

Bourassa's War: Henri Bourassa and the First World War
by
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A thesis
presented to the University of Waterloo
in fulfilment of the
thesis requirement for the degree of
Doctor of Philosophy
in
History

Waterloo, Ontario, Canada, 2015

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Author's Declaration

I hereby declare that I am the sole author of this thesis. This is a true copy of the thesis, including any required final revisions, as accepted by my examiners. I understand that my thesis may be made electronically available to the public.

Abstract

This dissertation examines the perspective of French Canadian nationalist Henri Bourassa during the First World War from 1914-1918. Bourassa was one of the best-known voices rejecting the war's purpose and value in Canada. He consistently offered detailed and in-depth analytical critiques of the war. He first accepted Canadian participation from August 1914 to January 1916, but his position gradually shifted from cautious support to outright rejection. This dissertation argues that Henri Bourassa has traditionally been understood as a domestic commentator in Canada, but during the war years he wrote in the pages of his newspaper *Le Devoir* to address a wide variety of international issues. He was one of a few Canadians who looked out to the world and interpreted global events for his readers. Historians have already recounted in detail his thoughts about the Ontario bilingual schools crisis, conscription, the December 1917 election, and the Easter Riots of 1918. This work examines Bourassa's thoughts on diplomacy between the belligerent nations and that of Pope Benedict XV, international events like the Easter Rising in Ireland and the American entry into the war. It re-examines his domestic commentary concerning the Canadian home front in light of his position on international issues, especially his growing anxiety over militarism and the deterioration of Canadian democracy. He believed that the war, which was ostensibly fought for democracy and liberty, was drastically changing the Allied nations and transforming them into the sort of autocratic states against which they fought. This thesis concludes that Bourassa adopted an intellectual approach to the war that deconstructed its impact at home and abroad, and stands as one of Canada's foremost thinkers during the war years.

Acknowledgements

Acknowledgements are strange things and I have read quite a few in my time as a doctoral student at the University of Waterloo. Some are funny for the stories they tell, others are interesting for the names they mention, while most are generically bland. A special few are touching, one or two are tragic. Early on in this process I thought I could write a historiography of acknowledgements that I have read, but after finally getting through it all, I realised that thanking the people who have helped me is the most important part of this work and every name deserves mention. There have been so many people that have touched my life during the last four and a half years that I am certain I will not name them all – so know that the work before you is a testament to countless acts of support big and small.

This work would have not have been possible without the financial support of the Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council, the University of Waterloo, and the Laurier Centre for Military, Strategic, and Disarmament Studies. As well, I thank the University of Toronto, Microsoft and the Internet Archives for providing access to many digitized documents that improved this work.

Numerous friends have helped me throughout this process – stretching back to my undergraduate studies, though I do not have the space to name them all! Nicole Amin-Scott helped me during my Master's with the Papineau letters that were just as valuable during the writing of this dissertation. Estelle Hjertaas generously provided me with a place to stay and many hours of conversation during research trips to Ottawa. Oliver Haller has provided me with many enjoyable and far-ranging conversations. I have spent many hours with Matt Wiseman and Marjorie Hopkins in the last two years, and both have been invaluable sources of relaxing and academic conversations. Kirk Goodlet has been an amazing colleague and friend to me. Through our discussions of academia, history, and many other topics, I have become a better historian. Nick Lachance, who somehow lived with me for three years of this process, generously devoted countless hours of his own time playing video games with me when I needed it. He has truly been a great friend.

Numerous professors have guided me on my path towards finishing this dissertation. A second-year course with Robert Hanks was the first time I became seriously interested the craft of history. During a fourth-year seminar Jasmin Habib exposed me to vigorous and enjoyable academic discussion. In another undergraduate seminar, and later a Master's seminar, Susan Neylan showed me that studying historical works could be engaging and exciting. Alan Gordon and Ken Coates both offered careful direction in my doctoral fields as I learned the difference between a student of history and a historian. Cynthia Comacchio, who besides being on my dissertation committee, was also an invaluable teacher during my Master's. Her comments in class, on my written work, and throughout the dissertation process, have helped me evolve as a student and a historian considerably. I have also had the great pleasure to work with one of the most insightful scholars I have met in my graduate life, Geoff Hayes, and I remember many times walking out of his office in awe of his perceptive remarks. I must thank the two external members of my defence committee, Carol Acton and Michael Neiberg, who both provided perceptive questions and comments on this work.

At the University of Waterloo, I do not think any graduate student could have survived without the constant support and help of our administrative assistant, Donna Hayes. She is there at the worst of times and the best times, and is always willing to help or cheer us on. I am glad to call her my friend. I am thankful for the consideration of Dan Gorman as Graduate Chair and Andrew Hunt as Tri-University Director, which has helped me during my time as a

student. Jane Forgay at the Dana Porter Library responded to several vaguely urgent emails over the years about library services, but I must also thank the anonymous staff supervising RACER and all the PDFs they have sent me. Numerous other members of the History Department have made my time at Waterloo enjoyable and memorable. I am happy to have spent my graduate career in their company.

