¹² As noted in the previous chapter, support for Laurier in Jacques-Cartier and St-Roch wards dropped ten per cent from what it was in 1891.

that change.¹³ They benefited still more, however, from Laurier's ability to deliver a national victory. Laurier knew their dependence on his patronage made them the more disciplined and reliable group.

Laurier kept both the strengths and weaknesses of these local factions in mind when he began the work of his government at the Hotel Windsor in Montréal. It was there, before being sworn in, before even returning to Ottawa, that he chose his first cabinet.¹⁴ Historians consider its composition his first great success as a national leader.¹⁵ He used cabinet appointments almost exclusively to consolidate party unity nation-wide and cement ties with recent converts in Québec. Appointees included Liberal Premiers Oliver Mowat (Minister of Justice), William Fielding (Minister of Finance) and Andrew George Blair (Minister of Railways and Canals) as well as Clifford Sifton (Minister of the Interior) who had been Attorney General in the Liberal Manitoba government of Thomas Greenway. From Québec, the most significant appointment went to Israel Tarte (Minister of Public Works). Through them, Laurier gained access to information and influence he would not otherwise have had. By joining the Cabinet they strengthened the web of connections between ethnic, religious, and regional networks throughout Canadian society and for this reason were considered the "ablest" Cabinet Canadians had yet seen.¹⁶

¹³ As noted earlier, the level of support for Laurier in St-Sauveur and St-Valier changed little from 1891 to 1896.

¹⁴ *L'Électeur*, 2 July 1896, p. 1.

¹⁵ Brown and Cook, *Canada 1896-1921...*, p. 9.

¹⁶ Morton, *A Short History...*, p. 120.

Historians praise Laurier, too, for leaving 'le vrai parti' out of that Cabinet.¹⁷

François Langelier could have been chosen. He had run – and won – in Québec-Centre despite his precarious finances and disgust with changes in the party and political culture. He had been convinced, or convinced himself, that only his personal influence could guarantee the party victory in the riding.¹⁸ But he was eased aside by Laurier. Using Pelletier as an intermediary, Laurier offered Langelier a choice between a position in Cabinet or on the bench, warning that, if he came into Cabinet, a judicial appointment might be impossible for many years thereafter.¹⁹ Langelier chose a Cabinet position, though out of politeness, offered to step aside should this facilitate Laurier's task. Laurier surprised him by accepting the offer while promising to make him a judge or Lieutenant Governor as soon as possible. Laurier did not move quickly though and even chose to extend the term of Conservative Lieutenant Governor Joseph-Adolphe Chapleau rather than appoint Langelier. Langelier was insulted by the impersonal and manipulative way Laurier had dealt with him. He was also upset by the way Laurier used Cabinet to bring Québec "Conservatives" into the government. Instead of Langelier, his brother, Choquette or even Pelletier, Laurier appointed R.R. Dobell from Québec City. Dobell was named Minister without Portfolio to cement ties with both English-speaking and former Conservative electors. 'Les parentistes' fared only slightly better. Charles

¹⁷ Bélanger, Wilfrid Laurier..., p. 214; Skelton, Life and Letters..., Volume II, p. 20; H.B. Neatby, Laurier and a Liberal Québec: A Study in Political Management (Toronto: McClelland and Stewart Ltd., 1973) p. 99 and 122.

¹⁸ The Montreal Daily Witness, 9 December 1897, p. 1.

¹⁹ P-A. Choquette, Un demi-siècle de vie politique (Montréal: Éditions Beauchemin, 1936) p. 113. Although Choquette's account of this incident is different from the story told by Langelier in The Montreal Daily Witness, it is more credible because, in Langelier's account, it is Choquette who made the initial overture to him. Langelier's reaction is, however, well established by the newspaper interview. The Montreal Daily Witness, 9 December 1897, p. 1.

Fitzpatrick, elected in Québec-Comté, was named Solicitor General – a position that was not part of cabinet at the time.

Fitzpatrick's appointment was important, though, for two reasons – both of which hinged on his loyalty to Laurier. First, it gave Laurier a devout Irish Catholic in his Cabinet who would play a critical role in convincing the Vatican to support a negotiated settlement of the Manitoba Schools Question. Second, and more importantly for Québec-Est, Laurier could trust Fitzpatrick as the principal patronage broker in Ottawa for “la vieille capitale.” Tarte might manage federal patronage in the rest of the province, but his personal history made that impossible in Québec City. The son of a lumber merchant, Fitzpatrick was – above all – an ambitious lawyer and brilliant jurist who won the Governor-General's Gold Medal in law at Laval in 1876.²⁰ He had defended Louis Riel in 1885 and was elected to the provincial legislature as a Liberal in 1890. He then chose to defend Conservative MP Thomas McGreevey in 1891, broke with Mercier during the Baie des Chaleurs scandal and was elected as a Conservative in 1892. Fitzpatrick also played a prominent role in Québec-Est labour disputes, defending W.A. Marsh, a shoe manufacturer, in 1894, and ship owners in 1895.²¹ Despite their very different origins, Fitzpatrick and Parent had remarkably similar careers and, not surprisingly, a close relationship as law partners. Working with Fitzpatrick, Parent became Laurier's key patronage broker in Québec City and Québec-Est. His position as Mayor and a Minister in the provincial government, gave him a network of aldermen and MLAs that covered

²⁰ For biographical information see his entry at Québec. Les Parlementaires depuis 1792. [www.assnat.qc.ca/fra/membres/notices/index.html] July 1992.

²¹ L'Électeur, 2 June 1894, p. 5; NAC, Fonds Charles Fitzpatrick, MG 27-II-C, Volume 1, page 56, N. LeVasseur to P.P. Pelletier, 8 November 1895.

municipal and provincial territories systematically and relied significantly on access to government resources for authority. The “neo-traditionalist” structure of the ‘vrai parti’ could never have given Laurier the hierarchical, semi-official, organization for the distribution and administration of government resources that Fitzpatrick and Parent did. They made his Liberal party substantially different from that of Macdonald’s Conservatives.

Disappointing ‘le vrai parti’ gave Laurier another important advantage in 1896 too. It helped secure Church support for the “Laurier-Greenway” accord. When it became public in November, Church leaders launched what historian O.D. Skelton called a “reign of ecclesiastical terror...particularly in the archdiocese of Québec” against the accord and the Liberal party.²² Ironically, then, it was leaders of ‘le vrai parti’ – though excluded from the Cabinet – who were obliged to lead his defence and, once again, confront Church intervention in public affairs. Laurier tried to calm passions on both sides, writing to Pacaud and, through Fitzpatrick, maintaining regular contact with an informal “ecumenical council” of clergymen sympathetic to the Liberal cause – most notably Monseigneur Mathieu at the Université Laval.²³ Despite his best efforts, though, the belligerent tone mounted until December 22 when the Archbishop of Québec, Monseigneur Louis-Nazaire Bégin (who had taken over most of Cardinal Taschereau’s duties since his illness in 1891), banned L’Électeur “by bell, book and candle.” In extremis, Laurier showed some support for Pacaud and ‘le vrai parti’ but refrained from

²² Skelton, Volume II, p. 14.

²³ Neatby, Laurier..., p. 95.

engaging in a pitched battle with the Church.²⁴ Pacaud changed the name of his paper to Le Soleil and continued to publish. At the Club National in Montréal, Laurier declared “nothing will deter me from continuing to the end in my task of preserving, at all cost, our civil liberty.”²⁵ But most importantly, he dispatched Fitzpatrick to Rome to negotiate a solution with the Pope.²⁶ It was a long way from the ‘vrai parti’s’ “holy wars” in the 1870s.

At the same time, Tarte, Fitzpatrick and Parent gave devout Catholics control of party and government patronage in the province and extending Chapleau’s term as Lieutenant Governor ensured a Conservative “backstop” for any too-liberal measures of the Marchand government. With Laurier’s help, they blocked Marchand’s Education Bill until he agreed not to establish a Department of Education.²⁷ It was a major disappointment for the ‘vrai parti’ but proved to be the key to convincing Monseigneur Bruchési, Bishop of Montréal, to accept Laurier’s settlement of the Manitoba Schools Question.²⁸ Without Fitzpatrick, Parent and the “orthodox” ‘parentiste’ faction in the

²⁴ Skelton, Volume II, p. 16.

²⁵ Ibid.

²⁶ Fitzpatrick’s mission led to an inquiry by Monseigneur Merry del Val that resulted, in December 1897, in the Pope’s encyclical, “Affari Vos,” that condemned the “Laurier-Greenway” accord but encouraged Catholics to accept it as the basis for future negotiations. Brown and Cook, Canada 1896-1921..., p. 16.

²⁷ Marchand’s first Education Bill would have established a Minister and Department of Education, given the government authority to appoint two inspector-generals, determine the curriculum, choose texts and require a certificate of competence from lay and clerical teachers alike. The Bill that passed had no Minister or Department of Education, and retained the organizational structure that left power in the two religious (Catholic and Protestant) “comités d’instruction publique.” It did, however, require them to use a standard text in each municipality and allowed the government to appoint inspectors as well as purchase school texts. Paul-André Linteau, René Durocher, Jean-Claude Robert, Histoire du Québec Contemporain, Tome I, De la Confédération à la crise (1867-1929) (Montréal : Boréal Express, 1979) pp. 526-529.

²⁸ Brown and Cook, Canada 1896-1921..., p. 17.

party, that would not have been likely. Thus Laurier's first appointments proved critical to winning over public opinion in the province.

Like the appointment of cabinet ministers, the nomination of federal board members and departmental employees in the riding forced Laurier to choose between 'le vrai parti,' 'les parentistes' and more recent Conservative additions to the Liberal "club." Fitzpatrick and Parent played important roles in these nominations although, in the government's early days and in the more influential and controversial nominations, Laurier's involvement was essential. As at the national level, his decisions regarding senior positions show an interest in extending the party's influence as much as possible. But the more limited and immediate a position's influence on public opinion, the more concern he showed for party loyalty, local interests, competence and, on occasion, broader community interests – even individual welfare. As a result, he became involved in the very minutia of departmental administration, giving him a detailed knowledge of local public opinion and the actual work of his government. Thus the distribution of government appointments played multiple roles throughout the community: encouraging political participation and membership in the government party; infusing partisan values into all public decisions; extending social cohesion within the party at senior levels; and reinforcing a narrower party cohesiveness locally. It also ensured some competence within government and, at the same time, provided a system for the exchange of remarkably detailed information between the highest and lowest levels in the community. It was an ideal tool for shaping public opinion.

In Québec-Est – and especially St-Roch – the most prominent and influential federal institution was the Québec Harbour Commission (QHC). Its central role in

developing the port and providing local employment encouraged politicians of all stripes to fight passionately over appointments to the Commission and made them exclusively Laurier's prerogative. The battles began just days after the election. Charles E. Parent (no relation to S-N. Parent), met with Laurier on July 8 asking to be named President of the QHC and produced, at Laurier's request, a list of 'parentiste' and 'vrai parti' supporters one week later.²⁹ But Parent lacked sufficient status for the appointment and, one suspects, sufficiently close ties with the 'vrai parti.' Within days, Laurier received a letter from Gaspard Rochette, President of the Club Mercier, stating that Parent's nomination "ferait un refroidissement parmi les amis de la division."³⁰ A petition followed from other members of 'le vrai parti.' They protested Parent's nomination because "[il] n'a manifesté son dévouement à la cause d'une manière efficace que dans la dernière lutte; qu'il a profité de sa position de trésorier du comité de souscription...pour enfourner la signature du président et divers membres du comité."³¹ True or not, it was sufficient evidence to show he lacked support among the faction most closely linked to St-Roch, Jacques-Cartier and the QHC. He may not have had enough support among the 'parentistes' either, as they did not defend him and, in the end, he was not even nominated to the Commission.

Dobell's suggestion that James MacPherson, treasurer of the Conservative party in Québec-Centre, be named to the position proved more controversial. The mere idea

²⁹ NAC, Fonds Laurier, MG 26-G, Volume 14, p. 5662, Charles E. Parent to Laurier, 15 July 1896. The list of supporters includes S-N. Parent, J-R. Paquet, Cyrille Delage, J-B. Laliberté, Joseph Dussault, Charles E. Roy, J-P. Lavoie and J-H. Patry.

³⁰ *Ibid.*, Volume 15, p. 5729, Gaspard Rochette to Laurier, 17 July 1896.

³¹ *Ibid.*, Volume 10, p. 4074, Petition from J. Ducharme, J-B. Dupuis, J-B. Thibaudeau, J-E. Martineau to Laurier, no date.

incensed ‘le vrai parti.’ “Surely in the name of common sense and justice you would never sanction the appointment of a life long Conservative,” wrote E.H. Duval. “Who put you into power? Was it Mr. Dobell or his brother-in-law Mr. MacPherson and their Conservative ilk? NO! It was the rank and file of the Liberal party [emphasis as in original].”³² Dobell’s suggestion so irritated ‘le vrai parti’ that J-B. Laliberté was asked to organize a public protest. He refused, but wrote to Laurier. “Ceci vous démontre jusqu’à quel point les opinions sont préparées à ressentir la mauvaise distribution du patronage et aussi combien on est disposé à mal interpréter tous les actes sensés venir de messieurs Dobell et Fitzpatrick qui n’ont pas la confiance du parti.”³³ Laliberté suggested a candidate who would be acceptable both to English Protestants and ‘les vrais libéraux.’ He was careful not to overstep his place though, insisting that he acted only “comme ami du parti et surtout comme votre ami personnel qui veut votre succès et à qui chaque reproche fait sur le compte de votre administration fait une peine réelle.”

In the end, Laurier negotiated a solution that worked for both ‘le vrai parti’ and Dobell. He appointed both MacPherson and Laliberté to the QHC then had MacPherson nominate Laliberté for President; he was elected unanimously.³⁴ Laurier also fired the Commission’s lawyer, “le plus conservateur de tous les Conservateurs” according to Laliberté, but allowed Dobell to choose his replacement, William Cook, and rejected Laliberté’s suggestion that Charles Langelier be nominated instead.³⁵ By October, Laliberté could finally report that “les amis mécontents commencent à s’apaiser et tout va

³² *Ibid.*, Volume 22, p. 7655, E.H. Duval to Laurier, 1 October 1896.

³³ *Ibid.*, Volume 20, p. 7377, Laliberté to Laurier, 22 September 1896.

³⁴ *Ibid.*, Volume 22, p. 7923, Laliberté to Laurier, 8 October 1896.

³⁵ *Ibid.*, Volume 23, p. 8038, Laliberté to Laurier, 14 October 1896.

pour le mieux.” The incident reveals a balance then, between Laurier’s efforts to broaden the party’s appeal through the use of senior appointments and strong local interests that complicated those efforts.

Laurier rarely made such efforts when it came to the appointment of federal employees although he recognized that their employment was not merely a matter of private concern. He took considerable interest in their loyalties and competencies. Public servants, too, seemed to recognize and accept the political conditions of their employment though they did not hesitate to invoke Laurier’s support both as citizens with a certain right to community consideration and as individuals capable of influencing public opinion themselves.

On a visit to the constituency in 1896, Laurier met with Edward Little, representative of the Mechanics Assembly, regarding three men employed at the Cartridge Factory operated by the Department of Militia and Defence.³⁶ Upon his return to Ottawa, he asked his principal secretary to enquire further and learned that one of the men, André Gingras, had been hired on the recommendation of a Conservative and, despite his incompetence, was kept on “until there was no work.”³⁷ Another, Joseph Guillaume, was let go because of irregular attendance and because his brother and father already worked there (management did not like too many members of one family working together). The third, Alfred Dandurand, apparently left on his own accord after being reprimanded and would not be rehired for the sake of discipline. Conservative loyalties and questionable performance ruled out further consideration for Gingras and

³⁶ *Ibid.*, Volume 25, p. 8687, Laurier to Boudreau, September 1896.

³⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 8686, Boudreau to Laurier, 10 September 1896.

Guillaume but Little invoked political influence where he could. “Mr. Dandurand would not have troubled you about this matter,” he wrote in a follow-up letter, “were it not that a number of his Liberal friends in St-Roch urged him to do so in justice to himself...he being a life-long Liberal although he had to get other influences to get employment in the Cartridge Factory upon his return from the United States.”³⁸ It was not a strongly worded appeal and was not enough to convince Laurier to save the job of a man he must have regarded, very possibly, as a Conservative.³⁹

Partisanship and competence were still more important at the Post Office where employees could, and did, affect the distribution of party newspapers and campaign literature.⁴⁰ François Langelier recommended Jean-Baptiste Caouette for the position of Postmaster in St-Roch because “[il] réunit les titres personnels aux titres politiques. C’est peut-être l’employé le plus capable du Bureau de Poste et c’est un homme qui a souffert pour le parti.”⁴¹ Less well-known Liberals made the same partisan arguments but asked Laurier to take charitable concerns into consideration as well. In 1898, G. Ménard wrote: “Je désirais que [mon fils] soit employé au Bureau de Poste ou à la Douane de Montréal...L’honorable Monsieur, sachez que si je cède le poste que je devrais avoir en toute justice à mon fils c’est premièrement pour lui assuré son avenir. Deuxièmement pour garder mon entière liberté afin de combattre encore dans cette grande armée

³⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 8682, E. Little to Laurier, 28 September 1896.

³⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 8678, E. Little to Laurier, 9 November 1896.

⁴⁰ “Vous comprenez comme moi l’importance d’avoir des maîtres de postes honnêtes et amis pour la distribution de notre littérature électorale,” wrote Charles Langelier before the 1897 provincial election. *Ibid.*, Volume 27, p. 9052, Charles Langelier to Laurier, 21 November 1896.

⁴¹ *Ibid.*, Volume 28, p. 9436, François Langelier to Laurier, 3 December 1896.

libérale...’’⁴² Laurier recommended Ménard to Mullock, the Minister of the Post Office and ensured that Caouette was hired.⁴³

A year later, Caouette was himself writing Laurier regarding appointments in the Post Office.

J’ai entendu dire que deux dames faisaient des démarches pour être nommées commis dans le Bureau de Poste de Québec. Si tel est le cas, je crois de mon devoir de vous dire ce que je pense de ces nominations. Nous avons déjà deux dames à ce Bureau et l’expérience m’a appris depuis longtemps que deux femmes dans un Bureau de Postes ne font pas l’ouvrage d’un seul homme. D’abord il est difficile d’exiger d’elles qu’elles se conforment aux heures réglementaires, disons de 5 heures a.m. à 10 heures p.m., et ensuite elles trouvent toutes sortes de prétextes pour ne pas faire tel ou tel ouvrage malgré qu’elles reçoivent le même salaire que les hommes. Enfin, ces dames prennent la place d’hommes qui emploieraient leur salaire non-seulement pour acheter des toilettes mais pour soutenir leurs nombreuses familles.⁴⁴

Laurier did not respond and apparently left the matter in Mullock’s hands. This incident is a good example of the way political control of government resources resulted in a remarkably detailed communication of information and opinion from the lowest to the highest levels. It also shows, though, how that system ruthlessly punished people excluded from public life.

Political control of the distribution of government resources extended, of course, well beyond the granting of employment. It had, perhaps, its greatest impact on public opinion in directing public finances towards both economic and social objectives.

Laurier’s highest priority for local social expenditures in 1896 was given to victims of the

⁴² *Ibid.*, Volume 70, p. 21937, G. Ménard to Laurier, March 1898.

⁴³ *Ibid.*, p. 21939, Laurier to G. Ménard, March 1898. Caouette was soon corresponding with Laurier as postmaster at Québec City. In 1911, he ran as a Liberal candidate in Québec County and was narrowly defeated by 48 votes.

⁴⁴ *Ibid.*, Volume 45, p. 14559, Jean-Baptiste Caouette to Laurier, 5 May 1897.

1889 landslide that devastated Champlain Street in Québec-Ouest when part of the plains above, public lands, collapsed. Liberals on the City Council had agitated for federal compensation for more than seven years and made it a prominent issue in the election. Once in power, Laurier saw that it was settled promptly through the party controlled patronage system but not in an arbitrary or extravagant manner. Indeed, he tapped all currents of opinion within the party organization and engaged a public process that gave him a fair idea of the claims and legitimized the distribution of funds beyond merely the settling of a campaign issue.

A petition from the City Council sent to Laurier on August 17, 1896, initiated a formal process for compensating victims.⁴⁵ Earlier, the city had awarded \$80,000 when the Québec Superior Court established that it had a moral, though not a legal, responsibility to the victims of the landslide.⁴⁶ In that case, Pelletier had acted for the city and was the first person Laurier consulted – in September 1896 – regarding the victims’ claims. Pelletier confirmed that victims were essentially destitute and unable to assume any financial burden. Laurier then asked Charles Langelier, in a confidential letter, to investigate privately the extent of the claims.⁴⁷ Langelier spoke with people who knew the injured parties and reported in October 1896 that the claims, totalling more than \$300,000, were “bien exagérées.” He concluded that a proper investigation would reduce them substantially. At this point, Laurier worked with the local MP, Dobell, to establish a board of inquiry in March 1897 chaired by William Cook. In correspondence with

⁴⁵ *Ibid.*, Volume 23, p. 8088, E. Chouinard to Laurier, 17 August 1896.

⁴⁶ *Ibid.*, Volume 21, p. 7520, Pelletier to Laurier, 27 September 1896. The letter is clearly written in response to an inquiry from Laurier.

⁴⁷ *Ibid.*, Volume 23, p. 8077, Charles Langelier to Laurier, 16 October 1896. Langelier refers to an earlier, confidential, letter from Laurier.

Dobell, Cook described his understanding of the board's mandate. "We will hear people... and understand that anything Parliament may grant is in the nature of a relief grant and therefore claims by well-to-do or rich people should not be entertained... We have no authority to mention or even suggest any sum and we will not do so without permission... however [there] seems to be an impression here that the Government will ask Parliament for \$50,000 - a very handsome figure in my opinion."⁴⁸ In less than two weeks all the claims were heard in what was, obviously, no more than a public relations exercise at that point. Cook wrote to Dobell just prior to submitting his report: "Much of what is said [is] of little value, but it is desirable to hear people, who have suffered much, with consideration and sympathy and to hear their stories. Many sad enough." He concluded that "our report will be for the relief of the poor who lost practically their all and in a few cases for the relief of widows and orphans, who, losing husband and father, lost their support as well as their comfort and happiness in life. As to which amount may be required I cannot speak positively but it will be my effort to keep it well under the figure which I understand you are disposed to recommend."⁴⁹ In the end, the claims were settled for a relatively conservative \$40,000. Clearly, then, the patronage system could be used judiciously and for social or charitable objectives.

Economic development remained, however, the heart of the local Liberal agenda and was the focus of much of Laurier's energy in his first years as Prime Minister. Central to Québec City's ambitions were a fast steamship service to Britain, development

⁴⁸ *Ibid.*, Volume 40, p. 13165. William Cook to Dobell, 14 March 1897. Cook refers to earlier correspondence from Laurier.

⁴⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 13170, William Cook to Dobell, 24 March 1897.

of the port and construction of a railway bridge over the St. Lawrence. Laurier moved on all three in 1896 and 1897.

Laurier appointed Dobell a Minister without Portfolio specifically to have a cabinet minister devoted to securing a fast Atlantic steamship service for the city. Dobell was President of the Québec Chamber of Commerce as well as MP for Québec-Ouest, thus the matter was entirely in local hands and had all the backing of the federal government. Laurier must have hoped that this would compensate for his own public misgivings in 1894. Yet his continuing doubts, and sense of partisanship, were evident in an early decision to reject a proposal negotiated by the Conservative government with the Allan Steamship Lines shortly before the election. The proposal called for the Canadian government to contribute \$750,000 and the Imperial government \$375,000 a year for ten years to the service.⁵⁰ Laurier was unwilling to provide more than the \$500,000 annual subsidy offered earlier by Macdonald and was willing to accept a slower service (less than 20 knots) in consequence.⁵¹ Dobell negotiated an agreement with a British firm, Peterson, Tate and Company, for construction and operation of four fast (18 knot) steamships to provide mail service between Québec City and Britain.⁵² The first two ships were to be in operation by 1899 and the second two by 1900. He argued that an 18-knot service from Québec City to Liverpool would take no more time than a 20-knot service from New York.⁵³ The contract, entered into on March 24 and ratified by Parliament on June 14, 1897, called for a \$250,000 annual contribution from the Imperial

⁵⁰ House of Commons Debates, 10 May 1898, p. 5223.

⁵¹ Ibid., p. 5231-5232.

⁵² Ibid., p. 5216.

⁵³ Ibid., p. 5231.

government.⁵⁴ In addition, the government expected a contribution from the British Admiralty as the ships were also to be suitable and available in case of war.⁵⁵ It was a major accomplishment for Québec City with important savings for Canada.

In the Fall of 1896, Laurier asked Pierre Garneau, President of the Great Northern Railway (GNR) and owner of a large wholesale business in the city, as well as Jean-Baptiste Laliberté, President of the QHC, how best to improve trade in the port. Garneau initially suggested an improved steamship service.⁵⁶ Laliberté, however, had a series of more practical improvements in mind. “We need to acquire the remaining properties facing the Louise Basin to complete the dock and create an accommodation for the heaviest draft steamers along the south or Saint Andrew Street side of the basin,” he wrote.⁵⁷ Construction of docks in the Princess Louise Basin had long been a cherished goal of Québec City – appearing on maps as early as 1875.⁵⁸ To give the project tangible form, in early 1898, the QHC requested permission to issue \$350,000 in 25 year preferred bonds at 4 per cent.⁵⁹ At issue was the government’s willingness to see interest payments on the bonds given preference over existing government loans that totalled close to \$4 million. Laurier not only accepted the agreement, he approved expenditures of \$134,000 to repair existing docks, \$6,000 to expand the customs office and \$3,000 for a new

⁵⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 5229.

⁵⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 5231.

⁵⁶ NAC, Fonds Laurier, MG 26-G, Volume 23, p. 8000, P. Garneau to Laurier, 12 October 1896.

⁵⁷ *Ibid.*, Volume 25, p. 8511, Laliberté to Laurier, 5 November 1896.

⁵⁸ Paul Cousin, Topographical Plan, City of Québec and Village of St. Sauveur with the General Improvements in the Québec Harbour proposed by F.X. Berlinguet, Esq. (Québec: Cherrier’s Québec Directory, 1875). NAC, National Map Collection, NMC 0029158.

⁵⁹ NAC, Fonds Laurier, MG 26-G, Volume 73, p. 22381, Barthe to Laurier, 9 April 1898.

immigration shed.⁶⁰ His commitment to the port never wavered. The following year, he ensured that the QHC could have the use of four barges and a hydraulic pump from Sorel to dredge the Louise Basin.⁶¹ Then, in January 1900, he made arrangements with the Deputy Minister of Finance to allow insurance companies the right to hold QHC preferential bonds as part of their security deposits – something that altered government policy at the time.⁶² The measure ensured that the Equitable Insurance Company would purchase \$220,000 of the bonds that they would not have otherwise.

The bridge project, in every way the centre-piece of local development, was also jump-started shortly after the 1896 election when directors of the Québec Bridge Company (QBC), originally incorporated in 1887 with an impressive list of Conservative board members, first invited Parent to join them.⁶³ Within a year, there were signs the province and city would lend their support and Laurier publicly committed himself to the project. Meeting with board members in Ottawa on May 20, 1897, Laurier declared: “I consider the Québec bridge as a commercial necessity of the present moment... You have been expecting a bridge for nearly 50 years. Well, I can assure you that the supreme ambition of my life will be to realize your hopes which have been long deceived.”⁶⁴

⁶⁰ Le Soleil, 31 May 1898, p. 6.

⁶¹ NAC, Fonds Laurier, MG 26-G, Volume 118, p. 35642, Laurier to Laliberté, 17 July 1899.

⁶² Ibid., Volume 135, p. 40474, Laliberté to Laurier, 4 January 1900; and Volume 136, p. 40755, Laurier to Laliberté, 15 January 1900.

⁶³ Board members included: Lt. Col. William Rhodes, President (a banker and businessman involved in the QMOO), James Ross (a Senator, businessman and promoter of the QMOO), Richard Dobell, Thomas McGreevy, Joseph-Israel Tarte, Lt. Col. Joseph Forsyth (merchant and founder of the Québec and Lévis Electric Light Co.), Gaspard Lemoine (grain merchant), Cyrille Duquet (jeweller) and Eugene Chinic (hardware merchant). William D. Middleton, The Bridge at Québec (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2001) p.25.

⁶⁴ Laurier’s statement was included in the September 1897 Annual Report of the Québec Bridge Company. Ibid., p. 30-31.

Early on, Laurier took a personal interest in the bridge, collecting information from the Canadian Pacific Railway (CPR), the Bridge Company, the city and the Department of Public Works regarding the costs and benefits of the project.⁶⁵ Only T.G. Shaughnessy, President of the CPR, provided a realistic estimate of the rail traffic and potential benefits of the bridge. He calculated that the CPR and Intercolonial Railway (ICR) exchanged 8,000 tons a year at Lévis that would double to 16,000 tons with a bridge – meaning 800 carloads of 20 tons each.⁶⁶ But he warned that most of this traffic would be of a class that would not stand bridge tolls exceeding \$3 per car yielding annual revenues to the QBC of only \$2,400. Noting that a bridge connection was already available to both railways in Montréal, he concluded: “it is not easy to see how our traffic with the Intercolonial could be substantially increased even by a bridge connection.”

But the political arguments from the QBC and the city, and Laurier’s own electoral promises, far outweighed Shaughnessy’s sensible comments. Ulric Barthe, once a journalist for L’Électeur, hired by Parent as Secretary of the QBC, argued that a bridge would generate savings at least equal to 4 per cent on a \$1 million loan.⁶⁷ Assuming a bridge toll of \$3.50 per car, he was confident that the ICR would save \$42,000 a year in ferry costs but might, in fact, double its freight traffic and generate an additional \$10,000 from passengers. Thus the government would save between 8 and 10 per cent on a \$1 million grant and substantially reduce its losses on the ICR. Parent made the political

⁶⁵ There is one letter from Laurier to the Department of Public Works asking for assistance. NAC, Fonds Laurier MG 26-G, Volume 80, p. 24759, Laurier to Schrieber, 5 June 1898.

⁶⁶ *Ibid.*, Volume 43, p. 14174, Shaughnessy to Barthe, 24 April 1897.

⁶⁷ *Ibid.*, Volume 57, p. 18366, Barthe to Laurier, 29 November 1897.

case, which, like the financial arguments, drew heavily on the government's previous railway investments and caressed the longstanding dreams of Québec City:

Québec is of one opinion as to the necessity of a bridge. We have suffered for years for want of it. We have contributed our share of the public works of the country and have got little in return... We have paid our share of the public expenditures in bonuses to the Grand Trunk, the Great Western, the Northern of Toronto, the Intercolonial and the Canadian Pacific. Through these bonuses, bridges have been built or aided at the public expense at Niagara, at Lachine, at Montréal, at St. John, N.B., and at Fredericton. We think the next bridge to be built should be that at Québec so as to join the Intercolonial to the CPR and fulfil the expectations of Confederation making these two roads a continuous connected military and commercial highway from Halifax to Vancouver...⁶⁸

Three weeks later Laurier had obtained cabinet approval for the federal government to cover one third of the costs of "the bridge and approaches payable on progressive estimates."⁶⁹ This established the basis for cost sharing between the three orders of government – all conveniently controlled by the Liberal party. From that point on progress was rapid. The QBC called for tenders in September 1898 and Charles Schrieber, the Deputy Minister and Chief Engineer at the Department of Public Works, made his recommendations in June 1899. With the plans approved, the federal government officially granted a \$1 million subsidy to the QBC in August 1899 at the same time it awarded contracts to M.P. Davis for construction of the substructure and approaches while an American firm, the Phoenix Bridge Company (PBC), was hired to design and build the superstructure.⁷⁰

⁶⁸ *Ibid.*, Volume 61, p. 19363, Parent to Laurier, 3 June 1898.

⁶⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 19362, Laurier to Parent, 23 June 23 1898.

⁷⁰ Middleton, *The Bridge...*, p. 40 to 45.

The scope of the project fit the size of the city's ambitions. It would be 1800 feet long with a suspended length of 675 feet, cantilever arms 562.5 feet long, anchor arms 500 feet long and a centre span 150 feet above the St. Lawrence. The superstructure would weigh 38,500 tons and sit on caissons reaching down 101 feet below the water.⁷¹ It would be the longest cantilever bridge ever built. When work began on the substructure in May 1899, Davis brought granite from Rivière à Pierre (45 miles west of Québec on the Batiscan River) along the Québec and Lake St. John railway to worksites on both sides of the St. Lawrence River.⁷² They included newly constructed shops to crush stone, make concrete, compress air and build derricks for the main and anchor piers as well as storage sheds and offices. The work employed hundreds.

With such a record of local accomplishments and, most especially, the consistent involvement of Pacaud, Laliberté, Charles Langelier, Pelletier and Rochette, it is surprising that Laurier established a reputation for neglecting 'le vrai parti.' One is struck, instead, by his devotion to their interests and his recourse to their networks and individual abilities in the affairs of Québec-Est and Québec City. It is true, however, that they did not enjoy a monopoly on local influence and, most importantly, as appointments and investments increased in significance and national stature, Laurier tended to rely on 'les parentistes' and former Conservatives.

By the end of 1897, François Langelier could no longer contain his frustration. In The Montreal Daily Witness, he publicly complained that Laurier reneged on a promise to name him Lieutenant Governor, never spoke with him about government policy and

⁷¹ Ibid., p. 184.

⁷² Ibid., pp. 45-47.

deprived him of patronage even in his own riding.⁷³ He was most annoyed to see Laurier include Conservatives like Tarte and Chapleau in party affairs, something he considered “a gross piece of political immorality” and “an unwarranted foolish move.” He claimed not to have asked for a position on the bench and concluded that his treatment was due only to his unwillingness to compromise his political convictions. Yet his record of compromise with Castors in the Mercier government, Laurier’s record on matters of local interest and the article itself suggest that he felt the loss of patronage and influence most keenly. He was not merely content to complain, however. Showing all the determination that had characterized ‘le vrai parti’ since the 1870s, he warned, “the old Liberal school are not apathetic over the matter; they are simply and silently watching events and when the proper time comes will give the government to understand that they cannot and will not tolerate such an untruly political alliance.” Just two years before the next election, his meaning was unmistakable and his decision to speak publicly a sure sign that ‘le vrai parti’ had reached a turning point.

Days later Laurier named Louis-Amable Jetté – one of the founders of the Parti national – Lieutenant Governor of the province and appointed François Langelier to replace him as Puisne Judge of the Québec Superior Court for the district of Montréal. In June he named Joseph-Arthur Paquet, the son of Zéphérin Paquet of Paquet Department Stores on St-Joseph, to the Senate.⁷⁴ These appointments were not mere “consolation prizes.”⁷⁵ They signal, instead, the beginning of a renaissance for the ‘vrai parti’ that

⁷³ All quotations in the paragraph are found in The Daily Witness, 9 December 1897, p. 1.

⁷⁴ He was appointed on June 27, 1898.

⁷⁵ Neatby, Laurier..., p. 125.

came as a result of their own influence over public opinion, well before Henri Bourassa's opposition to Laurier over Canadian involvement in the Boer War. Moreover, they were appointments to still influential positions within the political culture of the day.

Appointments to the position of Lieutenant Governor, the Senate and the judiciary all served the larger social function of entrenching particular values within the most durable public institutions. They offered the sort of long-term influence over public decisions that could – and did – shape the political culture for years to come. After their legal battles in the 1870s, Langelier and 'le vrai parti' could not have been insensitive to this fact.

1898 marked a turning point for the Church too. Marchand amended his Education Bill, the Pope issued his encyclical "Affari Vos," the Bishops ended their campaign against the "Laurier-Greenway" accord and Monseigneur Bruchési initiated a much closer relationship with Laurier. Then, on April 12, Cardinal Taschereau died and Monseigneur Bégin became Archbishop of Québec. It was Bégin, not Bruchési, who would lead a renaissance in the Church through reorganization at the provincial level and, most importantly, initiatives to "récupérer les masses."⁷⁶ Almost immediately, he established the Réunion des archevêques et évêques de la province civile de Québec as the first regularized meeting of Bishops in the province.⁷⁷ But the need for a new connection with urban working class Catholics must have been obvious even earlier. Labour organizers in Québec City were notably absent from Cardinal Taschereau's

⁷⁶ Nive Voisine, *Histoire de Catholicisme québécois*, Tome I, *Le XXIème siècle, 1898-1940* (Montréal : Boréal Express, 1984) pp. 82 and 193.

⁷⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 84.

funeral.⁷⁸ They could not overcome their memory of his implacable opposition in the 1880s and 1890s.

It was the renaissance of working men's organizations in late 1897 and 1898 that would mark a most significant turning point in the political culture of Québec-Est and make "la question ouvrière" critical to both the Church and the Liberal party. Since 1882 the QHC and the Corporation of Pilots had been fighting for control over the certification of pilots, their assignments and their wages.⁷⁹ When the QHC threatened to withdraw certification in 1897 unless the pilots limited their employment to one steamship line and a fixed number of voyages per year, the Corporation went on strike. They only returned to work when the government agreed to establish an independent commission to investigate and report "objectively" on the claims of each party, allowing informed public opinion a chance to form. It was a procedure used in Québec-Est since the 1860s, institutionalized by the Chamber of Commerce in the 1870s and recommended by Pacaud in the typographers' strike in the 1880s – a procedure well grounded in local practice that foreshadowed the Conciliation Act of 1900.

The Commission reported in March 1898 recommending that the Corporation assume responsibility for appointing pilots. A Bill, incorporating this amendment, was prepared in 1899 and finally passed in 1900 but not before the issue was well aired in the local newspapers and considerable political pressure was brought to bear on Laurier by

⁷⁸ Jacques Rouillard, Histoire du Syndicalisme au Québec: Des Origines à nos jours (Montréal : Boréal Experss, 1989) p. 48.

⁷⁹ Much of the background to the strike and its settlement is given in NAC, Fonds Laurier MG 26-G, Volume 153, p. 44967, S.C. Auger to Laurier, 25 April 1900.

the Corporation. In uncharacteristically disrespectful language, Ferdinand Labranche wrote to Laurier on behalf of the Corporation on November 24, 1899.

Voulez-vous être assez bon de me dire si votre gouvernement a l'intention d'approuver le rapport de la Commission appointée par le gouvernement pour s'enquêter des griefs des pilotes après notre malheureux grève? Si vous n'appuyez pas ce rapport, pourquoi l'enquête a-t-elle eu lieu? ...Aux prochaines élections fédérales soyez certain que si ce rapport n'est pas approuvé les pilotes...feront tous en leur pouvoir pour que le candidat libéral soit défait.⁸⁰

Despite this threat, the President of the Corporation, S.C. Auger, had to write again, five months later. This time, however, he had the added support of Charles Langelier. Well represented, at last, in the party and public opinion, the Corporation's Bill was soon passed.⁸¹

A similar forcefulness on the part of workingmen, and support from the 'vrai parti' (at least to the extent that it could be buttressed by local public opinion), was evident in the boot and shoe industry too. In August 1898, organizers from the Canadian "Union protectrice des cordonniers-monteurs de Québec" in Montréal held a meeting with lasters on Jacques Cartier Square to establish a local union.⁸² Within a year, they had 540 members and had inspired the machinists and tailors to organize unions of their own (the "Fraternité des cordonniers-unis de la puissance du Canada" (machinists) and the "Fraternité des tailleurs de cuir").⁸³ The lasters aimed to increase their salary and dignity

⁸⁰ *Ibid.*, Volume 132, p. 39321, F. Labranche to Laurier, 24 November 1899.

⁸¹ *Ibid.*, Volume 153, p. 44967, S.C. Auger to Laurier, 25 April 1900.

⁸² Jean-Pierre Charland, "Le Syndicalisme chez les cordonniers de Québec, 1900-1930," in Jean-Claude Dupont and Jacques Mathieu, ed., *Les Métiers du Cuir* (Québec : Les Presses de l'Université Laval, 1981) p. 344. There were three principal trades involved in shoemaking at the time: tailors, lasters and machinists.

⁸³ Jacques Rouillard, *Les Syndicats nationaux au Québec de 1900 à 1930* (Québec : Les Presses de l'Université Laval, 1979) p. 23.

in society, and help union members in need. In addition, they sought to establish a common pay scale, a ten-hour workday and limit the number of apprentices. Most unusually, they explicitly justified their right to a share of company profits and government protection based on their role in the creation of economic value.⁸⁴

The mere assertion of such a “labour theory of value” threatened the Church’s ideal of a well-ordered, hierarchical, society based on the sanctity of private property; but it was the union’s singular pursuit of its members’ interests and the possibility of outside influence that most concerned ‘le vrai parti.’ On August 5, 1899, the lasters started to circulate an anonymous letter to boot and shoe manufacturers in the riding – signed only, “Les Monteurs de Québec, Bureau de Poste, St-Sauveur.”⁸⁵ It explained that salaries were insufficient in the industry. The next day they sent a pay scale and asked manufacturers to sign it, signaling their acceptance, before forwarding it to others. It was signed by a majority of owners but, when two refused, their workers went on strike and the owners responded with a citywide lock out. As in the past, Le Soleil argued for a reasonable resolution in the best interests of the city as a whole. It readily recognized that salaries were “manifestement insuffisants” and reproached the owners for their inability to agree on a reasonable solution. At the same time, it objected to the union’s impersonal manner of negotiating and decision to strike without first meeting the owners. The approach was well grounded in local practice, the same one used to settle the pilots strike, recommended (though not followed) by Pacaud in the typographers strike and formalized in the Arbitration Board of the Chamber of Commerce since the 1870s. Not surprisingly

⁸⁴ Charland, “Le Syndicalisme...,” pp. 345-246.

⁸⁵ Le Soleil, 9 August 1899, p. 6. The account of negotiations given in the paragraph is based on this article.

then, Le Soleil objected most to the possibility of organizers from outside the city influencing the local economy. “Qu’on ait des associations ouvrières locales, fort bien,” concluded Pacaud, “celles-là comprendront mieux.” Despite this guarded support, however, the strike collapsed. Two weeks later, though, a second strike and lockout forced 550 men onto the streets for a full week.⁸⁶ This time workers won a 15-20 per cent pay increase, starting October 1, on condition that they leave the union. It is clear from union records, however, that they not only got the pay increase, they kept their union.

The same idea of a “reasonable solution” was essential to the anti-sweating resolution that Laurier announced in a speech to the Québec Chamber of Commerce in September 1897.⁸⁷ It established “reasonable” hours, wages and sanitary conditions in all government shops. Insistence on “local solutions” to labour disputes formed the basis of the 1897 Alien Labour Act.⁸⁸ These two central elements in the long-established practice for settling labour disputes in Québec City came together in the Fair Wages Resolution passed by Laurier in March 1900, just months before the 1900 federal election. It obliged the government, its contractors and sub-contractors to pay all their employees wages at least equivalent to those commonly paid for the job in the region in which the work was being done.⁸⁹ “La main d’oeuvre [est] une denrée dont la vente ou le loyer doit donner un profit *raisonnable*, et dont la valeur varie suivant les *lieux* [emphasis added],” explained

⁸⁶ An account of this strike, and settlement, is found in Charland, “Le Syndicalisme...,” p. 346.

⁸⁷ The Globe, 30 September and 7 October 1897. See references in R. MacGregor Dawson, William Lyon Mackenzie King: A Political Biography, 1874-1923 (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1958) p. 67 and Paul Craven, An Impartial Umpire: Industrial Relations and the Canadian State, 1900-1911 (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1980) pp. 191-192.

⁸⁸ Dawson, William Lyon Mackenzie King..., p. 97; Craven, An Impartial Umpire..., pp. 193-194.

⁸⁹ Le Soleil, 23 March 1900, p. 1. See references in Dawson, William Lyon Mackenzie King..., p. 70 and Craven, An Impartial Umpire..., p. 195.

Pacaud. “L’ouvrier a droit à un salaire au moins suffisant pour payer la subsistance et l’éducation de sa famille. Tels sont les principes qui ont inspiré la mesure ministérielle.” Conservatives somewhat ingenuously argued that the measure did not go far enough. Based on his experience and local knowledge, Pacaud almost certainly concluded correctly that, in the political culture of Québec-Est, “le gouvernement va aussi loin qu’il peut aller, et prend le moyen le plus pratique de résoudre l’une des grandes difficultés de la question ouvrière.”⁹⁰

The Conciliation Act, passed only four months later, on the eve of the election, adopted every aspect of what had become standard local practice for the resolution of labour disputes in Québec-Est. “To prevent strikes and lockouts,” the Act authorized the federal government to establish boards of conciliation at the request of workers or employers.⁹¹ The board would compile and make public “objective” information relative to the dispute in order to allow public opinion to come to, and – in theory – force, a reasonable solution on both parties. In addition, it established a Department of Labour and the Labour Gazette to compile and publish reliable statistics on labour disputes just as Laurier had argued for in 1894.⁹² After years of experience with the arbitration boards institutionalized by the Québec City Chamber of Commerce (despite their name, these acted essentially as conciliation boards) and settlement of the pilots strike, Laurier considered the measure “most important” but entirely uncontroversial. His only intervention in the House of Commons was to chastise opposition members for “a

⁹⁰ Le Soleil, 24 March 1900, p. 1.

⁹¹ House of Commons Debates, 27 June 1900, p. 8399; Dawson, William Lyon Mackenzie King..., p. 97; Craven, An Impartial Umpire..., p. 195.

⁹² House of Commons Debates, 30 April 1894, p. 2190.

most useless debate” over a measure “simply...embodying and crystallizing the ideas that have been long in the minds of the people.”⁹³

Laurier might well have added: “...in the minds of the people in *Québec-Est*.”

Although historians have attributed the Conciliation Act and Fair Wages resolution to a variety of influences, they are most convincingly understood as a reflection of the unique history and practice in Laurier’s own riding. Historian Paul Craven, credibly, argues that the Act was simply a copy of British legislation and, indeed, in introducing the Bill, William Mulock, the Minister responsible, described it as “an echo, largely, of the Conciliation Act which has been in force in Great Britain for some years.” Craven does not address, however, the government’s motives for copying that particular model.⁹⁴

Regrettably, members of the opposition did not raise the question either and the only real insight offered by the government is found in Laurier’s own comment that it had “long been in the minds of the people.” It is difficult, however, to qualify the legislation as reflecting a nation-wide consensus, an argument made by historian H.C. Pentland.⁹⁵ At

⁹³ House of Commons Debates, 27 June 1900, p. 8415.

⁹⁴ Craven does suggest that Canadian dependence on staple exports and imported technology encouraged the introduction of foreign models such as American scientific management, American unions and British labour policy. But, more interested in King’s “original” contribution to labour policy in the following decade, he does not address the government’s choice between foreign influences in the late 1890s. Craven, *An Impartial Umpire*.... Robert Craig Brown and Ramsay Cook extend Craven’s analysis of King’s ideological approach to labour relations backwards chronologically by linking it to Liberal legislation in 1900. For example, they write: “King’s ideas, and those of the Laurier government, placed the government in the role of umpire. Even before King entered the Department of Labour this attitude had been displayed...” Brown and Cook, *Canada 1896-1921*..., p. 120. Their emphasis on the parallel between King’s ideas and Laurier’s legislation on labour relations is convincing. It offers considerable insight into Laurier’s own ideas and, in particular, King’s advancement and legislative influence in later years. As Laurier’s most immediate experience with labour disputes came from his role as “le député de Québec-Est,” it is reasonable to conclude his ideas were shaped essentially by local history and practice. It is less convincing to see King as influential in drafting the 1900 legislation.

⁹⁵ See the reference to Pentland in Craven, *An Impartial Umpire*..., p. 358; H.C. Pentland, *A Study of the Changing Social, Economic, and Political Background of the Canadian System of Industrial Relations* (Ottawa, 1968).

least the Trades and Labour Congress was disappointed that the Fair Wages resolution applied only to government contracts and that the Conciliation Act did not introduce compulsory arbitration.⁹⁶

The uniqueness of the approach to labour issues in Québec City, and its consistency with Laurier's labour legislation in 1900, was made more explicit during the 1900 election. At the height of the campaign, in mid-October, workers went on strike at the Poirier Shoe Company to protest a change in the method of paying wages and defend their right to collective bargaining.⁹⁷ The Association des Manufacturiers de Chaussures de Québec (AMCQ) responded with a citywide lockout of 3,850 employees on October 26. Monseigneur Gauvreau, priest of Notre-Dame de St-Roch, met with the workers and urged a compromise solution, but the manufacturers refused to hire union members. It was not until November 24 that they agreed to accept Monseigneur Bégin as a non-binding "arbiter." Factories opened on December 5, with the established pay scale maintained until Bégin reported on January 10, 1901. The report, and Bégin's involvement in its application, marked the beginning of the Catholic union movement in the province. At the time workers and manufacturers accepted his intervention as only another application of accepted community practice in the resolution of labour disputes. Bégin offered his services and was voluntarily accepted by both parties in the dispute. He compiled relevant information, met with an "arbitration board" comprised of three worker and three manufacturer representatives, and made a public report of his findings and recommendations. In the end, he would only innovate by institutionalizing these

⁹⁶ Craven, *An Impartial Umpire...*, p. 195.

⁹⁷ For accounts of this well known strike, see Charland, "Le Syndicalisme...", pp. 350-354 and Rouillard, *Les Syndicats nationaux...*, pp. 59-61.

practices (requiring the union to renounce strikes, the AMCQ to pay fair wages and both to establish “reclamation” and “conciliation” committees to settle disputes) and by requiring the union to remove Marxist references in its constitution and accept a Chaplain (the priest of St-Roch and St-Sauveur).

In the midst of Bégin’s inquiry, the local appeal of this longstanding approach to labour disputes was put to the test when representatives of the Boot and Shoe Workers’ Union (BSWU), affiliated with the American Federation of Labour (AFL), came to Québec City to organize a local union.⁹⁸ In Montréal, they had successfully won workers’ support and manufacturers’ recognition – although they divided the union movement – with a policy that included a closed shop, binding arbitration, union label and significant workers’ benefits. But in Québec City, the high cost of membership and most especially the appearance and possibility of outside influence held little appeal for workers, manufacturers or anyone else. It set the community apart from Montréal and, as labour historian Jacques Rouillard has noted, made the 4,000 shoemakers in Québec City “le noyau de la résistance à la pénétration du syndicalisme international au Québec.”⁹⁹

When the strike was over, Mulock wrote to thank Bégin for his work and ask him to register the conciliation boards he established under the Conciliation Act.¹⁰⁰ He noted that the Act made specific provision for “the registration of conciliation boards established either before or after the passing of the Act” and expressed his opinion that “the conciliatory methods so successfully adopted in the adjustment of the dispute in [Québec City] may be of great service elsewhere both as a means of preventing and of

⁹⁸ See the account in Rouillard, *Les Syndicats nationaux...*, p. 56-65.

⁹⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 61.

¹⁰⁰ Archives de l’Archidiocèse de Québec, Fonds du gouvernement, King to Bégin, 24 January 1901.

adjusting differences between employers and employees generally.” He went so far as to suggest it might “lead to the establishment of similar boards in other trades and industries throughout the Dominion.” Thus the Act itself provides evidence that Mulock and Laurier had Canadian experience in mind when preparing the Bill and Mulock’s letter suggests that he was very familiar with that experience in Québec City.

Renewed attention to the interests of ‘le vrai parti’ and “la question ouvrière” did not, by any means, diminish Laurier’s support for ‘les parentistes.’ He relied on Parent, in particular, to maintain a “popular” presence in Québec City through a judicious distribution of the symbolic as well as the material resources of government. Both were used in ways that identified local symbols and civic improvements with Laurier, the Liberal party and pan-Canadian nationalism. Through a careful “distribution” of the symbols of state power, Laurier sought to broaden national sentiment in a manner that, as the 1896 election proved, was particularly advantageous for him. It aimed to cross partisan and ethnic lines by focusing on future prosperity and Laurier’s unique biculturalism. He became a symbol of local success in the broader world and, through local events and improvements, made that world tangible in Québec Est.

Creation of Victoria Park, along the banks of the St. Charles River just north of St-Valier, was the first tangible expression of this policy. The need for a park in the city’s most densely populated working-class ward was undeniable. Michel Fiset, the Conservative alderman for St-Valier, had tried to get the city to build one as a condition of annexation in 1889.¹⁰¹ Thus for Parent, also an alderman for St-Valier, it was a political as well as a local priority upon becoming Mayor in 1894. It took some time,

¹⁰¹ L’Électeur, 4 September 1889, p. 2.

however, and Fitzpatrick's help to negotiate the city's purchase of the land from the Hôpital Général in April 1896, just months before the federal election.¹⁰² With the park ready to open in the spring of 1897, Parent sought to draw attention to his accomplishment by asking Lord Aberdeen, the Governor General, to negotiate permission to name the park after Queen Victoria in honour of her jubilee.¹⁰³ When Laurier returned from the jubilee celebrations in Britain, the Imperial Conference and a tour of France on August 29, 1897, it was the logical place, and moment, for a celebration.

L'Électeur, which had taken pride throughout the summer in Laurier's prestige abroad, emphasized national unity (across partisan and ethnic divides) and local sentiment in describing the celebrations.¹⁰⁴ The sheer number of people attending, it insisted, proved that "conservateurs comme libéraux s'étaient donnés la main pour fêter le héros du jour." The flags of Canada, Britain and France "formaient une véritable voûte multicolore" over streets of St-Roch and St-Sauveur. A military band, the police, firemen and local Garde Champlain led the procession, stopping only for Laurier to receive flowers from the daughters of prominent Conservatives and Liberals on successive streets. On the newly built avenue Parent, next to the park, Laurier shouted his congratulations to the Mayor for "l'un des plus beaux parcs du monde."

Speaking before 20,000 people in the park, Laurier masterfully linked his visit to both countries "du passé" with his return to the land "de l'avenir." He used the future as a

¹⁰² ANQQ, Fonds Mairie de Québec, P198, Volume 4, Parent to Fitzpatrick, 17 March 1896; Danielle Blanchet, Saint-Sauveur : à l'image du début du siècle (Québec : Ville de Québec, 1987) p. 20.

¹⁰³ ANQQ, Fonds Mairie de Québec, P198, Volume 4, Parent to Lord Aberdeen, 8 March 1897.

¹⁰⁴ Descriptions of the celebrations and speeches in the following paragraphs are taken from L'Électeur, 30 August 1897, p. 1.

thematic device to unite French and English. “J’ai la fierté de mon origine, je l’ai proclamé cent fois, j’ai la fierté de mon état civique comme citoyen britannique, surtout j’ai la fierté des aspirations que j’entretiens pour l’avenir du Canada, notre commune patrie.” He linked issues by emphasizing future gains from imperial, local and national policies as proof that his government, “un gouvernement d’hommes d’affaires,” had only one program: “développer la prospérité du pays.” He pointed first to the commercial gains negotiated with Britain as a reason for his loyalty to the Empire. He reminded his audience of the newly negotiated fast steamship service to Britain and, with the next breath, asked them to support western immigration, “cette grande oeuvre nationale.” He thanked Liberals and Conservatives but emphasized, more than anything, his gratitude for the years of support from Québec-Est. “Si vous ne m’avez pas oublié au jour de l’infortune, je ne vous oublierai certainement pas au jour de la prospérité.” Finally, he sought to connect local residents and a local pride to the imperial honours he had received in Britain and France. “S’il y a sur ma poitrine des croix et des décorations, c’est toujours le même cœur qui bat sous ces croix et ces décorations-là. C’est toujours le cœur d’un enfant du peuple, né dans le peuple et qui jamais jusqu’ici n’a oublié son origine et qui ne l’oubliera jamais non plus.” Thus he used themes of future prosperity and his own local representation to unite his audience and give tangible meaning as well as inspiration to membership in multiple communities. Anyone in the crowd that day might well have retained memories of Laurier, his speech, their neighbors’ cheers and waving flags to remind them of their attachment to Québec-Est, French Canada, English Canada and the British Empire each time they walked their children or sought refuge by the river.

One year later, meetings of the Joint High Commission called to resolve boundary issues between Canada and the United States (including the Alaska boundary dispute) served as an international backdrop to even more sumptuous celebrations that conveyed a similar theme though with a slightly different emphasis.¹⁰⁵ Rather than infuse imperial symbols with local and French Canadian identities, ceremonies unveiling a monument to Samuel de Champlain during the meetings would infuse local French Canadian and Catholic symbols with imperial and international identities. The idea was largely that of the SSJB and its President, ‘vrai libéral’ and Postmaster in St-Roch, J-B. Caouette.¹⁰⁶ He established an organizing committee, with English and French members, in 1890. Their efforts, however, bore little fruit until 1895 when a special committee was established to raise funds from the federal and provincial governments as well as the English speaking community in Québec City.¹⁰⁷ The group included ‘parentistes,’ a former Castor, Conservatives and clergymen.¹⁰⁸

As things came together in the summer of 1898, the organizing committee asked the SSJB to delay its annual celebrations until September, to coincide with the unveiling and then a second time, until September 21, to allow the High Commissioners to

¹⁰⁵ The meetings were held, not uncoincidentally, at the Chateau Frontenac. Laurier was intimately involved in choosing the location and even in making preparations at the hotel. NAC, Fonds Laurier, MG 26-G, Volume 83, page 25498, Laurier to Château Frontenac, 1 August 1898.

¹⁰⁶ It was Caouette who, in 1890, wanted “something new and interesting to catch the eyes of visitors” and began to raise funds for the project. However, the English Literary and Historical Society of Québec had first suggested the idea in 1879. Ronald Rudin, Founding Fathers: The Celebration of Champlain and Laval in the Streets of Québec, 1878-1908 (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2003) pp. 59-60.

¹⁰⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 63.

¹⁰⁸ The ‘parentists’ included S-N. Parent, George Tanguay, F-X. Berlinguet and Ernest Gagnon; the former Castor Pierre Garneau; Conservatives Thomas Chapais and A. Chauveau; and clergymen C.O. Gagnon and J.C.K. Laflamme. Le Soleil, 22 September 1898, p. 5.

attend.¹⁰⁹ Their agreement, more than anything, represented a blending of local, national and imperial identities. Québec-Est residents dominated the SSJB organizing committee that made this decision.¹¹⁰ The location of the statue, on the Dufferin Terrace, distinguished the celebrations from those held a year earlier in Victoria Park. Yet the focus on pan-Canadian pride and unity was the same. The event, and the Joint High Commission, drew British and American naval vessels to the port and official representatives from Britain, France and the United States.¹¹¹ Le Soleil proclaimed: “c’est la race française et la race anglo-saxonne qui, oubliant leurs luttes séculaires sur cette terre, ...s’unissent dans une même ovation, acclamant le même nom...Samuel de Champlain.” Pacaud was consciously aware that it was yet another of “ces spectacles qui révèlent une nation à elle-même”; in this case, an effort to “reveal” the pan-Canadian identity in a local French-Canadian hero.

The monument, “la Fête nationale” and the Joint High Commission completely overshadowed the prohibition referendum that took place the following week. Historian Nive Voisine explains how Protestant leadership in the campaign put the Roman Catholic Church in an awkward and ineffectual position.¹¹² Archbishop Bégin would certainly have seen greater opportunity to “récupérer les masses” in the “Fête nationale” than the referendum campaign. As a result, Le Soleil showed little restraint the day before the vote

¹⁰⁹ Le Soleil, 10 September 1898, p. 1.

¹¹⁰ Members of the SSJB committee responsible for the “Fête nationale” from Québec-Est included ‘vrai libéral’ J.B. Caouette; ‘parentiste’ Dr. C.E. Côté; Conservative Dr. M. Fiset; and Dr. Albert Jobin, a man who would later be closely identified with Bourassa’s ‘nationaliste’ movement. The other members were Amédée Robitaille, Adjutor Rivard, E-L. Bouffard and Jules Robitaille. Le Soleil, 17 September 1898, p. 8.

¹¹¹ Rudin notes the importance of the Joint High Commission in convincing the Americans to send a warship to the event. Rudin, Founding Fathers..., p. 97.

¹¹² Voisine, Histoire du Catholicisme..., p. 198.

characterizing prohibition as a fanatic's utopia that threatened to undermine government finances and even prevent the Church from holding mass.¹¹³ Although it scrupulously described the referendum as non-partisan, the newspaper's headline on September 30 read: "Comme au 23 juin, c'est la province de Québec qui sauve encore une fois le pays."¹¹⁴ Thus prohibition appeared to electors in Québec-Est as an outside imposition but not one to be taken very seriously when, as the Victoria Park and Champlain monument celebrations demonstrated, the community was so clearly part of – even, in a sense, a leader in – a still larger national and imperial community.

The Champlain celebrations may have inspired Laurier to suggest the creation of a national park on the Plains of Abraham to further buttress that idea. One year after the celebrations, the Québec Literary and Historical Society (QLHS) reminded him of this in a letter that urged him to purchase the Plains "for a national inheritance" or expropriate them to provide a drill area for the Québec Brigade.¹¹⁵ Laurier responded in a speech on November 6, 1899, in which he promised to purchase the Plains if they could be obtained at a reasonable cost.¹¹⁶ He turned to Parent for assistance, asking him to secure city council support for the project and negotiate purchase of the land from the Ursuline

¹¹³ Le Soleil, 28 September 1898, p. 1. Pacaud suggested that, without wine, it would be impossible to serve mass.

¹¹⁴ Ibid., 30 September 1898, p. 1. In Québec-Est, 53.4 per cent of electors turned out to vote (down three per cent from the 1896 election). The majority of voters opposed prohibition: 3,649 to 271. There was no significant variation across districts or polls.

¹¹⁵ NAC, Fonds Laurier, MG 26-G, Volume 121, p. 36416, F.C. Wurtele to Laurier, 18 August 1899.

¹¹⁶ Historian H.V. Nelles credits Laurier with suggesting that the Plains be turned into a national historic site, much like Gettysburg, in 1907. However, Laurier may well have had the idea years earlier. In 1900, he asked Doughty to provide him with notes on the battle and site. H.V. Nelles, The Art of Nation Building: Pageantry and Spectacle at Québec's Tercentenary (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1999), p. 306-7. See also NAC, Fonds Laurier, MG 26-G, Volume 167, p. 48489, Doughty to Laurier, 23 August 1900. For comments on Laurier's speech, see Ibid., Volume 136, p. 40717, Parent to Laurier, 4 January 1900.

Order. It did not take long. By January of the following year, the city was prepared to annex the Plains and the Ursulines had been convinced to sell the property to help “cement the good understanding that exists between people of different nationalities, not only in the City of Québec but throughout the entire Dominion.”¹¹⁷

At this stage, controversy arose out of the complex party structure for managing the distribution of patronage and the temptation of easy profit for speculators. When first proposed, the property was valued at \$20,000.¹¹⁸ But Laurier could not simply make an offer for that amount. So as not to offend the Church, he hoped to find another property of similar value to offer in exchange. So as not to offend his party, he sought to involve both Parent and Dobell. Thus, he asked Dobell to speak with Parent about the possibility of securing Marchmont, an improved property next to the Ursulines, and offering it to them in exchange.¹¹⁹ Parent proposed that the city make the necessary arrangements before finally selling the Ursuline’s property to the federal government.¹²⁰ When the public learned, in March 1900, that Marchmont had been sold, Dobell circulated rumours that Parent had purchased the property for himself.¹²¹ In fact, George Tanguay, a St-Sauveur Liberal and close associate of Parent, had purchased it; but the appearance of impropriety was scarcely reduced.¹²² The resulting scandal drew criticism from the ‘vrai

¹¹⁷ The phrase is taken from a much later letter summarising the situation. *Ibid.*, Volume 193, p. 55215, E.D.T. Chambers to Laurier, 8 April 1901. Parent confirms the city’s intentions in *Ibid.*, Volume 136, p. 40717, Parent to Laurier, 4 January 1900.

¹¹⁸ *Ibid.*, Volume 121, p. 36416, F.C. Wurtele to Laurier, 10 August 1899.

¹¹⁹ *Ibid.*, Volume 167, p. 48410, Dobell to Laurier, 21 August 1900.

¹²⁰ *The Chronicle*, 1 March 1900, p. 2.

¹²¹ NAC, Fonds Laurier, MG 26-G, Volume 167, p. 48410, Dobell to Laurier, 21 August 1900.

¹²² *Ibid.*, Volume 147, p. 43516, Sworn statement by George Tanguay, 19 March 1900.

parti' and almost certainly encouraged Laurier to resist further petitions from local residents urging him to purchase the property that year – he insisted that the government did not have enough time to vote an appropriation.¹²³ This was not enough, however, to stop local speculators. Purchased in March for \$20,000, Marchmont's value rose to \$30,000 in August and \$40-50,000 in October.¹²⁴ Such speculation dramatically raised the value of the Ursuline's property as well. But Laurier could not allow 'les parentistes' to make such an easy profit. In early 1901 he arranged to purchase the Plains directly from the Ursulines for \$80,000 and, even then, refused to go ahead with the transaction until much later in the year when he and a more "neutral" authority, the Finance Minister, could visit Québec City.¹²⁵ Thus, competing interests within the local party and the potential for personal gain had created a small scandal – one of the first for his government – from a project that had promised to, once again, combine local and national interests. Laurier did not, however, sacrifice either interest. Instead, he used his control of patronage to impose a certain propriety on the transaction and secure a lasting national and local legacy.¹²⁶

Laurier also used his control of government resources to make the party newspaper a powerful and profitable instrument for shaping public opinion. For Pacaud, electoral success meant ready access to government printing and advertising contracts

¹²³ *Ibid.*, Volume 163, p. 47616, Laurier to Reverend F.G. Scott, 14 July 1900.

¹²⁴ *Ibid.*, Volume 167, p. 48410, Dobell to Laurier, 21 August 1900; *Ibid.*, Volume 168, p. 48547, P.B. Casgrain to Laurier, 24 August 1900; *Ibid.*, Volume 175, p. 50058, Victor Chateauvert to George Tanguay, 20 October 1900.

¹²⁵ *Ibid.*, Volume 193, p. 55215, E.D.T. Chambers to Laurier, 8 April 1901; p. 55218, Laurier to Parent, 25 April 1901.

¹²⁶ Parent's displeasure with the delay is evident in *Ibid.*, Volume 206, p. 58813, Parent to Laurier, 10 September 1901.

and the opportunity to profit from, and reinvest in, his newspaper. His print shop produced everything from census documents to the Governor-General's post cards.¹²⁷ To secure these contracts, Pacaud often dealt with public servants or railway company employees as well as Laurier's ministers and political staff; but he never hesitated to draw on his personal relationship with Laurier. In 1898 he wrote to Laurier in a typical letter: "Vous n'avez pas répondu à ma lettre du 12 novembre. Vous l'avez pourtant reçue. Boudreau [Laurier's personal secretary] me l'a écrit. Je ne saurais attendre d'avantage pour faire régulariser ma position. Je ne saurais permettre à vos lieutenants de me persécuter plus de quinze jours encore." He regularly asked Laurier to intervene on his behalf and had no compunction about blaming former Conservatives, notably Dobell, and "le mauvais vouloir du personnel des départements" for his frustrations.¹²⁸ It was the ICR, though, that caused most of Pacaud's difficulties. "J'ai, en 1896, contracté pour la publication de l'horaire de l'ICR à raison de \$150 par année," he explained to Laurier in 1900. "Et voici que sans avis de discontinuation on refuse de me payer pour le dernier trimestre. Vous m'avez dit à Montréal l'autre jour que vous aviez donné l'ordre de me donner des impressions pour \$2,000. On s'est moqué de vos instructions. Je n'ai rien reçu."¹²⁹ Nobody else could possibly write to Laurier in this way; and, nobody else enjoyed the advantages Pacaud did. In this instance, Laurier wrote the General Manager of the ICR in Moncton and ordered him to meet with Pacaud in Québec City.¹³⁰

¹²⁷ *Ibid.*, 58729, Pacaud to Boudreau, 4 September 1901.

¹²⁸ *Le Soleil*, 14 October 1897, p. 1.

¹²⁹ NAC, Fonds Laurier, MG 26-G, Volume 165, p. 48138, Pacaud to Laurier, 8 August 1900.

¹³⁰ *Ibid.*, Volume 164, p. 47924, Laurier to D. Pottinger, 30 July 1900.

The situation was even more complicated for Laurier when it came to the Department of Public Works. Pacaud suspected that the Department deliberately overlooked him in favour of the Minister's own newspapers, La Patrie and The Montreal Daily Witness. As a loyal Liberal, Pacaud would not challenge Tarte directly. But, if Tarte was not directly involved, he insisted on his fair share of the Department's advertising. In 1900 he wrote to Laurier: "Toutes les annonces sous pli sont détachées du Witness. On les refuse au Soleil. Si c'est par ordre de Tarte je n'ai rien à dire. Mais j'aimerais bien savoir si c'est sur l'ordre de ceux qui le remplacent que le patronage du Département des Travaux Publics est refusé au Soleil."¹³¹ He extracted a promise from Laurier that he could reprint, and would be paid for, all government advertisements appearing in La Patrie and all advertisements of the ICR.¹³² But he did this, and more, reprinting other advertisements and charging them to the Department of Public Works. Tarte protested to Laurier, but he too recognized Pacaud's special status. "Je n'ai pas besoin de vous dire que si vous croyez vous être lié à l'endroit de Pacaud, pour les annonces de mon Ministère, je paierai celles qu'il a publiées jusqu'à ce jour. L'embarras est que des douzaines de journaux font de même. [Mais] Pacaud est un cas spécial, et pour l'empêcher de grincer, je n'ai pas d'objection à le payer."¹³³

Pacaud's special status depended not only on his longstanding friendship with Laurier but also his role in the Liberal electoral organization. Leading up to the 1900 federal election, his production of campaign literature reached an unprecedented scale.

¹³¹ Ibid., Volume 147, p. 43683, Pacaud to Laurier, 12 March 1900.

¹³² Ibid., Volume 211, p. 59777, Laurier to Tarte, 5 November 1901.

¹³³ Ibid., p. 59774, Tarte to Laurier, 7 November 1901.

His print shop produced 100,000 copies of 13 different brochures and distributed them to Liberal candidates throughout the province.¹³⁴ He distributed Le Soleil – “the best campaign literature available” – free of charge in six different constituencies including Québec-Est.¹³⁵ He printed placards, instructions for Liberal scrutineers, pamphlets for public meetings and more. He charged the Comité d’organisation du parti libéral only a minimal amount for these services but by the end of the campaign he nonetheless submitted a substantial bill to Fitzpatrick, for \$4,235.56.¹³⁶

Distribution of campaign literature, like the distribution of the newspaper, was assured by the Post Office and railway. Thus, they had critical roles in the shaping of public opinion and when Pacaud found delays and fraud in their systems only weeks before the election, Laurier acted without hesitation. Pacaud asked for an inquiry on July 31, claiming that four people had been let go at the Post Office when work had, in fact, increased; that mail coming and going from points between Québec and Trois-Rivières was sent unnecessarily to Montréal and that more than 100 Post Offices were not delivering Le Soleil.¹³⁷ Laurier ordered the Controller of Railway Mail Services, Mr. Armstrong, to investigate.¹³⁸ The very next day, Armstrong found that 44 newspapers were “missent” to Fraserville and that the railway mail clerk, Mr. Gingras, was responsible.¹³⁹ Laurier wrote to Mullock: “The dismissal which I therein demand ought to

¹³⁴ Ibid., Volume 176, p. 50147, Pacaud to Boudreau, 27 October 1900.

¹³⁵ Ibid.

¹³⁶ Ibid., Volume 177, p. 50392, Pacaud to Laurier, 9 November 1900.

¹³⁷ Ibid., Volume 164, p. 47937, Pacaud to Laurier, 31 July 1900.

¹³⁸ Ibid., Volume 165, p. 48106, Laurier to Armstrong, 4 August 1900.

¹³⁹ Ibid., p. 48123, Armstrong to Laurier, 7 August 1900.

be made immediately. It is beyond doubt that there is a system amongst certain employees of the Québec Post Office to irritate and annoy our friend by systematically missending mail matter. I would advise you to promote to Gingras' place a man by the name of Lachance, who is now employed somewhere in the Baie des Chaleurs. I will send you in a few days the name of another man to take Lachance's place."¹⁴⁰ The level of detail and the speed with which he worked was certainly related to the approaching election; and it demonstrated, once again, the critical way in which patronage was linked to public opinion. Laurier did not reply, after the election, when a more thorough Post Office investigation found that "the newspaper office and not the Post Office Department was responsible for a large percentage of the missendings."¹⁴¹

The final piece in the Liberal electoral organization, the piece that had been missing in 1896, was the local campaign team in Québec-Est. Pacaud had started to reinvigorate the organization in late 1896, calling on party members to invite their friends to join the Club Mercier.¹⁴² Critical though was a transition to younger leadership that the party accomplished when Cyrille Fraser Delâge took on the duties of party organizer for St-Roch in 1899. Delâge had grown up in the parish, attended the local school and gone on to win numerous awards at the Université Laval law school.¹⁴³ While a student, he helped found the Club Mercier and he remained an active member after joining his father's notary office in 1892. Perhaps his greatest advantage, however, was his ability to

¹⁴⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 48105, Laurier to Mulock, 11 August 1900.

¹⁴¹ *Ibid.*, Volume 188, p. 53725, Armstrong to Postmaster General, March 1901.

¹⁴² *L'Électeur*, 16 December 1896, p. 4.

¹⁴³ A brief biography of Delâge is found in Jean-Charles Gamache, *Histoire de Saint-Roch de Québec et de ses institutions, 1829-1929* (Québec : Charrier et Dugal Ltée, 1929) pp. 67-68.

work with both factions in the party. Despite his roots in St-Roch and the Club Mercier, he was also closely associated with 'les parentistes' in St-Sauveur and, most significantly, with Fitzpatrick in Québec-Comté. Delâge would go on to win four successive provincial elections as the MLA for Québec-Comté. In April 1899, however, he was taking his first step into the upper echelons of the party by organizing the revision of electoral lists: providing the necessary office space, printing revision forms and copies of the list, and recruiting party workers, devoting nine days to the task.¹⁴⁴ "Je serai heureux de faire ce travail gratuitement pour le parti que j'aime et pour son chef qui le mérite et davantage," he wrote to Laurier.¹⁴⁵ He was certainly pleased, however, when Laurier sent him \$100 to cover expenses, "parce que cela m'aurait prouvé d'abord qu'on se souvenait et puis m'aurait indemnisé pour ces sacrifices."¹⁴⁶ He was happier still when Laurier made him the constituency's Returning Officer (nominally a non-partisan, government paid, position).¹⁴⁷ His enthusiasm contrasted sharply with Shehyn, still the MLA and a Minister without Portfolio in the Marchand government, who refused to contribute to the revision saying that it would be of no value for him.¹⁴⁸ Almost certainly he had already spoken to Laurier about stepping down.¹⁴⁹ In a gesture that facilitated a transition to younger leadership in St-Roch, Laurier appointed Shehyn to the Senate in February 1900.

¹⁴⁴ NAC, Fonds Laurier, MG 26-G, Volume 106, p. 32077, Delâge to Laurier, 1 April 1899.

¹⁴⁵ *Ibid.*, Volume 111, p. 33718, Delâge to Laurier, 18 May 1899.

¹⁴⁶ The funds covered 4 copies of the electoral list (\$17), printing blank revision forms (\$14.50), salaries for five people over seven days (\$65) and the rest for "la fête." *Ibid.*

¹⁴⁷ *Ibid.*, Volume 177, p. 50574, Delâge to Laurier, 12 November 1900.

¹⁴⁸ *Ibid.*, Volume 111, p. 33718, Delâge to Laurier, 18 May 1899.

¹⁴⁹ The first recorded exchange between them on the subject was in December 1899. *Ibid.*, Volume 135, p. 40308. Shehyn to Laurier, 27 December 1899.

Thus, by the time the House rose in July 1900, Laurier could rely on an effective organization in St-Roch and in St-Sauveur as well as a powerful party newspaper under the experienced direction of Ernest Pacaud. Moreover, resurgence of the ‘vrai parti’ and local labour organizations had given him a record of national labour legislation while ‘les parentistes’ ensured that local symbols and material improvements in the city were identified with him and his party.

Labour issues, while they played a “modest” role in the national campaign, figured prominently in Québec-Est until the strike and lockout began in October.¹⁵⁰ Le Soleil gave unprecedented coverage of the Labour Day celebrations organized by the Conseil Central des Métiers et du Travail de Québec (CCMTQ).¹⁵¹ Pacaud protested against “des gens qui, tout en étant sympathiques aux ouvriers, préféraient que cette fête n’existât pas,” seeing in it “un acheminement vers des doctrines radicales et socialistes.” Le Soleil ran portraits of the CCMTQ executive, urged stores and factories to close on Labour Day, defended workers’ “indiscutable” right of association and assured readers that workers wanted only to “démontrer qu’ils sont quelque chose dans la société et qu’ils ont droit au respect des autres classes.” And, in case anyone doubted Pacaud’s partisan interest, he used the occasion to devote two full pages to Laurier’s labour policies. A month later, though, at the height of the lockout and the election campaign, Le Soleil avoided almost any mention of the strike.

¹⁵⁰ The judgement of the role played by labour issues in the national campaign is that of Dawson, William Lyon Mackenzie King..., p. 105.

¹⁵¹ All references to reports and opinion on Labour Day in this paragraph are found in Le Soleil, 1 September 1900, p. 1

During the campaign, Pacaud preferred to emphasize Laurier's contributions to Québec-Est. He regularly ran stories on "Laurier et ses oeuvres."¹⁵² Of these, the most important was construction of the Québec Bridge.¹⁵³ Thus it appeared almost providential when Marchand passed away on September 25 and, with Laurier's support, Parent assumed leadership of the provincial government just the day before they laid the bridge's first stone. Reporting on the grandiose event the following day, Pacaud trumpeted the assumption of a single Liberal administration that put Québec-Est in control of municipal, provincial and national governments.¹⁵⁴ That evening, Laurier held a "grande assemblée" on Jacques Cartier Square with Parent, Shehyn, Pelletier and Fitzpatrick (see Figure 3 page 94).¹⁵⁵ He spoke about the "Laurier-Greenway" accord but devoted most of his time to the bridge, the port and "les questions ouvrières, de plus en plus à l'ordre du jour." On election day, Laurier captured 81.3 per cent of the vote in Québec-Est and, thanks to Delâge, he once again won close to 80 per cent of the vote in Jacques-Cartier (79 per cent) and St-Roch (77.7 per cent) – a significant improvement over the 1896 results (68.9 per cent and 72.5 per cent respectively).¹⁵⁶ Victory proved the overwhelming effectiveness of the party in Québec-Est when both factions were able to cooperate and the important role Laurier and Pacaud played in keeping them together.

¹⁵² See, for example, Le Soleil, 11, 18, 25 August and 2, 15, September and 2, 3, 4 October 1900.

¹⁵³ In late October 1889, Fitzpatrick wrote to Laurier, "unless the bridge is started in my judgement you cannot successfully run your elections in this district." NAC, Fonds Laurier, MG 26-G, Volume 128, p. 38464, Fitzpatrick to Laurier, 31 October 1899.

¹⁵⁴ Le Soleil, 3 October 1900, p. 1. "Laurier-Parent: Québec Dirige" ran as a slogan in every edition throughout the rest of the campaign.

¹⁵⁵ Ibid., 4 October 1900, p. 1.

¹⁵⁶ NAC, Fonds Office of the Chief Electoral Officer, RG 113-C, Electoral Returns, 1867-1980.

For the next three years, Laurier and Pacaud managed to maintain a balance between the two factions that kept them reasonably well united. They oscillated though between the secular French-Canadian nationalist positions of the ‘vrai parti’ and the socially conservative positions of ‘les parentistes’ depending on which was able to exert most influence at any given moment. Their struggles helped shape government policy but, when they were truly united around the city’s most important economic interests, they were able to make the local agenda a national priority. Laurier and Pacaud walked this fine line together until 1903.

Their first challenge to party “unity” came within days of the federal election when Parent called a provincial election and appointed Georges Darveau as the Liberal candidate to replace Shehyn in the provincial constituency of Québec-Est. ‘Le vrai parti’ refused to support him in “their” part of Laurier’s riding. Over Laurier’s objections, and despite his efforts to negotiate a compromise, Jules-Alfred Lane, lawyer for the QHC and President of the Club Mercier, decided to run against Darveau.¹⁵⁷ Pacaud, Shehyn, Charles Langelier as well as Armand Lavergne, Albert Jobin and J.E.A. Pin, supported Lane; while Parent, Joseph-P. Turcotte, George Tanguay, Télesphore Trudel and a Conservative, Dr. Verge, backed Darveau.¹⁵⁸ Although Laurier forced Pacaud to announce for Darveau in the final days of the campaign, Lane won by 646 votes.¹⁵⁹ The next day, Pacaud excused electors for voting against his advice. Revealing his affinity to

¹⁵⁷ This incident is recounted in McGee, Laurier, Lapointe, St-Laurent..., p. 116 to 118.

¹⁵⁸ Le Soleil, 5, 6 December 1900, p. 8.

¹⁵⁹ In declaring the newspaper’s support for Darveau, Pacaud reminded his readers that Le Soleil was the party’s official organ. Le Soleil, 7 December 1900, p. 2. Result given in McGee, Laurier, Lapointe, St-Laurent..., p. 118.

‘le vrai parti,’ he described Lane as a loyal Liberal.¹⁶⁰ Laurier and ‘les parentistes,’ would consider him an “independent” Liberal at best.

Pacaud’s “discretion” makes it impossible to determine the role labour, and the lockout, might have had in the provincial election although Pin’s participation in Lane’s campaign suggests a degree of cooperation between the ‘vrai parti’ and labour organizers. Pin was a ‘vrai libéral’, active in the party since the 1880s, who, beginning in 1900, wrote on labour issues for the Bulletin de Travail and Le Soleil.¹⁶¹ By 1920, he had become President of the Convention des Unions nationales et catholiques de la province de Québec.¹⁶² Affinity between the ‘vrai parti’ and the labour movement in Québec-Est is also suggested by the gains they made – simultaneously – in the riding after 1900. The lockout, and Bégin’s report, marked the beginning of a three-year struggle for the shoemakers to retain their union recognition and to resist Church control. Their success created a uniquely powerful secular Canadian (“national”) labour movement with deep roots in Québec-Est. Omer Brunet, President of the CCMTC and a machinist employed by Conservative shoe manufacturer John Ritchie, was a resident of St-Sauveur.¹⁶³ He established a union-managed job placement office in 1902. Known as the Bourse de Travail, it became a central institution in the riding. Brunet, himself, became the first President of the National Trades and Labour Congress (NTLC) and organized its first

¹⁶⁰ Le Soleil, 10 December 1900, p. 1.

¹⁶¹ In a letter to Laurier, he claims to have worked for the Liberal party since the days of Honoré Mercier and have written for Le Soleil since March 1904. NAC, Fonds Laurier, MG 26-G, Volume 350, p. 93386. Pin to Laurier, 4 January 1905. His participation in the Bulletin de Travail, a short-lived union newspaper published in 1900-1901, is reported in Rouillard, Les Syndicats nationaux..., p. 93.

¹⁶² Archives de l’Université Laval, Fonds de l’Union protectrice des cordonniers-monteurs de la ville de Québec, P 290, Reel 2. Message du président, 1920.

¹⁶³ NAC, Fonds Laurier, MG 26-G, Volume 385, p. 102733. Ritchie to Laurier, 2 November 1905.

national meeting in Québec City.¹⁶⁴ At about the same time, in 1902, the ‘vrai parti’ captured two municipal seats in the riding from ‘les parentistes.’ Joseph Gauthier and J-B. Morrisette, both members of Laurier’s “team” in 1877, became aldermen for St-Roch and Jacques-Cartier wards, respectively.

That same year, however, Laurier’s practice of appointing ‘les parentistes’ and Conservatives – rather than ‘vrais libéraux’ – to positions of power in Ottawa seriously hurt the local labour movement in its struggle for recognition and independence from the Church. In June, during a strike over union recognition, Bégin threatened to rule against the three shoemakers’ unions unless they finally revised their constitutions and submitted them for his approval. The lasters and tailors relented, but the machinists resisted until Bégin relieved the AMCQ of its obligation to recognize their union. The AMCQ then threatened to lock them out unless they changed their constitution. Finally, they were forced to give in but they appealed to the Minister of Labour that the Church had overstepped its role. The case wound up in front of Laurier who, on the advice of Fitzpatrick and King, found that “the ecclesiastical authority was outside of government’s intervention altogether.”¹⁶⁵ As a result, Laurier refused to intervene in the local settlement and helped set the Church and union movement on a course towards creation of Catholic unions. The incident reveals the significance of patronage in shaping – or accepting – public culture, the conservative nature of ‘les parentistes,’ and their still powerful influence in 1902.

¹⁶⁴ The NTLC brought together the unions thrown out of the Trades and Labour Congress of Canada (TLCC) following the American Federation of Labour (AFL) takeover of that organization at the annual general meeting in Berlin in 1902. Robert Babcock, Gompers in Canada: A Study in American Continentalism before the First World War (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1974).

¹⁶⁵ NAC, Fonds William Lyon Mackenzie King, MG 26-I, Dairy, 10 March 1902.

The electoral influence of the ‘vrai parti’ counted for more however, on the eve of the Imperial Conference in May 1902, when Lane tabled a motion calling on the Legislative Assembly to oppose “le nouvel impérialisme et ses tendances dangereuses.”¹⁶⁶ Such a strong statement from the ‘vrai parti,’ even before Bourassa’s ‘nationaliste’ rally in Drummondville, in June, and well before the Ligue nationaliste drew up its program in the Fall, embarrassed Laurier.¹⁶⁷ But it strengthened the party’s French-Canadian nationalist appeal by forcing him to publish correspondence with the British Foreign Office in which he defended Canadian autonomy. Moreover, at a time when Fitzpatrick seriously underestimated Bourassa’s political strength, it encouraged Laurier to adopt a position at the Imperial Conference that even Armand Lavergne described as “presque nationaliste.”¹⁶⁸

Patronage did, however, play a role in the incident and the dénouement of the Imperial Conference. Before leaving for London, Laurier was able to apply sufficient pressure on Lane – a man he had appointed to be the lawyer for the QHC – to withdraw his motion opposing imperialism. Upon his return, ‘vrai parti’ strength and the indignation of Liberals across the country prompted him to dismiss Tarte for publicly suggesting the government abandon an Imperial preference and raise tariffs.

¹⁶⁶ This incident is recounted in McGee, *Laurier, Lapointe, St-Laurent...*, p. 122 and 123.

¹⁶⁷ Joseph Levitt, *Henri Bourassa and the Golden Calf: The Social Program of the Nationalists of Québec (1900-1914)* (Ottawa: Les Éditions de l’Université d’Ottawa, 1969) p. 19.

¹⁶⁸ Fitzpatrick characterized Bourassa’s nationalist movement as no more than an old story of a temporary outburst that would not last. NAC, Fonds Charles Fitzpatrick, MG 27-II-C-1, Volume 3, p. 1583, Fitzpatrick to Louis Lavergne, 18 June 1902. Armand Lavergne describes the appeal of Laurier’s opposition to participation in foreign wars and recognition of an obligation for national defence at the Imperial Conference in June 1902. Armand Lavergne, *Trente ans de Vie nationale* (Montréal: Les Éditions du zodiaque, 1934) p. 99.

Laurier took more direct action to bolster local support for his imperial policy in 1902. Sometime during the “run-up” to the Imperial Conference, the Department of the Militia and Defence agreed to lease public land in Québec City to Sir Charles Ross for construction of the Ross Rifle Factory (RRF).¹⁶⁹ It must have seemed like a wonderful opportunity to stimulate economic growth and employment and enlarge the city’s material interest in the Canadian military. But the site chosen, on the still vacant and only vaguely allocated Plains of Abraham, proved contentious from the beginning. Members of the ‘vrai parti’ and English-speaking residents living near the Plains objected to the presence of a private company besmirching the scenery. Upon his return from England, Laurier received a petition from a “City Committee” that included Choquette, Shehyn, François Langelier, Joseph Archer, Edward Connolly, William Wood and William Price. Their position combined both practical local concerns and pan-Canadian nationalist sentiment:

A factory [on the Plains of Abraham] would spoil the entire panoramic effect so much appreciated by Quebecers and all visitors...; if the City should not extend rapidly, there can be no necessity for seizing this particular site; whilst if it should extend, those open grounds will be needed all the more by the citizens for a park. But what we chiefly insist on is that the proposed lease to Sir Charles Ross is an apparently wanton private exploitation of this public property in which we are all so much interested both as citizens of Québec and as Canadians; it is well known that there are several superior sites available in Québec.¹⁷⁰

They went so far as to wonder if there might be some “unexplained attraction or some larger scheme behind it.” The Department claimed to have been duped by Sir Charles. He

¹⁶⁹ In conversation with François Langelier, L.P. Pinault, the person responsible for militia installations in Québec City, confirmed that the Department had agreed to lease land on the Plains of Abraham to Sir Charles Ross. NAC, Fonds Laurier, MG 26-G, Volume 263, p. 72805, François Langelier to Laurier, 4 May 1904.

¹⁷⁰ *Ibid.*, Volume 239, p. 67004, William Wood to Laurier, 11 August 1902.

had, the Department claimed, built his factory on a much more prominent site, higher up on the Plains, than the one they thought had been leased.¹⁷¹ Laurier would only ever say that he considered the site “unfortunate.”¹⁷² But Laurier took advantage of the Committee’s conjectures to change the focus of discussion. By ignoring their principal concern and adopting an uncharacteristically indignant tone, he made a strong defence of the factory and, by extension, its location. He replied: “I observe...that the tone of the memorial, a copy of which you have sent me, is very offensive. It contains innuendos for which no reason whatever is given. If you have any charge to make it would be better to do it in an open way but the language which you make use of is certainly not calculated to foster the end which you have in view.”¹⁷³ This put an end to public opposition to the factory in 1902.

When ‘le vrai parti’ and ‘les parentistes’ shared a common interest, they were much harder to stop. And always they shared a common interest in the city’s economic agenda established in the 1850s. But it would take the full weight of an unrelieved provincial debt and a fatal “outside” threat to their ambitions before they would finally unite, in 1903, to put in place the last element in that vision – a direct rail link to western Canada.

When Marchand took power in 1897, he faced the same provincial debt load and public unwillingness to increase taxes that had confronted all Québec premiers.¹⁷⁴ Parent,

¹⁷¹ Pinault’s comments are reported by François Langelier. *Ibid.*, Volume 263, p. 72805, François Langelier to Laurier, 4 May 1904.

¹⁷² *Ibid.*, p. 72808, Laurier to François Langelier, 7 May 1904.

¹⁷³ *Ibid.*, Volume, 239, p. 67008, Laurier to William Wood, 3 September 1902.

¹⁷⁴ In 1897-98, the provincial government debt was \$24 million and its deficit was \$187,000. Linteau, Durocher, Robert, *Histoire du Québec Contemporain...*, p. 548 and 550.

his Minister of Lands, Forests and Fisheries, provided temporary respite by selling off, quickly and cheaply, the province's timber limits and hydroelectric rights.¹⁷⁵ When Marchand imposed an export tax on pulpwood in 1900 the province developed a thriving pulp and paper industry and the government, a healthy surplus.¹⁷⁶ The revenue, however, came largely from American entrepreneurs who could afford to develop the resources quickly but who also excluded French Canadian colonists from the best land and often impeded their efforts. The conflict between industry and colonization once again pitted Liberals against Conservatives and the Church and, within the Liberal party, 'les parentistes' against 'le vrai parti.'

The rift was obvious as early as 1898, when the Société de Colonisation de Montréal held a Congress that attracted 'vrai parti' members, Adélard Turgeon, MLA for Bellechasse and Minister of Colonization, and Joseph-Emery Robidoux, former member of the Mercier government and Provincial Secretary – but not Parent.¹⁷⁷ Partly because of their participation, the Congress did not have much of an immediate impact on public opinion in the province.¹⁷⁸ It did, however, define the principal demands of the colonization movement. These included an innovative suggestion in favour of agricultural credit cooperatives but largely reiterated demands for greater attention to

¹⁷⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 576.

¹⁷⁶ *Ibid.*, pp. 361, 448, 548.

¹⁷⁷ Historian Robert Rumilly describes Turgeon and two colleagues, François-Gilbert-Miville Deschêne and Jules Tessier, as "rouges comme des tomates mûres – du groupe Langelier." Robert Rumilly, *Histoire de la Province de Québec*, Volume VII, *Taillon* (Montréal : Éditions Bernard Valiquette, 1942) p. 15. Regarding the Congress, see Robert Rumilly, *Histoire de la Province de Québec*, Volume IX, *Marchand* (Montréal : Éditions Bernard Valiquette, 1942) p. 85.

¹⁷⁸ Rumilly, *Marchand*, p. 87.

colonists' interests (in granting timber licences, for example) and, most especially, the development of colonization railways north of Québec City and Montréal.

Parent did not charge enough or could not get enough for the government to pay for further development of provincial railways. Both as Minister and then as Premier, his biggest fear was demanding too much from the capitalists "qui donnent du travail à la population."¹⁷⁹ Without increasing taxes, then, he had only two choices. In May 1902, prompted by Maurice Perreault, MLA for Longueuil, he chose the first and, like Mercier before him, asked for an increase in the federal subsidy to the provinces.¹⁸⁰ Laurier, apparently anxious to avoid provoking French-Canadian nationalist sentiment, asked him to delay any formal request until his return from the Imperial Conference.¹⁸¹ But Perrault went ahead anyway and got support from Lomer Gouin, Mercier's son-in-law and the provincial Minister of Public Works and Colonization, as well as Rodolphe Lemieux, Jetté's son-in-law and Liberal MP for Gaspé.¹⁸² Both men, close friends from Montréal, had served on the executive of the Club National in 1888.¹⁸³ Upon his return from Europe, Laurier again asked Parent to hold off any official request for an increased federal subsidy.¹⁸⁴ However, when Charles Hays, President of the Grand Trunk Railway

¹⁷⁹ Linteau, Durocher, Robert, Histoire du Québec Contemporain..., p. 578.

¹⁸⁰ Perrault told Parent he would present a motion to the Legislature in favour of an increased federal subsidy, provincial control of all public properties, including railways, and extinction of the federal right to disavow provincial legislation. Rumilly attributes the original idea to Bourassa although the motion essentially repeats the demands made by Mercier at the 1887 Inter-provincial Conference. Robert Rumilly, Histoire de la Province de Québec, Volume X, Tarte (Montréal: Éditions Bernard Valiquette, 1942) pp. 81 and 86.

¹⁸¹ Ibid., p. 81.

¹⁸³ René Castonguay, Rodolphe Lemieux et le Parti libéral, 1866-1937 : le chevalier du roi (Québec : Les Presses de l'Université Laval, 2000) p. 16.

¹⁸⁴ Rumilly, Tarte, p. 181.

(GTR), announced plans in November to spend \$100 million on construction of a transcontinental railway that would cross the St. Lawrence at Montréal and terminate in Portland, Maine, Parent could not hold off any longer.¹⁸⁵ The GTR project represented a direct threat to Québec City's long-held dream of a direct rail link to western Canada; to have any chance of success, it would have to be built before the GTR line. Under tremendous pressure from all sides, Parent finally called an Inter-Provincial Conference in December to ask for an increase in the federal subsidy.¹⁸⁶

In Le Soleil, Pacaud reminded his readers of Mercier's efforts to secure an increased federal subsidy but emphasized especially how federal revenues had grown while provincial responsibilities for education, colonization and industry had far outstripped the government's resources.¹⁸⁷ He went so far as to declare Parent's action "une réhabilitation complète de son illustre prédécesseur Mercier."¹⁸⁸ There could be no finer praise from Pacaud. The conference revealed, though, just how little interest the GTR announcement held for the other provinces. All joined in requesting an increased subsidy; but Premier Ross of Ontario and Premier Prior of British Columbia chose not to attend the conference while Premier Roblin of Manitoba left before it was finished.¹⁸⁹ They had little interest in the principal subject of the concluding banquet: the "national importance" of an all-Canadian route and eastern terminus for any new transcontinental railway. Laurier, who had always considered Mercier's request as detrimental to the

¹⁸⁵ Ibid., p. 178.

¹⁸⁶ Ibid., pp. 178-180.

¹⁸⁷ Le Soleil, 17 December 1902, p. 1.

¹⁸⁸ Ibid., 18 December 1902, p. 1.

¹⁸⁹ Rumilly, Tarte, p. 182.

provinces, needed no further excuse to ignore it. Gouin, Lemieux and Pacaud did not give up easily though. In May 1903 Gouin made it the subject of a major speech at the Club National in Montréal.¹⁹⁰ Laurier may have been responding in June when Senator Richard William Scott spoke against an increase in the subsidy. Lemieux questioned Laurier in the House of Commons about Scott's statement and Pacaud made his intervention front page news in Le Soleil; Laurier, however only responded that the issue was still being "studied."¹⁹¹

Laurier's unwillingness to increase the federal subsidy to the provinces left Québec City Liberals only one way to secure funds for construction of a direct rail link to the west. The federal government would have to spend the money itself. This was, likely, Laurier's preferred choice; rather than increase the provincial government's resources and influence, he determined to use his own government's influence and resources to fulfill the city's long held ambitions. Not only could he hope to take advantage of the GTR commitment, but he could also count on the ambitions of Donald Mann and William Mackenzie who were in the midst of patching together a third transcontinental railway: the Canadian Northern Railway (CNR).

At the time, there were no less than three local railway companies vying to fulfill the city's ambitions and promising, thereby, to open northern Québec to colonization. The most advanced was the Great Northern Railway (GNR) led by its President, former Castor and Mercier Cabinet Minister, Pierre Garneau. It had taken over much of the QMOO track north of the St. Lawrence and was granted a subsidy in 1899 to build a line

¹⁹⁰ Ibid., p. 201.

¹⁹¹ Reported in Le Soleil, 3 and 4 July 1903, p. 1.

linking it to the Canada Atlantic Railway (CAR) of John Rudolphus Booth.¹⁹² Together, the two lines would carry western grain from Parry Sound to Québec City. Laurier even allowed the QHC to guarantee the interest on GNR bonds, and give them priority over the QHC's own debt re-payment to the government, so that the GNR could build a grain elevator at Québec City.¹⁹³ Laurier's support for the city in its competition with Montréal was obvious in his defense of the elevator project. He justified the measure over objections that the port already had an unused elevator by asserting that the CPR, the owner of the elevator, had "not undertaken the carrying of wheat as a business." He praised the GNR and CAR project for avoiding "the dangers of navigation between Montréal and Québec" and credited the companies for having "no interest in Montréal."¹⁹⁴ Four years later though, the GNR purchased the Chateauguay and Northern Railway and gained access to Montréal via a line from Joliette.¹⁹⁵ The purchase made it a valuable part of any transcontinental railway but a less satisfactory vehicle for fulfilling the city's ambitions.

Charles Langelier floated a second, very similar, railway project in 1900. The Québec and Lake Huron Railway (QHR) was, if anything, an even more faithful manifestation of the city's ambitions. It claimed "the right to make use of the natural advantages that the almighty has laid at our feet...to raise a barrier to prevent what rightfully should come to Québec from being diverted into other channels."¹⁹⁶

¹⁹² House of Commons Debates, 5 August 1899, p. 9687.

¹⁹³ Ibid., p. 9684.

¹⁹⁴ Ibid., 8 August 1899, p. 9862.

¹⁹⁵ Linteau, Durocher, Robert, Histoire du Québec..., p. 394.

¹⁹⁶ NAC, Fonds Laurier, MG 26-G, Volume 154, p. 45119, Charles Langelier to Laurier, May 1900.

Specifically, it promised not to come within 75 miles of Toronto, Ottawa or Montréal. From the beginning, however, it planned to draw on American financial support that proved, in the end, impossible to secure.¹⁹⁷ Not one mile of track was ever laid.

The more modest Québec and Lake St. John Railway (QSJR) managed by former Conservative, now 'parentiste,' James Guthrie Scott, faced no such difficulties.¹⁹⁸ In 1903, it was already a profitable regional railway; but Scott dreamed of fulfilling the city's ambitions. He imagined a railway that would carry lumber, not grain, and stretch from the Lac-St-Jean region through the forests of the James Bay watershed into northern Ontario and, passing north of Lake Winnipeg, into the Saskatchewan River valley.¹⁹⁹ Like the QHR, his Trans Canada Railway (TCR) was only a vision in 1903; but it had support from Garneau, whose GNR line connected with the QSJR, and \$250,000 pledged from local businessmen.²⁰⁰

All three railways claimed to meet national needs, all three were threatened by the GTR project and all three looked to Parent, Fitzpatrick and Laurier to defend their interests and the city's most cherished ambitions. Laurier's problem was their almost total lack of funds. Even the Québec Bridge Company, with \$1 million in government support, had not attracted private financing.²⁰¹ At the same time, Laurier had repeatedly committed to fulfilling the city's ambitions since 1877. His first step then, early in 1903,

¹⁹⁷ *Ibid.*, Volume 227, p. 63674, Charles Langelier to Laurier, 14 March 1902; Volume 279, p. 76565, Charles Langelier to Laurier, 28 August 1903.

¹⁹⁸ Linteau, Durocher, Robert, *Histoire du Québec*..., p. 393.

¹⁹⁹ Rumilly, *Tarte*, p. 176.

²⁰⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 219.

²⁰¹ *Ibid.*, p. 224; see also NAC, Fonds Laurier, MG 26-G, Volume 272, p. 75127, Parent to Laurier, 16 July 1903.

was an attempt to bring together the GTR and the CNR while asking them to run their joint transcontinental over a line from North Bay to Québec City.²⁰² With \$100 million already committed to the project, and no major commitment yet from the CNR, the GTR was unwilling to join such a partnership. Pointing to Laurier's considerable legal and financial clout, transportation historian G.P. de T. Glazebrook describes his inability to negotiate this partnership a puzzling and critical failing.²⁰³ He suggests it may have been due to divisions within Cabinet, Laurier's fear the railway would never be built or simply his misunderstanding of the situation. Later events suggest, however, that neither railway would commit funds to a Québec City line that avoided Montréal under any circumstances. Without such a commitment, Laurier had nothing to gain in forcing their partnership.

Laurier had succeeded, through, in convincing both railways they would need to take Québec City interests into consideration. In a move that secured a line to Québec City, ensured a substantial gain for local investors and put Garneau, Scott, Parent and Québec City Conservative Victor Chateauvert on the board of the CNR, Mann and Mackenzie bought the GNR outright.²⁰⁴ However, it also gave the CNR access to Montréal, which, again, held the potential for disappointing Québec City interests. The GTR, however, amended its proposed charter for a western railway, the Grand Trunk Pacific Railway (GTPR), to include a North Bay-Québec City line and, in negotiations with Laurier, entertained the possibility of assuming responsibility for the Québec

²⁰² Rumilly, *Tarte*, p. 221. Specific reference to the government's request for a North Bay- Québec City line is reported in G.P. de T. Glazebrook, *A History of Transportation in Canada*, Volume II, *National Economy, 1867-1936* (Toronto : McClelland and Stewart Ltd., 1967) pp. 126-127 and 129.

²⁰³ *Ibid.*, p. 127.

²⁰⁴ Rumilly, *Tarte*, p. 223-224; Linteau, Durocher, Robert, *Histoire du Québec...*, p. 393.

Bridge.²⁰⁵ For Laurier and Parent, the GTR held enough promise that Parent rejected a request in March that year to subsidize TCR construction of a line from Roberval to Abitibi.²⁰⁶ Nationalist historian Robert Rumilly blames Laurier for rejecting the proposal and betraying local interests. William Price, however, may have had a better understanding of what was essentially a decision not to encourage an under-funded, Conservative dominated, railway. Price attempted to hire a Liberal lobbyist, P-A. Choquette.²⁰⁷ After consulting with Laurier, Choquette declined the offer and by the end of May, TCR shareholders were looking to sell their charter to the GTR.²⁰⁸

Despite amending their charter to include a North Bay-Québec City line and entertaining thoughts of building the Québec Bridge, it is likely the GTR never had any intention to do either. In the Bill Laurier presented to Parliament on July 30, written by Fitzpatrick and Senator Béique of Montréal, it was the government who assumed responsibility for building a line from Moncton through Québec City and from there by the most direct route to Winnipeg.²⁰⁹ It would be called the National Transcontinental Railway (NTR). In exchange for operating the NTR upon its completion, the GTPR could use it free of charge for seven years and with payments equal to 3 per cent of the cost of construction for the next 43 years. Meanwhile, the federal government would guarantee 75 per cent of the bonds issued to fund the GTPR from Winnipeg to Port Simpson. Hays

²⁰⁵ Rumilly, *Tarte*, p. 223; Glazebrook, *A History of Transportation...*, p. 129.

²⁰⁶ Rumilly, *Tarte*, p. 224-226.

²⁰⁷ NAC, Fonds Laurier, MG 26-G, Volume 264, p.73217, Choquette to Laurier, 11 May 1903; Volume 265, p. 73421, Choquette to Laurier, 18 May 1903; Rumilly, *Tarte*, 226.

²⁰⁸ *Ibid.*

²⁰⁹ For evidence of Fitzpatrick's role in drafting the Bill see NAC, Fonds Laurier, MG 26-G, Volume 270, p. 74481, Fitzpatrick to Laurier, 26 June 1903. See also, Rumilly, *Tarte*, p. 236.

admitted later that agreeing to these terms was the only way he could get any federal support at all for the GTPR.²¹⁰

Thus, Laurier made fulfillment of Québec City's 50-year dream of a direct rail link to western Canada his guiding principle in creating the new transcontinental railway. Although it would never have been built without the national spirit of optimism that moved Hays, Mackenzie and Mann, it would never have taken the form it did without Laurier's loyalty to Québec City and the combination of 'vrai parti' and 'parentiste' interest. In the end, Laurier hired Scott, the city's best railway man, as General Manager of the NTR, and relied on surveys done by the provincial government to trace a line north of Abitibi Lake, well beyond any line running to Montréal and easily used for logging. Although Laurier presented it as a project of national importance, Le Soleil trumpeted the local triumph. "Tout en faisant l'affaire du pays tout entier, [le gouvernement] fait du même coup la fortune de notre district," it rejoiced.²¹¹

Laurier extended a \$3 million loan to the Montréal Harbour Commission for works in progress as compensation for the railway and decided to hold off on addressing the financial concerns of the QBC until later in the year.²¹² Nevertheless, successful completion of the NTR depended on the bridge. Thus, in October, he reorganized the QBC's financial arrangements and extended its credit, granting it permission to issue \$6,678,200 in government guaranteed bonds with four per cent interest over twenty-five years.²¹³

²¹⁰ Glazebrook, A History of Transportation..., p. 129.

²¹¹ Le Soleil, 1 August 1903, p. 3.

²¹² Rumilly, Tarte, p. 230

²¹³ House of Commons Debates, 21 October 1903, pp. 14523-14529.

The balance between 'vrai parti' and 'parentiste' interests from 1898 to 1903 gave them unique influence over Laurier's administration of government patronage. In July 1903, Pacaud could claim that the promise of a fast steamship service to Britain, improvements in the port as well as construction of the NTR and the bridge had literally transformed the city.²¹⁴ It was a claim filled with the confidence that Laurier's management of government appointments, finances and symbols had shaped in local public opinion. In Québec-Est, Pacaud hoped it was only the beginning. "Saint-Roch et Saint-Sauveur profiteront surtout [des nouveaux développements]; car c'est dans la vallée de la rivière Saint-Charles que se livrera le grand combat industriel et commercial de l'avenir," he wrote.²¹⁵ But it was a confidence that still hung precariously on the balance between 'le vrai parti' and 'les parentistes.'

²¹⁴ Le Soleil, 18 July 1903, p. 12.

²¹⁵ Ibid.

Chapter 6

1903-1907: Public Opinion versus Patronage

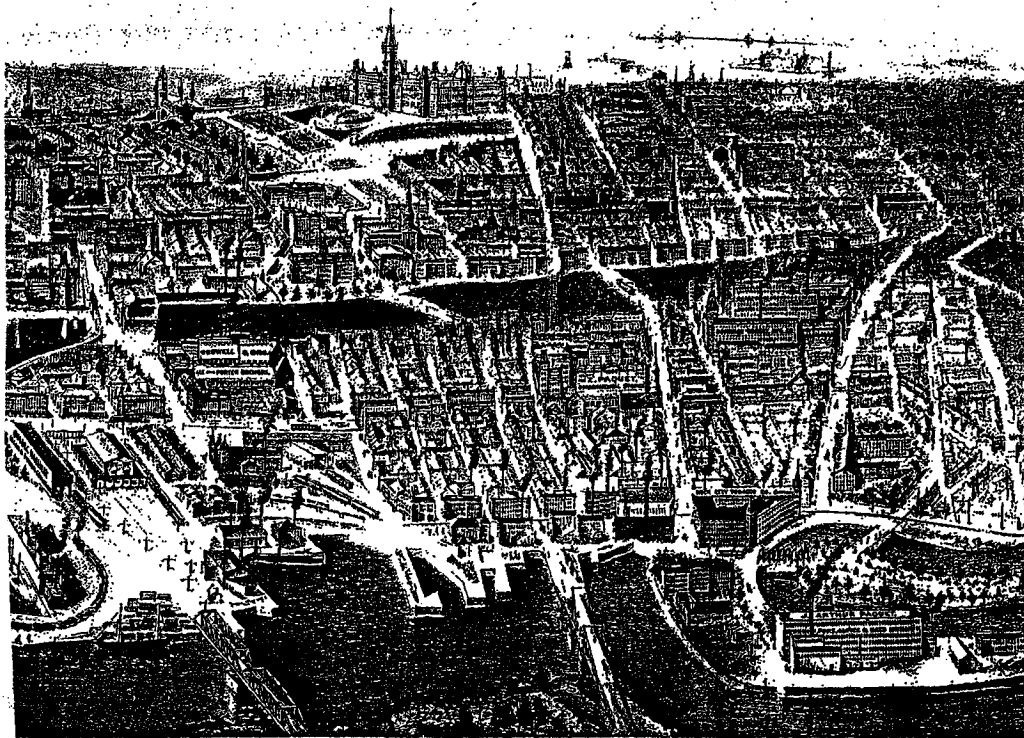


Figure 7: "Québec, A.D. MDCCCV"¹

¹ J.L. Wiseman, "Québec, A.D. MDCCCV," NAC, National Map Collection, NMC 16169.

When Ernest Pacaud fell deathly ill in May 1903 it touched off a financial crisis at Le Soleil, upset the delicate balance between ‘le vrai parti’ and ‘les parentistes’ and loosened Laurier’s hold on the party, the newspaper and public opinion in Québec-Est.² Although he continued to work from home, Pacaud could no longer oversee the collection of accounts. On August 1, he confided to Laurier that the newspaper was \$27,000 in debt and that he had taken funds from his own life insurance policy to pay expenses.³ Competing factions came forward with solutions. Georges-Élie Amyot had already shown an interest in buying a \$10,000 share.⁴ François Langelier suggested his “friends” rent the newspaper from Pacaud, estimating it was worth \$10,000 a year with the party in power and \$6,000 in opposition.⁵ P-A. Choquette thought about purchasing it himself and hiring Pacaud’s brother, Alphonse, to run it – an idea opposed by Parent.⁶

The timing could not have been worse for Laurier. He was only weeks away from unveiling his plans to build the National Transcontinental Railway (NTR) and was preoccupied by work in Ottawa. This was small consolation to Pacaud. He wrote to F-X. Lemieux:

M. Laurier, informé de ma position, sachant même que les médecins me défendent d’ouvrir ma correspondance, de répondre à une seule lettre d’affaires, s’est contenté de me dire que j’avais toujours bien dirigé Le Soleil et que je devrais être capable d’en faire autant même en étant gravement malade. Il ne veut pas que personne de nos amis entre au Soleil craignant évidemment que la direction en soit affectée surtout durant ma

² NAC, Fonds Laurier, MG 26-G, Volume 281, p. 76903, Pacaud to F-X. Lemieux, 10 September 1903.

³ Ibid., Volume 275, p. 75685, Pacaud to Laurier, 1 August 1903.

⁴ Ibid., Volume 250, p. 69624, Pacaud to Laurier, 28 January 1903.

⁵ Ibid., Volume 279, p. 76597, François Langelier to Laurier, 29 August 1903.

⁶ Ibid., Volume 282, p. 77086, Sirois to Laurier, 21 September 1903.

maladie. Je considère cela d'un égoïsme qui augmente mes tortures et retardera certainement pour longtemps ma guérison.⁷

Far from wanting to cause him harm, though, Laurier almost certainly foresaw the dangers Pacaud's illness presented for the party. He did not abandon Pacaud. Instead, he hired M. Sirois, a notary, to administer Pacaud's affairs and gave him \$5,000 to cover Pacaud's debts.⁸ When it became obvious Pacaud would have to sell the newspaper, Laurier instructed Sirois to conduct an inventory and act on Pacaud's behalf.⁹ On his own initiative, Laurier organized the Compagnie de publication du Soleil, subscribing Liberals from all sides of the party.¹⁰ Charles Fitzpatrick negotiated a selling price with Sirois and Pacaud and, after some dickering, C-A-P. Pelletier took ownership of the newspaper for the company on December 12, 1903.¹¹ Pacaud received \$112,500: \$25,000 in cash, \$12,500 in "divers billets et dettes à aguetter d'ici à quelques mois," \$27,000 in four equal payments over five years and \$48,000 in shares of the company.¹² Pacaud visited doctors in New York City and stayed with friends of Laurier's in Georgia for a month or so.¹³ He returned to Québec City early in 1904 and passed away on April 19.¹⁴

⁷ *Ibid.*, Volume 281, p. 76903, Pacaud to F-X. Lemieux, 10 September 1903.

⁸ *Ibid.*, Volume 282, p. 77084 and 77086, Sirois to Laurier, 21 September 1903.

⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 77088, Laurier to Sirois, 24 September 1903.

¹⁰ Laurier subscribed Laliberté and Narcisse Rioux for \$500 each and informed them afterwards. *Ibid.*, Volume 292, p. 79480a, Laurier to Laliberté, 3 December 1903.

¹¹ André Bélanger and Jean Hamelin, *La Presse québécoise des origines à nos jours*, Troisième Tome, 1880-1895 (Québec : Les Presses de l'Université Laval, 1977) p. 12.

¹² NAC, Fonds Laurier, MG 26-G, Volume 291, p. 79131, Pelletier to Laurier, 21 November 1903.

¹³ *Ibid.*, Volume 296, p. 80242, Pacaud to Laurier, 12 December 1903; Volume 298, p. 80767, Pacaud to Laurier, 6 January 1904.

¹⁴ Michèle Brassard and Jean Hamelin, "Pacaud, Ernest" *Dictionary of Canadian Biography*, Volume 13, 1901-1910 (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1994) p. 803.

Those initial signs of struggle within the party, set off by Pacaud's illness, marked the first visible tears in the intimate relationship between public opinion and patronage in Québec City. They were the very beginning of a transformation in Canadian political culture that historian John English has called the "decline of politics."¹⁵ In some respects, it had already begun with the Laurier's decision to rely on the "orthodox" party structure of 'les parentistes' to manage the distribution of government resources. But as 'le vrai parti' fought for and won control of the party and the party newspaper over the next three years, Laurier adopted a more cautious approach to government spending and a more carefully articulated structure, with higher standards for competence, in the management and distribution of government resources than he had used with the more dependent and disciplined 'parentistes.' He was preparing the way – ever so slowly – for a later, more radical change: taking into government service people hired exclusively for their technical or managerial expertise.

Such changes within government could not have occurred without changes in the party first; because, at the time, government was little more than an extension of the party. This chapter focuses on how Laurier's Liberals began to distinguish between their party and their government during the four years of bitter internecine struggle, running across municipal, provincial and federal politics, that followed Pacaud's illness and eventual passing. The struggle took place in three separate stages that ultimately altered

¹⁵ English uses the phrase "decline of politics" to refer to Borden's strategy of "going around" a political system rooted in patronage to build a "new" Conservative party supported by national associations and provincial premiers. Although English does not express it this way, Borden was trying to separate the formation of public opinion from the distribution government resources. It is in this sense that his phrase is used here. The thesis argues, however, that this development began with Laurier and not with Borden's Conservative party or his Union government. John English, The Decline of Politics: The Conservatives and the Party System, 1901-1920 (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1977).

the balance of power in the party, tested the core values and beliefs of party members as well as Laurier, and planted the seeds of change in the administration of government.

During the first stage, 'le vrai parti' challenged 'les parentistes' for control of the party and provincial government. It was a struggle triggered by Pacaud's passing and hinged on 'vrai parti' resentment of 'parentiste' control over government patronage. In particular, men like P.-A. Choquette and 'vrai parti' members of Parent's Cabinet, notably Adélard Turgeon and Lomer Gouin, were angry that they had to defend Parent publicly while they had little say in his administration. But the struggle also stemmed from the growing scale and scope of social and economic development in Québec over the previous ten years.¹⁶ 'Les vrais libéraux,' French Canadian nationalists with a deep interest in local economic development and progressive social reform, were more sensitive than 'les parentistes' to English Canadian imperialism, impediments to the province's colonisation efforts (particularly in Québec City's hinterland) and social problems created by urbanization and industrialization. They were more attuned to popular sentiment, too, because their reliance on social networks for political influence brought them into contact with a wider range of opinion than 'les parentistes.'

For at time, 'les vrais libéraux' found allies among men in both the Liberal and Conservative parties who shared their French-Canadian nationalism and desire to address social problems. These men were also critical of Parent's administration of patronage but, unlike 'le vrai parti,' sought to reform the whole party system. They were more devoutly Catholic than 'les vrais libéraux,' too, and sought to preserve the Church's place in Québec society. They were led by Henri Bourassa. Bourassa had been a young and

¹⁶ "Scale and scope" refers to the increasing size and complexity of social and economic organizations during this period as described by Alfred D. Chandler, *Scale and Scope: The Dynamics of Industrial Capitalism* (Cambridge, Mass: The Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 1990).

promising Liberal MP, until he resigned in 1899 to protest Laurier's support for limited Canadian participation in the Boer War. Although he remained a Liberal, winning re-election in 1900 under the party's banner, he led a growing movement bringing together French Canadian nationalism, devotion to the Catholic Church, disenchantment with the party system and opposition to materialist values.¹⁷ 'Vrai parti' opposition to 'les parentistes' made 'les nationalistes' a powerful political force in Québec-Est.

A second stage began when 'le vrai parti' defeated 'les parentistes,' making Lomer Gouin Premier in March 1905. From that point on, although the struggle continued between 'le vrai parti' and 'les nationalistes,' on one hand, and 'les parentistes,' on the other, national events began to show the differences between 'les vrais libéraux' and 'les nationalistes.' More significant at this stage, though, were the measures Laurier adopted in his management of the party, the party newspaper and government to replace the disciplined administrative structure Pacaud and Parent had given him.

The third and final stage of this complex transitional period began when 'le vrai parti' and their allies finally threw Parent out of City Hall, making George Garneau Mayor in February 1906. At this point, a revival of Church activism in Québec-Est led to the emergence of new social issues that sharpened the differences between 'le vrai parti' and 'les nationalistes' over partisanship and the Church's role in society. They created an opportunity for renewed collaboration between 'les vrais libéraux' and 'les parentistes' based on devotion to the party system, commitment to the city's material interests and, with 'le vrai parti' in control, a secular French Canadian nationalism. Some 'parentistes,'

¹⁷ Joseph Levitt, *Henri Bourassa and the Golden Calf: The Social Program of the Nationalists of Québec (1900-1914)* (Ottawa: Les Éditions de l'Université d'Ottawa, 1969).

more devout and conservative in their view of society, would be drawn to the ‘les nationalistes’ at this time. Yet Laurier managed to reunite majorities from both ‘vrai parti’ and ‘parentiste’ factions by insisting on ‘vrai parti’ values still at the heart of the political culture in Québec-Est. By August 1907, events confirmed both the party’s reunification and the direction of Laurier’s government reforms in the years ahead.

In Québec-Est, tangible reaction to economic and social change began not with ‘les parentistes’ or even Conservative ‘nationalistes’ but with ‘le vrai parti’ and Liberal ‘nationalistes.’¹⁸ Because both Liberal groups had to defend government decisions and relied on personal networks for political influence, they were more acutely attuned to fluctuations in public opinion brought on by economic and social change in the riding. They focused their criticism on the same moral and democratic concerns. Colonization, temperance and use of the French language were moral flashpoints for both although the ‘nationalistes’ would seek greater support for Church-led initiatives while ‘le vrai parti’ would urge secular solutions. Both saw problems with government, too, though ‘les nationalistes’ would condemn partisanship while ‘le vrai parti’ preferred to attack corruption. Initially, their common interests overshadowed such subtle distinctions when economic and social change transformed Québec-Est at the turn of the century.

¹⁸ The text uses the term ‘nationalistes’ exclusively to refer to the devout, socially conservative, French-Canadian nationalists who did or would follow Henri Bourassa. During the period described by this chapter, they belonged to both the Conservative and Liberal parties. Thus, it is important to distinguish between social “conservatives” and political “Conservatives.” Readers are reminded that members of ‘le vrai parti’ were also French-Canadian nationalists. They differed with ‘les nationalistes’ over the place of the Church as well as moral and democratic reform in their nationalism. They largely agreed with ‘les nationalistes’ on the need to promote and defend the use of French and on their vision of an autonomous pan-Canadian nation.

The economic boom that began in 1896 increased the size and degree of integration of the Canadian consumer market.¹⁹ It prompted manufacturers to increase production by building larger factories and by introducing electric motors and other new technologies. These, in turn, required still further rationalization of their management systems and larger capital investments that spurred greater collaboration between manufacturers, recourse to larger sources of capital and the specialization and diversification of product lines. Within ten years, from 1900 to 1910, the value of goods manufactured in Québec nearly doubled and the population of Montréal increased 75.7 per cent.²⁰

Without direct rail access to the Canadian west or larger Canadian and American markets, Québec City did not benefit nearly as much as Montréal from this period of expansion.²¹ Yet the established industrial ridings in both cities saw their populations increase, on average, 18.3 per cent: 35 per cent in Montréal Ste-Marie, 14.5 per cent in Montréal St-Laurent, 3.3 per cent in Montréal St-Jacques and 20.5 per cent in Québec-Est.²² In Québec-Est, the value of all manufactured goods increased 47 per cent. But the riding was hurt by slower growth in the boot and shoe industry, where the value of goods

¹⁹ The brief account of Canadian economic development in this paragraph is based on Paul-André Linteau, René Durocher, Jean-Claude Robert, *Histoire du Québec contemporain : de la Confédération à la crise (1867-1929)* (Montréal : Boréal Express, 1979) pp. 370-372.

²⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 374. See also, Marc Vallières, "Les industries manufacturières du Québec, 1900-1959. Essai de normalisation des données statistiques en dix-sept groupes industriels et étude sommaire de la croissance de ces groupes," M.A. Thesis: Université Laval, 1973, pp. 132, 136, 145, 149. For population figures see, Canada, *Census of Canada, 1911* (Ottawa: C.H. Parmelee, 1912). The population figures for Montréal include the suburbs of Jacques-Cartier, Laval, Hochelaga and Maisonneuve.

²¹ The population of Québec City increased 13.6 per cent. *Census of Canada, 1911*.

²² The population densities of the four ridings are also comparable. In 1911, they reached the astronomic proportions of 56, 608 per square mile in Ste-Marie, 65,717 in St-Laurent, 64,410 in St-Jacques and 51,108 in Québec-Est. These statistics, and the others presented in this paragraph, are taken from Canada, *Census of Canada, 1901* (Ottawa: S.E. Dawson, 1902) and *Census of Canada, 1911*.

produced increased only 23.2 per cent. It more than tripled in the hat, cap and fur business and almost quadrupled in men's clothing. From 1901 to 1911, the number of boot and shoe manufacturers decreased from 35 to 26 while the average number of employees per firm increased slightly from 113.7 to 120.1 and vertical integration within the industry gave birth to a paper box and bag industry with three firms in the riding employing 194 people. In the hat, cap and fur business, the number of firms doubled from 3 to 6 while the average number of employees per firm almost doubled too, rising from 58.3 in 1901 to 107.5 in 1911. In men's clothing, 11 firms specialized in the custom business by 1911, employing an average of 25 employees each (as compared to 13 firms employing an average of 18.4 employees throughout the industry in 1901). Moreover, there were three manufacturers in the new factory side of the business each employing an average of 43.7 people.

For the most part, the companies that introduced new technologies, expanded their operations and adopted new business structures were those established in the 1890s by supporters of Simon-Napoléon Parent: Paul Tourigny, A-E. Marois, Uldéric Cantin, Nazaire Fortier, G-E. Amyot and Charles-Abraham Paquet. Tourigny was an administrator, financier, furniture and leather manufacturer from Victoriaville, who became the local Mayor and MLA before opening a boot and shoe factory on Notre-Dame des Anges, in Québec-Est, in 1900.²³ In December 1902, he moved his operation to a larger five-story building on Arago previously occupied by Amyot. It allowed him to introduce new machinery and double production. He employed A-E. Marois as manager, one of the first graduates of the Académie de Québec, and later took him on as a partner

²³ Biographical information is found in *Le Soleil*, 13 December 1902, p. 11.

in the firm. By 1912, their business was the second largest in the city, with 430 employees working in five different departments.²⁴ Uldéric Cantin opened his tannery in 1893, on a large property between St-Valier and the St. Charles River, just west of St-Valier ward in the new suburb of St-Malo.²⁵ The inventor of a new process for tanning leather, his business grew into one of the largest in North America. By 1903, he was also an alderman for St-Valier ward, employed 80 men and anticipated expanding his factory yet again. Nazaire Fortier, another tanner and 'parentiste' alderman in Jacques-Cartier, also built a profitable business on an innovation in the tanning process.²⁶ He was a director of the Banque nationale, too, just like Georges-Élie Amyot. Amyot, also the President of Dominion Corset, had diversified his business by establishing the Québec Paper Box Company in 1894 and, later, the Canada Corset Steel Company.²⁷

The involvement of Fortier and Amyot with the Banque nationale, like the involvement of 'vrai parti' members in 1860s and 1870s, suggests that the bank played an important role in financing the expansion of local manufacturing businesses in Québec-Est. Evidence is scarce but historian Ronald Rudin found that the bank disposed of its last timber limit in 1893, freeing capital for other investments and returning the institution to

²⁴ Marc-André Bluteau, "Québec 1896-1940 : croissance et déclin de l'industrie du cuir," in Jean-Claude Dupont and Jacques Mathieu, eds., Les Métiers du Cuir (Québec : Presses de l'Université Laval, 1981) pp. 305-306.

²⁵ Biographical information is found in Le Soleil, 11 April 1903, p. 23.

²⁶ For biographical information, see Ville de Québec, Centième anniversaire du Conseil de la Cité de Québec (Québec : Ville de Québec, 1933) p. 41.

²⁷ Jean du Berger and Jacques Mathieu, Les Ouvriers de Dominion Corset à Québec, 1886-1988 (Québec : Les Presses de l'Université Laval, 1993) p. 23. For reference to Canada Corset Steel Company, see the entry for Georges-Élie Amyot at Québec. Les Parlementaires depuis 1792. [www.assnat.qc.ca/fra/membres/notices/index.html] July 1992.

profitability at about the same time the manufacturers were expanding.²⁸ The machinery company founded by Charles-Abraham Paquet in St-Roch in 1902 became the bank's single largest borrower when it too expanded, moving to Montmagny.²⁹ Further evidence suggestive of the bank's role in the local business community is provided by the connection between local Liberals and Napoléon Lavoie, inspector of the St-Roch branch in 1899.³⁰ His ties to the party dated from the late 1880s when he helped found L'Union Libérale.³¹ In 1906, he signed nomination papers for P-A. Choquette.³² Without access to the bank's financial records, however, it is difficult to determine precisely the role it played in the growth of Québec-Est though the coincidences are striking.

Capital from both Montréal and the United States also played an increasingly prominent role in the local economy at this time. Rodolphe Forget, a Montréal industrialist and financier, and Conservative MP from 1904 to 1917, owned not only the Québec Railway, Light and Power Company (QRLPC) but also the Québec and Saguenay Railway (QSR).³³ The QSR worked closely with the colonization society of the

²⁸ Ronald Rudin, Banking en Français: The French Banks of Québec, 1835-1925 (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1985) p. 69.

²⁹ Ibid., p. 113. Biographical information on Charles-Abraham Paquet see his entry at Québec, Les Parlementaires depuis 1792. [www.assnat.qc.ca/fra/membres/notices/index.html] July 1992.

³⁰ He served as General Manager of the bank from 1910 to 1922. Rudin, Banking en Français..., p. 111. Record of his employment as inspector of the St-Roch branch can be found in: La Banque Nationale, Rapport Annuel, 1899 (Québec: La Banque Nationale, 1899).

³¹ L'Union Libérale, 3 May 1888, p. 2.

³² P-A. Choquette, Un demi-siècle de vie politique (Montréal: Éditions Beauchemin, 1936) p. 183.

³³ See the entry for Rodolphe Forget at Québec, Les Parlementaires depuis 1792. [www.assnat.qc.ca/fra/membres/notices/index.html] July 1992.

Société Saint-Jean-Baptiste de St-Sauveur to help settle the Lac St-Jean region;³⁴ while the QRLPC, located on Jacques Cartier Square in St-Roch, held a monopoly over the city's electric power from 1893 to 1900.³⁵ Parent helped establish the Jacques Cartier Water Power Company (JCWPC) in 1900 to compete with the QRLPC, but the two companies cooperated from the beginning and formally affiliated in 1909.³⁶ The United Shoe Machinery Company of Canada (USMC), a subsidiary of the United Shoe Machinery Company of Boston, also contributed significantly to local development. It started business in Québec City in 1899, renting and maintaining the machines and selling many of the raw materials needed for the boot and shoe industry.³⁷ Through the USMC, local manufacturers secured the latest machines without the initial capital investment required to purchase them. Each in their own way, Rodolphe Forget and the USMC helped Québec-Est adapt to the larger more complex and more capital-intensive economy of the early twentieth century. However, the city's dependence on them was also a sign of its relegation to a secondary position in the North American economy.

To compete in this larger, more complex and expensive economy, local shoe manufacturers banded together in the Association des Manufacturiers de Chaussures de

³⁴ NAC, Fonds Laurier, MG 26-G, Volume 416, p. 111213, Choquette to Laurier, 15 June 1906; Volume 436, p. 116327, Choquette to Laurier, 5 December 1906.

³⁵ The company was founded on February 27, 1893, as the Montmorency Electric Power Company. It was bought by the Forget-owned Québec, Montmorency and Charlevoix Railway Company on May 18, 1899, along with the Québec District Railway Company. He named the combined company the Québec Railway, Light and Power Company and, in 1909, when it was licensed to distribute gas, renamed it again as the Québec, Railway, Light, Heat and Power Company. G-Henri Dagneau, ed., La Ville de Québec: histoire municipale, Tome IV, de la Confédération à la charte de 1929 (Québec : La Société d'histoire de Québec, 1983) pp. 185-186.

³⁶ Dagneau, La Ville de Québec..., pp. 187-188.

³⁷ Bluteau, "Québec 1896-1940..." p. 309. See also NAC, Fonds Laurier, MG 26-G, Volume 505, p. 136476, Goulet et Garant to Laurier, 25 March 1907.

Québec (AMCQ). To protect themselves in the new economy, lasters, machinists, tailors, stevedores and typographers formed unions. And to combat the social and moral changes wrought by the new economy, Monseigneur Bégin, Archbishop of Québec, sought to renew the Church's relevance and appeal. In Québec-Est, Bégin's work began with his intervention in the boot and shoe industry lockout of 1900 but, by then, a renaissance in the local parish was already underway. In 1897, Monseigneur Gauvreau, priest for Notre-Dame de St-Roch since 1895, took the first step by opening the Hospice Ste-Anne, a residence for poor elderly parishioners, on St-François.³⁸ That same year, he also lent his much-needed support to the Garde indépendante Champlain and helped turn it into an effective vehicle for mobilizing public support.³⁹ Founded in 1894 as an athletic association for young men from "nos meilleures familles," it devoted most of its energies to a marching band and highly disciplined honour guard.⁴⁰ The first Garde indépendante in Canada, it played a prominent and colourful role, often parading through parish streets on public occasions. Gauvreau even intervened with Laurier from time to time on behalf of local parishioners.⁴¹

Gauvreau's greatest contribution, however, was simply recognizing that he could not minister to 18,894 parishioners every Sunday morning.⁴² For years, the Congrégation des Hommes de Notre-Dame de Jacques-Cartier had wanted to divide Notre-Dame de St-

³⁸ Jean-Marc Paradis, "Inventaire des Archives de la Paroisse de St-Roch de Québec," B.A. Thesis: l'Université Laval, 1966, p. 5; J-Charles Gamache, Histoire de Saint-Roch-de-Québec et des ses institutions, 1829-1929 (Québec : Charrier et Dugal Ltée, 1929) p. 111.

³⁹ Paradis, Inventaire..., p. 6; Gamache, Histoire de Saint-Roch..., p. 176 and 209.

⁴⁰ Gamache, Histoire de Saint-Roch..., p. 208-212.

⁴¹ NAC, Fonds Laurier, MG 26-G, Volume 791C, p. 224791, Gauvreau to Laurier, 15 April 1898; Volume 791J, p. 226204, Gauvreau to Laurier, 24 August 1905.

⁴² Census of Canada, 1901.

Roch and raise its chapel to an independent parish church.⁴³ But Gauvreau's predecessor had resisted the move. With Gauvreau's support, Monseigneur Bégin founded Notre-Dame de Jacques-Cartier in 1901 and made Monseigneur Paul-Eugène Roy its first priest.⁴⁴ Roy held the position for seven years, during which time he became the leading agent of Church renewal in the province. He began immediately, by establishing the Confrérie des Dames de la Sainte-Famille (a religious and charitable organization for married women) and the Congrégation des Enfants de Marie (a similar organization for single women).⁴⁵ One year later, he got support from Fitzpatrick and Parent as well as members of 'le vrai parti' to purchase a carillon for the church.⁴⁶ It was a dramatic gesture that gave the parish prestige and let the Church's message ring out. In Roy's own words, "qui entend qu'une cloche n'entend qu'un son" – and he was determined that his parishioners would hear every note in the Church's call.⁴⁷

Despite these tremendous changes in the size and complexity of the economy and society of Québec-Est, Laurier had introduced only minor changes in the way he managed government institutions and party business before Pacaud fell ill. For example, in February 1903, he met with Laliberté and the federal Minister of Public Works to discuss ways to expand facilities of the Québec Harbour Commission (QHC) – to

⁴³ Paradis, Inventaire..., p. 4-5.

⁴⁴ Albert Jobin, Histoire de la Congrégation et de la Paroisse de Notre-Dame-de-Jacques-Cartier (Québec: 1940) pp. 61-72.

⁴⁵ Ibid., p. 79.

⁴⁶ Ibid., p. 86.

⁴⁷ Ibid., p. 85.

accommodate larger steamships.⁴⁸ Between them – and them alone – they arranged for the federal government to guarantee \$500,000 of QHC bonds in order to extend the breakwater at Point-à-Carcy by 1,480 feet. Only when the federal Department failed to provide the agreed upon support did any variation occur in this exclusively party-controlled procedure.⁴⁹ Representatives of Dominion Steamship Lines; Alans, Rae and Company; and the CPR wrote to complain about delays due to the inadequate port facilities.⁵⁰ The urgency of their appeals reflected the increased cost of their investments; but it was the coordinated nature of their approach that was new. They got a prompt response. In March 1904, the Minister sent dredges to the harbour and, in May, Laurier announced additional funding for the extension.⁵¹ Still, this was not a major departure from the normal course of granting or petitioning for government support.

Laurier adopted a similarly traditional approach to proposals for innovation in the administration of the Québec Bridge Company (QBC) in 1903. That year, the Department of Public Works applied for authority to hire its own qualified bridge engineer to review all work plans before spending government monies.⁵² This unusual measure was approved by Order-in-Council on July 21, 1903.⁵³ But Theodore Cooper, Consulting

⁴⁸ NAC, Fonds Laurier, MG 26-G, Volume 254, p. 70718, Laliberté to Laurier, 3 March 1903.

⁴⁹ *Ibid.*, Volume 274, p. 75633, Laliberté to Laurier, August 1903.

⁵⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 75634, William MacPherson (Dominion) to Laurier, 10 August 1903; p. 75635. W.A. Henderson (Alans, Rae and Co.) to Laurier, 11 August 1903; p. 75636, J.R. Ronald (CPR) to Laurier, 10 August 1903.

⁵¹ *Ibid.*, Volume 308, p. 83284, James Sutherland to Laurier, 12 March 1904; Volume 318, p. 85806, Laurier to MacPherson, 18 May 1904.

⁵² Canada, Report of the Select Committee appointed to investigate the conditions and guarantees under which the Dominion government paid moneys to the Québec Bridge Company (Ottawa: S.E. Dawson, 1908) p. xix; William D. Middleton, The Bridge at Québec (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2001) p. 52.

⁵³ *Ibid.*

Engineer for the QBC, and Thomas Sterling Deans, Chief Engineer of the Phoenix Bridge Company (PBC), resisted what they perceived as a government takeover.⁵⁴ They protested that government oversight would needlessly slow down the work and increase their costs – a scenario Laurier wanted to avoid.⁵⁵ As a result, departmental oversight of the project remained sharply limited and the PBC was left free to begin construction before completing all the necessary blueprints and before calculating the final deadweight loads. These would prove to be fatal mistakes; but, once again, they were typical of government procedure at the time.

Laurier sought to maintain the status quo at Le Soleil, too, despite the newspaper's financial crisis. He had urged Pacaud not to accept Amyot's offer to invest \$10,000 in the newspaper because he suspected Amyot was acting on behalf of the Canadian Manufacturers' Association.⁵⁶ He feared Amyot might try to dictate editorial opinion in favour of higher tariff protection. Whether true or not Laurier clearly perceived, in this case, the threat independent private investment could pose to party influence over public opinion. Yet he did not resolve Pacaud's financial woes and the situation only got worse with Pacaud's illness. Early in 1904, once the *Compagnie de publication du Soleil* had taken over the newspaper, Fitzpatrick and Pelletier discovered that a number of credits on the company's books were payable only to Pacaud's estate.⁵⁷ Moreover, the company was liable for bills still owing and for a series of lawsuits of

⁵⁴ NAC, Fonds Laurier, MG 26-G, Volume 264, p. 73236, Thomas Sterling Deans to Parent, 12 May 1903; Volume 275, p. 75763, Théodore Cooper to Edward Hoare, 31 July 1903.

⁵⁵ *Ibid.*, Volume 264, p. 73236, Thomas Sterling Deans to Parent, 12 May 1903.

⁵⁶ *Ibid.*, Volume 281, p. 76888, L.A. Cannon to Laurier, 10 October 1903.

⁵⁷ *Ibid.*, Volume 298, p. 80767, Pacaud to Laurier, 6 January 1904.

which nobody – other than Pacaud – had been aware.⁵⁸ They decided to withhold payments to Mme Pacaud and reduced the company's dividend, thereby lowering the value of its shares.⁵⁹ Mme Pacaud protested and both sides turned to Laurier for support. He resolved the controversy by getting them to accept François Langelier as an arbiter but, in the end, the company assumed most of the costs and its financial position worsened still further.⁶⁰

One of the newspaper's owners, subscribed by Laurier though not active in its management, was P-A. Choquette.⁶¹ He had been a devoted member of 'le vrai parti' since studying law with Langelier at the Université Laval and working for Laurier in 1877.⁶² Upon graduation, he had opened a law practice with Langelier and Pacaud in Montmagny where he became the local MP in 1886. He made a name for himself in Ottawa as a champion for the use of French in the federal government.⁶³ He was well known, too, for a rivalry with Parent that dated from their university days.⁶⁴ In 1897, he even chose a judicial appointment over serving in the same Cabinet as Tarte and Fitzpatrick.⁶⁵ Like all members of 'le vrai parti,' he rejoiced when Laurier threw Tarte

⁵⁸ *Ibid.*, Volume 310, p. 83610, Fitzpatrick to Taschereau, 2 March 1904.

⁵⁹ *Ibid.*, Volume 322, p. 86541, Marie Lisèle Pacaud to Laurier, 9 June 1904.

⁶⁰ *Ibid.*, Volume 331, p. 88747, Sirois to Laurier, 5 August 1904.

⁶¹ Beaulieu and Hamelin, *La Presse québécoise...*, p. 12.

⁶² Biographical information from P-A. Choquette, *Un demi-siècle...*

⁶³ Choquette condemned the Intercolonial railway and Departments of Customs and Agriculture for not hiring Francophones, for not paying them as well as Anglophones and for not using French. *Ibid.*, pp. 56-58.

⁶⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 162.

⁶⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 113.

out of the government in 1902. In the years ahead, he would lead the 'vrai parti' challenge to Parent.

From Laurier's perspective, in 1903, Choquette represented a natural bridge to Bourassa and the 'nationalistes.' With a federal election little more than a year away, and without Pacaud or Tarte, Laurier sought to secure Bourassa's support by promising to extend Catholic educational rights in western Canada and assist 'nationaliste' candidates.⁶⁶ It was in this context that he asked Choquette to organize a by-election campaign for Armand Lavergne, the son of his law partner and one of the founders of the Ligue nationaliste, in Choquette's old riding of Montmagny.⁶⁷ His timing coincided almost exactly with William Price's offer to hire Choquette as a lobbyist for the Trans-Canada Railway and rising opposition to Parent from 'vrais libéraux' and 'nationalistes' in Québec.⁶⁸ In exchange for his services, and for relinquishing his position on the bench, Laurier offered Choquette a Senate seat.⁶⁹ To ensure Choquette's cooperation with Parent, at least until the federal election, he also promised to have Parent step down before the next provincial election.⁷⁰

These arrangements, made almost exclusively with regards to national politics, would add fuel to the simmering fire between 'le vrai parti' and 'les parentistes' in Québec-Est. Since Pelletier's election in 1873, an inclusive, secular and progressive form

⁶⁶ Robert Rumilly, Histoire de la Province de Québec, Tome XI, S.-N. Parent (Montréal : Éditions Bernard Valiquette, 1942) p. 162.

⁶⁷ Choquette, Un demi-siècle..., p. 147; Armand Lavergne, Trente ans de vie nationale (Montréal : Les Éditions du zodiaque, 1934) p. 101.

⁶⁸ Choquette, Un demi-siècle..., p. 145; Robert Rumilly, Histoire de la Province de Québec, Tome X, I. Tarte (Montréal : Éditions Bernard Valiquette, 1942) p. 226.

⁶⁹ Choquette, Un demi-siècle..., p. 146.

⁷⁰ Ibid., p. 163.

of French Canadian patriotism had flourished in the 'vrai parti' and local labour organizations. It had been the basis of Jules-Alfred Lane's coalition against the more devout and conservative George Darveau, Parent's candidate, in 1900.⁷¹ It had been the strength of that same nationalist sentiment, in the face of rising imperialist feeling in English Canada, that prompted Lane to take a stand with 'les nationalistes' prior to the 1902 Imperial Conference.⁷² Since then, their coalition had been strengthened in Québec-Est by Lane taking on Armand Lavergne as an articling student in his law practice.⁷³

As luck would have it, both Lane and Lavergne ran for election in February 1904. In Montmagny, Lavergne won the federal by-election easily thanks largely to Choquette's support.⁷⁴ However, in the municipal elections that month, the matter was not so cut and dried. Lane challenged Parent with a coalition of 'vrai parti' members, workers (like Omer Brunet) and more devout Conservative 'nationalistes' (like Michel Fiset) in what he called, l'École de la Réforme.⁷⁵ L'École divided both the Liberal and Conservative parties in the riding though it only contested the election of 'parentiste' aldermen. Nominally, 'vrai parti' candidates supported Parent although publicly they insisted on their independence.⁷⁶ Imperialism had nothing to do with the contest.

⁷¹ Pacaud, Shehyn, Charles Langelier, Armand Lavergne, Albert Jobin and J.E.A. Pin supported Lane in that campaign. *Le Soleil*, 5, 6 December 1900, p. 8.

⁷² Among the many places this incident is recounted, see Jean-Charles McGee, *Laurier, Lapointe, St-Laurent: Histoire politique de Québec-Est* (Québec: Belisle éditeur, 1948) p. 122 and 123.

⁷³ See entry for Armand Lavergne at Québec, *Les Parlementaires depuis 1792*. [www.assnat.qc.ca/fra/membres/notices/index.html] July 1992.

⁷⁴ Lavergne gives due credit to Choquette in Lavergne, *Trente ans...*, p. 101.

⁷⁵ Evidence of the coalition between Lane and Fiset is found in *Le Soleil*, 17 February 1904; Rumilly, *S.-N. Parent*, p. 109. Brunet's role in the coalition is noted in *Le Soleil*, 30 January 1904.

⁷⁶ See, for example, J-E. Martineau's message to electors in St-Roch. *Le Soleil*, 12 February 1904, p. 1.

With the support of the Conservative newspaper, L'Événement, L'École de la Réforme accused Parent of corruption, pitting the newspaper and their nascent coalition's influence over public opinion against Parent's patronage network. Lane labelled 'les parentistes:' le Club des Souces.⁷⁷ Le Soleil, weakened but still controlled by Fitzpatrick, defended Parent as the "meilleur ami des ouvriers" for providing employment through public works.⁷⁸ The election might have been close, had it not been for Laurier's public endorsement of Parent just days before the vote.⁷⁹ Parent won every contest; although, among his "supporters" on the new city council, there were more than a few reluctant 'vrais libéraux.'⁸⁰

The challenge posed by Lane's coalition had an immediate effect on Laurier's decisions regarding the distribution of government and party resources. In March, J.E.A. Pin, a member of Lane's coalition since 1900, was hired to write a regular column on workers' concerns.⁸¹ In July, at the request of Alphonse Desjardins, Laurier agreed to introduce legislation granting legal status to cooperatives.⁸² Desjardins, a Conservative and a devout Catholic, had received strong support for his Caisses populaires from Ernest Pacaud, Rodolphe Lemieux and Hernri Bourassa in April and May 1903.⁸³ And, in May

⁷⁷ Rumilly, S.-N. Parent, p. 109.

⁷⁸ Le Soleil, 30 January 1904, p. 12.

⁷⁹ Rumilly, S.-N. Parent, p. 109.

⁸⁰ Le Soleil, 20 February 1904, p. 1.

⁸¹ NAC, Fonds Laurier, MG 26-G, Volume 350, p. 93386, Pin to Laurier, 4 January 1905.

⁸² Pierre Poulin, Histoire du Mouvement Desjardins, Tome I, Desjardins et la naissance des caisses populaires, 1900-1920 (Montréal: Éditions Québec/Amérique, 1990) p. 119.

⁸³ The series began in Le Soleil, 15 April 1903, p. 1-2.

1904, Laurier refused – for the first time – to increase funding for the QBC.⁸⁴ Parent wrote to explain that, as a result of weak money markets, the four per cent bonds issued by the company and guaranteed by the government had only been subscribed at 80 per cent of their value.⁸⁵ At the same time, he noted that the federal government's own three per cent bonds had sold at 100 per cent. Parent suggested the government recall the QBC bonds and issue its own bonds on behalf of the company. His temerity was impressive; he had no intention of relinquishing company control even though his proposal would have made it an entirely public entity. Laurier refused.

In the months leading up to the federal election at the end of the year, division and uncertainty among Liberals in Québec-Est was so great that members of both factions asked Laurier to name the party's candidates personally – to prevent further division within their ranks.⁸⁶ Their situation was made worse by the continuing financial crisis at Le Soleil and, ironically, by some of the format changes Pacaud had introduced to help the newspaper increase its readership. Before his illness, Pacaud had subscribed to a telegraph service and instituted a daily sports page as well as children's and family pages that ran in the weekend edition. He had even made an effort (only partially successful) to distinguish between news and editorials by creating a separate editorial page. These innovations were typical of what historian Jean de Bonville has called a "journal populaire."⁸⁷ Editors like Pacaud hoped such innovations would both increase their

⁸⁴ There is no record of any financial arrangement made with the QBC following Parent's request. Canada, Report of the Select Committee...., pp. vii-viii.

⁸⁵ NAC, Fonds Laurier, MG 26-G, Volume 320, p. 86064, Parent to Laurier, 23 May 1904.

⁸⁶ Ibid., Volume 307, p. 82910, Électeurs de Québec-Est to Laurier, 26 February 1904.

⁸⁷ Jean de Bonville, La Presse québécoise de 1884 à 1914 : genèse d'un média de masse (Québec : Les Presses de l'Université Laval, 1988) p. 221.

advertising revenue and political influence. But, while they certainly increased advertising revenue, they also fragmented the newspaper's readership and reduced the prominence of its political coverage. Without Pacaud at the helm, and in the midst of internal party discord, Le Soleil lost its sense of editorial direction. Fitzpatrick complained to Ernest Chouinard, the interim editor, that Le Soleil no longer took the lead, that it lacked local content and neglected any sustained or strategic coverage of political issues.⁸⁸

During the federal election campaign in October and November 1904, Le Soleil appeared much less astute than in years past. It published long newswire articles on the Russo-Japanese War every day on page one and largely neglected the NTR. It repeatedly referred to Laurier as the "vieux chef" at a time when there was a noticeable generational change in Canadian politics.⁸⁹ At his only speech in the riding, Laurier appeared with Parent, Fitzpatrick and Darveau, but also shared the stage with Choquette, Lemieux, Turgeon and Delâge as well as Armand Lavergne and Dr. Albert Jobin.⁹⁰ In an election closer than any since 1882, Laurier convincingly defeated Michel Fiset but saw his support drop by 10 per cent in every ward.⁹¹

Parent threw oil on the fire within the party by immediately calling a provincial election and fixing the nomination of his own candidate in Québec-Est, Georges

⁸⁸ NAC, Fonds Laurier, MG 26-G, Volume 326, p. 87655. Fitzpatrick to E. Chouinard, 4 July 1904.

⁸⁹ Pelletier wrote: "plusieurs visages familiers n'apparaissaient plus, des figures nouvelles sugissaient, le personnel politique se renouvelait, une autre génération entrait en scène." McGee, Laurier, Lapointe, St-Laurent..., p. 120.

⁹⁰ Ibid., p. 119.

⁹¹ NAC, Fonds Office of the Chief Electoral Officer, RG 113-C, Electoral Returns, 1867-1980.

Darveau.⁹² The move surprised Laurier and members of ‘le vrai parti’ who objected to Darveau, Parent’s tactics and the way Choquette had apparently been “double crossed.”⁹³ Against Laurier’s wishes, they supported Dr. Albert Jobin as an “independent Liberal,” one with strong ‘nationaliste’ convictions.⁹⁴ Choquette, as party organizer in the region, initially attempted to resolve the conflict but when he found Parent actively opposing one of his candidates, he threw his support to Jobin.⁹⁵ Choquette organized a public meeting on Jacques Cartier Square, calling Parent a traitor “vendu aux bleus.” ‘Les parentistes’ replied with whistles, shouts and stones. The violence drew provincial attention and ended, at the polls, with Jobin’s victory.

Parent, who had caught the Conservatives off guard, won a convincing majority across the province but, just as in the municipal election, a good many of the newly elected MLAs did not want him as Premier. Following the election, Choquette denounced Parent as a “vulgaire boodler” and formally accused him of using ministerial influence for personal gain, making government payments without proper verification and favouring friends in the sale of timber limits and hydroelectric licences.⁹⁶ Parent sued him for defamation. But Choquette was not done. Before the legislature opened, he organized

⁹² McGee, Laurier, Lapointe, St-Laurent..., p. 125.

⁹³ Rumilly, S.-N. Parent, p. 187.

⁹⁴ After his conflict with Laurier over the Canadian position at the Imperial Conference in 1902 and after supporting the Conservative Michel Fiset in the 1904 municipal election, Jules-Alfred Lane did not even attempt to run in Québec-Est.

⁹⁵ It is unlikely Choquette required much provocation before turning on Parent. Nonetheless, in his memoirs, Choquette contends that he only determined to oppose Parent when the Premier sent him to help a candidate in Charlevoix whom Parent himself did not support. The remainder of these developments is related in Choquette, Un demi-siècle..., pp. 166-168.

⁹⁶ The remainder of the paragraph, recounting how Parent’s government was brought down, is based on Rumilly, S.-N. Parent, pp. 185-221 and Choquette, Un demi-siècle..., pp. 158-179.

a meeting of Liberal MLAs at the Chateau Frontenac and secured the support of ‘vrai parti’ ministers Lomer Gouin, Adélard Turgeon and William Alexander Weir, as well as 44 MLAs, to vote against Parent’s candidate for Speaker. In effect, they were trying to overthrow the Premier.

Laurier, who had kept his distance during the campaign, sent Rodolphe Lemieux (Solicitor General and member of the ‘vrai parti’), Louis-Philippe Brodeur (Minister of Internal Revenue and ‘parentiste’) and Raoul Dandurand (a diplomatic former Conservative) to negotiate a settlement. But Gouin, Turgeon and Weir remained steadfast and, when the legislature met, Parent’s candidate was defeated. Finally, after a series of meetings involving Laurier, Pelletier, Choquette, Gouin, Turgeon and Parent, the Premier agreed to resign once a committee of the legislature could be called to clear him of all the charges brought by Choquette. It did not take long. Within two weeks the committee finished its report, clearing Parent of any wrongdoing. Parent resigned from the legislature on March 21 and Lomer Gouin became Premier.

Choquette’s “coup d’état” really only marked the beginning of a new phase in the conflict between ‘le vrai parti’ and ‘les parentistes.’⁹⁷ But for Laurier it created two significant problems. First, it marginalized the disciplined, “orthodox,” party faction on which he relied for the distribution of government resources and replaced it with a much more independent “neo-traditional” party organization at the provincial level. He would need to find, then, other ways to effectively control the distribution of federal government resources in Québec. Secondly, it gave provincial power to a faction that had already

⁹⁷ Gonzalve Désaulniers, a progressive Montréal Liberal, characterized the change of government as a “coup d’état.” See NAC, Fonds Lomer Gouin, MG 27-III B 4, Volume 56, File 67, “Sir Lomer Gouin, Sa vie, Son œuvre.” This reference is quoted in Edwidge Munn, “Les relations entre Wilfrid Laurier et Lomer Gouin de 1905 à 1908,” M.A. Thesis : Université de Montréal, 1985, p. 13.

shown, at the municipal level, a willingness to work with more devout Conservatives who shared their French Canadian nationalism against their Liberal ‘parentiste’ colleagues. Laurier would have to prevent such a coalition from undermining his government by finding a way to reconcile ‘le vrai parti’ and ‘les parentistes.’ After all, Parent was still the Mayor of Québec City and MLA for St-Sauveur while Fitzpatrick retained his position as political minister for the district.

Laurier would meet the first challenge by making a clear distinction between federal and provincial patronage and, in the federal sphere, by reducing government expenditures in Québec City while placing greater emphasis on competence in federal appointments. He would face the second challenge by cautiously limiting his support to initiatives and coalitions that represented the secular progressive French Canadian nationalism of ‘le vrai parti’ and the material interests of Québec-Est.

In the very midst of the “coup d’état,” Laurier received a letter from Alphonse Desjardins and L’Action populaire économique asking him, once again, to introduce a bill legalizing the Caisse populaires.⁹⁸ The group included Charles Langelier, Joseph-Élie Martineau and Adélard Turgeon of the ‘vrai parti’ as well as prominent Conservatives, Thomas Chapais and Edmond James Flynn, ‘nationaliste’ Omer Héroux and Monseigneurs Bégin, Duhamel and Mathieu. The letter mentioned that a fourth Caisse populaire had just been established in St-Malo, “faisant partie du district électoral de Québec-Est.” It had a ‘vrai parti’ member as President, Louis Canac dit Marquis, and as

⁹⁸ Poulin, *Histoire du Mouvement Desjardins...*, p. 123. Archives de la Société historique Alphonse-Desjardins, Fonds Desjardins, Chapitre 5, Dossier S.2, 0.21:2.4-8.4, Desjardins to Laurier, 25 January 1905.

Secretary-Manager, Joseph Délisle.⁹⁹ But Laurier refused their request and, in an uncharacteristically abrupt reply to Monseigneur Bégin, refused even to meet with Desjardins.¹⁰⁰ Laurier claimed to see no advantage in the Caisses populaires over the savings accounts offered by the Post Office (although these did not offer loans as did the Caisses populaires). Historians of the Mouvement Desjardins have suggested that Laurier decided to wait for public opinion to form or for unspecified “other reasons” before acting on his promise to introduce legislation.¹⁰¹ They do not, however, give much consideration to the political context in which his decision was made. There is every chance that Laurier, in the uncertain political climate, simply preferred not to upset Liberals associated with the Banque nationale or encourage further cooperation between ‘le vrai parti’ and ‘nationaliste’ Conservatives and Church leaders – especially in his own riding.

The unstable political situation in Québec also affected Laurier’s management of the controversy surrounding the Autonomy Bills in February 1905.¹⁰² The Bills, creating the provinces of Saskatchewan and Alberta, had been key election promises for western Canada and part of Laurier’s earlier efforts to mend relations with Bourassa. Thus, in January, Laurier asked the experienced and devout Fitzpatrick to draft the Bills, with the

⁹⁹ References to Canac dit Marquis and Délisle are found in Archives de la Société historique Alphonse-Desjardins, Fonds Desjardins, “Calepin d’Alphonse Desjardins.” Canac dit Marquis ran for election as an alderman in St-Valier ward, and lost, in 1896. AVQ, Fonds de la Ville de Québec, Série Politique, Dossier Candidats aux élections municipales, QP1-4/20-7. Délisle signed Laurier’s nomination papers in 1877. Le Journal de Québec, 22 November 1877, p. 2.

¹⁰⁰ Archives de la Société historique Alphonse-Desjardins, Fonds Desjardins, Chapitre 5, Dossier S.2, 0.21:2.3-1.1, Laurier to Bégin, 28 January 1905.

¹⁰¹ Yves Roby, Alphonse Desjardins et les caisses populaires, 1854-1920 (Montréal : Fides, 1964) p. 74; Poulin, Histoire du Mouvement Desjardins..., p. 123.

¹⁰² The paragraph is based on the detailed account of political events surrounding the Autonomy Bills provided in Robert Rumilly, Histoire de la Province de Québec, Tome XII, Les Écoles du Nord-ouest, (Montréal: Valiquette, 1942) pp. 9-54.

assistance of Henri Bourassa and Monseigneur Sbarretti (the papal delegate) as well as representatives of the western territories. Clifford Sifton, his western political minister, was absent on account of illness. The Bills established publicly funded Catholic schools, much as they had existed in Manitoba before the “Laurier-Greenway” accord, and gave the federal government ownership of all natural resources in the new provinces. The proposed legislation appealed to all currents of opinion in Québec. But they set off tremendous opposition in western Canada and Ontario. Sifton, upon his return to Ottawa, resigned in protest. Finance Minister W.S. Fielding threatened to join him. Faced with outrage in the region most affected by the legislation, division within his caucus and strong opposition to Fitzpatrick (a ‘parentiste’) in Québec, Laurier withdrew the Bill in March. After consulting Sifton, he proposed a revised Bill that included provisions similar to those in the “Laurier-Greenway” accord. Members of ‘le vrai parti’ accepted the revision just as they had the accord in 1896 but the more devout ‘nationalistes’ castigated Laurier for sacrificing “provincial” interests. It was a bitter defeat for Laurier; but it had the unintended consequence of differentiating ‘le vrai parti’ from ‘les nationalistes’ within the Liberal ranks. Privately, Fitzpatrick hoped that federal control of natural resources would give the government enough leverage to assist Catholics in the future but, in truth, it was a worse defeat for him than Laurier.

Laurier might be forgiven a sense of pathetic fallacy when, in the midst of debate over the Autonomy Bills, the wet dock quay wall collapsed in the Québec port. It required \$362,000 for urgent repairs and he moved quickly to provide the necessary funding.¹⁰³ But, this time, he ensured that the payments would be made only as work

¹⁰³ NAC, Fonds Laurier, MG 26-G, Volume 376, p. 100056, Laliberté to Laurier, 27 July 1905.

progressed¹⁰⁴ and resisted requests from Laliberté to award contracts without tender.¹⁰⁵ Despite these provisions though, he was still uncomfortable spending federal funds in Québec City. When William MacPherson, President of Dominion Steamship Lines and a Conservative member of the QHC proposed “building a larger graving dock next to the loading docks in Québec harbour...near the labourers as well as the workshops of St. Roch,” Laurier refused.¹⁰⁶ “I see there is constant figuring, at the present time, to spend more money in the harbour of Québec,” he replied. “Apart from the bridge, we are now committed for the works of the Louise Embankment [breakwater and wet dock quay], to an expenditure of \$800,000. You will appreciate, under the circumstances, that it would be somewhat difficult to ask for more money for that section of the country.”¹⁰⁷

In the uncertain political climate, Laurier adopted a similarly cautious approach to his relations with Gouin. Although the two men had known each other for years, their correspondence is far less familiar than that between Parent and Laurier and much less preoccupied with patronage.¹⁰⁸ Instead, the two men established a wary but respectful relationship and insisted upon just as strict a division between provincial and federal patronage as if they had been from different parties.¹⁰⁹ Historian Edwidge Munn found that, between 1905 and 1908, Laurier made only eight “polite” requests for provincial nominations (all rejected except for one previously arranged by Parent) while Gouin

¹⁰⁴ *Ibid.*, Volume 383, p. 102064, C.S. Hyman to Laurier, 12 October 1905.

¹⁰⁵ *Ibid.*, Volume 376, p. 100056, Laliberté to Laurier, 27 July 1905; Volume 428, p. 114386, William Power to Laurier, 4 October 1906.

¹⁰⁶ *Ibid.*, Volume 381, p. 101554, MacPherson to Laurier, 28 September 1905.

¹⁰⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 101559, Laurier to MacPherson, 30 September 1905.

¹⁰⁸ Edwidge Munn found the same thing. Munn, “Les relations...,” p. 43.

¹⁰⁹ Munn describes the respect the two men had for each other’s jurisdiction as “scrupuleux.” *Ibid.*, p. 44.

asked for a mere six federal appointments (three of which were granted).¹¹⁰ Such a strict division helped, in fact, to maintain the hierarchical and geographic patronage structure Laurier had already put in place – lending it a certain credibility and sense of permanence. Laurier did, however, frequently consult Lemieux, Choquette and Dandurand as well as Fitzpatrick on federal patronage in Québec. Increasingly, too, he insisted on competence more than party loyalty in senior appointments.¹¹¹ Although a degree of distrust continued for many years between Gouin and Laurier, the respect they shared for each other's power eventually led to a close friendship and greater stability in the party at all levels.

Choquette, however, remained determined to rid the party of 'les parentistes' and his efforts, along with those of the Church and 'les nationalistes', continued to transform the political climate in Québec-Est in 1905. In April, Choquette took advantage of the dispute between Lucien Pacaud and the Compagnie de publication du Soleil to further his influence. He purchased all of Pacaud's shares for \$49,500 – fully \$1,500 more than their value in 1903 and substantially more than their value in 1905.¹¹² He made a \$9,500 down payment and agreed to make \$5,000 payments each year for eight years with five per cent interest. Upon learning of the deal, Laurier commended Lucien for taking good care of his mother but must have had misgivings about the advantages for the party.¹¹³ Within

¹¹⁰ *Ibid.*, pp. 54-55.

¹¹¹ Munn even claims that Laurier demanded competence more than party loyalty for senior appointments. *Ibid.*, p. 54.

¹¹² NAC, Fonds Laurier, MG 26-G, Volume 361, p. 96253, Laurier to Lucien Pacaud, 6 April 1905.

¹¹³ *Ibid.*

weeks, Choquette was asking him for a greater share of federal patronage¹¹⁴ and ‘les parentistes’ were claiming that “Le Soleil n’est plus l’organe du parti mais celui du Sénateur Choquette.”¹¹⁵

Then, on June 17, a new newspaper appeared in St-Roch.¹¹⁶ Inspired by Monseigneur P-E. Roy and Abbot Stanislas Lortie, La Libre Parole gave them a voice, beyond the pulpit, to “récupérer les masses.”¹¹⁷ Lortie was a student of Frédéric LePlay and a key advisor to Bégin during the 1900 lockout in the boot and shoe industry. He had long sought to establish a Catholic newspaper to promote LePlay’s social doctrine. With Lortie’s encouragement and Roy’s support, Alphonse Huard, a notary and choirmaster at Notre-Dame de Jacques-Cartier, along with Dr. Albert Jobin, Dr. Jules Dorion and Jacques-Édouard Plamondon opened La Libre Parole in offices on St-Joseph.¹¹⁸ It adopted a position, similar to that of the ‘nationalistes’: independent of party and obedient to Church teachings on religious matters.¹¹⁹ It called for “une entente charitable, pacifique et chrétienne” between employers and employees and a “lutte sans merci aux monopoles.” La Libre Parole would prove to be a powerful voice for the Church’s social

¹¹⁴ Ibid., Volume 362, p. 96490, Choquette to Laurier, 12 April 1905.

¹¹⁵ Ibid., Volume 391, p. 103996, L.A. Taschereau to Laurier, 5 December 1905.

¹¹⁶ La Libre Parole, 17 June 1905.

¹¹⁷ “La Société d’économie politique et sociale” included Monseigneurs P-E. Roy and C-O Gagnon as well as prominent French-Canadian ‘nationalistes’ Jules Dorion and Adjutor Rivard. Nive Voisine, Histoire du Catholicisme québécois, Tome I, Le XXe siècle, 1898-1940 (Montréal : Boréal Express, 1984) p. 193. For information on Lortie, see Rumilly, Les Écoles..., p. 76.

¹¹⁸ 343, rue St-Joseph. La Libre Parole, 17 June 1905. p. 1.

¹¹⁹ The newspaper’s objectives and opinions described in the remainder of the paragraph are based on articles in the first edition. Ibid., p. 1 and 2.

doctrine; but, in the short term, it set out to defeat ‘les parentistes’ at the next municipal elections, in February 1906.

Le Soleil, too, began to campaign against Parent, promoting the political ambitions of its new owner. So, to protect Parent, Laurier named him President of the National Transcontinental Railway (NTR) on July 31, 1905.¹²⁰ Rather than appoint him to a judicial position, a more traditional appointment for which he was well qualified, Laurier preferred to transfer his most reliable, disciplined manager of government resources into a “public service” position. It gave Parent a substantial income, considerable patronage and allowed him to continue as President of the QBC as well.

Choquette accepted Parent’s nomination in the ‘interests of the party,’ but as long as Parent remained Mayor he would continue the struggle. He challenged Parent’s presidency of the NTR as in conflict of interest with his role as President of the QBC at the Bridge company’s September 1905 Annual General Meeting.¹²¹ Board members assured Choquette there was no conflict; but, when Montréal interests asked for a place on the Board, Parent offered his resignation and put their loyalty to a more formal test. Parent had begun to fight back. Board members and investors rejected his resignation outright. In their view, “there [was] nobody else with [the] necessary knowledge of company’s business.”¹²² For Ulric Barthe, Parent’s closest colleague, it was “presque émouvant.” With the help of his law partner, Alexandre Taschereau, Parent then revived

¹²⁰ Michèle Brassard and Jean Hamelin, “Parent, Simon-Napoléon,” in Dictionary of Canadian Biography, Volume 14, 1911-1920 (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1998) p. 821.

¹²¹ Regarding Choquette’s acceptance of Parent’s nomination see Rumilly, Les Écoles..., p. 78. Barthe recounted the events of the QBC Annual General Meeting in a letter to Laurier. NAC, Fonds Laurier, MG 26-G, Volume 380, p. 101022, Barthe to Laurier, 6 September 1905.

¹²² Ibid., Volume 391, p. 104066, F.J. Cockburn, Manager, Bank of Montréal, to Laurier, 7 December 1905.

his defamation case against Choquette.¹²³ Choquette claimed that the arrangements made prior to Parent's resignation had settled the case and called Laurier as a witness. This, finally, was too much for Laurier. Although furious with Choquette, he arranged for Parent to resign as Mayor at the end of the year. Parent's battle hadn't lasted long. A month later, Laurier stayed out of the provincial by-election in St-Sauveur that returned 'vrai parti' candidate and President of the local SSJB, Dr. Joseph-Eugène Côté, as the new MLA.¹²⁴

The campaign to succeed Parent as Mayor, fought in January and February 1906, was unlike any the city had ever seen. Parent and his administration remained central issues, but the momentum built by Choquette opened the field for candidates from every social group that had been organizing since Laurier came to power. Moreover, once the 'parentistes' launched L'Éclair in January, all but the workers had a newspaper to put forward their views.¹²⁵ The competition prompted individual candidates to clarify their positions on a multitude of issues in detailed manifestos that were even printed, sometimes, in more than one newspaper.¹²⁶ At the outset, the campaign took on the appearances of the truly democratic politics idealized by Henri Bourassa. Armand Lavergne, who ran for alderman in St-Roch, even withdrew when Louis Létourneau, a member of 'le vrai parti,' announced his "independence."¹²⁷

¹²³ The case, and its resolution, are discussed in Rumilly, Les Écoles..., p. 78.

¹²⁴ Munn, Les relations..., p. 28.

¹²⁵ L'Éclair, 16 January 1906.

¹²⁶ For example, the manifestos of Napoléon Drouin and Louis Létourneau appeared in L'Éclair, 8 and 9 February 1906, p. 1, and La Libre Parole, 10 February 1906, p. 3.

¹²⁷ L'Éclair, 14 February 1906, p. 2.

Lavergne's withdrawal was typical of a campaign characterized by fluid alliances between 'le vrai parti,' 'les nationalites,' workers and Conservatives against some – but not all – 'parentistes'. Parent made no attempt to bridge the gulf with 'le vrai parti,' selecting to run in his place first George Tanguay (a long-time ally and business partner) and then, when confronted with overwhelming opposition to Tanguay, Alexandre Taschereau (his law partner).¹²⁸

Choquette's attack on Parent's corrupt conduct of government affairs had set the tone and established the campaign's central issue well before it began.¹²⁹ Even George Tanguay accepted the need for an investigation into Parent's administration.¹³⁰ Nonetheless, L'Éclair defended Parent for his devotion to the city and the prosperity he created.¹³¹ The 'nationaliste' Alphonse Huard and 'vrai libéral' Louis Létourneau called for a permanent, independent, city auditor.¹³² 'Le vrai parti,' 'les nationalistes' and union leaders agreed on a series of electoral reforms for the city. All argued that the Mayor should be elected directly by the voters rather than indirectly by the council, all wanted to see the property qualification reduced, and all thought every taxpayer should have a vote.¹³³ The 'parentistes' rejected all these reforms except direct election of the Mayor.

¹²⁸ Rumilly, Les Écoles..., p. 116.

¹²⁹ Typical of the articles published by Choquette during the campaign was "Guerre au vice." Le Soleil, 29 January 1906. p. 4.

¹³⁰ L'Éclair, 16 January 1906, p. 1.

¹³¹ Ibid.

¹³² Ibid., 9 February 1906, p. 1; La Libre Parole, 10 February 1906, p. 2.

¹³³ Well summarized in L'Éclair, 16 January 1906, p. 1.

The Church and ‘les nationalistes,’ in collaboration with devout Conservatives, made temperance the second most prominent issue in the campaign.¹³⁴ They urged the city to follow the example set by Ontario and the Northwest territories and close all outlets selling alcohol at six or seven o’clock on Saturday (when most workers were paid).¹³⁵ They supported Choquette mostly because he would reduce the number of outlets.¹³⁶ Yet the issue was noticeably less significant in Le Soleil and absent from Létourneau’s manifesto.¹³⁷ L’Éclair called for better enforcement of the current legislation and a gradual reduction in the number of outlets, but its advertisements for Colby’s Rye Whiskey were undoubtedly more convincing statements of its true position.¹³⁸ Some ‘parentistes’ however, such as Nazaire Fortier, a trustee at Notre-Dame de Jacques-Cartier, genuinely shared the clergy’s perspective while Napoléon Drouin, President of Rock City Tobacco, managed to emphasize his sympathy with the clergy in La Libre Parole while taking his distance from them in L’Éclair.¹³⁹ In general, it was an issue that appealed more to ‘nationalistes’ and Conservatives than ‘le vrai parti’ or ‘les parentistes.’

Despite these divergences on moral and democratic issues, there was considerable agreement among all candidates – including ‘les parentistes’ – on labour, nationalist and

¹³⁴ La Libre Parole only endorsed six candidates in Québec-Est: three Conservatives (Michel Fiset, Onésime Mathieu and O.N. Shink), one “nationaliste” (Alphonse Huard), one ‘vrai parti’ member (Antoine Galipeault) and one worker (Omer Brunet). La Libre Parole, 17 February 1906, p. 3.

¹³⁵ La Libre Parole, 10 February 1906, p. 1.

¹³⁶ Ibid., 3 February 1906, p. 1.

¹³⁷ L’Éclair, 9 February 1906, p.1.

¹³⁸ Ibid., 1 February 1906, p. 1.

¹³⁹ Nazaire Fortier served as syndic – or trustee – for the parish for 23 years. Ville de Québec, Centième anniversaire du Conseil de la Cité de Québec (Québec : Ville de Québec, 1933) p. 41.

civic improvement issues. They all hoped the typographer's work-to-rule campaign for an eight-hour day would end peacefully though only Joseph-Eugène Côté, not running in the election, publicly supported the typographers.¹⁴⁰ All parties, without exception, called for French names for the city's tramway routes; all thought the city should annex growing suburbs such as St-Malo and Limoilou; all supported the creation of a council committee devoted to local economic development; and all wanted more electric light at lower cost. Many also favoured the creation of public libraries and baths, better pay for the police and fire departments, and an improved tramway service.

These common interests provided the basis for a compromise. Almost certainly concerned about his ability to work with the diverse coalition ranged behind Choquette, Laurier had Gouin and Lemieux ask him to renounce his candidacy early in the campaign.¹⁴¹ Choquette agreed to withdraw if Taschereau would too. But Taschereau refused. Laurier tried again, this time, approaching Choquette personally. When they spoke, Choquette warned Laurier that any choice between Taschereau and himself would hurt the party. Moreover, should Taschereau be chosen, he would leave Le Soleil so he could act "comme je voulais." Facing the prospect of further – prolonged – internal conflict, Laurier convinced Taschereau to accept a compromise candidate. At the same time, he offered to purchase Choquette's shares in Le Soleil and hire him as the lawyer for the Grand Trunk Pacific. Choquette agreed to sell on February 18 but refused the appointment.

¹⁴⁰ He was "accused" of this by 'les parentistes' in L'Éclair, 6 February 1906, p. 1.

¹⁴¹ The best account of these events, on which this paragraph is based, is given in NAC, Fonds Laurier, MG 26-G, Volume 417, p. 111369, Choquette to Laurier, 16 June 1906. Other similar accounts can be found in Choquette, Un demi-siècle..., pp. 183-186 and Rumilly, Les Écoles..., pp. 116-118.

Mid-way through the campaign, all parties – even the group at La Libre Parole – seem to have agreed that George Garneau, the son of Pierre Garneau and a successful businessman in his own right, would be the best man to carry out the civic reforms they wanted. Although he was more closely associated with ‘le vrai parti’ than ‘les parentistes,’ L’Éclair suggested him as a compromise candidate on January 22, Le Soleil on February 2 and La Libre Parole on February 3.¹⁴² It became official on February 9 when Choquette and Taschereau withdrew. Garneau was elected without opposition ten days later. In St-Valier, Parent’s own ward, Conservatives swept all three seats while devout Catholics, be they ‘parentiste’ or ‘nationaliste,’ captured the three seats in Jacques-Cartier. In St-Sauveur, the workers, ‘vrai parti’ and Conservatives each took a seat. St-Roch returned a ‘vrai libéral,’ a Conservative and the intrepid Napoléon Drouin. In the words of historian Robert Rumilly, “les ‘anciens’ de Saint-Sauveur n’en revenaient pas.”¹⁴³

The campaign marked the restoration of ‘le vrai parti’ in Québec City and revealed trends that would shape the final phase of this fluid, transitional, period. It revealed an increasingly important Church influence in the riding that would, in the years ahead, gradually distinguish it from the working class constituencies in Montréal. Church influence would also make temperance and partisanship more important issues, creating an opportunity to reunite ‘vrais libéraux’ and ‘parentistes’ around ‘vrai parti’ leaders. The campaign had also revealed widespread support for civic improvements that advanced the riding’s material interests. Over the next two years, Laurier would stabilize the party by

¹⁴² Rumilly considered Garneau to be ‘anti-parentiste.’ Rumilly, Les Écoles..., p. 118.

¹⁴³ Ibid.

insisting, first, on those material interests and, secondly, only on the secular progressive reforms supported by 'le vrai parti.' Even then, he would demand a high standard of public support before accepting such initiatives. But he would also help stabilize the party by continuing to introduce rational professional management in the party, the party newspaper and the administration of government. These changes took place almost simultaneously, in rapid succession, linked together, as they were by the growing size and complexity of social activity and reaction to it. By the time Robert Borden launched his attack on government scandals, Laurier had already begun the reform.¹⁴⁴

Shortly after the municipal election, Laurier gave Gouin control of Le Soleil's editorial policy on municipal and provincial matters and Fitzpatrick on federal issues.¹⁴⁵ It was another step in the rationalization of party activities. But his decision to hire Gouin's candidate for editor, Henri Lefebvre d'Hellencourt, shortly thereafter represented an even more significant step in the professionalization of the newspaper's management.¹⁴⁶ D'Hellencourt, originally from France, was a professional journalist who had made a careful study of Canadian politics as editor and owner of L'Écho de Manitoba over the previous six years.¹⁴⁷ He gave Laurier and Gouin the dependable leadership they had been missing at Le Soleil since Pacaud's departure. Laurier told d'Hellencourt in no uncertain terms that "Le Soleil existe pour le parti libéral et les amis

¹⁴⁴ The Conservative attack turned the next three years of parliamentary debate into "scandal sessions." Robert Craig Brown and Ramsay Cook, Canada, 1896-1921: A Nation Transformed (Toronto: McClelland and Stewart Limited, 1974) p. 192.

¹⁴⁵ NAC, Fonds Laurier, MG 26-G, Volume 406, p. 108165, Gouin to Laurier, 15 March 1906.

¹⁴⁶ Rumilly, Les Écoles..., p. 117.

¹⁴⁷ Biographical information is found in Ibid.; ANQM, Fonds Henri Marie Victor Lefebvre d'Hellencourt, P47.

de toutes les nuances à qui il doit donner l'hospitalité de ses colonnes et ne combattre que l'ennemi commun.”¹⁴⁸

Laurier's reaction to technical and managerial difficulties at the Ross Rifle Factory (RRF) show just how insistent he would be on the riding's material interests, and how important local public opinion would be to any reform initiative. By the time Borden raised the factory's problems in the House of Commons, Laurier had long been aware of them – thanks largely to party loyalty. J.H. Staunton, “a journeyman tool maker” and “a supporter of the Reform [Liberal] Party,” had worked at the RRF from November 1904 to June 1905.¹⁴⁹ He told Laurier that the working drawings used at the factory would “be a disgrace to a third rate amateur.” The rifle was “faulty and defective” and “will not stand 100 shots.” Moreover, he claimed that “the shop was run by the government of Canada and [as a result] from the highest to the lowest every man tries to see how long he can make his job last.”

The department wrote Staunton off as a disgruntled employee.¹⁵⁰ But concerns raised by the North West Mounted Police (NWMP) were not so easily dismissed. The first NWMP report was made in July 1906 when, on a rifle range at Fort MacLeod, “the bolt of Major Bowdridge's rifle flew back on the explosion of the cartridge and went into his eye...”¹⁵¹ A month later, the Comptroller of the NWMP confirmed that the force had tested 1,000 rifles in different locations and found them all inadequate.¹⁵² “The metal is

¹⁴⁸ NAC, Fonds Laurier, MG 26-G, Volume 432, p. 115361, Laurier to d'Hellencourt, 7 April 1906.

¹⁴⁹ *Ibid.*, Volume 399, p. 106387, J.H. Staunton to Laurier, 2 January 1906.

¹⁵⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 106392, Pinault to Laurier, 2 February 1906.

¹⁵¹ *Ibid.*, Volume 452, p. 120940, Courtland Starnes to Fred White, 6 July 1906.

¹⁵² *Ibid.*, Volume 424, p. 113037, Fred White to Laurier, 21 August 1906.

soft, the vital springs of the mechanism are weak and the workmanship is very inferior. For rapid firing the rifle is a positive danger to the man using it, that is, as a repeating rifle. The metal is not tempered to stand the heat of continuous shots, and the mechanism for ejecting the discharged shells jams in such a way as to render the rifle useless.” Yet he concluded: “it is a case of an infant industry which requires careful nursing to a state of perfection.” Laurier, and most everyone in Québec City, it seemed, agreed. Facing only “outside” criticism of the factory, Laurier remained loyal to the city’s material interest and trusted Ross’s promises of improvement.

Increasing Church influence inside the community would not be so easy to dismiss. In April 1906, city council imposed the Régulation Huard, closing all outlets selling alcohol at seven o’clock on Saturday.¹⁵³ It caused little controversy after having won the support of the Church, ‘les nationalistes,’ Conservatives, devout ‘parentistes’ and the ‘vrai parti’ during the election. But it was only a precursor to the much more ambitious temperance campaign launched by Monseigneur Roy in June. All of Roy’s determination to “récupérer les masses” was expressed in his quasi-military preparations for “la guerre sainte.”¹⁵⁴ La Société de Tempérance he established in Notre-Dame de Jacques-Cartier had a chief (the Archbishop), officers (Board members), soldiers (members), a flag (a cross distributed to members, their wives and children) and resources (a regular subscription).¹⁵⁵ Roy led his troops in the “double combat de la vie – [la] lutte intérieur dans le secret de la conscience...[et la] lutte publique [contre] les vices

¹⁵³ Le Soleil, 24 April 1906, p. 1.

¹⁵⁴ Musée de la Civilisation, Dépôt du Séminaire de Québec, Fonds Paul-Eugène Roy, P7/9/6, Société de Tempérance, Notes.

¹⁵⁵ Roy referred to them in exactly these military terms. Ibid.

scandaleux, les péchés contagieux.” He aimed directly at shaping public opinion on the narrow, close-knit, streets of Québec-Est in a way nobody had since Ernest Pacaud and François Langelier in the late 1870s.

Given Roy’s campaign, and the close cooperation between ‘le vrai parti,’ ‘les nationalistes’ and Conservatives in the 1906 election, it was reasonable to assume widespread support for federal legislation making Sunday a day of rest – prohibiting all commercial or professional activities. If anyone should object, it might reasonably be the increasingly marginalized ‘parentistes.’ So, under pressure from the Lord’s Day Alliance of Ontario and, with the support of Monseigneur Bruchési, Laurier asked Fitzpatrick to draft the Lord’s Day Act in March 1906.¹⁵⁶ He did not object, and the legislation was tabled in June. Public reaction to the bill revealed, however, growing differences between Québec City and Montréal, and the extent of Bourassa’s opportunism.

When introduced, virulent opposition to the Bill came from Montréal, its big businesses and workers drawn to Parc Sohmer. Cultural historians Yvan Lamonde and Raymond Montpetit have described the central role Parc Sohmer – a sort of park cum fair ground cum music hall – played in the introduction of capitalism to leisure, entertainment and culture in the city.¹⁵⁷ There was no other place like it in Canada at the time and, in their view, it was the key to public debate over the Lord’s Day Act.¹⁵⁸ Certainly, the band shell in Victoria Park was not threatened by the legislation; and there was far less opposition to the Bill in Québec City. In fact, Roy, Bégin and La Libre Parole supported

¹⁵⁶ This paragraph is based on the detailed account of the Bill - its origins, preparation and opposition to it - in Québec as covered in Rumilly, Les Écoles..., pp. 128-159.

¹⁵⁷ Yvan Lamonde and Raymond Montpetit, Le Parc Sohmer de Montréal, 1889-1919 : Un lieu populaire de culture urbaine (Québec : Institut québécois de recherche sur la culture, 1986) p. 209.

¹⁵⁸ Ibid., p. 197.

the measure.¹⁵⁹ The only hints of opposition came from Le Soleil and La Vigie (a ‘parentiste’ weekly newspaper). Both officially supported the legislation as a matter of course but they emphasized the way it was imposed on Laurier and appeared much more comfortable with Camille Piché’s amendment allowing each province to determine the limits of its application. In leading opposition to the Bill, Bourassa simply capitalized on popular opposition in Montréal to restrictions on Sunday activities. But, far from defending “les coutumes qui ont existé de tout temps dans la province,” as he claimed, he was in fact defending the new commercialization of leisure.¹⁶⁰ Public debate petered out once businesses in Montréal realized it would not be enforced in the province. It had never been controversial in Québec City.

In fact, the appearance of La Vigie marked a much more significant change in local politics than the Lord’s Day Act. Established by ‘les parentistes’ in direct response to Roy’s temperance campaign, it marked the separation of devout Catholics, such as Nazaire Fortier and Fitzpatrick, from others within the faction. Hereafter, devout Catholics in the ‘parentiste’ faction, many of them living in Notre-Dame de Jacques-Cartier, would be drawn to ‘les nationalistes’ or, as in Fitzpatrick’s case, the Conservative party. The others, a majority, would eventually – though not immediately – reconcile with ‘le vrai parti.’ Ulric Barthe, editor of La Vigie would be typical of those who remained in the party. He had begun his career as an insurance and telegraph agent

¹⁵⁹ A certain awkwardness appeared in the position of La Libre Parole. It declared: “en principe, cette loi nous paraît opportune.” Moreover, it emphasized the excesses of industry and commerce and the real need for a day of rest. Perhaps swayed by the ‘nationaliste’ politicians however, it urged further – less passionate – discussion rather than endorsing or rejecting the bill outright. La Libre Parole, 7 July 1906, p. 4.

¹⁶⁰ Bourassa is quoted in Rumilly, Les Écoles..., p. 151. Perhaps because the inconsistency of Bourassa’s position was so pronounced, historian Joseph Levitt did not include it in his discussion of the ‘nationaliste’ social program. Joseph Levitt, Henri Bourassa....

in Sorel before accepting a position at L'Électeur in 1882.¹⁶¹ He remained an inveterate promoter, starting a business column in L'Électeur before launching La Semaine Commerciale in Montréal. A close friend of Parent, he served as Secretary of the QBC as well as editor of La Vigie in 1906. His newspaper affected a non-partisan tone, like La Libre Parole, critical of the incessant quarrels among “les journaux politiques.”¹⁶² But it appears mostly to have adopted that position to give a modern appearance to its own politics. Pages of advertisements for the Black Bottle and local wine merchants made its position clear.¹⁶³ Had Fitzpatrick still been actively involved in local politics, it is unlikely that the newspaper would have been established. But Laurier had appointed him the Chief Justice of the Supreme Court, fulfilling his true ambition, just before the Lord's Day Bill was read in the House.¹⁶⁴

Laurier reluctantly assumed Fitzpatrick's responsibilities for editorial opinion in Le Soleil on federal issues.¹⁶⁵ They involved him even more closely in a lengthy battle between d'Hellencourt and Pacaud's long-time administrator, Eugène Marcotte, over the newspaper's future direction. From its humble beginnings in 1880, the newspaper had, by 1906, become a substantial business. It published 24 pages daily and employed 98 people: “22 en rédaction...; 7 en comptabilité; 3 en photogravure; 5 dans le département des presses; 14 dans le département du journal; 10 dans le département des machines; 2

¹⁶¹ NAC, Fonds Ulrich Barthe, MG 27-1-I-28, Volume 1, S. Pugnuelo to Barthe, 25 September 1873; E. Pope to Barthe, 30 October 1874; Pacaud to Barthe, 25 September 1882.

¹⁶² La Vigie, 30 June 1906, p. 1.

¹⁶³ Ibid., 7 July 1906, p. 2.

¹⁶⁴ See the entry for Charles Fitzpatrick at Québec, Les Parlementaires depuis 1792. [www.assnat.qc.ca/fra/membres/notices/index.html] July 1992.

¹⁶⁵ NAC, Fonds Laurier, MG 26-G, Volume 415, p. 110999, Laurier to Bélanger, 7 June 1906.

clicheurs; 5 dans le département des adresses; et 30 dans le département des jobs gouvernementaux et autres.”¹⁶⁶ Marcotte and d’Hellencourt proposed very different ways to adjust to the new size and complexity of its operations. Marcotte put the issue before Laurier:

En premier lieu, vous pourriez nous laisser savoir laquelle de ces deux propositions vous préférez: soit d’établir le journal sur des bases solides en acquittant au plus tôt les dettes existantes, en pratiquant la plus stricte économie, tout en augmentant graduellement la circulation et le prix des annonces où bien de pousser les affaires en publiant de gros numéros du journal en ajoutant d’autres sollicitateurs d’abonnements avec primes etc. Il faudra aussi accepter des annonces à meilleur marché a fin de couvrir la dépense extra de papier.¹⁶⁷

His opinion was clear: Le Soleil would survive as an independent business only if it grew slowly and remained, as a result, a “journal populaire.” D’Hellencourt, on the other hand, contended that: “en dehors de la direction politique, il faut que le journal soit conduit entièrement comme une entreprise commerciale.”¹⁶⁸ He recommended Le Soleil invest in its product, develop sales and hive off its money losing print shop. If, on top of that, it did not have to carry any debts, he felt it would make money in three to four years.

In July 1906, Laurier made his choice and put d’Hellencourt in charge.¹⁶⁹ He agreed there was not much economy to be gained through savings on the writing and editing of the newspaper.¹⁷⁰ At the same time, however, he encouraged d’Hellencourt to reorganize the editorial department, limit the number of pages and increase circulation

¹⁶⁶ Ibid., Volume 405, p. 107722, E. Marcotte to Fitzpatrick, 26 February 1906.

¹⁶⁷ Ibid.

¹⁶⁸ Ibid., Volume 432, p. 115358, D’Hellencourt to Laurier, November 1906.

¹⁶⁹ Ibid., Volume 420, p. 112240, Laurier to E. Taschereau, 4 July 1906.

¹⁷⁰ Ibid., Volume 432, p. 115361, Laurier to d’Hellencourt, 7 November 1906.

gradually. He promised to help with increased patronage although he warned it could only be a temporary solution. His decision, made to stabilize the newspaper's and the party's finances, put Le Soleil on a course that would ensure its future success. It also set the newspaper on a path towards more professional management that would separate editorial direction from administration and, as a result, public opinion from patronage.

Fitzpatrick's departure, and Parent's reversals, altered the context within which Laurier was forced to consider the continuing financial and managerial challenges presented by the Québec Bridge too – although they did not alter his commitment to the undertaking. A mere two days after Fitzpatrick's appointment, Laurier received a petition from the QBC explaining that it was, once again, short of funds.¹⁷¹ Of the \$6,678,200 in bonds guaranteed by the government in 1903, the company had issued \$5,628,224 but only received \$4,608,882.44 for them in the market. At this rate, they calculated that the remaining \$1,049,976 in bonds would only net \$740,352. Deducting from these amounts the cost of customs duties and interest on the bonds, the QBC expected to net \$1,940,740 less than the government originally intended. Laurier agreed to meet with them.

The QBC's predicament represented an opportunity for the CPR and its banker, the Bank of Montréal.¹⁷² For some time, the CPR had been concerned that it could be excluded from the Québec City rail terminal, part of the QBC, once the NTR was completed and turned over to the GTR. So, when it became aware of the QBC's financial predicament, the Bank suggested that, should Laurier separate the terminal from the QBC, he might attract support for the company from the CPR and the bridge could then

¹⁷¹ *Ibid.*, Volume 416, p. 111113, Barthe to Laurier, 9 June 1906.

¹⁷² *Ibid.*, Volume 417, p. 111360, F.J. Cockburn, Bank of Montréal, to Laurier, 18 June 1906.

become part of the NTR – increasing the overall pool of government funding available for the project. The proposal raised some objections from other railways, but it offered the government a short-term solution that would ensure work progressed on the bridge.¹⁷³ Laurier leaped at the opportunity. But the complicated arrangements, necessitated by the immense cost of the project, made it clear to him that in the long term a more thoroughgoing solution was needed. In August 1906, he informed the Bank that, “while we [the government] have not had time to go into details of any scheme for the future management of the bridge, we are quite clear that the present arrangements cannot continue and that the government, at the coming session of Parliament, will be obliged to provide for the taking over of the enterprise.”¹⁷⁴ It was a “radical” solution for the day but held a number of important advantages. The government could fund construction through an issue of its own bonds, reducing overall costs. It would secure greater control over expenditures, greater assurance of the project’s success and Parent could still be retained as company President. It was a decision, like the one Laurier made regarding direction of Le Soleil, that favoured more consistent, professional, management. It showed, too, that Laurier could overcome any ideological objections to government ownership when local interests were at stake. However, it would be more than a year before he introduced the necessary legislation.

At about this time, Gouin, and ‘le vrai parti,’ started to win over Laurier’s confidence by building public support for an increased federal subsidy to the provinces.

¹⁷³ *Ibid.*, Volume 418, p. 111592, J.G. Scott, General Manager of the Québec and Lake St. John Railway, to Laurier, 26 June 1906.

¹⁷⁴ *Ibid.*, Volume 421, p. 112287, Laurier to Cockburn, 1 August 1906.

Gouin had begun by making an increase part of his first budget in March 1905.¹⁷⁵ Repeatedly he had protested his government's inability to undertake new colonization, education or industrial projects until the subsidy was increased.¹⁷⁶ He made the argument at public meetings (including those with Laurier present) and in the 1906 throne speech.¹⁷⁷ His persistence won the support of Conservatives, 'nationalistes,' Liberal clubs, boards of trade, chambers of commerce and finally, other provincial premiers.¹⁷⁸ Even Laurier's own ministers, especially Rodolphe Lemieux, encouraged the Prime Minister to act.¹⁷⁹ Finally, Laurier agreed to meet with the premiers in July 1906, inviting them to the first federal-provincial conference scheduled for October.¹⁸⁰ They unanimously elected Gouin as chairman and approved recommendations identical to those made in 1887 and 1902.¹⁸¹ Although an increased federal subsidy had been part of 'vrai parti' policy for nineteen years, Laurier had resisted until faced with overwhelming public support and strict division between federal and provincial wings of the party. It was, in fact, simply further recognition of the increasing size of provincial government responsibilities and rationalization of government administration. When the necessary

¹⁷⁵ Rumilly, Les Écoles..., p. 59.

¹⁷⁶ Ibid., p. 96.

¹⁷⁷ Ibid., p. 103.

¹⁷⁸ Munn, Les relations..., pp. 143-145.

¹⁷⁹ René Castonguay, Rodolphe Lemieux et le Parti libéral, 1866-1937 : Le Chevalier du roi (Québec : Les Presses de l'Université Laval, 2000) p. 76.

¹⁸⁰ Munn, Les relations..., p. 149.

¹⁸¹ Rumilly, Les Écoles..., pp. 196-197.

legislation passed in 1907, it increased the Québec provincial budget by \$500,000 annually (approximately nine per cent).¹⁸²

The conference took place right in the midst of a by-election held to replace Fitzpatrick in Québec-Comté. It would reveal both the ‘vrai parti’s’ weakness, without at least some ‘parentiste’ support, and the stark differences over partisanship between ‘les vrais libéraux’ and ‘les nationalistes.’ Cyrille Delâge, the party organizer in St-Roch and MLA for Québec-Comté, organized the Liberal campaign. From the outset, he was concerned that “les amis de M. Parent ne me paraissent pas bien disposés. Ce groupe ne manifeste aucune sympathie. Votre ami [Parent] pourrait leur donner le mot d’ordre et les mettre au courant de la situation. Ils me reprochent une alliance avec Dubord [one of Choquette’s local supporters] et me prédisent que j’en serai la première victime.”¹⁸³

Without ‘parentiste’ participation, the contest for the Liberal nomination came down to a battle between ‘le vrai parti’ and ‘les nationalistes’ that would make party loyalty the most important issue of the campaign. Early on, Delâge advised Laurier that George-Élie Amyot gave them the best chance of rallying both ‘vrai parti’ and ‘parentiste’ support and, with Laurier’s approval, began working for Amyot in August.¹⁸⁴ Yet it was a surprise to him when Lorenzo Robitaille, son of a “petit industriel de Beauport,” contested Amyot’s candidacy at the party’s nomination meeting. According to historian Robert Rummilly, “[Robitaille] avait l’indépendance de son âge [24 ans] et une

¹⁸² *Ibid.*, p. 197; The total amount of the federal subsidy accounted for approximately 25 per cent of the provincial budget. Paul-André Linteau, René Durocher, Jean-Claude Robert, *Histoire du Québec contemporain : De la Confédération à la crise (1867-1929)* (Montréal : Boréal Express, 1979) pp. 548-549.

¹⁸³ NAC, Fonds Laurier, MG 26-G, Volume 424, p. 113212, Delâge to Laurier, 30 August 1906.

¹⁸⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 113010, Delâge to Laurier, 18 August 1906; Volume 395, p. 104900, Delâge to Laurier, 1906.

teinte de nationalisme.”¹⁸⁵ He was favoured too, as a local against an outsider who acted very much the “grand patron.” Delâge stacked the meeting and had Laurier declare Amyot the party’s chosen candidate, but Robitaille refused to withdraw. So Delâge organized a public meeting with Laurier, Gouin, Lemieux and Taschereau, at which Laurier made it clear he expected party members to adhere to party discipline. Robitaille turned to Lavergne for support and the battle was on over party discipline. Lemieux and Choquette led an ever growing number of Liberals drawn into the party’s first electoral contest with Bourassa, Lavergne and ‘les nationalistes.’ Dr. Jobin, the MLA for Québec-Est, showed his ‘nationaliste’ colours simply by not joining in. Thus, the campaign helped ‘les vrais libéraux’ prove their loyalty and differentiate themselves from ‘les nationalistes.’ But, tragically for Delâge, it also revealed real ‘nationaliste’ appeal in the riding. Robitaille won by 447 votes.

For a short time, Laurier continued to hope ‘les nationalistes’ would remain in the party and even invited Bourassa to join his Cabinet.¹⁸⁶ But the election in Québec-Comté and the issue of party loyalty had started to harden the differences between ‘les nationalistes’ and ‘les vrais libéraux.’ Choquette was calling for Laurier to ‘excommunicate’ Lavergne.¹⁸⁷ Then Lavergne gave Laurier an even more powerful reason to throw him out. When he attacked Parent’s plans to expropriate the Champlain Market in order to build a station for the NTR, Laurier gave control of government

¹⁸⁵ The account of the election in this paragraph is based on the detailed account in Rumilly, *Les Écoles...*, pp. 163-179.

¹⁸⁶ Lavergne, *Trente ans...*, p. 136; Réal Bélanger, *Wilfrid Laurier: quand la politique devient passion* (Québec: Les Presses de l’Université Laval, 1986) p. 321.

¹⁸⁷ Rumilly, *Henri Bourassa*, p. 24.

patronage in Montmagny to Choquette.¹⁸⁸ The measure satisfied both Choquette and Parent and marked the beginning of local efforts to reunite at least parts of both factions. But it showed too, Laurier's insistence that they would unite, first, around local material interest.

Laurier maintained the same approach less than a month later, when expansion of the Ross Rifle Factory erupted as an economic and cultural issue that threatened to divide 'le vrai parti.' The issue had been simmering since 1904 when Sir Charles Ross sought permission to expand the factory onto the Plains of Abraham. At the time, François Langelier had warned Laurier:

On considère comme un outrage la concession duquel Sir Charles demande. C'est la plus belle partie des Cove Fields. Sir Charles n'a aucunement besoin pour sa manufacture, il pourrait quadrupler celle-ci avec le terrain qu'il a déjà. Le bruit courut qu'il veut construire sur le terrain qu'il demande des résidences qu'il louera à ses employés et à ses principaux ouvriers. Les Anglais surtout sont très montés au sujet de cette affaire et elle pourrait vous faire un tort incalculable. Les Cove Fields servent aujourd'hui de parc où les femmes et les enfants de la classe ouvrière du quartier Montcalm vont prendre de l'air.¹⁸⁹

But workers had sent a petition of their own supporting the expansion. They had gone straight to the point. The factory paid \$4,000 in weekly wages and "the wages paid to the workingmen and circulated among the citizens of Québec would...be doubled [with the expansion]."¹⁹⁰

Because Ross did not push the issue, and because it divided 'le vrai parti' from its allies among the workers and (at the time) 'les parentistes,' the issue did not reach crisis

¹⁸⁸ Lavergne, *Trente ans...*, p. 148; Rumilly, *Henri Bourassa*, p. 25.

¹⁸⁹ NAC, Fonds Laurier, MG 26-G, Volume 263, p. 72805, François Langelier to Laurier, 4 May 1904.

¹⁹⁰ *Ibid.*, Volume 345, p. 92118, J.J. O'Flaherty to Laurier, 12 November 1904.

proportions until 1906. Mayor Garneau, like Langelier, opposed the expansion and believed that Laurier did too.¹⁹¹ But he did not want to take a stand against Omer Brunet and Alexandre Taschereau, proponents of the expansion.¹⁹² He hoped Laurier would do that. Laurier countered by insisting that, as it was a local issue, he would not act until officially advised of the Council's wishes.¹⁹³ There ensued a game of "cat and mouse" during which time local support for the factory made Garneau's position increasingly untenable. Twice – in 1906 and 1907 – Garneau passed motions by the City Council that he claimed demonstrated its opposition to the extension.¹⁹⁴ Yet each time the motion stated only that the Council was willing to have the federal government decide the issue. In the meantime, rumours circulated that Ontario municipalities were ready to offer Ross concessions for relocating.¹⁹⁵ Laurier received petitions in favour of the extension from the Chamber of Commerce, the Association of Retail Merchants, the Association of Manufacturers and one from a public meeting that produced 8,000 signatures.¹⁹⁶ Their coordinated efforts had all the appearance of a well-run public campaign and won Laurier's support.

As a last recourse, Garneau raised the factional and nationalist stakes. He dismissed the petitions from "le même petit groupe [les parentistes] et qui j'ose dire sans

¹⁹¹ *Ibid.*, Volume 263, p. 72808, Laurier to François Langelier, 7 May 1904.

¹⁹² *Ibid.*, Volume 427, p. 113944, Garneau to Laurier, 20 September 1906.

¹⁹³ *Ibid.*, p. 113946, Laurier to Garneau, 22 September 1906.

¹⁹⁴ City Council passed motions on November 9, 1906, and January 25, 1907. Garneau summarizes the motions and provides a detailed accounting of the development of the issue (on which the remainder of the paragraph is based) in *Ibid.*, Volume 488, p. 131966, Garneau to Laurier, 14 February 1907.

¹⁹⁵ *Ibid.*, Volume 435, p. 116133, D'Hellencourt to Laurier, 28 November 1906.

¹⁹⁶ *Ibid.*, Volume 449, p. 120134, N. Levasseur to Laurier, 16 February 1907.

hésitation ne représente pas l'opinion publique.”¹⁹⁷ Days later he added, “ce n'est guère le moment à la veille du trois-centenaire de Québec où nous voulons conserver ce qui nous reste de terrain historique de livrer à une exploitation industrielle une partie intégrale du champ de bataille celle même où étaient rangés nos Canadiens formant l'aile gauche de l'armée de Montcalm.”¹⁹⁸ But nationalist arguments alone would not move Laurier in February 1907. He refused to budge and his reply brought a sharp rebuke from Garneau. “Ce ne sont pas les affirmations d'une trentaine de délégués quelconques qui doivent invalider la décision sérieuse réfléchie du corps qui représente officiellement la cité... Vous ne connaissez pas suffisamment les lieux et la vérité sur toute cette affaire.... On vous a mal renseigné sur les détails de cette question et sur le sens de l'opinion publique ici.”¹⁹⁹ It was a long way from the days when Parent ran City Hall. But Garneau, like Gouin before him, would have to convince Laurier that public opinion really did oppose the extension or show him that it was detrimental to the city's material interests.

Laurier's insistence on the city's material interests, party loyalty, and secular French Canadian nationalism began to bear fruit early in 1907, giving local organizers the basis for rejuvenating party membership. ‘Vrai parti’ leaders Antoine Galipeault (Choquette's law partner) in St-Sauveur and Dr. Alphonse Lessard (Secretary of the SSJB de Québec) in Québec-Est re-organized the Club Laurier and Club Mercier in

¹⁹⁷ *Ibid.*, Volume 488, p. 131966, Garneau to Laurier, 14 February 1907.

¹⁹⁸ *Ibid.*, Volume 490, p. 132298, Garneau to Laurier, 18 February 1907.

¹⁹⁹ *Ibid.*, Volume 491, p. 132660, Garneau to Laurier, 23 February 1907.

March 1907.²⁰⁰ Both meetings saw ‘vrai parti’ stalwarts joining with ‘parentistes’ and ‘nationalistes’ “pour effet de faire cesser toute division entre les libéraux, de les réunir plus forts que jamais pour le succès de la grande cause libérale.”²⁰¹ A month later, at the Imperial Conference in London, Laurier, accompanied by Choquette, continued to insist on local material interests and the secular nationalism supported by ‘le vrai parti.’²⁰² As in the past, he rejected the idea of an Imperial Council and an Imperial Navy and repeated his desire to see Canadians negotiate their own treaties and build their own navy. He even proposed an “All Red Route,” linking Britain and Australia by rail through Canada – perhaps thinking of it as a source of financial assistance for the NTR.

St-Roch welcomed him home with bouquets on every door, victory arches across every street and fireworks.²⁰³ The pageantry seems to have helped party lines harden even further because, when the Ligue nationaliste announced plans to hold a public meeting with Henri Bourassa just two weeks later, both ‘le vrai parti’ and ‘les parentistes’ took it as a deliberate provocation.²⁰⁴ Liberal clubs throughout the region met to plan for the event and, on August 5, 15,000 people gathered to see the tumult. They would not be disappointed. D’Hellencourt, Taschereau and Georges Parent (son of Simon-Napoléon), directed the Liberal barrage of tomatoes, eggs, stones and bottles. Dr. Jules Dorion, editor of La Libre Parole was struck by a stone and fell from the platform covered in blood.

²⁰⁰ Accounts of the meetings are found in Le Soleil, 2 March 1907, p. 8 and 9 March 1907, p. 1. Biographical information on Galipeault can be found at Québec, Les Parlementaires depuis 1792. [www.assnat.qc.ca/fra/membres/notices/index.html] July 1992. Information on Lessard is taken from Le Soleil, 21 June 1906, p. 1.

²⁰¹ The words are those of J.H. Patry at the meeting in St-Sauveur. Le Soleil, 9 March 1907, p. 1.

²⁰² Choquette, Un demi-siècle..., p. 188.

²⁰³ Le Soleil, 19 July 1907, p. 1.

²⁰⁴ The paragraph is based on the detailed account in Rumilly, Henri Bourassa, pp. 77-78.

Bourassa, however, stood his ground in front of the church, defending his freedom of speech. Though he called for the police, a word from Taschereau held them back.

The event reflected the still violent partisanship of Québec-Est; directed, now, at a new target, but no less intense than it was in 1877. Liberals in the riding were still united in their sense of partisanship and secular French-Canadian nationalism. Reaction to the violence in newspapers across the country suggested that it was a political culture unique to Québec-Est. Outside Québec, it was held up as an example of the savagery of Québec politics; while, inside the province, Conservative and ‘nationaliste’ newspapers decried the Liberals’ suppression of free speech.²⁰⁵ Towns across Québec invited Bourassa to speak “freely” in their communities and he spent the rest of the summer crisscrossing the province.²⁰⁶ It was his “entrée” into provincial politics.

In Québec City, François Langelier was well aware that party lines were hardening once again. He was drawn by both his progressive and partisan instincts into becoming the first President of the Ligue Anti-Alcoolique de Québec that August. “La cause de la tempérance est, en ce moment, très populaire,” he wrote to Laurier.²⁰⁷ “Des informations certaines m’ont convaincu que vos adversaires veulent essayer de s’en emparer. C’est parce que j’en étais convaincu que j’ai accepté la présidence de la Ligue de Québec. J’ai pensé que dans cette position je pourrais empêcher de détourner ainsi en faveur du parti politique un si beau mouvement.” Clearly, a new coalition of ‘vrai parti’

²⁰⁵ Rumilly, Henri Bourassa, pp. 78-79.

²⁰⁶ Ibid., p. 84.

²⁰⁷ NAC, Fonds Laurier, Volume 475, p. 128416, François Langelier to Laurier, 30 August 1907.

and ‘parentistes’ was forming, based on the riding’s material interests and the ‘vrai parti’s’ secular, progressive, patriotism.

Then, just a year from leading the party to the polls once again, a disaster struck that would help unite Liberals, again, around their city’s interests, and encourage Laurier to take party and government reforms one step farther. On August 29, the partially completed Québec Bridge collapsed. It took less than 15 seconds.²⁰⁸ Seventy-five men were killed – 12 of them drowning hours later when, trapped under the crumpled iron, they could not escape the rising tide. Monseigneur Mathieu wrote to Laurier as soon as he heard the news. “On vient de me téléphoner de Québec l’accident qui est arrivé au pont qui, à juste titre, nous est si cher... Tous nous sommes atterrés. C’est un malheur national. Pauvre Québec!”²⁰⁹ Thirty-three of the men who died came from the Caughnawaga, 17 from the United States and the rest from Québec City.²¹⁰ Laurier wrote to Mayor Garneau a message copied in every newspaper: “Je vous prie d’exprimer aux citoyens de Québec la part profonde de sympathie que je prends dans le désastre épouvantable qui est arrivé hier soir. C’est le devoir de tous de ne pas perdre courage. Il faut s’appliquer immédiatement à réparer le malheur et à pousser énergiquement l’entreprise.”²¹¹

²⁰⁸ The paragraph is based on the account in Middleton, *The Bridge*..., p. 82 to 88.

²⁰⁹ NAC, Fonds Laurier, MG 26-G, Volume 475, p. 128368, Mathieu to Laurier, 29 August 1907.

²¹⁰ Middleton, p. 82.

²¹¹ NAC, Fonds Laurier, MG 26-G, Volume 475, p. 128405, E.J. Lemaire to d’Hellencourt, 30 August 1907.

The bridge's collapse was a managerial, engineering and political failure of monumental proportions.²¹² The engineers, Cooper and Deans, blamed each other. Second-guessing their plans and estimates became an international sport.²¹³ Laurier received proposals for construction of a tunnel, a higher bridge and many new designs.²¹⁴ The Québec City coroner began an immediate investigation.²¹⁵ Under these circumstances, Laurier's response relied heavily on professional expertise. He established a Royal Commission of three engineers, chaired by Henry Holgate, to produce an independent report.²¹⁶ The Royal Commission found that the piers had been sound but that Cooper, the Consulting Engineer for the QBC, had approved unprecedented and untested stress levels at the design stage and, even after being appraised of the deadweight problem, allowed still higher stress levels.²¹⁷ It also pointed to a confusing division of authority between the QBC and Phoenix Bridge Company (PBC) as well as the absolute need for independent verification of all design assumptions in engineering. Its report concluded, however, that Cooper was largely to blame; his ability had been

²¹² Research by Eda Kranakis reveals the full extent of the management errors, rooted in the organizational structure of the QBC, the PBC and the government's administrative structure. Eda Kranakis, "The Québec Bridge" (Presentation at the Institute of Canadian Studies, University of Ottawa, 23 April 2003).

²¹³ In 1910, the Scientific American devoted an entire issue to the bridge's collapse. NAC, Fonds Laurier, MG 26-G, Volume 631, p. 171270, Laurier to R.L. Drury, 25 May 1910. The last letter Laurier received suggesting reasons for the bridge's collapse was Ibid., Volume 703, p. 193729, W.T.R. Preston to Laurier, 10 November 1916.

²¹⁴ In order, examples include: Ibid., Volume 586, p. 158751, F.J. Gilman to Laurier, 9 August 1909; Volume 505, p. 136338, George Handrill to Laurier, 14 February 1908; Volume 480, p. 129571, Charles Murphy to Laurier, 20 September 1907.

²¹⁵ Middleton describes something of the aftermath of the disaster, The Bridge..., p. 88 to 102.

²¹⁶ Ibid., pp. 89.

²¹⁷ Findings of the Royal Commission report can be found in Ibid., pp. 181-182.

“tried in one of the most difficult professional problems of the day and proved to be insufficient for the task.”

The minority report of a “Select Committee of Parliament appointed to investigate the conditions and guarantees under which the Dominion government paid moneys to the Québec Bridge Company” laid considerably more emphasis on the government’s failure “to provide itself with competent and independent professional advice.”²¹⁸ Without admitting it publicly, Laurier accepted their advice. The scale of the project, the risks involved, the funds committed, its essential place in the NTR and the city’s ambitions as well as its unassailable political importance to Laurier all dictated that the government improve the way it managed the project rather than withdraw. Backing out was not an option; and, as Laurier had decided a year earlier, the company could not proceed alone. He passed an Order-in-Council allowing the government to take over the QBC and appoint a Board of three expert engineers from outside Canada to oversee the project.²¹⁹ Their credentials and international representation reflected Laurier’s determination to see the bridge built and willingness to find new ways to manage such a large project.

By the Fall of 1907, reorganization of the Liberal party and the rationalization of inter-governmental relations, as well as the more professional management of government and the administration of Le Soleil had all become irreversible. They were changes intimately linked to one another by the party system of government and by their common origin in the increasing size and complexity of economic and social organization. Ironically, they had begun to loosen the tie between public opinion and the

²¹⁸ Canada, Select Committee of Parliament appointed to investigate the conditions and guarantees under which the Dominion government paid moneys to the Québec Bridge Company (Ottawa: S.E. Dawson, 1908) p. xix.

²¹⁹ Middleton, The Bridge..., p. 102.

distribution of government resources that was at the heart of the party system. Québec-Est had played an important role in the transformation because of the speed and extent of economic and social change had not been even across the country. And Laurier, as always, relied on his riding to help him understand and navigate such closely integrated changes.

Chapter 7

1907-1911: "Un vrai libéral"



Figure 8: "Baptiste. – Ouais! Ça ne prend pas; on voit la ficelle"¹

¹ Le Soleil, 13 September 1911, p. 6.

The way the party came together and the measures Laurier introduced to stabilize his government through the fall and winter of 1907-1908 shaped Liberal politics and the party's direction for the next three years. In those critical months, the progressive social initiatives of consolidating Church, 'nationaliste' and Conservative forces presented the greatest challenge to Liberal unity as they appealed to 'les vrais libéraux,' already attracted by nationalist sentiments, but repelled former 'parentistes.' In this precarious context, Laurier acted exclusively on progressive initiatives that enjoyed broad public support in Québec-Est. He acted carefully, too, in the administration of patronage, introducing measures to reduce the level of partisanship in the distribution of government resources. His efforts coincided with scandals, like the collapse of the Québec Bridge, that pointed to a need for greater expertise and professionalism in public administration. It was this coincidence that prompted the beginnings of substantial public service reform. How Laurier, his party and his government managed these transitions forms the first part of the present chapter. The second part examines how the reorganized party and government reforms conditioned Laurier's response to continued economic growth and to Church and 'nationaliste' opposition in the years leading up to the 1911 election. They give us a new perspective on one of the most persistent questions in Canadian history: how "such a clever old dude"² could lead his party to defeat in that election.

The first official signs of reconciliation and consolidation within the Liberal party occurred on October 17, 1907. On that day, Lomer Gouin took Alexandre Taschereau into his Cabinet and Adélard Turgeon challenged Henri Bourassa to contest a provincial

² George Bowering, *Stone Country: An Unauthorized History of Canada* (Toronto: Penguin Canada, 2003) p. 211.

by-election in his Bellechasse riding.³ Olivar Asselin, editor of Le Nationaliste, had provoked both events by repeatedly accusing Jean Prévost, Minister of Colonization, and Turgeon, Minister of Lands and Forests, of corruption.⁴ Prévost had responded by charging Asselin with libel, turning the court case into an even more critical review of the Gouin administration. After months of hearings, Prévost stepped down in September to spare the government further embarrassment. His resignation opened a spot in Cabinet and his legal victory, more than a month later, triggered a formal Cabinet shuffle and Turgeon's challenge.

The day after the trial ended, Gouin appointed Taschereau Minister of Public Works and Labour. A brilliant lawyer, partner in a firm with Simon-Napoléon Parent and MLA for Montmorency, Taschereau was a 'parentiste' with close ties to the 'vrai parti.'⁵ He had been the only prominent 'parentiste' to take part in the crucial 1906 by-election in Québec-Comté and had served as the government's lawyer in the Prévost-Asselin case. His appointment signaled Gouin's willingness to make room for 'parentistes' who would accept his leadership. Turgeon's dramatic challenge, issued later the same day, provided an indication of growing determination among 'les vrais libéraux' to exclude 'les nationalistes' from the party. Turgeon, a member of the 'vrai parti' since the 1880s,

³ Robert Rumilly, Histoire de la Province de Québec, Tome XIII, Henri Bourassa (Montréal: Valiquette, 1942) p. 100.

⁴ Charges included selling crown land, timber limits and hydroelectric rights at grossly undervalued prices and receiving kickbacks from their subsequent, highly profitable, resale. For an account of the charges, the campaign in Le Nationaliste as well as the libel and defamation charges brought by Prévost, see Ibid., pp. 59-99.

⁵ Taschereau was a member of L'Union Libérale, formed by 'vrai parti' members in 1888 to protest Mercier's concessions to the "Castors" in his government. The group included Adélard Turgeon and, from Québec-Est: Arthur Delisle, Philéas Corriveau, Napoléon Lavoie, J-B. Morissette and Narcisse Dion. L'Union Libérale, 3 May 1888, p. 2; Robert Rumilly, Histoire de la Province de Québec, Tome VI, Les "Nationaux" (Montréal: Éditions Bernard Valiquette, 1942) p. 35.

blamed Bourassa for instigating the charges against him in Le Nationaliste. He made the by-election a question of honour, forcing men like Jules-Alfred Lane, Alphonse Huard and P-A. Choquette to make a stark choice between ‘le vrai parti’ and ‘les nationalistes,’ between Laurier and “le petit fils de Papineau.” On the hustings, Choquette, Lane and Ernest Lapointe supported Turgeon.⁶ Armand Lavergne, Lorenzo Robitaille and Alphonse Huard, campaigned for Bourassa.⁷ ‘Parentistes’ took almost no part in a campaign that was essentially a feud between ‘le vrai parti’ and ‘les nationalistes’ over definitions of French Canadian nationalism and partisanship. On November 4, election day, Turgeon held on to his seat and his place in Gouin’s Cabinet. In the space of two weeks, a stable Liberal coalition had finally begun to take shape.

Maintaining that stability became Laurier’s principal preoccupation in party affairs and it encouraged him to place greater trust in d’Hellencourt’s professional, less partisan, administration of Le Soleil. “Je m’empresse de vous dire que, quant à moi, je suis entièrement satisfait de la direction que vous avez donnée au Soleil. Vous vous êtes acquitté d’une tâche des plus difficile avec un tact qui ne vous a jamais fait défaut une seule fois.”⁸ It was the principal reason he agreed, after speaking with Gouin, to extend d’Hellencourt’s authority over the newspaper in March 1907.⁹ The effect of d’Hellencourt’s administration on the newspapers’s political reporting is captured in his instructions to a new correspondent in Ottawa:

⁶ Ibid., p. 89 and 106.

⁷ Ibid., p. 107.

⁸ NAC, Fonds Laurier, MG 26-G, Volume 456, p. 122833, Laurier to d’Hellencourt, 23 March 1907.

⁹ Ibid.

Ce n'est pas un rapport, ni un procès verbal de la séance de la Chambre que je demande, mais bien une correspondance. Je voudrais que cette correspondance représente en somme l'impression qu'emporterait de cette séance un auditeur de passage à la Chambre. Naturellement vous devez toujours avoir en vue les intérêts des députés de notre district et ne perdre aucune occasion de leur donner crédit de leurs faits et gestes. Je vous recommanderais cependant d'éviter toujours à cet égard les éloges longs et trop plantureux. Quelques mots habilement passés produisent beaucoup plus d'effet et impressionnent plus sûrement l'esprit du lecteur que des tartines dithyrambiques qui inspirent trop vite la méfiance du lecteur.¹⁰

It represented a significant change from the partisan reports still common in most newspapers and a major step towards making Le Soleil into what historian Jean de Bonville has called a modern "journal d'information."¹¹

Laurier also sought to maintain party stability by insisting on personal and party loyalty as the principal criteria for his support in the 1908 municipal elections. His efforts met with much more success in 1908, when the party coalition had begun to harden, than they had in 1906. He managed to convince both 'les parentistes' and 'le vrai parti' to support Mayor George Garneau, combat "les bleus" and put aside past wrongs.¹² The modest and somewhat nuanced enthusiasm for this strategy within the party revealed both how far it had come from 1906 and how far it had to go. Garneau's allegiance to Council members elected in 1906, especially to "les conservateurs et castors," drew criticism from both factions.¹³ 'Les parentistes' and La Vigie would, however, reluctantly support him; while 'le vrai parti' and Le Soleil (with Laurier's assent) preferred to emphasize only

¹⁰ Ibid., Volume 491, p. 132701, D'Hellencourt to G. Bélanger, 24 November 1907.

¹¹ Jean de Bonville, La Presse québécoise de 1884 à 1914 : Genèse d'un média de masse (Québec : Les Presses de l'Université Laval, 1988) p. 221.

¹² NAC, Fonds Laurier, MG 26-G, Volume 502, p. 135552, Laurier to Henri-Edgar Lavigueur, 27 January 1908.

¹³ Ibid., p. 135548, H-E. Lavigueur to Laurier, 24 January 1908; Rumilly, Henri Bourassa, p. 118.

their opposition to “les bleus.”¹⁴ On February 17, Garneau was elected without opposition while ‘le vrai parti’ picked up three seats in Québec-Est wards and Omer Brunet retained his seat in St-Sauveur.¹⁵ Yet ‘le nationaliste’ Alphonse Huard and ‘les conservateurs’ Michel Fiset and Télésphore Verret all retained their seats and Dr. Albert Jobin, a ‘nationaliste,’ defeated a ‘vrai parti’ incumbent, Louis Létourneau. With a federal election less than a year away, Laurier still faced a serious challenge in the riding.

Just like the Liberals, ‘les nationalistes’ had consolidated their forces in the Bellechase campaign. But their cause had been helped most, during the winter and spring of 1907-1908, by a series of social reform initiatives launched by Monseigneurs Bégin and Roy. On December 21, 1907, they published the first edition of L’Action Sociale, a daily newspaper created to “coopérer, par l’influence dont il dispose, à la diffusion de la Sainte doctrine.”¹⁶ It was part of their effort to “récupérer les masses” in the larger, more complex and impersonal political culture emerging in Québec City. Jules Dorion quit La Libre Parole and Omer Héroux left La Vérité to write for the newspaper.¹⁷ They promised L’Action Sociale would conform to Church teachings on all issues and refrain from “les dissensions des parties politiques.”¹⁸ Within weeks, however, they endorsed Thomas Chapais when he claimed “quiconque comprend notre histoire, a le sens des traditions, de la dignité, de la stabilité de nos institutions, de la grandeur de notre pays,

¹⁴ Ibid., p. 135675, Laurier to H-E. Lavigueur, 30 January 1908.

¹⁵ Le Soleil, 18 February 1908, p. 4.

¹⁶ L’Action Sociale, 21 December 1907, p. 4.

¹⁷ Rumilly, Henri Bourassa, p. 119.

¹⁸ L’Action Sociale, 21 December 1907, p. 4.

doit être conservateur.”¹⁹ L’Action Sociale gave Chapais and Bourassa, as well as Bégin and Roy, a powerful vehicle for shaping public opinion and almost certainly helped Jobin in February 1908.

Not all of the initiatives launched or supported by Bégin and Roy were so overtly partisan however. La Ligue Anti-alcoolique and the Caisse populaires both appealed to the progressive inclinations of ‘le vrai parti’ as well as ‘les nationalistes’ and Conservatives. They shared an understanding that the social problems associated with the growing size and complexity of the community could be explained by a decline in “les habitudes de prévoyance et d’économie” among the working classes.²⁰ They argued that:

Si [l’ouvrier] avait été client moins assidu des débits de boissons, s’il avait été moins ardent partisan du luxe et du plaisir – de qui lui aurait permis de fréquenter davantage les institutions destinées à recevoir ses épargnes – l’avenir qui apparaîtrait aujourd’hui sous des couleurs plus souriantes, et il se laisserait moins facilement séduire par les utopies et les fallacieuses promesses du socialisme.²¹

Thus the progressive impulse remained within the ‘vrai parti’ even while its members willingly rejoined ‘les parentistes’ in the Gouin government. Moreover, it still cut across party lines in a way that threatened both the place of partisanship in the political culture and, most importantly in a pre-election year, Liberal unity. As a result, Laurier and Gouin

¹⁹ Rumilly, Henri Bourassa, p. 119.

²⁰ Though this quotation comes from Le Soleil, L’Action Sociale also considered “la question ouvrière” to be “la question sociale par excellence.” See Le Soleil, 8 April 1908, p. 4; L’Action Sociale, 21 December 1907, p. 4. Most scholars agree that ‘les nationalistes’ and the Church saw industrialization and urbanization as presenting, essentially, a moral crisis. Joseph Levitt, Henri Bourassa and the Golden Calf: The Social Program of the Nationalists of Québec (1900-1914) (Ottawa: University of Ottawa Press, 1969) p. 96; Nive Voisine, Histoire du Catholicisme québécois, Tome I, Le XXe siècle, 1898-1940 (Montréal : Boréal Express, 1984) p. 175.

²¹ Le Soleil, 8 April 1908, p. 4.

would do everything they could to sap the progressive's momentum – without opposing it outright – in 1908.

François Langelier recognized the political threat posed by the temperance movement when he wrote to Laurier in late August 1907. “La cause de la tempérance est, en ce moment, très populaire,” he said.²² “Des informations certaines m’ont convaincu que vos adversaires veulent essayer de s’en emparer. C’est parce que j’en étais convaincu que j’ai accepté la présidence de la Ligue de Québec. J’ai pensé que dans cette position je pourrais empêcher de détourner ainsi en faveur du parti politique un si beau mouvement.” Seven months later, he presented the first annual report of the Ligue Anti-Alcoolique de Québec at a meeting that included Conservatives, A.B. Routhier and T. Chapais, ‘le nationaliste’ Albert Jobin, and ‘vrai parti’ stalwart, F-X. Lemieux.²³ They had already lobbied provincial ministers to reduce the number of liquor licenses and hosted a number of public lectures. At the meeting, Conservative members urged the Ligue to report anyone selling liquor illegally, recruit younger members, publish a quarterly review, sell a membership badge, institute an annual fee, prepare a constitution and draft an act of incorporation. Langelier himself supported “la suppression de toutes les buvettes” but he was careful to distinguish between “les boissons alcooliques” and “les boissons alimentaires telles que les vins.” “Tout en étant antialcoolique,” he argued, “il ne faut pas être intransigeant et proscrire toute liqueur.”

Langelier’s moderate views differentiated him from his ‘nationaliste’ and Conservative colleagues. But, in 1908, they still pitted him against the majority of ‘parentistes.’ Only two weeks later, G-É Amyot, a prominent ‘parentiste,’ led a

²² NAC, Fonds Laurier, Volume 475, p. 128416, François Langelier to Laurier, 30 August 1907.

²³ Details of the meeting can be found in *Le Soleil*, 19 March 1908, p. 1.

delegation of the Protective Association of Merchants and Manufacturers of the Province of Québec that met with Gouin and his ministers urging them to enforce, but not amend, the Liquor Licensing Act.²⁴ The Association included distillers, brewers and wine merchants as well as soda, cigar, box and furniture manufacturers. Ranged against them was a coalition of priests, professors, women's organizations and the Dominion Alliance. In the lead-up to his first provincial election as premier, Gouin preferred not to take a position on such a divisive issue. The speech from the throne, delivered in February that year, had emphasized the government's plans to establish L'École des Hautes Études Commerciales, two technical schools, a revision of the municipal code, provincial oversight of insurance companies and the construction of rural roads.²⁵ He would not tamper with the Liquor Licensing Act in 1908. Laurier, too, judged the moment inopportune. He replied to Langelier that, in federal politics at least, he hoped temperance would remain a "question morte."²⁶

Laurier adopted a similar approach to federal legislation, proposed by Conservative leader Frederick-Debartzch Monk in December 1907, to grant legal status to cooperatives.²⁷ Monk's proposal coincided with a period of expansion for the *Caisses populaires*. Alphonse Desjardins established 159 new *Caisses* between 1907 and 1916,

²⁴ Le Soleil, 2 April 1908, p. 1.

²⁵ Rumilly, Henri Bourassa, p. 127.

²⁶ NAC, Fonds Laurier, MG 26-G, Volume 475, p. 128417, Laurier to François Langelier, 3 September 1907.

²⁷ Pierre Poulin, Histoire du Mouvement Desjardins, Tome I, Desjardins et la naissance des caisses populaires, 1900-1920 (Montréal : Éditions Québec/Amérique, 1990) p. 138.

including ones in Québec City (1908), St-Sauveur (1908) and St-Roch (1910).²⁸ All opened with the support of the local clergy. Although information regarding the origins of the Caisses populaires in Québec-Est is scarce, it suggests some support for them among members of 'le vrai parti.' They had played a prominent role in 1905 when Desjardins established the Caisse de St-Malo and, in 1910, J-É. Martineau, a 'vrai parti' member and President of l'Union St-Joseph, hosted the first meeting and joined the Board of Directors.²⁹ But on the very day the Caisse populaire de Québec opened, Napoléon Lavoie, Inspector of the Banque nationale, delivered a public plea for French-Canadian support. At the Université Laval, before an audience that included Monseigneur Mathieu, François and Charles Langelier, Choquette and Joseph Picard, a St-Sauveur grocer, he expounded on the solidity of the Canadian banking system and concluded:

N'est-il pas plus raisonnable et plus patriotique pour nous Canadiens-français, si nous voulons grandir comme race distincte et conserver notre langue, nos lois et notre foi, de nous serrer autour de nos institutions canadiennes-françaises?³⁰

It marked the beginning of a contest between the Banque nationale and the Caisse populaire that would parallel the battle between the Liberal party and 'les nationalistes' for the allegiance of French Canada.³¹

²⁸ Yves Roby, Alphonse Desjardins et les caisses populaires, 1854-1920 (Montréal: Fides, 1964) p. 100; Majella St-Pierre, Alphonse Desjardins Entrepreneur (Montréal : Les Éditions transcontinental, 2001) p. 159.

²⁹ L'Action Sociale, 17 February 1911, p. 17.

³⁰ Le Soleil, 25 April 1908, p. 1.

³¹ "La Banque nationale" and "les Caisses populaires" came into conflict because both sought to serve largely rural French Canadian communities neglected by other financial institutions. The full extent of their struggle has only just begun to emerge in the scholarship, however, and this is the first research to suggest that it extended into the political arena. For the most recent research see Claude Genest, "La position éditoriale du journal 'Le Temps' d'Ottawa à l'égard de la Banque nationale et des Caisses populaires," Notes de recherche, Société historique Alphonse Desjardins, (December 1995). The standard accounts of

Ironically, Joseph Picard may have been the most important person at the Université Laval that evening. He was the second vice-president of the Québec City branch of the Retail Merchants Association of Canada.³² Its members also included ‘vrais libéraux’ F-X. Onésime Pouliot, a retailer and alderman for Jacques-Cartier ward, and F.L. Falardeau, a prominent shoe manufacturer in Québec-Est.³³ It was their association that led opposition to Monk’s legislation in Ottawa.³⁴ The Bill received the unanimous consent of the House of Commons before stalling in the Senate during the spring and summer of 1908. In July, it was defeated by a single vote. According to historian Ronald Rudin, Laurier could well have induced one of the 19 Liberal Senators who voted against the Bill to vote otherwise, if he had wanted it to pass.³⁵ The result may well have satisfied Laurier, though, showing considerable Liberal support for the project, without threatening the interests of the majority in the party.

The precarious balance and shifting interests within the local party obliged Laurier to take a particularly cautious approach to the distribution of government patronage in the riding. At the local level, the MLAs and aldermen who were part of the formal “orthodox” system he had established with Parent had changed considerably.

the conflict are Poulin, Desjardins et la naissance des caisses..., pp. 240-259 and Roby, Alphonse Desjardins..., pp. 105-108.

³² Le Soleil, 18 April 1908, p. 15.

³³ The 1908 nomination papers for F-X. Onésime Pouliot were signed by F.L. Falardeau and ‘vrai parti’ stalwarts J-B. Laliberté, J-É. Martineau and O. Goulet. Albert Jobin also signed for Pouliot that year. AVQ, Fonds de la Ville de Québec, Série Politique, Dossier Échevins : Poitras à Shink, QP1-4/41-5.

³⁴ Ronald Rudin, In Whose Interest? Québec’s Caisses Populaires, 1900-1945 (Montréal : McGill-Queen’s University Press, 1990) pp. 124-126; Pierre Poulin, Histoire du Mouvement Desjardins, Tome I, Desjardins et la naissance des caisses populaires, 1900-1920 (Montréal : Éditions Québec/Amérique, 1990) pp.138-140.

³⁵ Rudin, In Whose Interest?..., p. 126.

Although elected as Liberals, Charles-Eugène Côté was also tied closely to the National Trades and Labour Congress (NTLC) and Albert Jobin to ‘les nationalistes.’ Moreover, the riding’s seats on city council now included five Conservatives or ‘nationalistes’ and one worker. Laurier continued to recognize and respect “un devoir de m’entendre” with other elected officials in his riding.³⁶ But what had once been a reliable, well-ordered system for the distribution of government resources and exchange of local political information had been reduced to a little-used, rather formal, network.

To compensate for this loss, Laurier turned increasingly to public servants, his principal secretary, formal industrial associations and, on the most important issues, members of his old network or party members willing to accept the new Liberal coalition in the riding. For example, he clearly distrusted a request from Côté for “fair wages” for workers at the Cartridge Factory run by the Department of Militia and Defence.³⁷ Even before checking with the Department, he responded to say that any pay increase would be unlikely. Yet, when he did check, he found the Department had already assented to the request.³⁸ When Côté asked Laurier to grant a degree of leniency to constituents serving time in prison, he was refused outright.³⁹ The same was true when the Conservative alderman, Télésphore Verret, asked for his help in reducing customs charges on material imported by the St-Sauveur Congrégation de Sacré Coeur.⁴⁰ He would not even intervene

³⁶ NAC, Fonds Laurier, MG 26-G, Volume 385, p. 102502, Laurier to Côté, 30 October 1905.

³⁷ *Ibid.*, Volume 469, p. 126861, Côté to Laurier, 26 July 1907.

³⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 126863, Laurier to E. Fiset, 29 July 1907; p. 126864, Laurier to Côté, 29 July 1907.

³⁹ Laurier had introduced the Ticket of Leave Act in 1899, making it possible for the Governor General to grant parole on the recommendation of the entire Cabinet. Canada. *History of Parole in Canada*. [www.npb-cnrc.gc.ca/about/parolehistory_e.htm] February 2003.

⁴⁰ NAC, Fonds Laurier, MG 26-G, Volume 499, p. 134831, Télésphore Verret to Laurier, 9 January 1908.

with the Customs Department for L.T. Armand, Treasurer of the Club Laurier. “Je dois vous faire observer,” he wrote, “que le ministre ne peut pas faire de promotion simplement sur une recommandation d’amis politiques, autrement le service en serait lésé. Toutes les promotions doivent se faire d’après certaines règles établies dans le département pour le maintien de la discipline.”⁴¹

Requests from less well-connected constituents reveal both the continuing importance of political patronage in Québec-Est and a sort of formal protocol that had developed around it – involving Boudreau, Laurier’s Principal Secretary, more than the MP himself. For example, the Club de baseball St-Louis was careful to make Laurier their Honorary President and inform him of their decision before asking for a personal contribution in April 1908.⁴² Boudreau replied, sending a cheque for \$5.⁴³ Such requests for personal assistance demonstrate how constituents continued to play an active role in defining the limits of patronage beyond the scope of established government practice. They showed that the patronage system could still be used for charitable as well as social and economic functions but revealed, too, the limits of its capacity and a growing need to enlarge the definition of departmental responsibilities. In 1907, two widows asked Laurier to help secure acceptance and a half scholarship for their sons at the École Normal de Jacques-Cartier. Laurier agreed to help but wrote to the school that “je n’ai pas d’autre raison à vous donner pour ces deux demandes que celle que ces deux veuves

⁴¹ *Ibid.*, Volume 481, p. 130085, Laurier to L.T. Armand, 8 October 1907.

⁴² *Ibid.*, Volume 515, p. 139170, G. des Croisselles to Laurier, 16 April 1908.

⁴³ *Ibid.*, p. 139172, Boudreau to G. des Croisselles, 5 May 1908.

méritent extrêmement de sympathie.”⁴⁴ The boys were subsequently enrolled but, for want of resources, the school was unable to award them even a half scholarship.⁴⁵

By increasingly placing his trust in the public service and staff to administer the distribution of government resources, Laurier lost personal contact with constituents and local politicians’ assessment of public opinion. His single exchange with Albert Jobin, early in 1907, hints at the value of such an assessment. Given their political differences, Jobin hesitated and weighed his words carefully before writing to warn Laurier that local manufacturers had threatened to oppose Laurier at the next federal election if he did not increase the protective tariff.⁴⁶ Laurier replied: “le tarif sur les chaussures est une question dont je m’occupe depuis plusieurs semaines. C’est à dire depuis l’entrevue que j’ai eue avec les fabricants de la Ville de Québec. J’en connais toute l’importance et j’y ai donné toute l’attention possible. Le résultat sera connu dans quelques jours.”⁴⁷ Laurier had, indeed, met with the Association des Manufacturiers de Chaussures de Québec (AMCQ) and its President, Conservative John Ritchie. But his government only increased the tariff on shoes from 25 to 30 per cent – rather than the 35 per cent Ritchie requested.⁴⁸ There is certainly room to question if, in fact, he did understand “toute l’importance” of the issue.

⁴⁴ *Ibid.*, Volume 477, p. 128791, Laurier to Rodolphe Roy, 3 September 1907.

⁴⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 128793, Rodolphe Roy to Laurier, 5 September 1907.

⁴⁶ *Ibid.*, Volume 442, p. 118040, Jobin to Laurier, 10 January 1907.

⁴⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 118042, Laurier to Jobin, 12 January 1907.

⁴⁸ *Ibid.*, Volume 395, p. 104997, Ritchie to Laurier, 1906; Marc-André Bluteau, “Québec 1896-1940: croissance et déclin de l’industrie du cuir,” in Jean-Claude Dupont and Jacques Mathieu, eds., *Les Métiers du Cuir* (Québec: Les Presses de l’Université Laval, 1981) p. 309.

In his letter, Jobin also reminded Laurier of a Liberal promise, made during the 1906 municipal elections, to build a Post Office in St-Roch. Although couched in the most delicate terms, it was a pointed reference to a highly charged local issue that Laurier had, thus far, neglected. Not only did its construction hold the promise of local real estate profits, public works contracts and stable employment, but it had also come to symbolize community and party pride. The Post Office would recognize St-Roch, the city's commercial and manufacturing centre, as a community at least as important as the city's administrative centre, whose Post Office the government had refurbished in 1905.⁴⁹ For local Liberals, the building's stature – which they insisted be at least equal to that of the Church – would be a symbol of their influence.⁵⁰ It was not something Laurier would ever contemplate discussing with Jobin. For such a delicate initiative, Laurier turned to Parent (though he was living in Ottawa by then), Joseph Gauthier, a 'vrai libéral' who campaigned for him in 1877, and even scouted the site himself.⁵¹ A sense of the effect this personal approach had on the local community is conveyed in a letter from Gauthier:

Votre visite à St-Roch et surtout la visite à pieds sur la rue St-Joseph et Dorchester a été comme un courant électrique dans tout St-Roch et chacun se disait 'nous allons avoir un bureau de poste à St-Roch.' Je vous assure que si votre gouvernement nous donne ce bureau de poste tant désiré cela arrêtera bien des commentaires surtout des Conservateurs qui nous disent que vous ne nous le donnerez pas.⁵²

⁴⁹ NAC, Fonds Charles Fitzpatrick, MG 27-II-C1, Volume 10, p. 4158, Fitzpatrick to Laurier, 27 June 1905.

⁵⁰ NAC, Fonds Laurier, MG 26-G, Volume 549, p. 148883, Létourneau to Laurier, 14 December 1908.

⁵¹ ANQQ, Fonds Simon-Napoléon Parent, P198, Volume 3, File "Démission," Parent to Laurier, 12 September 1907.

⁵² NAC, Fonds Laurier, MG 26-G, Volume 476, p. 128614, Gauthier to Laurier, 4 September 1907.

Once the site was chosen and the size of the lot agreed upon, Laurier turned the project over to Rodolphe Lemieux, the Minister responsible for the Post Office.⁵³ It was announced in time to help Louis Létourneau narrowly defeat Albert Jobin in the provincial election of June 1908.⁵⁴ In the years ahead, local residents, led by Létourneau, repeatedly fought with the Department over the size and price of the property, the interior design and exterior additions.⁵⁵

By 1908, such reliance on the party or personal intervention in the distribution of government resources had become exceptional – reserved only for the projects with the most influence over public opinion. Laurier had reacted to the break-up and reorganization of the Liberal coalition between 1904 and 1908 largely with measures that actually reduced party influence and the role of the political structure in government patronage while he turned increasingly to the public service, his staff and industry associations for administrative support and information. This process, referred to by historian John English as the “decline of politics,” was only beginning – but it had begun.⁵⁶ Political scientist J.E. Hodgetts has noted that increased reliance on the public service during this period imposed new responsibilities on it that led, in turn, to the

⁵³ *Ibid.*, Volume 503, p. 135889, Lemieux to Laurier, 3 February 1908.

⁵⁴ It was the closest election in the riding since 1875. Jean Hamelin, Jacques Letarte, Marcel Hamelin, “Les élections provinciales dans le Québec,” *Cahiers de Géographie de Québec*, 4, no. 7 (October 1958-March 1960) figure CII.

⁵⁵ NAC, Fonds Laurier, MG 26-G, Volume 596, p. 161596, Létourneau to Laurier, 2 November 1908; Volume 554, p. 150118, Lemieux to Laurier, 9 January 1909; Volume 646, p. 175474, Létourneau to Laurier, 7 November 1910.

⁵⁶ John English, *The Decline of Politics: The Conservatives and the Party System, 1901-20* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1977).

formation of new departments for the first time since Confederation.⁵⁷ This somewhat haphazard growth process had already created the kind of “policy gaps” within the bureaucratic structure that historian Ken Cruikshank says “policy entrepreneurs” like James McLean and William Lyon Mackenzie King, trained in the new social sciences, had begun to fill.⁵⁸ When competent “policy entrepreneurs” did not step forward, scandals and disasters like the collapse of the Québec Bridge, provided ample evidence of the systematic managerial and technical inadequacies of both the public service and the party system when confronted with large, complicated and expensive government projects.⁵⁹ It was Laurier’s increasing reliance on the public service, as well as the scandals, that contributed to his decision, on the eve of the federal election, to introduce the Civil Service Amendment Act in June 1908.⁶⁰ The Act instituted proficiency exams for employment in the internal (Ottawa only) public service and other measures to improve government efficiency.⁶¹ The idea of a professional public service had been the study of seven royal commissions since 1868 and had been part of Borden’s “Halifax

⁵⁷ The Department of Trade and Commerce was created in 1898, Labour in 1900 (although it did not have a Minister until 1909), Mines in 1907, External Affairs in 1909 and Naval Service in 1910. J.E. Hodgetts, The Canadian Public Service: A Physiology of Government, 1867-1970 (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1973).

⁵⁸ Ken Cruikshank, “Policy Entrepreneurs and Regulatory Innovation: Simon James McLean, William Lyon Mackenzie King and Business-Government Relations in the Age of Laurier,” in P.A. Baskerville, ed., Canadian Papers in Business History, Volume II (Victoria: The Public History Group, 1993) pp. 103-124. For the role the emergence of the new social sciences played in the transformation of the Canadian state see Barry Ferguson, Remaking Liberalism: The Intellectual Legacy of Adam Shortt, O.D. Skelton, W.C. Clark and W.A. Mackintosh, 1890-1925 (Montréal: McGill-Queen’s University Press, 1993) and Doug Owsram, The Government Generation: Canadian Intellectuals and the State, 1900-1945 (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1986).

⁵⁹ Even such capable ministers as Clifford Sifton complained of overwork. J.E. Hodgetts, William McCloskey, Reginald Whitaker, V. Seymour Wilson, The Biography of an Institution: The Civil Service Commission of Canada, 1908-1967 (Montréal: McGill-Queen’s University Press, 1972) p. 19.

⁶⁰ Ibid., p. 8.

⁶¹ Ibid., pp. 26-28.

Platform” issued in August 1907; it was not new.⁶² But the timing and extent of the reforms (leaving sensitive local issues like the St-Roch Post Office in experienced party hands) reflect Laurier’s experience within his own party in 1904-1908. In the words of political scientists J.E. Hodgetts, William McCloskey, Reginald Whitaker and V. Seymour Wilson, the decision to reform the public service was a “millennial concept” – the beginnings of greater things to come.⁶³

The first sign of such reform in Québec-Est was the government’s decision, in August 1908, to take over the QBC.⁶⁴ In its place, Laurier appointed a board of three engineers chaired by Henri Étienne Vaudelet of Montréal, who had trained in France, M. Fitzmaurice from Britain and R. Modjeski from the United States. Their credentials and international representation reflected Laurier’s determination to develop a better system for the management and construction of such a large project. The board called for tenders and oversaw the process for selection of a new design without political interference; Laurier insisted only that they provide clear and unanimous recommendations before he would proceed with construction.⁶⁵ Even though it would take until February 1911 before the engineers could agree,⁶⁶ Laurier consistently replied to questions about the bridge’s progress that it was “a question upon which I can have no judgement of my own; we must depend upon our engineers.”⁶⁷

⁶² *Ibid.*, pp. 16-26.

⁶³ *Ibid.*, p. 33.

⁶⁴ William D. Middleton, *The Bridge at Québec* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2001) p.103.

⁶⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 105.

⁶⁶ NAC, Fonds Laurier, MG 26-G, Volume 665, p. 181135, M.J. Butler to Laurier, 8 February 1911.

⁶⁷ *Ibid.*, Volume 631, p. 171270, Laurier to R.L. Drury, 25 May 1910.

Laurier adopted a similarly cautious and progressive approach to managing the political risks surrounding the city's tercentenary. The idea of celebrating the anniversary of Champlain's landing was first suggested in 1904 by H-J-J-B. Chouinard, City Clerk (appointed by François Langelier in 1890) and President of the Société Saint-Jean-Baptiste (SSJB).⁶⁸ His proposal captured a sense of French Canadian nationalism that could be shared by all factions in the city – even the English and 'les parentistes' – and reflected a desire shared by 'le vrai parti' and 'les nationalistes' to give it tangible public expression.⁶⁹ It was just the sort of issue that had made Choquette's coalition possible in 1904 and 1906; the type of issue Laurier had sought to avoid for three years. But in 1907, when different views of the Church's place in French Canadian nationalism and on the role of parties in the political system had begun to separate 'le vrai parti' from 'les nationalistes,' it began to seem manageable. In the spring and summer of 1908, with the party still divided over progressive issues, with Bourassa and Bégin resurgent in Québec, the bridge a mass of twisted iron on the shores of the St. Lawrence, sabres rattling in Europe and an election only months away, it looked like a necessary risk. But, even then, it took all the persuasion of 'le vrai parti' and all the precaution of government reforms to convince Laurier to take the gamble.⁷⁰

⁶⁸ H.V. Nelles, *The Art of Nation Building: Pageantry and Spectacle at Quebec's Tercentenary* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1999) p. 46.

⁶⁹ *Ibid.*, pp. 46-48; *The Daily Telegraph*, 25 December 1904.

⁷⁰ Historian Ronald Rudin notes a change in the management of commemorative celebrations in Québec City over time. He describes the organization put in place for the Tercentenary as "a modern bureaucracy." Ronald Rudin, *Founding Fathers: The Celebration of Champlain and Laval in the Streets of Québec, 1878-1908*. (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2003) p. 220.

In April 1907, Laurier finally gave some indication of support for a project that had been transformed by the shifting political coalitions of the previous three years.⁷¹ It had the full support of 'le vrai parti' and the English community anxious to secure federal support for a national park and demolition of the Ross Rifle Factory on the Plains of Abraham.⁷² It had the backing of Governor General Lord Grey who saw it as an Imperial celebration destined to replace the factory on the Plains with a monument to the Empire.⁷³ It had provincial government support from Québec and Ontario.⁷⁴ But 'les nationalistes' now treated it with disdain, the Church viewed it with trepidation and 'les parentistes' were nowhere to be found.⁷⁵ Laurier pledged \$300,000 but insisted on delaying the event until 1909 – after the 1908 federal election.⁷⁶ He hoped to cast the tercentenary as a celebration of the future, rather than the contentious past, by having it coincide with completion of the Québec Bridge. To reduce the political risk still further, he planned to create a national commission that would oversee both the tercentenary and the formation of a national historic park. The National Battlefields Commission (NBC) would protect the government by providing a forum for achieving a balanced expression

⁷¹ Nelles, *The Art of Nation Building*..., p. 62; ANQQ, Fonds Georges Garneau, P90, Volume 5, Garneau to Laurier, 24 March 1907.

⁷² Nelles, *The Art of Nation Building*..., p. 61; NAC, Fonds Laurier, MG 26-G, Volume 434, p. 115996, Garneau to Laurier, 21 November 1906.

⁷³ Nelles, *The Art of Nation Building*..., pp. 72-74; NAC, Fonds Laurier, MG 26-G, Volume 731, p. 204035, Grey to Laurier, 19 December 1906.

⁷⁴ Nelles, *The Art of Nation Building*..., p. 80.

⁷⁵ For a 'nationaliste' perspective, see Armand Lavergne, *Trente ans de vie nationale* (Montréal: Éditions du Zodiaque, 1934) p. 142; Rumilly, *Henri Bourassa*, p. 160-162; and Nelles, *The Art of Nation Building*..., pp. 123-140. For the Church perspective, see Nelles, *The Art of Nation Building*..., p. 102-120. The 'parentistes' are notable for their near-absence in Nelles' book.

⁷⁶ Details of Laurier's offer of support are provided in Nelles, *The Art of Nation Building*..., p. 63; ANQQ, Fonds Georges Garneau, P90, Volume 4, Laurier to Garneau, 30 October 1907.

of public opinion in developing the event and provide professional support for its organization. Despite all this support, and all these precautions, Laurier decided to withdraw his own support when the bridge collapsed.⁷⁷

Only after Garneau and 'le vrai parti' had more clearly differentiated themselves from the 'nationalistes' in Bellechasse, and accepted 'les parentistes' back into the party, did Laurier begin to see an advantage in using the tercentenary to project a secular 'vrai parti' nationalism. Garneau wrote to Laurier: "material development alone would not suffice to make a strong nation; it requires also the cult of the ideal, and what a unique occasion presents itself to us in the tercentenary of Champlain's work to unite in harmony the two great races of our country in a spirit of mutual patriotism from which the fruits for the future would be beyond price."⁷⁸ In December 1907, after prodding from Garneau, Turgeon and Lord Grey, Laurier decided not only to go ahead but also to move it up, to hold it before the federal election, "to take people's minds off the twisted wreckage."⁷⁹

Still, Laurier was reluctant to trust Garneau. He wanted to appoint Parent to chair the NBC. Garneau was incensed and, for a short time, the matter was delayed.⁸⁰ Only after Jobin's victory in February 1908, when it became clear he would have to secure 'vrai parti' support in Québec-Est, and after Lord Grey negotiated Church support for the

⁷⁷ Nelles, *The Art of Nation Building*..., p. 81; NAC, Fonds Laurier, MG 26-G, Volume 484, p. 130852, Laurier to Garneau, 23 October 1907.

⁷⁸ Nelles, *The Art of Nation Building*..., p. 81; NAC, Fonds Laurier, MG 26-G, Volume 485, p. 131076, Garneau to Laurier, 28 October 1907.

⁷⁹ Nelles, *The Art of Nation Building*..., p. 83-84; NAC, Fonds Laurier, MG 26-G, Volume 732, p. 204594, Grey to Laurier, 25 October 1907.

⁸⁰ ANQ, Fonds Georges Garneau, P90, Volume 2, Laurier to Georges Garneau, 21 January 1908.

tercentenary, did Laurier take action.⁸¹ In March, he established the NBC with \$300,000 in federal funds and named Garneau as its chair.⁸² At the same time, arrangements were made for Canada's permanent military and militia units, 15,000 men, to muster in Québec City.⁸³ They would parade in front of the Prince of Wales, the Governor General, Prime Minister, Cabinet, parliamentarians and diplomatic representatives from around the world. They would parade, too, in front of eight British, two French and one American warship – including the largest and fastest British dreadnought.⁸⁴ Once he had decided to go ahead, Laurier wanted the tercentenary to mark Canada's place on the world stage. By April, when Frank Lascelles, master of the pageant, arrived from Britain, "things had begun to fall into place."⁸⁵ In St-Roch, 'les nationalistes' held a protest meeting and urged Laurier to use the funds to help "la minorité française du Nord Ouest...les gens du métier...l'instruction primaire [et] la colonization des nôtres."⁸⁶ But, as historian H.V. Nelles describes, Lascelles was a "theatrical medicine man." He came to Québec not merely to stage a show "but rather to transform society."⁸⁷

Historical pageantry was an art form that set out specifically to show that "history could be made into a dramatic public ritual through which the residents of the town, by acting out a version of their past, could bring about some kind of future social and

⁸¹ For Lord Grey's negotiations with the Church, see Nelles, The Art of Nation Building..., p. 102-121.

⁸² Nelles, The Art of Nation Building..., p. 93-97.

⁸³ Ibid., p. 206.

⁸⁴ Ibid., p. 215.

⁸⁵ Ibid., p. 149.

⁸⁶ Ibid., p. 128. NAC, Fonds Laurier, MG 26-G, Volume 498, p. 134506, Anonymous to Laurier, 1908.

⁸⁷ Nelles, The Art of Nation Building..., p. 141.

political transformation.”⁸⁸ It had only just become popular in Britain where it drew on long-held faith in public demonstrations as legitimate expressions of public opinion. But this was a faith shared by all residents of Québec-Est and Québec City. Thus, the pageant was not so much a foreign innovation as an adaptation of the local political culture.

For one week in July 1908, the pageant that played out on the Plains of Abraham presented a distinctly Liberal version of the past, “designed to establish and broaden the middle-ground of understanding between English and French Canadians, and to inspire a new consciousness of shared nationhood.”⁸⁹ It depicted a battle on the Plains of Abraham that included Carleton’s loyal French Canadians defending Québec in 1775 and de Salaberry’s Voltigeurs fighting beside the British in 1812. Every effort was made to place the French “on a footing of equality with the English.” The pageant was acted entirely in French. The Prince of Wales spoke in French and appointed a French-speaking aide-de-camp.⁹⁰ ‘O Canada,’ a patriotic hymn of French Canadian nationalism, was sung as an anthem for all Canadians.⁹¹ Moreover, the pageant presented “the Liberal party in costume.”⁹² In Québec-Est, local businessmen “conscripted” performers for various scenes: Édouard Laliberté (grandson of ‘vrai parti’ stalwart J-B. Laliberté) drafted 195 people for the Champlain pageant; Mathias Blouin (another ‘vrai libéral’), with some assistance, recruited 425 more for the two armies; and the retail dry goods merchants

⁸⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 143.

⁸⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 154.

⁹⁰ Laurier had insisted on these measures. *Ibid.*, p. 244 and 246.

⁹¹ *Ibid.*, p. 239.

⁹² For example, Charles Langelier played the central role as Champlain. *Ibid.*, p. 159.

found 510 people to serve as footmen in the Henry IV segment.⁹³ French-Canadians held 85 per cent of the starring roles and made up 67 per cent of the 3,000 extras involved in the pageant.⁹⁴ At one of the last presentations, Montcalm's army marched "triumphantly" through St-Roch.⁹⁵

The tercentenary left a national commission that would oversee the creation of Canada's first national historic site and memories of "the excitement that had poured in simultaneously through every sense."⁹⁶ In the opinion of historian H.V. Nelles, the tercentenary seemed to "overcome the ongoing social and political divisions within the country."⁹⁷ It was just in time.

The tercentenary connected citizens with the party, expressed 'vrai parti' nationalism and incorporated progressive government reform. It provided an almost cathartic experience for the party. There was a palpable enthusiasm that carried over into the campaign organization. For the first time, the Club Mercier and the Club Laurier held a joint meeting to plan a public demonstration for Laurier.⁹⁸ Louis Létourneau, elected to lead the campaign organization, promised Laurier it would surpass any seen in Québec, "même celle que l'on vous faisait du temps de notre regretté ami Pacaud."⁹⁹ His letter suggests a connection between the tercentenary, the political culture of Québec-Est and

⁹³ *Ibid.*, p. 151.

⁹⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 155.

⁹⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 159.

⁹⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 314.

⁹⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 171.

⁹⁸ NAC, Fonds Laurier, MG 26-G, Volume 536, p. 145235, Létourneau to Laurier, 26 September 1908.

⁹⁹ *Ibid.*

the election campaign. And it drew Laurier back into the community. At the outset, he responded to Létourneau with standardized letters about campaign organization (themselves a political innovation), but by the end of the campaign he promised to visit local businesses and tour the polls with Létourneau and Côté on election day.¹⁰⁰

Every aspect of the campaign reflected the party's renewed vigour and unity built around Laurier as a symbol of the secular French Canadian nationalism of 'le vrai parti.' 'Les nationalistes' focused their attack on Laurier himself as much as on his immigration policy, the Autonomy Bills, the Manitoba Schools Question and Laurier's contribution to his riding.¹⁰¹ A warning that "les sociétés neutres" make more noise and do less than "nos sociétés nationales et catholiques" reflected the most fundamental division between 'les nationalistes' and 'le vrai parti.'¹⁰² That it became an issue indicated it was a difference that could no longer be overlooked. 'Les vrais libéraux' and 'les parentistes' joined in defending Laurier's record on riding and 'nationaliste' issues, condemning the dishonesty of Conservatives (who concentrated their campaign on government scandals) and trumpeting how "le parti libéral, le parti du Sir Wilfrid Laurier, a fait du Canada une nation."¹⁰³ In Québec-Est, the campaign slogan – "Let Laurier Finish His Work" – was a perfect expression of the way Laurier had come to personify the party and a subtle reminder of the tangled mass of iron where all hoped the Québec Bridge would someday stand.

¹⁰⁰ *Ibid.*, Volume 519, p. 140819, Laurier to Létourneau, 25 May 1908; Volume 538, p. 145783, Laurier to Létourneau, 14 October 1908.

¹⁰¹ *La Libre Parole*, 3 October 1908, p. 1 and 2; 10 October 1908, p. 1 and 2; 17 October 1908, p. 2.

¹⁰² *Ibid.*, 10 October 1908, p. 2.

¹⁰³ *Le Soleil*, 22 October 1908, p. 1. He told local reporters that he had, engraved on his heart, the words: "pont du Québec." *La Vigie*, 14 October 1908, p. 4.

Both factions made the most, too, of the government's labour legislation. Although it did not play a large part in the national campaign, it did in Québec-Est. Particularly in Le Soleil, Lemieux's speech in Berlin on the Anti-sweating and Fair Wages resolutions, and the Conciliation and Industrial Disputes Investigation Acts, received extensive coverage.¹⁰⁴ As the Minister of Labour, Lemieux appeared on the platform with Gouin, Létourneau and Côté when Laurier spoke in Québec-Est. The following day, the front page of Le Soleil read: "Le triomphe de la loi Lemieux."¹⁰⁵ It was an effective appeal. Despite all the divisions and uncertainty over the previous four years, Laurier defeated Michel Fiset by an almost identical margin in every ward as he did in 1904.¹⁰⁶

The victory gave Laurier confidence in the new Liberal coalition between 'le vrai parti,' now holding the most prominent leadership roles in the party, and 'les parentistes.' He would increasingly act on their advice in the years ahead. Particularly after their victory in the decisive 1910 municipal election, the structure of the reorganized party and the way it had adapted to change in the political culture seemed to guide Laurier's decisions. They helped him respond to challenges presented by the ever-growing size and scope of the economy, the Church, and finally, 'les nationalistes' in his last three years in power.

The most visible signs of growth in Québec-Est during Laurier's government had occurred on the fringes of St-Roch and St-Sauveur where two new suburbs had appeared.

¹⁰⁴ Le Soleil, 3 October 1908, p. 12.

¹⁰⁵ Le Soleil, 5 October 1908, p. 1; La Vigie, 7 October 1908, p. 1 and 2.

¹⁰⁶ NAC, Fonds Office of the Chief Electoral Officer, RG 113-C, Electoral Returns, 1867-1980.

St-Malo, just west of St-Sauveur, grew as an extension of that area. It was established as a separate parish in 1898 and annexed by the city in 1907. The area was transformed, however, in 1910, when Parent decided to build the National Transcontinental Railway (NTR) yards and factories there.¹⁰⁷ Limoilou, or St-Roch Nord, just across the St. Charles River from the historic parish, was annexed by Québec City in 1909. It had grown up around the railway yards and shops built by the Great Northern Railway, the Québec and Lake St. John Railway, and the Canadian Northern Railway after completion of the Ste-Anne Railway Bridge in 1890.¹⁰⁸ Its fortunes were tied closely, too, to the bridges that linked it with the factories and warehouses in St-Roch and St-Sauveur. Limoilou benefited greatly when the city assumed responsibility for the Bickell Bridge in 1894 (ending the toll) and built the Victoria and Parent bridges in 1897.¹⁰⁹ With the growth of St-Roch and St-Sauveur, demand for housing finally pushed the price of land in Limoilou high enough to convince A. Hedley Anderson, the largest landowner, to sell out to the Québec Land Company (QLC) in 1906.¹¹⁰ Owned by a Montréal-based syndicate, the QLC divided the property into streets and avenues on a grid plan similar to that of New York City.¹¹¹ It designated the property only for residential housing that met specific construction standards. Annexation ensured construction of a bridge, an extension of the

¹⁰⁷ Danielle Blanchet, Saint-Sauveur : à l'image du début du siècle (Québec : Ville de Québec, 1987) p. 24.

¹⁰⁸ Danielle Blanchet, Limoilou : À l'heure de la planification urbaine (Québec : Ville de Québec, 1987) p. 12; G-Henri Dagneau, La Ville de Québec : histoire municipale, Tome IV, de la Confédération à la charte de 1929 (Québec : Société historique de Québec, 1983) p. 99.

¹⁰⁹ Dagneau, La Ville de Québec..., p. 99.

¹¹⁰ Blanchet, Limoilou..., p. 14.

¹¹¹ Ibid.

tramway and a larger aqueduct to serve the new development.¹¹² Napoléon Drouin, alderman for St-Roch ward and owner of Rock City Tobacco, located on the shores of the St. Charles River where the bridge would be built, was instrumental in promoting the annexation.

The railway yards and their factories, the Québec Bridge, the Ross Rifle Factory, even the steamships in the harbour, were all signs of Laurier's contribution to the local economy. Along with local companies that had expanded, diversified and reaped the benefits of concentration in the boot and shoe, leather and textile industries, they dominated life in the community. In most of these factories, women and men worked ten to twelve hours a day in closely watched, highly structured, tightly confined, dirty quarters. In the boot and shoe industry, still the riding's largest employer, a tailor earned \$8.42 a week in 1909, a machinist, \$7.69 and a laster, \$7.35.¹¹³ L'Action Sociale calculated that a married father of five, working steadily in one of those professions, would earn between \$150 and \$250 dollars a year less than he needed for his family to survive.¹¹⁴ Moreover, because it was piecework, employees were not paid when the factories shut down – as they routinely did for four to six weeks in November-December and May-June.¹¹⁵ In those conditions, women, men and children were obliged to work

¹¹² Québec City assumed responsibility for the Dorchester Bridge in 1910 and renovated it in 1912. It built the Drouin Bridge in 1911 and a 40-inch aqueduct in 1913. Dagneau, La Ville de Québec..., pp. 99 and 108-110.

¹¹³ L'Action Sociale, 18 January 1909, p. 1; Nicole Thivièrge, "La condition sociale des ouvriers de l'industrie de la chaussure à Québec, 1900-1940," in Jean-Claude Dupont and Jacques Mathieu, eds., Les Métiers du Cuir (Québec : Les Presses de l'Université Laval, 1981) p. 398.

¹¹⁴ Ibid.

¹¹⁵ Thivièrge, "La condition sociale...", p. 381.

long hours just to pay the rent, heat their apartments and feed themselves. It was the lucky ones that could afford the regular tram fair required to live in Limoilou.

In those conditions, hours of work and especially the cost-of-living became critical issues in the riding, particularly when the economy slipped into a two-year depression in 1907. In Ottawa, Alphonse Verville, a Worker-Liberal MP first elected in the Montréal riding of Maisonneuve in 1906, repeatedly tabled legislation to establish an eight-hour workday in the public service and on federal public works.¹¹⁶ Le Soleil lent Verville some support in 1909, covering the debate and reprinting his speech in its entirety.¹¹⁷ But the worker's cause had not yet overcome Laurier's concern for regional differences and the influence of public opinion. He insisted it would be "better to continue with the present system of a fair wages clause" than disrupt the variety of employment practices in each industry and each region of the country.¹¹⁸ "Public opinion," he trusted, "will always compel the great industries to give shorter hours."¹¹⁹

He had no such hesitation in addressing the cost-of-living issue because of the way it was understood and expressed in public opinion – particularly in Québec-Est. Le Soleil recognized it as a matter of national interest but believed that "la vie à Québec est d'un tiers plus chère qu'à Montréal, Boston ou même New York."¹²⁰ It blamed – both – "la rapacité des monopoles" and "la protection à outrance [qui] est devenue la base, le

¹¹⁶ He tabled such legislation in 1906, 1908, 1909 and 1910. R. MacGregor Dawson, William Lyon Mackenzie King: A Political Biography, 1874-1923 (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1958) p. 201.

¹¹⁷ Le Soleil, 8 May 1909, p. 1; 10 May 1909, p. 5.

¹¹⁸ Canada, House of Commons Debates, 7 May 1909, p. 5941.

¹¹⁹ Ibid., p. 5944.

¹²⁰ Le Soleil refers to similar concerns raised by The Morning Chronicle. Le Soleil, 15 May 1909, p. 4.

fondement et le rempart d'une suite non-interrompue de combines qui écorchent le consommateur."¹²¹ D'Hellencourt and Laurier would have been well aware, too, of a particularly powerful trust injurious to consumers and manufacturers alike in Québec-Est. Though it is not generally recognized in the scholarship, that trust and its effect on the riding were instrumental to creation of the Combines Investigation Act.¹²²

Not long after it began operations in Canada, in 1899, the United Shoe Machine Company (USMC) ran into conflict with boot and shoe manufacturers because it refused to sell its machines. The USMC would only agree to long-term rental contracts (twenty years was standard) that required manufacturers to use USMC machines exclusively and purchase all raw materials through the company.¹²³ In exchange, the USMC maintained the machines free of charge.¹²⁴ In 1903, two cases were brought against the company for restraint of trade.¹²⁵ The following year, it was the USMC that brought cases against Ernest Caron, General Manager of the Canadian General and Shoe Machinery

¹²¹ *Ibid.*

¹²² The legislation is generally attributed to popular discontent with price increases and the personal influence of William Lyon Mackenzie King, whose biographer, drawing on King's diaries, described it as "in all respects, King's own measure." King claimed to have developed the idea, drafted the bill, persuaded Cabinet, introduced the Act and led debate in the House. Dawson, *William Lyon Mackenzie King...*, pp. 204-205. The bill is generally considered, "a mere sop to public sentiment." Robert Craig Brown and Ramsay Cook, *Canada 1896-1921: A Nation Transformed* (Toronto: McClelland and Stewart Limited, 1974) p. 93. Laurier's most recent biographer also attributes the bill to King's influence. Réal Bélanger, *Wilfrid Laurier: quand la politique devient passion* (Québec, Les Presses de l'Université Laval, 1986) pp. 345-346.

¹²³ Canada, *The Labour Gazette* (March 1911) p. 970.

¹²⁴ NAC, Fonds Laurier, MG 26-G, Volume 505, p. 136476, Goulet et Garant to Laurier, 25 March 1907.

¹²⁵ *Flibotte v. United Shoe Machinery Company of Canada*, Stettye 1903, Volume I, Column 1455, no. 50 and *Carol v. United Shoe Machinery Company of Canada*, C.S. 1903, Volume II, Column 663, no. 298 in J.J. Beauchamp, ed., *Répertoire générale de Jurisprudence canadienne, 1770-1913* (Montréal: Wilson et Lafleur Limitée, 1914).

Manufacturing Company of Lévis.¹²⁶ A dispute between USMC and Michel Brunet, a local shoe manufacturer, brought these cases together in 1905. Brunet had rented machines from the USMC until 1903, when he entered into a contract with Caron.¹²⁷ In June 1904, a USMC agent convinced him to terminate the contract with Caron and rent more machines from the USMC by threatening to sue for breach of their earlier contract as well as infringement of their patent rights.¹²⁸ Brunet must have had second thoughts, however, as he wrote three times to the USMC in May and June 1905 asking them to remove their machines from his shop.¹²⁹ They responded by getting an injunction preventing him from moving or using their machines.¹³⁰ Brunet fought the injunction, claiming that the lease was not binding because it had been made under duress and was, therefore, illegal. Brunet lost the case; but he appealed and won the right to have the case retried before a jury.¹³¹ By bringing public opinion into the courtroom in this way, Brunet

¹²⁶ United Shoe Machinery Company of Canada v. Caron, C.S. 1904, Volume II, Column 22, no. 57; United Shoe Machinery Company of Canada v. Caron, C.S. 1904, Volume IV, Column 767, no. 91; United Shoe Machinery Company of Canada v. Caron, C.S. 1904, Volume IV, Column 775, no. 147 in *Ibid*.

¹²⁷ United Shoe Machine Company of Canada v. Brunet, Judicial Committee of the Privy Council, 23 March 1909, *Les Rapports judiciaires, Cour du banc du roi (en appel)*, Volume 18, 1909 (Montréal: Eug. Globensky, 1909) p. 513.

¹²⁸ *Ibid.*; United Shoe Machinery Company of Canada v. Brunet, C.S. 1905, *Les Rapports judiciaires de Québec, Cour supérieur*, Volume 27, 1905 (Montréal: Gazette Printing Company, 1905) pp. 200-217.

¹²⁹ United Shoe Machine Company of Canada v. Brunet, Judicial Committee of the Privy Council, 23 March 1909, *Les Rapports judiciaires, Cour du banc du roi (en appel)*, Volume 18, 1909 (Montréal: Eug. Globensky, 1909) p. 513.

¹³⁰ United Shoe Machinery Company of Canada v. Brunet, C.S. 1905, *Les Rapports judiciaires de Québec, Cour supérieur*, Volume 27, 1905 (Montréal: Gazette Printing Company, 1905) pp. 200-217.

¹³¹ United Shoe Machinery Company of Canada v. Brunet, B.R. 1905, Volume III, Column 1780, no. 182, J.J. Beauchamp, *Répertoire générale de Jurisprudence canadienne, 1770-1913* (Montréal: Wilson et Lafleur Limitée, 1914).

won the case and a subsequent appeal to the Court of the King's Bench.¹³² Without a jury, before the Judicial Committee of the Privy Council (JCPC), he lost in the final court of appeal. However, in its ruling, the JCPC stipulated:

If the monopoly established by the appellants and their mode of carrying on their business be as oppressive as is alleged (upon which their Lordships express no opinion), then the evil, if it exists, may be capable of cure by legislation or by competition, but in their view not by litigation. It is not for them to suggest what form the legislation should take, or by what methods the necessary competition should be established. These matters may, they think, be safely left to the ingenuity and enterprise of the Canadian people.¹³³

Eight months later, in the speech from the throne, Laurier announced his intention to establish legislation that would “provide for the investigation of Combines, Monopolies and Mergers.”¹³⁴ The Act, when passed by Parliament in April 1910, gave an investigating board power to levy fines and other penalties but counted on the power of public opinion – proven by the jury in Brunet's case – to deter industries from measures contrary to public policy.¹³⁵ Seven months later, a coalition of moderate ‘vrais libéraux’ from Québec-Est joined Brunet in petitioning for an investigation under the new Act. They included Napoléon Drouin, Louis Létourneau, J. Alphonse Langlois (a machinist and union activist), Joseph Picard and Ernest Caron.¹³⁶ After innumerable objections and

¹³² *United Shoe Machine Company of Canada v. Brunet*, Judicial Committee of the Privy Council, 23 March 1909, *Les Rapports judiciaires, Cour du banc du roi (en appel)*, Volume 17, 1908 (Montréal: Eug. Globensky, 1908).

¹³³ *United Shoe Machine Company of Canada v. Brunet*, Judicial Committee of the Privy Council, 23 March 1909, *Les Rapports judiciaires, Cour du banc du roi (en appel)*, Volume 18, 1909 (Montréal: Eug. Globensky, 1909) p. 513; *Labour Gazette* (March 1911) pp. 969-970.

¹³⁴ The Speech from the Throne was read on November 11, 1909. Dawson, *William Lyon Mackenzie King...*, p. 204.

¹³⁵ *Ibid.*, pp. 204-205.

¹³⁶ *Labour Gazette* (March 1911) p. 971.

appeals, an investigating board found the USMC guilty of forming a combine that effectively raised consumer prices.¹³⁷ At the time, the USMC rented machines to 138 (possibly 143) of the 145 shoe manufacturers in Canada.¹³⁸ It was the only case ever brought under the Combines Investigation Act.¹³⁹

The full effect of the USMC monopoly on the local industry went beyond its effect on consumer prices. It also pitted small manufacturers like Brunet, including many moderate ‘vrais libéraux,’ against larger ones, most often Conservatives or former ‘parentistes.’ The petition brought by “Drouin et al.” specified, *as part of the USMC combine*, all manufacturers who had signed contracts with the company, but only named Conservatives, John Ritchie and William Marsh, as well as former ‘parentistes,’ Paul Tourigny and A.E. Marois.¹⁴⁰ In fact, such large manufacturers had long sought to escape the restrictive USMC rental agreements themselves but had wanted to do so in a manner that would give them even more control over the industry. In 1907 and again in 1908, the large manufactures in Québec City and Montréal proposed legislation making it illegal to rent or pay royalties on machinery used in the business.¹⁴¹ It would end USMC control but force all manufacturers to purchase the equipment outright. This would have put most of the small manufacturers out of business.¹⁴² These smaller manufacturers wrote

¹³⁷ Charles Laurendeau, “Report of the Combines Investigation Board – United Shoe Machinery Company Case,” *Labour Gazette* (November 1912) pp. 464-476.

¹³⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 468.

¹³⁹ Dawson, *William Lyon Mackenzie King*..., p. 205.

¹⁴⁰ *Labour Gazette* (March 1911) p. 973.

¹⁴¹ NAC, Fonds Laurier, MG 26-G, Volume 505, p. 136476, Goulet and Garant to Laurier, 25 March 1907; p. 136475, Goulet and Garant to Laurier, 18 February 1908.

¹⁴² *Ibid.*, p. 136476, Goulet and Garant to Laurier, 25 March 1907.

carefully coordinated letters to Laurier, in protest, and each time he reassured them that no formal bill had come before the House but, if one was tabled, he would give every consideration to their concern.¹⁴³ Thus Laurier continued to support the local shoe manufacturers in Québec-Est, but, influenced by the new Liberal coalition, he lent his support to the small manufacturers of ‘le vrai parti’ rather than the larger manufacturers.

The way Monseigneurs Bégin and Roy responded to the social problems created by the growing size and complexity of the local economy posed another challenge to the new Liberal coalition because it hinged on a revitalization of clerical influence. “La récupération des masses” had begun with the Garde indépendante Champlain in 1894 and the Hospice Ste-Anne in 1897. It had taken a significant leap forward when Bégin became Archbishop in 1898 and established Notre-Dame de Jacques-Cartier, appointing Roy as priest, in 1901. Bégin had begun the catholicisation of the shoemakers unions that year by withholding his recognition until they accepted a chaplain, Father Alexis, at their meetings.¹⁴⁴ Meanwhile, Roy founded numerous religious societies and initiatives in Jacques-Cartier, launching La Libre Parole and the Société de Tempérance in 1905. Bégin established the Action sociale catholique movement and, with Roy’s assistance, L’Action Sociale in 1907. At the same time, they lent their support to the Caisses populaires. And the movement continued to grow in the years leading to the next federal election in 1911.

¹⁴³ Ibid., p. 136477, Laurier to Goulet and Garant, 26 March 1907.

¹⁴⁴ Initially, the priests in St-Roch, Jacques-Cartier and St-Sauveur fulfilled the role, though it was not long before Bégin appointed Father Alexis. Jacques Rouillard, Les syndicats nationaux au Québec de 1900 à 1930 (Québec: Les Presses de l’Université Laval, 1979) p. 169.

From 1908 to 1911, the Action sociale catholique made notable gains organizing young men and working people in Québec-Est. They gave the Church an even greater presence in the community than it had before. In November 1908, Arthur Duval and Jules Vallerand organized the Cercle Charest of the Association catholique de la Jeunesse canadienne-française (ACJC) in St-Roch.¹⁴⁵ The Jesuit Order in Montréal had launched the ACJC in 1904 with the goal of completing the moral and intellectual training of young men with piety, study and social action.¹⁴⁶ In St-Roch, the group “canalisa toutes les énergies d’une génération et fut le catalyseur d’un nationalisme modéré.”¹⁴⁷ It held conferences on “la juiverie,” “la francmaçonnerie,” “l’observation du dimanche” and “les droits de la langue française.”¹⁴⁸ It included members from Jacques-Cartier although a separate Cercle Bégin had also been organized in Roy’s parish.¹⁴⁹ In St-Sauveur, more effort was placed on the organization of working people. The Ligue de Sacré Cœur was founded by Jesuits in Montréal, in 1884, to “propager et maintenir l’esprit chrétien dans la famille et la paroisse.”¹⁵⁰ In Québec-Est, the Congrégation de Sacré Cœur was organized specifically for working-men who met once a month, at the end of the working

¹⁴⁵ J-Charles Gamache, Histoire de Saint-Roch de Québec et de ses institutions, 1829-1929 (Québec : Charrier et Dugal, Ltée, 1929) p. 244.

¹⁴⁶ Robert Rumilly, Histoire de la Province de Québec, Tome XI, S.-N. Parent (Montréal : Les Éditions Valiquette, 1940) p. 125.

¹⁴⁷ Jean-Marc Paradis, “Inventaire des Archives de la Paroisse de St-Roch de Québec,” B.A. Thesis: Institut d’histoire, l’Université Laval, 1966, p. 40.

¹⁴⁸ Gamache, Histoire de St-Roch..., p. 248.

¹⁴⁹ Archives de la Paroisse de Saint-Roch de Québec, Fonds Paroisse de Saint-Roch de Québec, RMC 4-45/7, Bureau de Direction, Cercle Charest, Procès verbaux, 28 February 1909; Albert Jobin, Histoire de la Congrégation dit de la Paroisse de Notre-Dame de Jacques-Cartier (Québec, 1940) p. 49.

¹⁵⁰ Voisine, Le XXe siècle..., p. 220.

day, for the *Heure des Ouvriers* in St-Sauveur.¹⁵¹ In 1908, they erected a statue, symbol of the congregation's growing importance in the community.¹⁵² By 1909, the *Ligue de Sacré Coeur* was an integral part of the *Action sociale catholique* and in 1910 warned Québec Bishops of socialism and anti-clericism in the union movement.¹⁵³ In January 1911, Father Alexis presided over a decisive meeting of Bishops in Montréal that formally recommended the creation of strictly Catholic unions.¹⁵⁴

Laurier and Gouin were wary of these Church-led associations that they considered, like the colonization societies of an earlier day, largely 'nationaliste' political organizations.¹⁵⁵ To help counteract the influence of the ACJC, they organized the Young Liberal Association in 1909, recruiting future Liberal MPs Charles Gavin Power and Louis St-Laurent among other students at the Université Laval.¹⁵⁶ But they had more difficulty confronting clerical influence within the city's labour unions. In October 1909, Charles-Eugène Côté, the 'vrai libéral' MLA for St-Sauveur and close associate of Omer Brunet, resigned his seat to become the city registrar.¹⁵⁷ Laurier disapproved of his decision but with J.H. Patry, a former 'parentiste,' as the Liberal candidate, he looked

¹⁵¹ *Le Soleil*, 3 January 1914, p. 1.

¹⁵² NAC, Fonds Laurier, MG 26-G, Volume 499, p. 134831, Télésphore Verret to Laurier, 9 January 1908.

¹⁵³ Rouillard, *Les syndicats nationaux...*, p. 175.

¹⁵⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 177.

¹⁵⁵ Robert Rumilly, *Histoire de la Province de Québec*, Tome XIV, *Sir Lomer Gouin* (Montréal: Éditions Bernard Valiquette, 1940) pp. 12-13; NAC, Fonds Laurier, MG 26-G, Volume 548, p. 148533, Laurier to Gouin, 4 December 1908; p. 148532, Gouin to Laurier, 5 December 1908.

¹⁵⁶ Rumilly, *Sir Lomer Gouin*, p. 13.

¹⁵⁷ NAC, Fonds Laurier, MG 26-G, Volume 593, p. 160865, Laurier to Côté, 15 October 1909.

forward to a good working relationship with the new MLA.¹⁵⁸ It was not to be. With encouragement from Armand Lavergne and the clergy, the largely working class population of St-Sauveur elected a machinist, Joseph-Alphonse Langlois, instead.¹⁵⁹ Langlois was an active member of the Fraternité nationale des cordonniers-machinistes – one of the three shoemakers’ unions that had accepted a chaplain in 1901 and, according to historian Robert Rumilly, “côtoyaient le syndicalisme ouvertement confessionnel.”¹⁶⁰ It was Langlois’ decision, in February 1911, to vote against the introduction of standard texts in primary schools, that split the labour movement in Québec-Est. Omer Brunet condemned Langlois for opposing a measure long desired by the riding’s workers.¹⁶¹ But Brunet’s reaction only prompted J.A. Mercier, secretary of Brunet’s Canadian Federation of Labour (CFL)(a new name given to the National Trades and Labour Congress in 1908), to resign and found the Conseil central national du district de Québec et de Lévis.¹⁶² The three shoemakers unions and the Union nationale des longshoremen de Québec immediately joined this openly confessional organization.¹⁶³ It marked the beginning of the end for the secular “national” unionism that had for so long been a distinctive characteristic of the labour movement in Québec-Est.¹⁶⁴

¹⁵⁸ Ibid.

¹⁵⁹ Rumilly, Sir Lomer Gouin, p. 86.

¹⁶⁰ Ibid.

¹⁶¹ Rouillard, Les syndicats nationaux..., p. 100.

¹⁶² Ibid., p. 101.

¹⁶³ Ibid., p. 102.

¹⁶⁴ Brunet would run against Langlois in the 1912 provincial election with tacit Liberal support – and was defeated. Ibid., p. 103.

The third challenge confronting the new Liberal coalition came from Henri Bourassa and ‘les nationalistes.’ Their unyielding opposition to the British imperialists in English-speaking Canada made it increasingly difficult for Laurier and the Liberals to maintain the credibility of their own secular, inclusive, French Canadian nationalism. The issue was driven, since the 1890s, by the economic and military rivalry between Britain and Germany that had prompted Britain to seek colonial contributions to a more closely integrated imperial military, under British command. In the last days of the 1896 election campaign, Ernest Pacaud had spelled out the ‘vrai parti’ response. He condemned military spending as wasteful and limitless while promising electors that Laurier would never “vous exposer à partir, un de ces bons matins, pour d’autre pays laissant en arrière de vous, vos femmes, vos enfants et tout ce que vous est cher.”¹⁶⁵ In power, Laurier had consistently rejected any suggestion of an Imperial Council. But he found it harder, politically, to resist imperialists in English Canada when Britain made tangible requests for assistance. They had forced him into a compromise position on Canadian participation in the Boer War and, in the spring of 1909, they forced his hand again. This time, rumours of an accelerated German naval construction program prompted imperialist demands for an urgent Canadian contribution to the Imperial Navy. Laurier responded, in March 1909, by securing unanimous parliamentary support for a motion that proposed construction of a Canadian Navy that, in times of war, would cooperate with the Imperial Navy. In January 1910, after obtaining British approval, he tabled a Naval Service Bill that would make the motion a reality.

¹⁶⁵ *L’Électeur*, 17 June 1896, p. 1.

The February 1910 municipal elections in Québec City tested popular support for the measure almost immediately. The contest for Mayor pitted Senator P-A. Choquette against St-Roch alderman, Napoléon Drouin. Choquette, never willing to compromise ‘vrai parti’ principles, opposed any military spending for fear it would entangle Canadians in Britain’s “foreign” wars. He attracted many of the same supporters he had in 1906: ‘vrais libéraux’ like Antonin Galipeault and F-X. O. Pouliot; ‘nationalistes’ like Alphonse Huard; and Conservatives like Michel Fiset and Télésphore Verret.¹⁶⁶ Drouin, who embodied the new Liberal coalition between ‘les vrais libéraux’ and ‘les parentistes,’ defended the Naval Service Bill with the support of George Parent (son of Simon-Napoléon) and Joseph Picard.¹⁶⁷ Laurier and Le Soleil remained neutral in the bitter contest, fought almost entirely on the naval issue, at the height of parliamentary debate in Ottawa. It revealed just how far Laurier had compromised for the imperialists and just how far he could compromise and still retain the support of a majority within his own party in Québec. Drouin’s resounding victory, in every ward, seems to have convinced Laurier that his Naval Service Bill could carry at least sufficient support in both the party and the province to secure national victory.

Drouin’s victory was significant in another way too. It brought a progressive spirit to City Council at a time when local residents were, once again, becoming painfully aware of their city’s economic inferiority to Montréal. “On fait trop de politique à Québec,” said alderman Oscar Morin in April 1910, “ce n’est pas ainsi que les choses se

¹⁶⁶ Le Soleil, 17 February 1910, p. 10.

¹⁶⁷ Ibid.

passé à Montréal [ou] on parle toujours de l'avancement de la ville.”¹⁶⁸ He condemned “la manque d'esprit public” and the individualism of local businessmen for Québec's lack of progress and urged Drouin to “réunir les intérêts privés dans un effort commun.” His progressivism renewed local determination to restore the city's flagging economic fortunes; however, it offered no new vision for economic development. At Morin's suggestion, Drouin formed a special committee of council to report on the best ways to “créer dans le port de Québec un commerce maritime proportionné aux avantages qu'offre la position géographique de cette cité.”

Morin did not understand the fundamental importance of politics – and federal money – in Québec City the way Laurier did. The Department of Militia and Defence spent approximately \$4,000 annually to maintain extensive government properties in the city.¹⁶⁹ As the naval debate reached its peak, Laurier ceded title to some of the lands and provided financial support for construction of an experimental farm, a library and a museum at the Université Laval.¹⁷⁰ He maintained his support for the Ross Rifle, a second version of which came out in 1909, despite continually poor ratings from the North West Mounted Police (NWMP).¹⁷¹ Most importantly though, given Morin's own

¹⁶⁸ *Le Soleil*, 9 April 1910, p. 1.

¹⁶⁹ These included the Esplanade; the tops of the walls and grass slopes from the Citadel to the Dominion Arsenal including the St. Louis, Kent and St. John Gates; the glacis in front of the Citadel; the grass slopes on the walls in the Citadel; the ramparts from Palace Hill to Dauphin Gate; the cliffs on St. Valier Street and Palace Hill; a section of the Grande Allée near the skating rink; the Drill Hall grounds; the Terrace and Mountain Hill; the arsenal grounds; St. Louis Barracks grounds; the Citadel grounds; and the Ordnance Store grounds. ANQQ, Fonds Georges Garneau, P90, Volume 2, File Correspondance, E.G. Jarvis, Acting Deputy Minister of Militia and Defence to R. Lemieux, 7 September 1906.

¹⁷⁰ NAC, Fonds Laurier, MG26-G, Volume 604, p. 164167, N. Garneau to Fitzpatrick, 23 December 1909; Volume 601, p. 163458, Laurier to Fitzpatrick, 9 December 1909; Volume 586, p. 158901, Matthieu to Laurier, 14 August 1909.

¹⁷¹ *Ibid.*, Volume 558, p. 151280, Ross to Laurier, 1 February 1909.

insistence on development of the city's commercial interests, Laurier made significant investments in the Québec Harbour Commission (QHC) and the National Transcontinental Railway (NTR). Since January 1909, J-B. Laliberté, President of the QHC, had been urging him to fund construction of a new dry dock.¹⁷² But it was not until May 1910 that he passed a Bill guaranteeing four per cent interest on QHC bonds issued to cover the construction costs and provided federal funds to build and maintain a basin protecting the dry dock from ice.¹⁷³ The dry dock and breakwater represented only a fraction of the work planned or undertaken to improve the Québec port though. From 1909 to 1910, Laurier's government approved construction of a railway link to the bridge, dredging and navigational improvements to the St. Charles River, relocation of the offices of the Department of Marine and Fisheries, subsidies for the Newfoundland shipping trade, demolition and relocation of the Custom's House, reorganization of the port facilities at Lévis and construction of a new shipyard.¹⁷⁴ In September 1910, he approved construction of a \$3 million station for the NTR on the site of the former Champlain Market while Drouin planned construction of an even larger market in St-Roch.¹⁷⁵ Even before Drouin's committee reported, Le Soleil boasted that the city could expect \$27 million in new spending on the bridge, railway and port before 1915.¹⁷⁶

¹⁷² Ibid., p. 151189, Laliberté to Laurier, 30 January 1909; p. 151376, Hugh Allan to Laurier, 3 February 1909; Volume 562, p. 152463, Hugh Allan to Laurier, 25 February 1909.

¹⁷³ Ibid., Volume 655, p. 178149, T. Levasseur to Laurier, 14 December 1910.

¹⁷⁴ A rail link was requested by the QHC in Ibid., Volume 554, p. 150156, T. Levasseur to Laurier, 5 January 1909. Improvements to the St. Charles River and Lévis port facilities were requested in Ibid., Volume 620, p. 168460, Olivier-Napoléon Drouin to Laurier, 19 March 1910. All other requests from the QHC were made in Ibid., Volume 655, p. 178149, T. Levasseur to Laurier, 14 December 1910.

¹⁷⁵ Le Soleil, 20 September 1910, p. 1. Napoléon Drouin, Drouin Administration rendering accounts to ratepayers, 1910-1914 (Québec : Ville de Québec, 1914) pp. 6-7.

¹⁷⁶ Le Soleil, 1 April 1910, p. 1.

With the city's commercial ambitions reaffirmed and such substantial federal monies committed, Laurier must have rejoiced in the summer of 1910 when, on a two-month western Canadian tour, farmers urged him to enter into a reciprocity agreement with the United States. In a single stroke he might satisfy western Canada, reduce the cost-of-living for consumers and expand the grain trade passing through the Québec City harbour and over the bridge on the NTR. Better yet, the Americans officially proposed full-scale discussions on reciprocity upon his return to Ottawa in the Fall. The only voice within the party in Québec-Est to suggest raising a tariff came from the President of Dominion Corset, George-Élie Amyot.¹⁷⁷ But Amyot, like other former 'parentistes' in the party, did not enjoy the same influence he once had – not as much as Drouin and his progressive City Council. In December 1910, Amyot asked Laurier to raise the tariff on corsets from 35 to 45 per cent, but Laurier simply replied that it was “frankly... impossible... In Canada and in the U.S. the trend is to lower tariffs.”¹⁷⁸ A month later, Laurier received a letter from a small leather manufacturer in Québec-Est, Joseph Pouliot, deeply upset by “les arguments mensongères” of the Canadian National League against reciprocity.¹⁷⁹ Thus, it appeared Liberal manufacturers in Québec-Est supported reciprocity; and Laurier did not consult with Conservatives or ‘nationalistes.’

In September 1910, Laurier returned to Québec at the very moment the temperance campaigns of Monseigneurs Bégin and Roy and Henri Bourassa were

¹⁷⁷ Bourassa supported the idea as a measure that would help “dégageait le Canada de la tutelle impériale.” Robert Rumilly, *Histoire de la Province de Québec*, Tome XVI, *Défaite de Laurier* (Montréal: Éditions Valiquette, 1942) p. 19.

¹⁷⁸ NAC, Fonds Laurier, MG 26-G, Volume 656, p. 178307, Amyot to Laurier, 17 December 1910; p. 178311, Laurier to Amyot, 20 December 1910.

¹⁷⁹ *Ibid.*, Volume 686, p. 187724, Pouliot to Laurier, 19 January 1911.

reaching a peak. Over the past five years, Roy had delivered more than 2,000 sermons on temperance in more than 60 parishes around the province.¹⁸⁰ The Action sociale catholique had distributed dozens of tracts and the Société de Tempérance” – first organized in Notre-Dame de Jacques-Cartier – had close to one million members. The Congrès de la Tempérance capped those efforts. Held on Labour Day weekend at the Université Laval, the Congrès brought together 2,639 delegates and more than 40 speakers to develop a provincial temperance agenda.¹⁸¹ Along with the many clergymen and Conservatives in attendance, there was Cyrille Delâge, now President of the provincial SSJB, and Dr. Albert Jobin from Québec-Est.¹⁸² Despite his prominence early in the temperance campaign, François Langelier was not there. Thus the Congrès revealed both the impressive strength of Roy’s movement and its transformation into a Conservative and ‘nationaliste’ organization drawing some support, too, from devout former ‘parentistes.’

During the summer, Frederick-Debartzch Monk, leader of the Québec wing of the Conservative caucus in Ottawa, had entered into a coalition with Henri Bourassa and joined ‘les nationalistes’ in a province-wide campaign against Laurier. It formalized, at the national level, the collaboration between Conservatives and ‘nationalistes’ visible in Québec-Est as early as 1904. That summer, the Conservative-‘nationalistes’ focused their attacks on Laurier personally. He had become the single overarching symbol of the secular French Canadian nationalism of ‘le vrai parti’ that had come to dominate the federal party since Tarte’s dismissal, Parent’s defeat and Fitzpatrick’s resignation. The

¹⁸⁰ Voisine, *Le XXe siècle...*, p. 202.

¹⁸¹ *Ibid.*, p. 203.

¹⁸² *Le Soleil*, 1 September 1910, p. 1.

Conservative-‘nationalistes’ saw a pattern in Laurier’s decisions, dating from the Boer War, that they believed proved he had abandoned the interests of French Canada and led to the spectre of conscription they saw behind the Naval Service Bill. Thus, Laurier became locked into a contest with Bourassa, each portraying competing symbols of French Canadian nationalism.

The importance of the Church, both in distinguishing between the two sorts of nationalism and in promoting Bourassa, was confirmed that September at the twenty-first Congrès eucharistique. A week after the Congrès de la Tempérance in Québec City, it brought cardinals, archbishops, bishops, priests and pilgrims from around the world to Montréal and engaged thousands of volunteers and participants from across the province enrolled in a multitude of religious societies and associations. Laurier and Gouin both played prominent roles in the event designed to affirm Catholic influence in the Canadian state. But it provided, also, a spectacular platform for Henri Bourassa who was invited to speak twice on the final day – before 25,000 members of the ACJC and at the final mass in Notre-Dame Cathedral.¹⁸³ He congratulated the ACJC “d’unir aussi étroitement leur patriotisme et leur foi.”¹⁸⁴ At the Cathedral he expressed all the power of that vision in a defiant speech in reply to Monseigneur Bourne, the Archbishop of Westminster, who had had the gaucherie to plead for recognition of English as the sole language of Catholicism in North America. Bourassa came away from the congress triumphant.

Returning home from the event, Arthur Duval and Jules Vallerand, who had attended as representatives of the Cercle Charest, began to organize the Adoration

¹⁸³ Robert Rumilly, *Histoire de la Province de Québec*, Tome XV, *Mgr Bruchési* (Montréal: Éditions Bernard Valiquette, 1942) pp. 111-112.

¹⁸⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 111.

nocture de St-Roch.¹⁸⁵ Its members would take turns praying in the church each night beginning on February 26, 1911. In December 1910, the same men formed the *Congrégation des Jeunes Gens* to prepare themselves for membership in the *Congrégation des Hommes*.¹⁸⁶ Their work gave the *Congrès eucharistique* a permanent legacy in Québec-Est.

In October, Laurier decided to pit his secular nationalism, the nationalism of ‘les vrais libéraux,’ against the conservative Catholic nationalism of ‘les nationalistes.’ “Il n’y a pas d’autre chose à faire dans le moment que de répondre à Bourassa,” he told Senator Dandurand. “L’attaque a été directe et il faut que la réponse le soit également.”¹⁸⁷ At an enormous rally in Montréal, he decried ‘les nationalistes’ – for the first time – as a reincarnation of “les Castors.”¹⁸⁸ Then, after receiving assurances from Louis Lavergne, the local MP, he challenged ‘les nationalistes’ to a by-election contest in a rural riding where clerical influence was strong but where he too was well known: Drummond-Arthabaska. In every way, the campaign would show how much the public culture of rural Québec still resembled that of 1877. The two parties organized committee rooms in each parish, generously distributed whiskey, brought in speakers from across the province and held “joute contradictoires” each night in a contest that lasted almost three weeks.¹⁸⁹ ‘Les nationalistes’ portrayed Laurier as an anglophile incapable of understanding the repugnance of conscription because he did not have children of his

¹⁸⁵ Gamache, *Histoire de St-Roch*..., pp. 241-242.

¹⁸⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 240.

¹⁸⁷ Laurier to Dandurand, 6 October 1910 quoted in Bélanger, *Wilfrid Laurier*..., p. 361.

¹⁸⁸ Rumilly, *Mgr Bruchési*, p. 141.

¹⁸⁹ *Ibid.*, pp. 146-164; Bélanger, *Wilfrid Laurier*..., p. 363.

own. They disguised themselves as soldiers and went door-to-door conducting a “census” of men available for “conscription” in “Laurier’s navy.” Those tactics produced the same results they did in 1877. The Liberal candidate lost by 207 votes. Laurier recognized the seriousness of the defeat. “L’effet moral dans le public a été désastreux,” he wrote to Béland, “et le mal ne peut être que difficilement réparé, s’il peut l’être encore.”¹⁹⁰

Yet Drummond-Arthabaska had not tested public opinion in the larger, more complex, less personal public culture that had reshaped Laurier’s party, his administration of the party newspaper and distribution of government resources since 1904. He would trust to them in developing a strategy for a final confrontation with Bourassa in 1911. The conflict would pit not only Laurier’s own secular nationalism against Bourassa’s Catholic nationalism, but also his more modern, rational and professional party organization against Bourassa’s personal, parish-based, movement.

A striking example of the cultural conflict between Laurier’s party and Bourassa’s movement is found in their different reactions, early in 1911, to conflict between Le Soleil and La Vigie, on one hand, and Le Devoir and L’Action Sociale, on the other. For Bourassa, like Bégin and Roy, a newspaper represented essentially a means “d’élargir et d’approfondir son action.”¹⁹¹ It took him 18 months to organize Le Devoir because he insisted on a legal structure that would ensure his complete control. Bourassa conceived of Le Devoir as a “journal d’opinion” or, in the words of historian Robert Rumilly, as a “centre d’action nationale” much like L’Action Sociale was a “centre d’action

¹⁹⁰ Laurier to Béland, 10 November 1910 quoted in Ibid., p. 364.

¹⁹¹ Rumilly, Sir Lomer Gouin, p. 114.

catholique.”¹⁹² As a result, ‘les nationalistes’ responded to attacks on Le Devoir and L’Action Sociale just as Hector Fabre had responded to Conservative attacks in 1877. During the campaign in Drummond-Arthabaska, Armand Lavergne adapted a Liberal refrain from that campaign for his own purposes, encouraging ‘nationaliste’ supporters to shout:

Pas d’Soleil! Pas d’Soleil!
C’est le Devoir qu’il nous faut!¹⁹³

Monseigneur Bégin, too, responded as in days gone by. In February 1911, he issued a pastoral letter, read in every church in the diocese, condemning Le Soleil and La Vigie for their attacks on L’Action Sociale. He considered such attacks, or appeals to the “tribunal incompétant de l’opinion publique,” to be challenges to his authority as an Archbishop and impertinences “indigne d’un journal catholique.”¹⁹⁴

Provincial Liberals replied just as Laurier had responded in 1897, by appealing to the Pope.¹⁹⁵ But Laurier himself took a different approach. He put his trust in d’Hellencourt.¹⁹⁶ D’Hellencourt was confident that public opinion disapproved of the pastoral letter and advised a moderate response, consistently defending Le Soleil while refraining from attacks on L’Action Sociale. He told Laurier, “pour triompher contre la concurrence de L’Action Sociale de façon décisive, pour assurer le succès matériel qui seul pourra la forcer à disparaître, il faut nous préoccuper de lui être supérieur comme

¹⁹² Ibid., p. 115.

¹⁹³ Rumilly, Mgr Bruchési, p. 147.

¹⁹⁴ Rumilly, Défaite de Laurier, p. 32.

¹⁹⁵ Ibid., pp. 28-36.

¹⁹⁶ NAC, Fonds Laurier, MG 26-G, Volume 668, p. 181979, Laurier to d’Hellencourt, 25 February 1911; p. 181977, d’Hellencourt to Laurier, 25 February 1911.

journal.”¹⁹⁷ It was a plea for financial support but, unlike so many others over the years, it portrayed the newspaper as engaged, first and foremost, in a business competition. It demonstrated, yet again, d’Hellencourt’s determination to transform Le Soleil into a real “journal d’information.”¹⁹⁸ Sections of the newspaper were now more clearly and consistently defined than they had been when he took over five years earlier. The distinction between news and editorial was unmistakable. There were more advertisements yet the newspaper itself had a cleaner, more rational, appearance than it did as a “journal populaire.” D’Hellencourt’s advice to Laurier showed he understood that Le Soleil would be a business success as a “journal d’information” while “les journaux d’opinion,” like L’Action Sociale, would survive only as long as the Church or another interest group could support them. In 1911, though, it was still not clear whether “les journaux d’information” could be as influential in an election campaign as “les journaux d’opinion.”

Just as he trusted d’Hellencourt, Laurier put his trust in the new Liberal coalition in Québec-Est. In January, he gave his government’s support to legislation establishing an eight-hour workday for labourers on all federal public works. Recognizing that “the idea which underlies the Bill is not universally popular,” Laurier nonetheless thought the time had come to “yield to the request of... labour organizations.”¹⁹⁹ Overcoming his own objections of two years earlier, he defended government regulation of labour as

¹⁹⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 181980, d’Hellencourt to Laurier, 27 February 1911; p. 181982, Laurier to d’Hellencourt, 27 February 1911.

¹⁹⁸ de Bonville, La Presse québécoise..., p. 321.

¹⁹⁹ Canada, House of Commons Debates, 11 January 1911, p. 1533.

“legitimate” and had no trouble distinguishing between classes of labour.²⁰⁰ He knew that it would be popular with the workingmen in Québec-Est. Then, on January 26, his Finance Minister, W.S. Fielding, tabled the Reciprocity Bill that promised to bring free trade in natural products to Canada and the United States. Here again Laurier knew it would please his working class constituents struggling with the ever increasing cost-of-living. He knew, too, it would meet with the approval of Napoléon Drouin and the city councillors anxious to reinvigorate trade in the port. And he no longer had such close contact with the riding’s larger manufacturers who might have protested. Finally, when C-A-P. Pelletier passed away, he appointed François Langelier to replace him as Lieutenant Governor of Québec. Laurier could only hope that the Naval Service Bill would be as well understood in the rest of the province as it had been understood in Québec City during the 1910 municipal election.

By early March, Laurier was preparing to go to the polls. Louis Létourneau organized a rally, drawing 3,500 people, in support of reciprocity.²⁰¹ The Club Mercier began its revision of the electoral list and planned to open three committee rooms.²⁰² Létourneau was confident. But there were some troubling signs as well. It was hard now, he said, to get people out to political events except during an election.²⁰³ The Club Mercier had shrunk to 300 members and Létourneau himself was unable to devote much attention to the party as his eldest son had fallen gravely ill.²⁰⁴ Moreover, he felt the need

²⁰⁰ *Ibid.*, pp. 1537-1538.

²⁰¹ NAC, Fonds Laurier, MG 26-G, Volume 670, p. 182916, Létourneau to Laurier, 9 March 1911.

²⁰² *Ibid.*, Volume 668, p. 182254, Létourneau to Laurier, 15 March 1911.

²⁰³ *Ibid.*, Volume 670, p. 182916, Létourneau to Laurier, 9 March 1911.

²⁰⁴ *Ibid.*, Volume 668, p. 182254, Létourneau to Laurier, 15 March 1911.

to warn Laurier that “la reciprocité a besoin d’être discutée dans les villes.”²⁰⁵ In fact, there was tangible evidence that Laurier’s support among workers in the riding might have slipped. That month, Catholic workers launched their own newspaper, L’Ami de l’Ouvrier. “Il est d’absolu nécessité,” declared the prospectus, “qu’un organe sérieux exclura de son programme la plaie de l’esprit de parti pour ne s’occuper que d’une politique saine et radicalement indépendante.”²⁰⁶ It was an approach to politics identical to that of its principal advertisers, all ‘nationalistes’: “Huard et fils,” Dr. Albert Jobin and La Libre Parole. Although it only published two editions, featuring profiles of devout working-class politicians J-A. Langlois and Louis Émond, its timing was significant. Finally, from outside the riding, Toronto manufacturers had taken a public stand against reciprocity, portraying it as the first step towards “political union with the United States.”²⁰⁷ Their imperialist feeling held little appeal in Québec-Est, but their underlying interest in tariff protection for manufacturing might.

Laurier swore he would pass the Reciprocity Bill before calling an election though he was forced to adjourn Parliament in the spring to attend an Imperial Conference. Upon his return, in July, he found the opposition growing stronger and decided to dissolve Parliament on July 29. He headed to the polls knowing, since the by-election in Drummond-Arthabaska, that he could be defeated on the naval issue in rural Québec, that Choquette and at least some ‘vrais libéraux’ opposed the measure and that the local organization in Québec-Est was not as strong as it once had been. But he knew,

²⁰⁵ Ibid., Volume 670, p. 182916, Létourneau to Laurier, 9 March 1911.

²⁰⁶ L’Ami de l’Ouvrier, 11 March 1911, p. 1.

²⁰⁷ Reproduced in Brown and Cook, Canada 1896-1921..., p. 181.

too, that the Naval Service Bill had not defeated Napoléon Drouin in 1910, that reciprocity appealed to local interests by encouraging trade and lowering the cost-of-living, that the Combines Investigation Act established his credible opposition to the trusts blamed for rising prices and that he had, with Le Soleil, a “journal d’information” admirably suited to projecting his rational, balanced, message and strong, unifying, image. Still, questions remained: could the party win with a smaller organization “on the ground” in Québec-Est? Would social and economic policies acceptable to the local party still appeal in the rest of Canada?

“Le Manifeste de Laurier au Peuple Canadien” launched the Liberal campaign on the front page of Le Soleil, on Monday, July 31, 1911. In an effort to avoid debate over the Naval Service Bill, it made reciprocity the sole issue. “Le Manifeste” appealed to the historical consensus among all political parties in favour of reciprocity, the unjustifiable parliamentary obstruction used by the Conservatives to block the agreement and the mutual respect it would produce in Canada, Britain and the United States. Its singular focus, identification with the leader and “unveiling” at the start of the campaign, reflected important adaptations to a political culture that granted less uncontested space (in both the workday and the newspaper) for partisan political activity. Above all, it represented an effort to sway public opinion more by print than large public demonstrations, more by image than community debate.²⁰⁸

The reduction in public space available for the partisan interests was evident even on the first day of the campaign. The election was not the only subject on page one of Le

²⁰⁸ Both the content and presentation of the 1893 Platform indicate that it was more of a policy document and less of a partisan appeal than the 1911 manifesto. Although, at the time, it too was an innovative means to facilitate communication with the voters. The Platform included a position on every public issue and ran on page 10 of Le Soleil in the second week of the 1896 campaign.

Soleil. In fact, throughout much of the campaign, election coverage on page one was limited to a single column under the head, “le fil d’eau.” The title suggested something less significant than “la petite guerre” and, indeed, it did not engage opposition newspapers in any way, presenting only short, advertisement-like, reports on Liberal campaign activities. Broader campaign news had to compete with a greater range of information throughout the newspaper as more space was devoted to sports, family, children’s, women’s, business, city and editorial pages than ever before. Although political “reporting” remained fundamentally partisan, it had adopted a less argumentative tone. It gave readers a slightly less engaging, more distanced, perspective. At the same time, a separate editorial page forced d’Hellencourt to attract readers with more than one editorial a day, each targeted to a specific audience or issue. Thus, while partisan politics was still present in the newspaper, political articles and editorials had relatively less space and less prominence at the outset of the campaign than they had in 1908.

In contrast, L’Action Sociale, La Vérité and La Libre Parole, the three Church run newspapers in Québec City, devoted considerable space, on page one, to their own partisan interest in condemning “l’esprit de parti” and Liberal party corruption. Their “disinterest” in politics appeared far more strategic than sincere. L’Événement, the city’s Conservative newspaper, gave extensive coverage of Borden, Bourassa and opposition candidates in Québec. It remained an unabashedly partisan “journal populaire.”

From the beginning of the campaign, organizers struggled to adapt Laurier’s single-issue, image-based appeal to a local political culture that was caught between the rational, national, culture emerging in the larger factories, the administration of

government and on the pages of Le Soleil, on one hand, and the more personal, integrated, local culture still evident in the smaller factories, the Church organizations and on the pages of L'Événement, on the other.

The first meeting of the Club Mercier, on August 12, revealed the local party's strength in the "national" labour movement and 'le vrai parti.' Their prominence, greater than at any time since 1891, emphasized the absence of Catholic union organizers and the riding's larger manufacturers as well as the significance that nationalism – particularly the differences between 'les vrais libéraux' and 'les nationalistes' – would play in the campaign. At the meeting, members heard Létourneau, J.A. Marier, President of the Club Mercier, J.L. Roy, Vice-President of the Young Liberal Association, and Liberal union organizers J.E.A. Pin, J. Catara and F-X. Galibois. Galibois, who had edited L'Ami de l'Ouvrier, was obliged to reiterate, publicly, that "il est libéral, quoiqu'en dissent certains mauvaises langues. Il n'a jamais été nationaliste."²⁰⁹ Jules-Alfred Lane also spoke – a prominent, even controversial, local representative of 'vrai parti' nationalism. All speakers faithfully reiterated the arguments of "le Manifeste" for reciprocity. But, even at this early stage, they were obliged to refute 'nationaliste' arguments against the Naval Service Bill and emphasize Laurier's contributions to the local community. They used the meeting to prepare for Laurier's arrival in the city, planning the opening of a committee room on St-Joseph and organization of an association of young liberal workers. Thus, they had already begun adapting Laurier's single-issue, image-based, appeal to reflect elements of the riding's traditional political culture.

²⁰⁹ Le Soleil, 12 August 1911, p. 1.

There were plenty of signs, however, that the riding's political culture had, indeed, changed. During the last week of August, two and a half weeks before election day, the Agricultural Exposition brought the campaign to a halt. Crowds flocked to see the latest farm equipment, champion animals and produce, new farming techniques and, most of all, flying exhibitions.²¹⁰ Although sponsored by the three orders of government, it was in no way a partisan event. Even Gouin's participation on opening day was strictly ceremonial. The same was true of an "open house" at the new technical school in St-Valier.²¹¹ Meetings of the Union of Canadian Municipalities and the International Order of Foresters as well as numerous municipal clubs and associations also attracted public attention without involving partisan politics.²¹² There was even an advertisement in Le Soleil that took advantage of the campaign to draw attention to more private concerns. Under the headline, "La Lutte dans Québec-Est," it read: "Nous avons décidé de prendre une part active à la lutte qui se fait actuellement dans Québec-Est...pour la vente de chaussures à réduction."²¹³ It would have been unthinkable in 1877.

Such technological and social changes had a direct effect on the campaign organization. The first automobiles facilitated travel in rural ridings but were not without political drawbacks. Gleefully, Le Soleil reported that a "brave citoyen" of Beaumont, in his horse and buggy, had been run into the ditch by "un candidat oppositioniste et son automobile."²¹⁴ Organizers installed a telephone in the committee room for the first time,

²¹⁰ Le Soleil, 26 August 1911, p. 5; 30 August 1911, p. 1.

²¹¹ L'Action Sociale, 9 September 1911, p. 1.

²¹² Le Soleil, 30 August, 1911, p. 1.

²¹³ Le Soleil, 25 August 1911, p. 6.

²¹⁴ Le Soleil, 28 August 1911, p. 5.

though it is uncertain how the new device was used.²¹⁵ And, in an effort to overcome the social distance between constituents, they planned a “door-to-door” campaign.²¹⁶ It added new dimensions to the local organization by necessitating private meetings of organizers and volunteers, and the production of campaign literature in a format that volunteers could distribute more easily than the back pages of Le Soleil. Thus a significant, new, part of the local campaign focussed on private contact with voters rather than public meetings. It was an innovation planned to supplement the already well-advanced media campaign. But organizers were obliged to adapt in other ways too. Although the temperance movement had no obvious impact on Létourneau’s organization in Québec-Est, candidates in Québec-Centre, Québec-Comté and Montmagny were all asked by the Ligue de Sacré Coeur to sign pledges that they would refrain from the distribution of alcohol.²¹⁷ Though they did not bind their parties, the pledges provided much fodder for partisan rhetoric when they were broken.

The struggle to strike an appropriate balance between national and local political cultures was evident when Laurier visited Québec-Est at the outset of his campaign tour.²¹⁸ As in the past, a crowd gathered in the courtyard of the Chateau Frontenac, surrounded by bengal lights, waving flags and shouting “vive Laurier” – but this time they sang “O Canada,” too. They formed a cortège that followed Laurier’s carriage, drawn by “deux superbe chevaux,” through the city’s streets to Jacques Cartier Square. But this time it was young Liberal workers who led them. On the podium, J. Catara gave

²¹⁵ Le Soleil, 24 August 1911, p. 6.

²¹⁶ Le Soleil, 2 September 1911, p. 8.

²¹⁷ Le Soleil, 9 September 1911, p. 7; 13 September 1911, p. 1; 18 September 1911, p. 1.

²¹⁸ The following description is based on Le Soleil, 19 August 1911, p. 1.

a resolutely local character to Laurier's "Manifeste" by asking the Prime Minister to "user de toute [son] influence afin que Québec...marche de l'avant et devienne, grâce à [son] bienfaisant concours, un centre d'affaires important."

Laurier followed Catara and, before 25,000 people, expressed his gratitude for their support. This simple remark, mere protocol in earlier campaigns, became the next day's headline in Le Soleil. It emphasized Laurier's local appeal just as his speech emphasized the way 'vrai parti' values and workers' interests informed his government's policies. His approach revealed the largely local significance of the rally. Laurier began by proclaiming the benefits of reciprocity for all. "Il y a solidarité entre les classes de la société," he said, "lorsque le cultivateur est prospère l'ouvrier est prospère." He drew attention to the local Liberal team then launched into a defence of the Naval Service Bill that appealed directly to 'le vrai parti' and aimed to differentiate them from the 'nationalistes.' He associated the 'nationalistes' with the old enemies of 'les vrais libéraux' – "les Castors" and "les Bleus." "Grattez un nationaliste et vous trouverez un castor," he claimed, "grattez un castor et vous trouverez un bleu." He appealed to a sense of pride in the nation's autonomy and defended a Canadian Navy as an inexpensive, voluntary, guarantee against social disorder. He concluded by pointing to the incongruity of the Conservative-'nationaliste' alliance. "Dans l'Ontario, ils disent que la marine est trop canadienne et dans le Québec qu'elle ne l'est pas assez."

Such an "irrational" alliance pushed Laurier to explain and justify his own rational, national, approach to government – one that made the country's economic prosperity its primary objective. "C'est en faisant appel au bon sens, à la générosité, à la noblesse des hommes de toutes les races et de toutes les religions que j'ai réussi à donner

à mon pays une ère de progrès,” he said. For ‘le vrai parti,’ whose nationalism and progressivism had always been founded in the economic interests of Québec City, it was an approach to governing – emphasizing compromise for greater material gain – that had guided them since the 1860s.

In the following weeks, the ‘nationalistes’ and Conservatives in Québec City also adapted to the reduction in public space for comprehensive political debate. They focussed their attacks on Laurier personally as a symbol of English domination expressed in the Autonomy Bills and the Naval Service Bill.²¹⁹ La Libre Parole alluded to him as a traitor.²²⁰ As in 1896, Le Soleil adopted a rational, national approach to his defence, reproducing articles from English-language Conservative newspapers that condemned him as a Roman Catholic hero and opponent of Ontario.²²¹

Yet local interests increasingly imposed themselves on the Liberal campaign. “On a tellement donné d’importance aux profits et aux avantages considérables que comporte le projet de réciprocité pour les agriculteurs canadiens,” admitted Le Soleil, “qu’il peut y avoir quelques dangers maintenant à ce que les consommateurs des villes perdent de vue la grande importance que présente pour eux la mesure proposée.”²²² It launched a series of articles on the potential savings for urban consumers, predicting that housewives would see a 20 per cent reduction in the price of chicken, 30 per cent on vegetables, a 40-cent reduction on a barrel of apples, 50 cents on pears and \$1.00 on peaches. “La réciprocité va enrichir les tables de la classe ouvrière,” claimed d’Hellencourt. He

²¹⁹ L’Événement, 5 September 1911, p. 6; 6 September 1911, p. 4; 7 September 1911, p. 4.

²²⁰ La Libre Parole, 26 August 1911, p. 1.

²²¹ Le Soleil 26 August 1911, p. 20.

²²² Le Soleil 1 September 1911, p. 4.

attacked “tous les trustards, tous les détenteurs de privilège économiques, les faiseurs de mergers qui pressurent le public, [et qui] crient comme des ânes rouges contre la réciprocité.”²²³ Le Soleil portrayed Borden and Bourassa as puppets of the manufacturers and the trusts – Rodolphe Forget in particular – blaming them for secret transactions and profit gouging that increased the cost-of-living (see Figure 8 on page 306 at the beginning of this chapter). It made an even more direct appeal to local interests, running large advertisement-like articles trumpeting the government’s expenditures on public works.²²⁴

With only a week to go in the campaign, the balance of articles in Le Soleil and L’Événement, La Vigie and La Libre Parole, made it clear the election in Québec-Est would turn on local perception of the riding’s material interest – as it always had. In the past, that interest had always been expressed in the nationalism of ‘le vrai parti.’ In 1911, however, the resurgent Catholic nationalism of ‘les nationalistes’ weakened that connection and undercut its appeal to workers. At the same time, the party’s reorganization weakened its ties to the riding’s larger manufacturers. The local organization tried to bridge the emerging national and resistant local cultures but it did not seem to represent the majority of local electors any longer. Moreover, it had only come together two weeks into the campaign and did not have the electoral list until the end of August.²²⁵ Although nobody thought Laurier could be defeated, his hold on the riding had never been so weak – and there were signs of Liberal concern. For the first time in 34 years, Laurier returned to Québec City for nomination day, September 14. He

²²³ Le Soleil, 12 September 1911, p. 4.

²²⁴ Le Soleil, 9 September 1911, p. 20.

²²⁵ NAC, Fonds Laurier, MG 26-G, Volume, 688, p. 188432, Létourneau to Laurier, 2 August 1911; Volume 689, p. 188682, Létourneau to Lemaire, 8 August 1911.

spoke of Québec as the “foyer du libéralisme,” “raconta tout ce que son gouvernement a fait pour l’ancienne capitale du Canada” and, at the request of party organizers, reiterated that reciprocity would not affect the boot and shoe industry.²²⁶

The very next day, the Association des Manufacturiers de Chaussures de Québec (AMCQ) released a public statement, signed by twenty Conservative and former ‘parentiste’ shoe manufacturers, declaring: “la reciprocité nous est fatale.”²²⁷ Only days before the election, it was the sort of devastating blow that could undermine public confidence in the local benefits of reciprocity – particularly among the riding’s working-class electors. Le Soleil published denials three days later from former ‘parentiste’ Paul Tourigny, and some of the smaller manufacturers, such as Luc Routhier, Télésphore Trudel and A. Poirier.²²⁸ By then, however, Letourneau had taken matters into his own hands. On the evening of Friday, September 15, he met with the ‘nationaliste’ candidate, editor of La Libre Parole, René Leduc.²²⁹ They had something to drink and, by Saturday morning, Leduc had officially withdrawn from the race. The events of that evening were hotly contested. Létourneau claimed that Leduc had come to him offering to resign in return for financial compensation and an appointment to the Canadian High Commission in Paris. Leduc said Létourneau got him drunk and offered a bribe. Laurier, still in town, could not believe his agent would do such a thing and offered to resign if it was proven true. Two days before the vote, Leduc brought charges against Létourneau and had him

²²⁶ Le Soleil, 15 September 1911, p. 1.

²²⁷ Le Soleil, 16 September 1911, p. 4; L’Action Sociale, 16 September 1911, p. 1.

²²⁸ Le Soleil, 18 September 1911, p.1.

²²⁹ The account of Létourneau’s dealings with Leduc has been pieced together from articles in Le Soleil 18, 19 September 1911, p. 12 and L’Action Sociale 18, 19 September 1911, p. 1.

called before a Justice of the Peace. The Judge, Charles Langelier, withheld his decision until after the election, at which time he excused Létourneau and condemned Leduc for his behaviour.²³⁰

As a result, Laurier was elected by acclamation in 1911 and we will never know if Laurier would have lost his seat. It seems unlikely although there is evidence to suggest it was possible. The local party organization no longer included the most influential shoe manufacturers nor the devout majority of workers in the riding. It had tried to bridge the emerging national and resistant local political cultures, but as the campaign progressed, local concerns held greater sway in the media. Laurier had adopted national policies that addressed the local party's concerns, but it is possible they no longer reflected the interests of most local voters.

The results were equally puzzling at the national level. They proved, certainly, that Laurier's policies did not reflect the interests of English Canadians or even a significant minority of French Canadians. L'Événement, well placed to understand local opposition to Laurier, concluded that it was "la vieille querelle de la 'protection contre la réciprocité' qui est la cause immédiate de cette chute extraordinaire."²³¹ There can be no doubt the issue provoked vigorous opposition from manufacturers and imperialists in Ontario where Borden captured 73 of 85 seats.²³² But, because he still managed to win 38 of 65 seats in Québec, Laurier believed it was "le cri de race [qui] a fait triompher les

²³⁰ McGee, Laurier, Lapointe, St-Laurent..., pp. 147-148.

²³¹ L'Événement, 22 September 1911, p. 4.

²³² Paul Stevens, The 1911 General Election: A Study in Canadian Politics (Toronto: The Copp Clark Publishing Co., 1970) p. 181.

adversaires,” not reciprocity.²³³ Yet he won every seat in Nova Scotia and Prince Edward Island, eight of thirteen seats on New Brunswick, and 15 of 17 in Saskatchewan and Alberta.²³⁴

Only days after the election, L’Action Sociale suggested an explanation that attempted to account for the outcome in both English and French Canada. Despite “son apparente robustesse,” it concluded, “le gouvernement d’Ottawa avait déjà subi les atteintes de l’âge, et souffrait des infirmités inhérentes au régime parlementaire.”²³⁵ Two Liberal journalists who knew Laurier personally, John Willison and J.D. Dafoe, shared this view. According to Willison, Laurier was simply “slow to recognize the danger of reciprocity because he never thought his government could be defeated.”²³⁶ Dafoe believed Laurier had become too powerful and, as a result, too isolated from critical opinion. “It is in keeping with the genius of our party system,” he wrote, “that the leader who begins as the chosen chief of his associates proceeds by stages... to a position of dominance; the republic is transformed into an absolute monarchy.”²³⁷ Historian Paul Stevens came to the same conclusion although he thought Laurier’s age contributed to his defeat too. Laurier was older, isolated and less willing to yield to his younger colleagues. “His political sense had been dulled,” concluded Stevens.²³⁸ Laurier’s most recent

²³³ Le Soleil, 22 September 1911, p. 1; Oscar Skelton, Life and Letters of Sir Wilfrid Laurier, Volume II, 1896-1919 (Toronto : McClelland and Stewart, 1965) p. 143; L.O. David, Laurier (Sa Vie – Ses Oeuvres) (Beauceville: L’Éclaireur Ltée., 1919) p. 140.

²³⁴ Stevens, The 1911 General Election..., p. 181.

²³⁵ L’Action Sociale, 22 September 1911, p. 4.

²³⁶ Sir John Willison, Sir Wilfrid Laurier (Toronto: Oxford University Press, 1927) p. 406.

²³⁷ J.W. Dafoe, Laurier: A Study in Canadian Politics (Toronto: McClelland and Stewart, 1968) p. 83.

²³⁸ Paul Douglas Stevens, “Laurier and the Liberal Party in Ontario, 1887-1911,” PhD. Thesis: University of Toronto, 1966, pp. 369-374.

biographer, Réal Bélanger, agreed: Laurier “n’avait pas su renouveler suffisamment [son Cabinet] après 1906 de peur d’en perdre la maîtrise.”²³⁹

Laurier’s experience in Québec-Est supports this view. As a result of internal party changes he was losing touch with an increasingly important part of the local community. But the evidence does not suggest he got “dumb all of a sudden,” or that he was too old or too reluctant to change.²⁴⁰ He worked with Lemieux when Fitzpatrick resigned; with Gouin when Parent was defeated; with Garneau and Drouin; with a succession of aldermen including Côté, Langlois and Jobin; and he supported d’Hellencourt just as he had Pacaud. Nor does the evidence suggest the younger generation was, somehow, inferior. Men attracted to power more than principle – such as ‘les partentistes’ – had long ago proven their worth. Very simply, Laurier worked with the men who had proven their support in the community by winning elections.

The evidence from Québec-Est suggests, rather, that Laurier lost touch because of the way he stabilized the party in the years between Pacaud’s death and the 1908 election. During those years, Laurier was faced with internal party conflict over how best to adjust to a larger more complex society, with commensurate technological and managerial challenges and with revitalized opposition from the Church and ‘les nationalistes.’ He responded by rationalizing the party’s administration of federal, provincial and municipal patronage and increasingly insisting on appropriate job skills, above party qualifications, for federal appointments. He supported d’Hellencourt’s transformation of Le Soleil from

²³⁹ Bélanger, Wilfrid Laurier..., p. 464.

²⁴⁰ When considering Laurier’s decision to support reciprocity, George Bowering asks: “how could such a clever old dude be so dumb all of a sudden?” The expression is irreverent but captures much of the difficulty historians have explaining Laurier’s decision. Bowering, Stone Country..., p. 211.

a “journal populaire” into a more business-like “journal d’information.” And he relied more, too, on his staff, organized interest groups and, in particular, a larger more professional public service. It was the beginning of the rationalization of political and administrative power that historian John English has called the “decline of politics.” Much more than a decline, though, it was a transformation of the political culture that reflected the larger, more complex, rationalized society emerging in Canada’s urban centers.

Laurier’s Québec campaign relied more heavily than that of ‘les nationalistes’ on “modern” means of communication and rational arguments to shape public opinion. Laurier issued a “Manifeste” at the outset; ‘les nationalistes’ never did. Laurier attempted to simplify and personalize his appeal; ‘les nationalistes’ drew on a wider range of arguments and themselves focused on Laurier. Le Soleil, although partisan, covered the campaign as a “journal d’information”; L’Événement covered it as a more partisan “journal populaire.” Laurier took a rational stand on reciprocity, the navy and nationalism, declaring in Québec City: “je ne suis ni impérialiste ni anti-impérialiste, je suis simplement canadien;” the Conservative-‘nationalistes’ had no qualms with their contradictory positions.²⁴¹ The Liberal campaign still relied on a local organization and large public demonstrations but it attempted to adapt, too, to the rational, national culture emerging in its midst. Laurier’s defeat suggests that culture had not yet taken hold across the province and might not have taken hold even in Québec-Est where Church influence was so strong.

²⁴¹ Le Soleil, 15 September 1911, p. 1.

Alone among election commentators, Ulric Barthe, editor of La Vigie, noticed the trend in Québec: Liberals won in the cities while Conservative-‘nationalistes’ won in the countryside.²⁴² In the Québec district – the area of the province east of Lotbinière corresponding to the Archdiocese of Québec and the territory where Le Soleil circulated – Laurier gained one urban seat and lost seven rural seats.²⁴³ In the rural ridings, only two Liberal candidates who were not Ministers held their seats – and only by margins of 200 and 367 votes.²⁴⁴ One Minister, Rodolphe Lemieux, lost his seat. In Montréal, where English voters and imperial sentiment altered the nature of the campaign, Laurier still captured the city’s three predominantly French Canadian urban ridings.²⁴⁵

The election results confound the commonly held view that Laurier’s “Gladstonian liberalism” no longer satisfied an increasingly urban and industrial province.²⁴⁶ Laurier continued to say he was “not much in favour of...substituting collectivism to individualism in the relations of the government with the people.”²⁴⁷ But, as historian Patrice Dutil has remarked, “an ideology cannot be firmly grasped unless the politics that express it, *or fail to express it* [emphasis added], are understood.”²⁴⁸ Laurier

²⁴² La Vigie, 23 September 1911, p. 1.

²⁴³ NAC, Fonds Office of the Chief Electoral Officer, RG 113-C, Electoral Returns, 1867-1980.

²⁴⁴ In Témiscouata, Charles-Arthur Gauvreau held his seat by 200 votes. In Mégantic, Lucien Turcotte Pacaud held his seat by 367 votes. Ibid.

²⁴⁵ Liberals won handily in St-Jacques, St-Marie and St-Laurent. Ibid.

²⁴⁶ Brown and Cook, Canada 1896-1921..., p. 186; Bélanger, Wilfrid Laurier..., p. 465.

²⁴⁷ Brown and Cook, Canada 1896-1921..., p. 186.

²⁴⁸ Patrice Dutil, Devil’s Advocate: Godfroy Langlois and the Politics of Liberal Progressivism in Laurier’s Québec (Montréal: Robertson Davies Publishing, 1994) p. 20.

was not an ideologue.²⁴⁹ While it is true, that he did not introduce all of the progressive reforms proposed in Montréal, like national health insurance or temperance legislation, he nonetheless introduced the progressive reforms that ‘le vrai parti’ in Québec-Est wanted: the Conciliation Act, the Combines Investigation Act, the National Battlefields Commission, federal support for technical education, the 8-hour day and reciprocity in addition to rationalizing the management of his party, the party newspaper and government. These measures captured the reforms necessary in a large, densely populated, industrial and commercial, urban community that was dependent on federal support, the very centre of the Action sociale catholique and the home of the “national” labour movement. Laurier judged the most appropriate balance between English Protestant and French Catholic interests on what would be acceptable to the ‘vrai parti’ in the “most patriotic riding in Québec.” This was as true on the Naval Service Bill as it had been on the Manitoba Schools Question. The harbour improvements, steamship lines, bridge and National Transcontinental Railway all testify that Laurier was, throughout his career, ‘un vrai libéral.’

²⁴⁹ Despite his ideological explanation for Laurier’s defeat in 1911, even historian Réal Bélanger does not describe Laurier as an ideologue. “Laurier n’était pas bâti tout d’un bloc. Il n’était pas l’homme des situations tranchées...” Bélanger, *Wilfrid Laurier...*, p. 467. He admits Laurier was not a theorist and explicitly recognizes that Laurier’s practical side complicated any study of his liberalism. Réal Bélanger, “Le libéralisme de Wilfrid Laurier: évolution et contenu (1841-1919) in Yvan Lamonde, ed., *Combats libéraux au tournant du XXe siècle* (Montréal : Éditions Fides, 1995) pp. 41 and 71. Paul Stevens wrote, “Wilfrid Laurier: Politician,” in Marcel Hamelin, ed., *Les idées politiques des premiers ministres du Canada* (Ottawa: Les Éditions de l’Université d’Ottawa, 1969) pp. 69-86. It is the only article in the book that does not even attempt to define a prime minister’s “ideology.”

Chapter 8

Epilogue and Conclusion: “Le député de Québec-Est”



Figure 9: “Laurier: Sa vie et son oeuvre”¹

¹ Le Soleil, 22 November 1954, p. 4.

Early in the morning of November 26, 1911, a short circuit set off an electrical fire at the Salle Jacques-Cartier.² In a matter of minutes the old wooden structure that had served for more than fifty years as the community's marketplace, theatre and meeting hall, burned to the ground. It would not be rebuilt; Québec-Est was outgrowing the sort of political culture – with its close-knit, intersecting and overlapping commercial, leisure and political networks – that had thrived in the Salle Jacques-Cartier. Although it would be years before anyone knew what to build in its place, the gaping hole in the centre of the riding would be a clear sign there could be no turning away from the new sort of political culture that Laurier had struggled to advance during his last years in power.³ A few years later, a decision, based on the 1911 census, to divide the riding in two, merely confirmed the transition. By 1914, the factories of the National Transcontinental Railway (NTR) in St-Malo had made St-Sauveur an industrial centre in its own right and justified its separation from St-Roch.⁴ George Parent, son of Simon-Napoléon, won the first federal election in the new riding. St-Sauveur and the section of Jacques-Cartier shifted into that riding accounted for 31,273 of its 37,933 residents – and there were still 38,330 people living in what remained of Québec-Est.⁵

The new Québec-Est, comprising St-Roch, most of Jacques-Cartier and Limoilou, prospered during Laurier's first years in Opposition. In 1912, a decision against the

² Christian Beaucage, Le Théâtre à Québec au début du XXe siècle : une époque flamboyant! (Québec : Nuit blanche éditeurs, 1996) p. 39.

³ The site actually remained vacant until the city opened the "Bibliothèque Gabrielle-Roy" in May 1983.

⁴ The site of the NTR factories in St-Malo became the principal industrial complex in the Québec City region. Danielle Blanchet, Saint-Sauveur : à l'image du début du siècle (Québec : Ville de Québec, 1987) p. 24.

⁵ Canada, Census of Canada, 1921 (Ottawa: F.A. Acland, 1924).

United Shoe Machinery Company contributed to stability in the boot and shoe industry while construction of the NTR, completed in November 1913, stimulated growth in the local iron and steel industries, in construction and in the port and rail yards. During the war, production and employment accelerated even faster. Sales to the Canadian and American governments boosted production in the boot and shoe industry 44 per cent during the war years while the influx of men and materials spurred employment in the service, commercial, labour and clerical sectors.⁶ Laurier's massive investments in the port, railway, bridge and rifle factory paid off.

Without local influence in the Prime Minister's office, however, the riding's cherished commercial and industrial ambitions could not long be sustained. The Grand Trunk Railway (GTR), staggering under a heavy debt, refused to take over the NTR when completed.⁷ It had not wanted the line in 1903 and could not afford to operate it ten years later. The government was forced to cover a \$40 million cost overrun and operate the railway itself. In 1917, with the Grand Trunk Pacific Railway (GTPR) and Canadian Northern Railway (CNR) both in financial trouble, Ottawa took them over as well, preparing the way for the creation of the Canadian National Railway. In September that year, the Québec Bridge, linking the NTR to the Intercolonial Railway (ICR), was finally completed. It would have been finished a year earlier but for a freak accident when raising the centre span that had cost thirteen men their lives.⁸ The lives lost overseas in

⁶ For production in the boot and shoe industry see Marc-André Bluteau, "Québec 1896-1940: croissance et déclin de l'industrie du cuir," in Dupont, Jean-Claude and Jacques Mathieu, eds., *Les Métiers du Cuir* (Québec: Les Presses de l'Université Laval, 1981) p. 311; *Census of Canada, 1921*.

⁷ G.P. de T. Glazebrook, *A History of Transportation in Canada*, Volume II, *National Economy, 1867-1936* (Toronto: McClelland and Stewart Ltd., 1967) p. 150.

⁸ William D. Middleton, *The Bridge at Québec* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2001) p. 155.

Flanders as a result of the persistent design and manufacturing faults in the Ross Rifle prompted the government to cancel its contract the same year. Through each of these reversals and setbacks Laurier's support for his riding never wavered. He defended the costs incurred by Parent in building the NTR and fought the government take over of the CNR for fear it would undermine the viability of the GTPR-NTR-ICR line.⁹ He was on hand when the centre span was raised – and collapsed – on the Québec Bridge and went to his grave defending the Ross Rifle.¹⁰

Just as the local party's influence in Ottawa faded, the Church's influence in Québec-Est flowered. Monseigneur Bégin showed that he, too, would adjust to a larger, more complex, society. His approach, however, revealed simply a desire to reproduce the community's old public culture on a larger scale. Despite rising wartime prices, Monseigneur Robert Lagueux, the new priest in Notre-Dame de Saint-Roch, pushed forward construction of a much larger church, just behind the old one, on the site of the old presbytery.¹¹ The first mass in the new church was held on July 22, 1917. In Jacques-Cartier, too, Monseigneur Omer Cloutier, Monseigneur Roy's successor, continued to find ways to assemble ever-larger groups of parishioners. In 1914, he inaugurated the Cercle paroissiale de Notre-Dame de Jacques-Cartier bringing together the parish's youth

⁹ Robert Rumilly, *Histoire de la Province de Québec*, Tome XVIII, *Le Règlement 17* (Montréal : Montréal-Éditions, 1940) p. 196; Robert Rumilly, *Histoire de la Province de Québec*, Tome XXII, *La Conscription* (Montréal : Montréal-Éditions, 1940) p. 151.

¹⁰ Middleton, *The Bridge at Québec*, p. 155 and 159. Laurier reiterated his support for the rifle in a letter to a constituent in 1917. NAC, Fonds Laurier, Volume 707, p. 195087, Laurier to J.W. Barrette, 20 March 1917. There were suggestions made in Québec City that the British-made cartridges were defective, not the rifle. Rumours also circulated that the Birmingham Small Arms Company, makers of the Lee Enfield, had mounted a campaign against the Ross Rifle. Rumilly, *La Conscription*, p. 46.

¹¹ Jean-Marc Paradis, "Inventaire des archives de la Paroisse de St-Roch de Québec," B.A. Thesis: Université Laval, 1996, pp. 24-32.

groups, the Cercle Bégin of the ACJC, the Garde indépendante Jacques-Cartier and the Union dramatique de Québec as well as a choir and orchestra.¹² The Cercle paroissiale launched two new initiatives to unite parishioners: a newsletter known as La Vie Paroissiale and a job placement office.

Joseph-Alphonse Langlois's vote, in 1911, against a bill introducing the use of standard texts in the province's primary schools revealed the Church's growing influence over labour unions in Québec-Est.¹³ For years, Omer Brunet and the national union movement had called for standard texts to be loaned free of charge to students during the school year. It was a measure the Church resisted for fear the additional costs, necessarily bourn by the government, would lead to secularization of the school system. By voting against the measure, Langlois split the local labour movement. He and the more devout labour leaders formed the Conseil central national du district de Québec et de Lévis (CCNDQL) in opposition to Brunet's Canadian Federation of Labour and the international Trades and Labour Congress of Canada. In the May 1912 provincial election, Brunet – with the support of Le Soleil – ran against Langlois in St-Sauveur. Langlois adopted a tactic, long used by Liberal opponents in Québec-Est, of publishing a single-edition newspaper to voice the aims of Catholic unionism in the riding. It called for a Parti Ouvrier Catholic to confront “les socialistes” and pledged, first and foremost, to obey Church doctrine, promote temperance and suppress prostitution.¹⁴ Langlois's victory represented a turning point in the orientation of the city's union movement. Four

¹² Albert Jobin, Histoire de la Congrégation et de la Paroisse de Notre-Dame-de-Jacques-Cartier (Québec, 1940) pp. 47-49.

¹³ Information in this paragraph is based on Jacques Rouillard, Histoire du syndicalisme au Québec : Des origines à nos jours (Montréal : Boréal, 1989) pp. 106-108.

¹⁴ Le Travailleur, 4 April 1912, p. 1.

years later, the CCNDQL regrouped a majority of the city's unions with 17 locals and 6,000 members.¹⁵ Only a year earlier, l'Abbé Maxime Fortin had set up the first Cercle d'étude for workers in the riding.¹⁶ It led many of the city's unions, and the CCNDQL to accept a chaplain by January 1918. Three years later, Fortin would play a central role in formation of the Confédération des travailleurs catholique du Canada (CTCC).

'Les nationalistes,' now a small minority among Conservative MPs in Ottawa, could not replace Laurier's influence in the federal government and suffered the consequences in Québec-Est. Borden selected Ministers from Québec with little support among 'les nationalistes.' He gave Conservatives, not 'nationalistes,' the prime patronage appointments. He extended the borders of Manitoba without altering the provisions for French-language Catholic schooling in the province. And he retained Laurier's naval policy while preparing the political ground, in Canada and Britain, for an emergency contribution to the Imperial Navy with a greater Canadian voice in Imperial foreign policy. Discouraged at every turn, Bourassa chose not to run in the May 1912 provincial election and Gouin's government was returned easily. It gave Liberals in Québec-Est a taste of revenge when Louis Létourneau soundly defeated 'le nationaliste' Alphonse Huard.

The disappointments of 'les nationalistes' helped reinvigorate the Liberal party in Québec and Laurier redoubled his efforts to associate the party with a strong secular image of French Canada. In June 1912, while Borden was in Britain, he took part – along with Gouin, François Langelier and P-A. Choquette – in the Congrès de la Langue

¹⁵ Jacques Rouillard, *Les syndicats nationaux au Québec de 1900 à 1930* (Québec: Les Presses de l'Université Laval, 1979) p. 103.

¹⁶ Rouillard, *Histoire du Syndicalisme*..., pp. 121-125.

Française.¹⁷ Organized by Monseigneur Roy, l'abbé Lortie, Adjutor Rivard and the Société du Parler Français, it brought together French Catholic leaders from across North America. But Liberals stood out by unveiling a monument to Mercier in the midst of the proceedings and by supporting a motion of sympathy for Franco-Ontarians facing the imminent imposition of Regulation 17.¹⁸ Borden's statements upon his return from Britain, all but announcing his government's plans to contribute to the Imperial Navy, further invigorated the party's reorganization in Québec-Est. A meeting of the Club Mercier, on September 30, confirmed the prominence of "national" unionists in the Liberal party.¹⁹ Speakers that evening included two labour leaders, J.E.A. Pin and F-X. Galibois, as well as Létourneau and the recently elected President of the Jeune libéraux de Québec, Hector Laferté. The effects of 'nationaliste' disappointment with Borden's government were also in evidence. Among those attending the meeting were Albert Jobin, Télésphore Verret and Michel Fiset. Two weeks later, a similarly striking group of Conservatives, 'nationalistes,' labour leaders and young Liberals came together at a meeting of the Club Laurier in St-Sauveur.²⁰ The two clubs joined others from across the city on October 20 to celebrate with Laurier, F. Langelier, Gouin, Drouin, C. Delâge, and G.E. Amyot the unveiling of a statue to "notre grand historien," F-X. Garneau.²¹ The event bound Laurier to "sentiments du plus pur patriotisme."

¹⁷ Robert Rumilly, Histoire de la Province de Québec, Tome XVII, Les Écoles du Keewatin (Montréal: Montréal-Éditions, 1940) p. 136.

¹⁸ Ibid., p. 141 and 146.

¹⁹ Le Soleil, 1 October 1912, p. 1.

²⁰ Le Soleil, 10 October 1911, p. 1 and 6.

²¹ Le Soleil, 21 October 1911, p. 1.

Laurier understood, however, that there had been more to his defeat in 1911 than Bourassa's challenge to his image as leader of French Canada or even the possible weakness of his party's constituency-level organization. The idea, suggested by L'Action Sociale, that a government could be defeated simply by the "infirmités inhérentes au régime parlementaire," was new in Canadian politics.²² But it pointed to ways in which Laurier's steps toward the rationalization of government and party, and reliance on a more objective print-based campaign, had disconnected him from the electorate. Rather than stepping away from these modern innovations once in Opposition, however, Laurier sought to reproduce them in a party now stripped of public service support.²³ He almost exactly duplicated the structure, personnel and objectives of the most modern government department – the Department of Labour – in 1912 when he established a Central Information Office (CIO) for the party with William Lyon Mackenzie King at its head. The CIO was to "coordinate with other Liberal agencies" and publish the Canadian Liberal Monthly.²⁴ The newsletter explicitly sought to support a form of public discussion that was "less fugitive than that of the press and less ephemeral than that of parliamentary debate or the public platform." In King's assessment, the reciprocity and the naval questions had produced a "volume of political literature unequalled in previous years," a development that had "compelled a reconsideration of first principles and a closer examination of the aims and objectives of the political parties of the Dominion."

²² Macdonald, working in a different party and political system, died in office. Mackenzie's defeat is most commonly blamed on his own political naiveté.

²³ Réal Bélanger sees these innovations, like the energy Laurier put into rebuilding the party after the 1911 defeat, as a departure for the Liberal leader. Réal Bélanger, "Le libéralisme de Wilfrid Laurier : évolution et contenu (1841-1919)," in Lamonde, Yvan, ed. Combats libéraux au tournant du XXe siècle (Montréal: Éditions Fides, 1995) p. 66.

²⁴ All quotations in this paragraph are taken from the first edition of the Canadian Liberal Monthly (September 1913) p. 2.

Thus, the Canadian Liberal Monthly was meant to take the rationalization of party management and debate, a process already begun, one step farther. In concrete terms, it would “bring together and preserve, in a form available for ready and permanent reference, expressions of Liberal thought and records of Liberal achievements.” Although “published in the interests of Liberalism,” it would appeal “to all persons, irrespective of party, who desire a fine understanding of public questions and honest, efficient and progressive government.” The CIO was a thoroughly modern measure, whose main purpose was partisan and educational and whose principal methods entirely rational and literate.

In Québec-Est, the Canadian Liberal Monthly became a central part of the local party organization. Prior to the May 1916 provincial election, Létourneau gathered 50 party members to organize the sale of 1,000 subscriptions to the newsletter.²⁵ It was a far cry from the public meetings, with prominent speakers, held before earlier campaigns. And, despite his victory, Létourneau found the campaign “sans enthousiasme sous une apparence froide et calme.”²⁶ He told Laurier that “la grande difficulté a été de faire voter les gens.”

Laurier, however, continued to strengthen the party’s ability to appeal to a larger, more rational and national public opinion. In December 1915, he organized a National Liberal Advisory Committee explicitly to advance “progressive Liberalism in Canada.” It was needed, he said, because “the conditions resulting from the War would bring about a new political and economic era” and because “reforms of many longstanding abuses were

²⁵ NAC, Fonds Laurier, MG 26-G, Volume 697, p. 191527, Létourneau to Laurier, 4 April 1916.

²⁶ Ibid., Volume 699, p. 192195, Létourneau to Laurier, 3 June 1916.

necessary.” Just as he, Mercier and François Langelier had done when seeking to renew the Liberal party in 1871, Laurier wanted to “give Liberals outside Parliament a voice in the active councils and direction of the Party.” This time, however, in addition to organizing Liberal clubs open to anyone, he made a special effort to attract “the best minds of the community.” King emphasized the elitism of this progressive approach to democracy by insisting on the carefully rational representative structure of the ‘central’ committee.²⁷ Members with an affiliation to Québec City included Rodolphe Lemieux, Ernest Lapointe, Alexandre Taschereau and party organizer Phillippe Paradis. Although not traditionally identified as ‘progressive Liberals’ these men contributed to a report, presented by Laurier in September 1916, that recommended old age pensions, unemployment insurance, medical insurance and accident insurance.²⁸ The committee laid the foundations for the 1919 federal Liberal convention in Kingston that elected William Lyon Mackenzie King leader.

Laurier adopted a similarly progressive approach to government during the war years – to the degree that it was acceptable in Québec-Est. When Britain declared war in August 1914, he did not hesitate to “laisser de côté la politique électorale pour ne faire que de la politique vraiment nationale.”²⁹ It was a remarkable gesture supported by all parties in his riding. Within a week, the Société Saint-Jean-Baptiste, at the urging of President J.E.A. Pin and Past-President Cyrille Delâge, pledged its support for the families of soldiers in the 9th Voltigeurs – one of the city’s militia regiments.³⁰ The

²⁷ Canadian Liberal Monthly (January 1916) p. 54.

²⁸ Ibid., (October 1916) p.16.

²⁹ Le Soleil, 7 August 1914, p. 4.

³⁰ Ibid., 15 August 1914, p. 12.

‘nationaliste’ Adjutor Rivard, President of the Société du Parler Français, joined the executive committee established by the Société Saint-Jean-Baptiste (SSJB) for the project. This initiative soon became the Québec City Branch of the Fonds patriotique canadien under the Presidency of Cyrille Delâge. He wasted no time in organizing sub-committees in St-Roch, Jacques-Cartier and St-Sauveur. Louis Létourneau led an organization dominated by former ‘vrais libéraux’ in St-Roch while Conservatives Michel Fiset and Télésphore Verret joined with Catholic labour leaders J-A. Langlois and Louis Émond in the St-Sauveur committee.³¹

The war transformed Québec City into a “veritable centre d’opérations.”³² Even before Britain declared war, the Cartridge and Ross Rifle Factories started working around the clock.³³ In a space of two months, 31,200 men from across the country had assembled in Valcartier to train before departing for Britain.³⁴ Laurier actively encouraged voluntary enlistment and played a prominent role in the formation of the uniquely French Canadian 22nd Battalion.³⁵ Despite high levels of employment in the city’s factories and port, a higher proportion of local residents volunteered to join the battalion than from any other area of the province (13.4 per 1,000 residents versus 12 per

³¹ *Ibid.*, 16 September 1914, p. 7; 8 October 1914, p. 8

³² *Ibid.*, 3 August 1914, p. 7.

³³ *Ibid.*

³⁴ Rober Craig Brown and Ramsay Cook, *Canada 1896-1921 : A Nation Transformed* (Toronto : McClelland and Stewart Limited, 1974) p. 214.

³⁵ *Le Soleil*, 30 September 1914, p. 4; Jean-Pierre Gagnon, *Le 22^e Bataillon (canadien-français) 1914-1919 : Étude socio-militaire* (Québec : Les Presses de l’Université Laval, 1986) p. 28; Pierre Vennat, *Les ‘Poilus’ québécois de 1914-1918 : Histoire des militaires canadiens-français de la Première Guerre mondiale*, Tome I (Montréal : Éditions du Méridien, 1999) p. 51.

1,000 from Montréal, the second highest).³⁶ They accounted for 14.1 per cent (421 men) of the battalion's volunteers (2979 men) and, later, 14.2 per cent (146 men) of its conscripts (1027 men).³⁷ Many of these men had worked as labourers or machine operators in Québec-Est, although historian Jean-Marc Paradis suggests that a significant number of the young men, from "nos meilleurs familles," who had joined the quasi-military Garde indépendante Champlain, were among the first to volunteer.³⁸

But it was not so much the level of recruitment as the massive influx of English-speaking soldiers during the war years that most affected people in Québec-Est. They brought tangible benefits to local residents, stimulating the economy and creating full employment. Even before they arrived, though, the local consumers were concerned about their effect on prices. The rising cost of living had been a problem since 1908 and a critical issue in the 1911 election. Thus, when enthusiasm for national sacrifice ran high in the first days of the war, Le Soleil recommended price controls as the best example of a "politique vraiment nationale."³⁹ As the war advanced it increasingly turned local prices into a partisan issue – into an easily understood symbol of Conservative mismanagement. In articles reminiscent of the 1911 campaign, d'Hellencourt condemned Borden and his Cabinet of "trustards" for not using the Combines Investigation Act against the wartime profiteers.⁴⁰

³⁶ Gagnon, Le 22^e Bataillon..., p. 237

³⁷ Ibid., p. 356.

³⁸ According to historian Jean-Pierre Gagnon, 30.8 per cent of soldiers from Québec City had worked in manufacturing and 26.4 per cent had worked as labourers. Ibid., pp. 372-373. Paradis, Inventaire..., p. 38.

³⁹ Le Soleil, 7 August 1914, p. 4.

⁴⁰ Ibid., 1 June 1917, p. 4.

By 1917, however, the soldiers were attracting greater attention for their behavior in the city than for their effect on local prices. The city's newspapers largely suppressed, voluntarily, conflict between soldiers and local residents.⁴¹ Yet it was serious enough, in May that year, for the government to establish a military Commission of Inquiry into accusations that local residents had, on a number of occasions, thrown stones at convoys of soldiers passing through the city. Its report suggested the soldiers had been drunk and may have provoked the incidents themselves. On another occasion, L'Action Catholique reported that a soldier, recently back from the front and "détraqué," had broken into a church and tried to open the tabernacle.⁴² Such incidents only hinted, though, at the unsettling disturbance such a large, sudden and often unruly English presence had in the city. In a letter to J.E.A. Pin, President of the SSJB, a frequent visitor to the city captured a sense of the "situation absolument anormale où se trouve le français dans votre ville." He wrote, "le public voyageur canadien-français se sent profondément humilié...d'être traité en esclaves par des garçons de table et des filles de restaurants et autres valets anglais ou à la solde des anglais."⁴³

The presence of so many English-speaking soldiers gave residents of Québec City a unique, immediate and profoundly upsetting context in which to interpret national political issues in the war years. First among these was the decision of the Ontario government to largely prohibit French-language schooling in Ontario. Although the government imposed Regulation 17 in 1912, the issue gained ever-increasing prominence

⁴¹ Information on the military Commission of Inquiry is taken from articles in L'Action Catholique, 2 June 1917, p. 3; 4 June 1917, p. 1.

⁴² Ibid., 11 July 1917, p. 6.

⁴³ ANQQ, Fonds de la Société Saint-Jean-Baptiste de Québec, P 412, Volume 4, File 55, Léon Paradis to J.E.A. Pin, 21 November 1916.

in Québec City during the war years. A motion, presented by Ernest Lapointe on May 10, 1916, respectfully suggesting that the Ontario government clarify the right to French language schooling in the province, gave Louis Létourneau an advantage he quickly exploited in the provincial election held five days later. At the largest public meeting held in the riding, with Lomer Gouin, Alexandre Taschereau and Adélard Turgeon, Létourneau “fit allusion à l’attitude prise par Sir Wilfrid Laurier sur la question bilingue et cette invocation de la figure du chef du parti libéral attira des applaudissements frénétiques.”⁴⁴ It was Le Soleil, though, that best captured the sense of local involvement in the issue. But it had none of the tact or subtlety of Lapointe’s motion:

Une fois la malice et la mauvaise foi bien établies de la part de ceux qui persécutent la langue française d’un bout à l’autre du Canada, la conclusion à laquelle, fatalement, nous serons amenés, nous de la province de Québec, c’est que la vie en commun n’est plus possible avec des associés qui nous trompent et nous trichent.⁴⁵

The conscription crisis, touched off by Borden’s announcement on May 18, 1917, made such sentiments even more common in Québec City. Borden’s invitation to Laurier, seven days later, to join his government made the issue particularly relevant to voters in Québec-Est. Before Laurier announced his decision, on June 6, to reject the invitation, four public meetings had been held in the riding all urging him to reject conscription and the Union government.⁴⁶ They argued that Borden’s government, already past its mandate, had no right to impose such a measure without first consulting the electorate. It would be detrimental, they said, to local agriculture and industry. And they claimed it

⁴⁴ Le Soleil, 13 May 1916, p. 1.

⁴⁵ Ibid., 10 May 1916, p. 4.

⁴⁶ Ibid., 5 June 1917, p. 8.

was unnecessary because of excellent results yielded by the voluntary system. Over the next month, during parliamentary debate on the measure, the Catholic unions and newly established Fédération des Sociétés Saint-Jean-Baptiste de l'Archdiocèse de Québec took a similar public stand. All three labour organizations in the city considered calling a general strike should conscription be imposed. In St-Sauveur, the Chasseurs de Salaberry and members of the Oeuvre de la Jeunesse opposed the measure. On Sunday, July 16, the Ligue Anti-conscriptioniste brought all of these groups together – 15,000 people – in a massive protest on Jacques Cartier Square. Conservative-‘nationaliste’ Senator Philippe Landry, Armand Lavergne and Louis Létourneau spoke before the enraged crowd sacked the offices of the city’s two Conservative newspapers, L’Événement and The Chronicle. Local public opinion was very clear. Laurier would have risked his safety in Québec-Est had he not opposed conscription.

Despite their differences, the imposition of Regulation 17 and conscription brought together Liberals and Conservative-‘nationalistes’ both in opposition to those measures and in their desire to maintain social order. Neither condoned the violence on July 16. Both urged acceptance of conscription once it was passed.⁴⁷ Even after Borden imposed the Military Voters Act and the Wartime Elections Act, they preferred to confront Borden at the polls rather than in the streets.⁴⁸ The Conservative-‘nationalistes’ rallied around Gouin and Laurier in preparation for the 1917 election.⁴⁹

⁴⁷ The Liberal appeal to accept conscription and remain committed to the war effort appeared in Ibid., 4 August 1917, p. 4. Conservative-‘nationalistes’ responded in a similar manner. See Rumilly, La Conscription, pp. 138-140.

⁴⁸ Le Soleil, 15 August 1917, p. 4; Rumilly, La Conscription, p. 154.

⁴⁹ Ibid., p. 155.

Yet two key differences between Liberals and Conservative-‘nationalistes’ remained strong enough to differentiate them and their approaches to maintaining social stability even in the last months of 1917. Former ‘parentistes’ within the Liberal party, still identified by their abiding interest in the city’s economic ambitions, maintained an almost desperate faith in the possibility of a pan-Canadian nationalism. In the Spring, Ulrich Barthe launched the Unity Publicity Bureau (UPB) with Frank Carrel, editor of the English-language Liberal newspaper in Québec City, The Daily Telegraph. The Bureau published pamphlets with titles such as “Jean-Baptiste to his English-Canadian Brother” that set out to explain French and English Canadians to each other.⁵⁰ Contributors, who assisted in the distribution of the pamphlets in English Canada, included George Tanguay, Nazaire Fortier, Onésime Goulet and George-Élie Amyot.⁵¹ ‘Les vrais libéraux’ adopted an equally progressive approach though it reflected their less conservative values. As early as June 1917, J.E.A. Pin began working with Joseph Tanguay and the wives of prominent Liberals – notably, Mme Napoléon Drouin – in organizing the Ligue des Menagères.⁵² Initial meetings in St-Sauveur and St-Roch revealed the women’s interest in organizational principles and municipal issues, in particular, the space allocated for the new St-Roch market. In July, however, when Borden established the country’s first income tax, Pin used the Ligue des Menagères to calm a run on the banks.⁵³ Le Soleil reported that “les déclarations enflammées de certains orateurs,” at

⁵⁰ NAC, Fonds Ulric Barthe, MG 27-I-1-28, Volume 1, P.A. Galameau to Barthe, 7 June 1917.

⁵¹ Ibid., George-Élie Amyot to Barthe, 17 November 1917; Volume 3, List of Subscribers to Unity Publicity Bureau, Québec, 2 November 1917.

⁵² Le Soleil, 13 June 1917, p. 10; 27 June 1917, p. 10; 10 July 1917, p. 10.

⁵³ Ibid., 17 July 1917, p. 8; 20 July 1917, p. 8.

“une assemblée anti-conscriptionniste,” had created a popular belief that the tax would apply to savings and capital as well as income and, as a result, people had begun closing their accounts.⁵⁴ In a series of meetings with the Ligue des Menagères, Pin urged members, whom he assumed controlled their families’ finances, to keep their savings in the bank, warning that massive withdrawals would hurt local business and employment.⁵⁵ It proved to be an effective way to end the panic.⁵⁶

The Church, and ‘les nationalistes’ urged more conservative measures for preserving social stability. During the war years, L’Action Catholique portrayed commercial cinema as a danger to moral and intellectual hygiene, calling on the family, city, province and country to repress it with authority.⁵⁷ It opposed women’s participation in public life as dangerous to the family.⁵⁸ Consistently, it appealed to “le droit naturel, conçu et inspiré par Dieu” as “le meilleur et le plus sûr fondement de notre unité nationale aujourd’hui chancelante.”⁵⁹ It had the most success, however, building on the temperance campaign first launched in 1905.

L’Action Catholique blamed alcohol for “les désordres et les malheurs de toutes sortes” in Québec City.⁶⁰ In the war years, alcohol offered a visible explanation for disorder easily associated with a “foreign” presence in the city. It was increasingly

⁵⁴ Ibid., 19 July 1917, p. 1.

⁵⁵ Ibid., 17 July 1917, p. 8; 20 July 1917, p. 8.

⁵⁶ Le Soleil reported that the run was “pratiquement calmée” on July 19. Ibid.

⁵⁷ L’Action Catholique, 2 July 1917, p. 1.

⁵⁸ Ibid., 5 June 1917, p. 1.

⁵⁹ Ibid., 1 June 1917, p. 1.

⁶⁰ Ibid., 2 August 1917, p. 1.

blamed, too, as a detriment to the nation's war effort. The heightened sense of patriotism and desire for order during the war added to momentum built by the Church's temperance campaign to produce an strong public appeal for total prohibition. In May 1917, on the eve of the conscription crisis, 8,000 people signed a petition asking the federal government (under the "Scott law") to hold a referendum on prohibition in the city. The strength of the appeal divided Liberals and the labour movement. Louis Létourneau organized the opposition to Monseigneurs Bégin and Roy, l'Abbé Maxime Fortin, Conservative-'nationaliste' Senator Philippe Landry, 'nationalistes' Adjutor Rivard and Albert Jobin, as well as 'vrai libéral' Antonine Galipeault.⁶¹ Caught in the middle was Charles Langelier, President of the Liquor Licensing Board, who shared his brother's view in favour of temperance, not prohibition. Before long he was identified with Létourneau, the brewers and hotelkeepers who warned prohibition would cost the city 600 jobs. The employment question divided workers: Catholic unions – the largest in the city – supported prohibition, national unions remained neutral and international unions opposed the measure.⁶² Létourneau managed to secure four delays from the federal government before the issue was finally put to a vote in the city on October 4. After months and years of preparation, a short, vigorous campaign began with a pastoral letter from Monseigneur Bégin on September 16 and ended with an overwhelming majority for prohibition.⁶³

⁶¹ Ibid.; Rumilly, La Conscription, p. 159.

⁶² La Prohibition, 3 October 1917, p. 3.

⁶³ Rumilly, La Conscription, p. 158. Prohibition passed with a majority of 3,222 votes. In Québec-Est, only two polls (both in St-Sauveur) voted against prohibition. L'Action Catholique, 5 October 1917.

Throughout the trying summer and autumn of 1917, Laurier stood resolutely with his party in Québec City and, in particular, with ‘le vrai parti.’ He opposed prohibition, he supported income tax, he would extend the federal franchise to women in provinces where they already had the vote and he worked closely with Barthe to prove that French Canadians enlisted in the same proportion as native-born English Canadians.⁶⁴ And, of course, he opposed conscription. The December 1917 federal election united Liberals and Conservative-‘nationalistes’ in their opposition to that measure and in their resolve to uphold social order. Their convictions were not put to the test, however, until the federal government began to enforce conscription in 1918.

The test came on Thursday, March 28, when military police in St-Roch arrested a young man they found in a bowling alley without his papers and a crowd reacted by sacking the police station on Jacques Cartier Square.⁶⁵ The incident, just before the Easter long weekend, touched off four days of increasingly violent riots by protesters from St-Roch and St-Sauveur against military offices and stores in the Upper Town – and increasingly repressive measures on the part of the army. Mayor Lavigueur, Louis Létourneau and l’Abbé Côté were left alone on Thursday to calm the protestors but, by Friday evening, when rioters overcame 20 municipal police officers before burning the recruiting station in the Upper Town, the military took over. The following day, Le Soleil pleaded for citizens to “calmer les esprits.” Yet a cavalry charge was required to disperse protestors hurling stones, bricks and ice at soldiers in front of the armory in the Upper

⁶⁴ Canada, House of Commons Debates, 16 May 1917, p. 1500; 2 August 1917, p. 4085; NAC, Fonds Laurier, MG 26-G, Volume 704, p. 194029, Barthe to Laurier, 3 December 1916; p. 194225, Barthe to Laurier, 29 December 1916; Volume 706, p. 194815, Barthe to Laurier, 15 February 1917; Volume 708, p. 195414, Barthe to Laurier, 30 April 1917.

⁶⁵ Unless otherwise indicated, the account of the Easter riots in this paragraph is based on articles in Le Soleil, 29, 30 March 1918 and 1-6, 8-13, 15 April 1918.

Town. Borden dispatched 1,000 troops, from Toronto, who arrived the following day. On Sunday, priests across the city read a pastoral letter appealing for calm. But the rioting continued – though confined, by the military, to the Lower Town. A patrol sent to empty a gun shop on du Pont, in St-Roch, was attacked and, in the resulting confusion, a man and two girls were shot (though not fatally). A second store on St-Joseph was sacked before the crowd attempted to move to the Upper Town. Armand Lavergne persuaded them to return to Jacques Cartier Square where he convinced them to disperse by promising he could get the troops to withdraw.⁶⁶

But the only troop movement the next day, Easter Monday, was the arrival of still more reinforcements from Toronto. At 6:30 that evening 400 of them set up machine guns in Jacques Cartier Square while others sealed off every street leading to the Upper Town. A crowd of 2,000 people gathered as the sun set and fog rolled in. Around eight o'clock, someone broke the window of a nearby grocery store. Machine guns fired. The cavalry charged after the crowd down St-Joseph. Their horses tumbled over cable wire strung across the street. The crowd and soldiers regrouped near the corner of Bagot, St-Joseph and St-Valier, in St-Sauveur. The soldiers, under fire from the crowd, ordered them to disperse – to no avail. With bayonets lowered, they charged – and were met with a volley of pistol shot and stones. They retreated behind the machine gun and opened fire.

Four people were killed (a man from St-Malo, a student at the Technical School and two boys from St-Sauveur), fifteen were injured and 53 arrested; ten soldiers ended the night in hospital; and the Easter riots were over. But for local Liberals, 'nationalistes'

⁶⁶ He had spoken previously that day with the district commander, General Landry, Colonel Machin of the Militia Department and Allyn Taschereau of the Justice Department. It is very unlikely, however, that he was authorized to make such a commitment. Robert Rumilly, *Histoire de la Province de Québec*, Tome XXIII, *L'Armistice* (Montréal : Montréal Éditions, 1940) p. 71.

and religious authorities, who had been caught between the crowd and the military – between their opposition to conscription and their desire for order – the troubles continued. And the country was watching. Reporters from every province had descended on Québec City. They filed story after story describing the violent traitorous French Canadians of Québec-Est. In the Winnipeg Free Press, J.W. Dafoe called for “summary measures” to deal with the “enemy.”⁶⁷

Faced with an unrelenting attack from English Canada, the Church and ‘les vrais libéraux’ made their choice. The Seminary admitted its students, immediately, to the first level of the priesthood to protect them from military justice.⁶⁸ Superior Court Judge Charles Langelier released all 46 of the detainees who appeared before him.⁶⁹ But the military continued to hold eleven of them and refused to let seven men, held in the Ross Rifle Factory, appear before Langelier. All eyes turned to Ottawa where Laurier, gathering information from Choquette, Létourneau and Lavigueur, prepared to address the House. Rising from his seat on April 5, he spoke for the crowd.⁷⁰ He blamed the riots on agitators from Montréal; he blamed them on the way the military authorities enforced conscription; and he defended the local authorities.⁷¹ Though he did not condone violence, he spoke, as he always had, as “le député de Québec-Est.”

⁶⁷ Ibid., p. 76.

⁶⁸ Ibid., p. 78.

⁶⁹ NAC, Fonds Laurier, MG 26-G, Volume 722, p. 200269, Létourneau to Laurier, 4 April 1918.

⁷⁰ The judgement is that of P.-A. Choquette, Un demi-siècle de vie politique (Montréal: Éditions Beauchemin, 1936) p. 245.

⁷¹ Canada, House of Commons Debates, 5 April 1918.

Despite the depth of Laurier's loyalty to Québec-Est, so evident in his speech on the Easter riots, as throughout his career, his ties to the constituency were almost forgotten ten months later when he passed away in Ottawa. The secretaries of the Club Mercier and Club Laurier were too young to have known him well; only Joseph Moisan and J.E.A. Pin of the SSJB remembered how "tant de liens, du reste, et si lointains l'attachaient à cette ville qui lui était fidèle."⁷² Instead, his memory became caught up in a national effort to rebuild a sense of unity in the aftermath of the war. "Laurier nous a tracé notre devoir;" wrote d'Hellencourt in Le Soleil, "comme lui, nous devons, à l'avenir, unir autour de l'idéal pour lequel il a combattu...l'unité nationale canadienne."⁷³

Multiple contests between French and English Canadians, nationalists and imperialists, progressives and conservatives, over the precise characteristics of Canadian unity would be projected onto Laurier's legacy for the next fifty years and cloud our view of both him and Canadian politics for many more. Raising Laurier to the level of a national icon would make him relevant to contemporary debate, a constant presence in the public mind, but it would also cut him loose – in our historical imagination – from the local roots that grounded him throughout his career. It produced a legacy of contradictions and unresolved questions that, in turn, contributed to making politics seem disturbingly unpredictable or somehow, perhaps, irrelevant.

⁷² Le Soleil, 20 February 1919, p. 12.

⁷³ Ibid., 24 February 1919, p. 4.

Figuratively cutting Laurier loose from his local roots was fitting, however, in one sense. It reflected something of what happened to Canadians as they lived through a period of tremendous growth in the size and complexity of society during Laurier's career. Examining his relationship with Québec-Est offers insight into how that process took place because the task of political representation tied him, for forty-two years, to the economic, social and cultural networks of his constituents. The pattern of stability and change in those networks shaped the riding's political culture and, as a result, the manner and quality of political representation that linked individual and collective opinion, values, beliefs and interests to government action. In Québec-Est, that link had an impact on the entire country.

During Laurier's career, that link, the essence of political representation, was made through four instruments for shaping and expressing public opinion: the party, the party newspaper, government patronage and elections. Of these, the party provided the most direct, nuanced and influential connection between Laurier and the evolving political culture in Québec-Est. Much of that evolution was captured by, and expressed through, the conflict between the two principal factions making up the local party.

'Le vrai parti libéral' first took shape as the Parti national in 1872. Its members, like Laurier, had mostly been Rouge until that point and they would retain that party's attachment to a secular French Canadian nationalism and its progressive interest in educational, electoral and governmental reforms. Yet their organizational structure, based on networks of personal influence, and overriding interest in the economic development of Québec City, reflected the timing of their formation, in the mid-1870s, during the first phase of industrialization in the riding. Their members included the constituency's first

important manufacturers, prominent merchants, their employees and the lawyers, doctors and students brought together by François Langelier as well as a few unusually independent Conservatives, notably Hector Fabre and C-A-P. Pelletier, put off by electoral violence and corruption. They solidified their influence in Québec-Est early on by building the party's extra-parliamentary support in the same way, and at the same time, they were building local business and community organizations. The Club de la Réforme, L'Électeur and François Langelier's city council prospered alongside local factories and, at least initially, the Banque nationale and the Congrégation des Hommes de Notre-Dame de Saint-Roch de Québec. In the early years, they were most influential in Jacques-Cartier ward, home of the riding's boot and shoe industry. They would retain a close connection with workers' organizations in the riding, particularly the secular "national" unions that shared their interests in the local economy and opposition to the larger manufacturers who became increasingly prominent in the 1890s.

'Les parentistes' formed around Simon-Napoléon Parent and Charles Fitzpatrick during the second phase of industrialization in the riding. Although both Parent and Fitzpatrick had, early in their careers, associations with the Conservative party, 'les parentistes' were never really Conservatives. Rather, they were most closely identified with the riding's larger manufacturers. These men employed professional managers and rational organizational principles in their businesses and adopted similar principles and practices when engaged in politics. They sought power principally for their own economic advantage and, as a result, were more socially conservative, religious and less motivated by French Canadian nationalism than 'le vrai parti.' Although Parent himself had a personal network of working-class supporters in St-Valier, 'les parentistes' relied

more on the promise and control of government patronage and the broader appeal of popular journalism for political influence. As a result, they were more dependent on Laurier – his popular appeal, his direction of the party newspaper and, most especially, his control of government patronage. It made them the more disciplined of the two factions. Initially at least, they were most influential in St-Valier, the poorest and most conservative part of the constituency.

The way the fortunes of these two factions waxed and waned, collided and coincided, played an important role in the course of Laurier's career. When one, or the other, or both, held sway in the riding, Laurier consistently addressed their concerns. They had a measure of influence over his political fortunes and he had confidence in their judgment. Particularly in the 1877-82, 1887-90, 1898-1903 and 1908-1911 periods, local influence was important. However, during the times they were divided against each other, their struggles for control over editorial policy, government patronage and Laurier's own "imprimatur" gave him much greater authority and encouraged him to keep his own council. When 'les parentistes' dominated in those struggles (1891-1897), or could secure a measure of 'vrai parti' support (1898-1903), Laurier was able to make his greatest strides as a national leader. His authority was unquestioned and he had a disciplined instrument for the exercise of government authority.

'Le vrai parti' and 'les parentistes' found grounds for compromise in their shared attachment to Québec-Est. As novelist Roger Lemelin realized, the riding's location – "Au pied de la pente douce" – set it apart from the rest of the city and gave it an enduring identity as a densely populated, urban, industrial and commercial, working-class French

Canadian community.⁷⁴ Within that context, established by its geographic location and earliest development, two experiences shaped a unique political culture in which all parties functioned and proved to be particularly significant for Laurier. First, the primary importance of work in Québec-Est made the end of the timber trade and the shipbuilding industry both traumatic and memorable for local residents. It impoverished the community and created an economic dependence on the provincial and federal governments that made local partisanship particularly meaningful and passionate in the riding while, at the same time, encouraging considerable compromise with other parts of the country in order to secure the benefits of power. The resiliency of 'le vrai parti' reflected their long experience with such strategy and facilitated Laurier's climb to the top. The riding's sharp economic decline also left a strong sense of economic insecurity in the community as well as the notion of a "natural" or "rightful" place in the nation. The determination to rebuild its commercial economy and establish a successful manufacturing centre set its baseline, minimum, expectations for political leadership. Laurier could negotiate other issues but federal elections in Québec-Est were always decided, in the last days, on the prospects for employment – tied to public works, port improvements, the Québec Bridge, the National Transcontinental Railway or, perhaps, the protective tariff. Finally, the struggle to rebuild locked Québec-Est into an economic competition with Montréal that inspired support for local business leaders, a suspicion of Montréalers (even within the clergy) and a resolve to avoid work stoppages that resulted

⁷⁴ Au pied de la pente douce was Roger Lemelin's groundbreaking first novel. Published a year before Bonheur d'occasion, it represented a significant departure in Québec literature by making the urban working-class community of St-Roch – rather than a pastoral rural location – the setting and focus of the story. In the 1950s, Lemelin wrote Les Plouffe, both the novel and television series. Roger Lemelin, Au pied de la pente douce (Québec: Éditions, 1944).

in the early development of a local workplace conciliation process. Thus the riding provided an established industrial model for Laurier that he applied at the national level.

The second defining event of the riding's history occurred in 1857, when a violent conflict between French Canadian and Irish stevedores spilled into the political arena, resulting in two deaths. It inspired government authorities to divide the city and create, in Québec-Est, an overwhelmingly French Canadian constituency. The particularly violent partisanship, linked directly to competition for work in the port, became a permanent feature of local politics. Everyone in Québec-Est, not just Laurier, "was in politics to beat the other man."⁷⁵ But, by essentially eliminating ethnic conflict in the riding, the decision also gave Laurier a greater margin for compromise. Tensions between French and English did not play a determinant role in any federal election except in 1877, the last time there was a significant Irish population in the riding, and in 1917, when English soldiers filled the streets and taverns.

Until the death of Ernest Pacaud in April 1903, 'le vrai parti' or 'les parentistes' – or both – successfully managed to represent most of Québec-Est. Pacaud, Laurier's closest friend, fulfilled a crucial role in the local party. Although an inheritor of the Rouge political tradition, like members of 'le vrai parti,' and a privileged, passionate, voice for the community, he remained always a man devoted more to Laurier than any particular faction or independent interest. His passing upset the balance between 'vrai parti' and 'les parentistes' – and substantially weakened the party newspaper – at just the time the growing size and complexity of government initiatives, symbolized by the Québec Bridge, seriously tested the technological and managerial expertise of the party

⁷⁵ A frequently repeated statement Laurier made to J.S. Willison. Quoted in Paul Stevens, "Wilfrid Laurier: Politician," in Hamelin, Marcel, ed. *Les idées politiques des premiers ministres du Canada* (Ottawa: Les Éditions de l'Université d'Ottawa, 1969) p. 71.

and government. Pacaud's passing also coincided with organized public resistance to changes in the local community provoked by the growing size and complexity of business, government and social organizations. 'Les parentistes,' owners of the largest factories and managers of government, who led in the introduction of professional – more impersonal – management in both spheres, seemed to stand for all that conservatives rejected. Opposition coalesced around a sense of French Canadian nationalism that expressed antagonism towards the sacrifice of local interests to business principles (the essence of the debate over colonization) and the separation of management control from public accountability (the essence of 'vrai parti' resentment towards Parent). 'Vrai parti' members, attuned to local sentiment through their social and business networks in the community and the principal victims of Parent's management, led the opposition.

Choquette's "coup d'état" had two crucial consequences for Laurier. It deprived him of a rational, dependent, organization within the party on which he relied for the administration of government patronage and it split the party at the very time Church leaders and the socially conservative 'nationalistes' threatened his hold on power. He met the first challenge by reducing government expenditures, negotiating and respecting a strict division of patronage between all levels of government and imposing more stringent job requirements for federal appointees. He turned more and more to his staff, public service or independent experts to manage the government's increasingly large and complex projects. These innovations, while they began to address the technological and managerial challenges, did not provide the political information that 'les parentistes' had. In Québec-Est, Laurier lost close partisan contact with the larger manufacturers.

The more devout ‘parentistes’ were drawn into Church-led initiatives and the ‘nationaliste’ movement. For a time, too, ‘le vrai parti’ was attracted by their French-Canadian nationalism and progressive ideals. They did not share, however, the ‘nationalistes’ frustration with politics or interest in restoring the Church’s role in society. Laurier was able to stabilize and reunite his party, more closely than ever before, around their faith in the political system, their secular French Canadian nationalism and local economic interests. All were critical to his election victory in 1908 and local support for a Canadian Navy in 1910. He adopted local ‘vrai parti’ solutions, the Combines Investigation Act and reciprocity, to the rising cost-of-living and threat of economic depression in Canada. By 1911, however, they may have been insufficient to overcome the combined opposition of the Church, whose influence was well rooted in a local political culture that had not changed as much as the Liberal party, and from the riding’s larger manufacturers, who no longer enjoyed the same influence as they had with Parent. Fortunately, for Laurier, he was elected by acclamation in Québec-Est that year.

After losing power in Ottawa, and throughout the war years, Laurier continued to be influenced by his party in Québec-Est while recognizing, too, the need to adopt rational and national organizational practices in the party, just as he had in government. His career marked, in every way, a period of transition in the social-cultural history of politics in Canada. The transition was just as evident on the pages of the party newspaper and in its election campaigns as in its organizational structure and policy ideas. In 1877, L’Événement fought “la petite guerre” with Conservative newspapers like it was arguing a case in the court of public opinion. Its editor and journalists served as the party’s political staff. The importance of political debate for the whole community was expressed

in the demonstrations and “joute contradictoire” that were held in the middle of the working day. Political parties were big, campaigned with teams of speakers and made no distinction between issues or organizations at the municipal, provincial or federal levels. This widespread interest in politics, the small size of the constituency and even smaller number of electors encouraged a personal approach to campaigning. Prominent employers used their own networks of influence to buttress a campaign built around dozens of committee rooms, bottles of alcohol, gangs of ruffians and envelopes full of cash.

By 1896, with ‘les parentistes’ running the party and Pacaud innovating at L’Électeur and in the Liberal campaign, all had taken on qualities historian Jean de Bonville has associated with an intermediary stage in newspaper development – that of “les journaux populaire.” Pacaud, like the editors of other major newspapers in Québec, sought to use larger manufacturers’ need for wider markets to increase his advertising revenue and – simultaneously – the growing number of literate potential readers, to expand the influence of his newspaper. Both required increased circulation that he achieved by including more, shorter, less opinionated, articles on a wider variety of topics. Pacaud used advertising-like techniques to cut through the clutter, making the bilingual, bicultural, Laurier an appealing party symbol, printing a streamlined party manifesto (drafted at the first national convention) and even policy “pamphlets” on the back pages of L’Électeur. The local campaign reflected similar adaptations. The party organized three, carefully balanced demonstrations, for English and French voters across the city, and a third, exclusively for electors in Québec-Est. However, membership declined as did the number of committee room meetings. Even Pacaud’s use of a

“lanterne magique” and organization of a community – not partisan – event to report electoral results reflected a political culture in transition.

By 1911, Le Soleil covered the campaign like a “journal d’information” (albeit with a clear political bias) while the party faced a challenging campaign in a contested political culture. Both the newspaper and the local campaign reflected, for better or worse, Laurier’s rational, national, adaptation to the increasingly large and complex political culture *and* the riding’s resistance to it. D’Hellencourt ran Laurier’s single-issue manifesto on page one in order to “kick off” the party’s campaign, presented political events as part of the “fil d’eau” and kept his editorials to the editorial page. There could be no doubt about the newspaper’s political opinion but it did not consume every page even though it represented the most important part of the party’s campaign. Laurier took to the hustings, as always, but let Rodolphe Lemieux confront the leading ‘nationalistes.’ In a time before national opinion polls, focus groups, press conferences, a party newsletter or even a central research bureau, he had gone too far without yet going far enough.

A community focus and a social-cultural history of politics help explain that conundrum by capturing the relevance and complexity of political activity. Laurier’s career was based not as much on his force of character or ideological beliefs as the values, social networks and hard work of men like Ernest Pacaud, François Langelier and Simon-Napoléon Parent. It required men like Jean-Baptiste Laliberté, George-Élie Amyot and Omer Brunet. All are men who have not found a place in the Laurier legend. Yet it was one of their number, a local businessman and party member, Lieutenant Colonel Oscar Gilbert, President and General Manager of Le Soleil in 1954, who would make a

place for Laurier among the statues and monuments that command the heights and national vistas in Québec City. Fittingly, he built it on boulevard Langelier in the heart of Québec-Est.

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