The most formative and fruitful connections I have made as a student of history have been made at the Laurier Centre for Military, Strategic, and Disarmament Studies. I wish I could devote a line to each of you, but I cannot. Jane Whalen inspired me as a young student there and continues to do so today. Kellen Kurschinski reminds me of the scholar I strive to be, and I respect him greatly as a colleague, a historian, and a friend. Mike Bechthold, Vanessa McMackin, Kate Rose, Marc and Joan Kilgour, Matt Symes, Caitlin McWilliams, Caleb Burney, Trevor Ford, and all the others: Thank you! Many hours have been spent enjoying your company.

Terry Copp, the Centre's director for my time there, has been an invaluable mentor and friend. He has guided, inspired, and shaped the scholar and person I am today. Since my first undergraduate class with him, I have been greatly honoured to be his student, his research assistant, and his colleague. This work is proof to his generosity and influence as an educator and a historian. Without Terry pushing me to test my potential, I would likely be working at a Starbucks in downtown Waterloo (or hopefully managing it by now).

My supervisor, Whitney Lackenbauer, has been just as generous with his time and help. I could not have asked for a better scholar to guide me through my years as a graduate student. He has invited me into his classroom and his home and I never fail to leave a conversation with him inspired to work harder and confident that, yes, one day I will finish. It is difficult to express how valuable such inspiration has been, but it is the reason why this work is before you. Whitney has helped me become a better writer, a better student, and a better historian; and I am thankful to have his support throughout the beginning of my academic career and my future endeavours.

My family has also been incredibly supportive. Alan, Richard, and Paul have all provided me with moments of relaxation and enjoyment. Meghan and Bill White have often provided a weekend away, as have Bill and Liesel White. My grandmother, Jean, inspired me with her energy. My parents, Bryan and Val, have offered constant support, encouragement, and food and drink. Years of their love have helped me endure this process, and their generosity in offering a place to edit my work peacefully was greatly appreciated.

More than anyone though, this work owes its existence to Jocelyn Hunt. I met her while writing this work, and the long arduous hours spent at a computer have been worth it only because she was there when I was done. Writing this work and falling in love with Jocelyn will be forever etched in my mind as one, long, incredible journey. As one part of that journey ends and another begins, I am unbelievably thankful to have her at my side.

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Introduction: Bourassa's War

Canada was at a breaking point during the “old-fashioned” winter in the final month of 1917, when weather stations logged record low temperatures and snow swept across the continent.¹ Amidst the deep freeze, Canadians went to the polls to pass judgment on Robert Borden’s wartime government. After more than three years of the Great War’s unrelenting industrialized warfare, the country was immersed in one of the bitterest electoral campaigns in its history. Canadians stood opposed over the future direction of the war. On the one side, Prime Minister Robert Borden wished to impose conscription; on the other, Liberal leader Sir Wilfrid Laurier desired a referendum on the issue which he believed he would win. Candidates for both parties evoked vitriolic patriotism and many ridings were harshly contested between Borden’s Unionist coalition (of Conservatives and pro-conscription Liberals) and those Liberals who stayed loyal to Laurier. The “party-truce” declared at the war’s outbreak in August 1914 was a distant memory.

In the midst of the election campaign, French Canadian nationalist Henri Bourassa advised readers of his newspaper that no party in Ottawa was worth trusting. He counselled French Canadian nationalists to reject Borden’s conscription policy, but admitted that Laurier was little better. Both had betrayed the country and the values that had shaped the Dominion over the last fifty years. On 8 November, he instructed his readers about the great perils of the election:

Le programme unioniste, c’est l’antithèse de tout ce que nous aimons, de tout ce que nous croyons, de tout ce que nous voulons. C’est la synthèse de tout ce que

¹ Charles F. Brooks, “The ‘Old-Fashioned’ Winter of 1917-18,” *Geographical Review*, 5, no. 5 (May, 1918): 405-414. December was one of the coldest on record and temperatures across the Dominion dropped between 10-30 degrees lower than normal, see Canada, Census Statistics Bureau, *Canada Yearbook 1918*, (Ottawa: Bureau of Statistics, 1918) 163.

nous détestons – hommes, idées et tendances – dans les deux partis. ... Adversaires résolus du ministère de coalition, de toute sa politique et de tout son personnel, nous acceptons le programme de M. Laurier dans la mesure où il se rapproche de nos principes et de nos idées; nous le repoussons partout où il concorde virtuellement avec celui du ministère.²

Laurier was the best of a bad lot. The years of war had changed Canada's government and its people. Hundreds of thousands of Canadians had fought and continued to fight in the trenches of France and Belgium, and the outcome remained uncertain. New government powers expanded the state's role in private and public life. Though the enthusiasm that marked the beginning of the war in 1914 had subsided, it had left an inedible mark on the Canadian people, particularly English Canadians, many of whom continued to support a seemingly unlimited war effort. They still believed that victory in Europe outweighed the war's growing cost.

Conscription, Bourassa alleged, was yet another sign of the war's dire consequences for the nation. It epitomized the growing militarism demanded by the war that Bourassa feared. He saw little allowance for his liberal values that enshrined the rights of the individual, adherence to the law, equality, and tolerance in wartime Canada. Instead, the imposition of conscription forced individuals to fight in a war that they did not support. In the December election, he hoped only that Laurier might win and "s'[entourer] et [entourait] son parti de barrières assez hautes et assez solides pour empêcher que les brigands ... ne viennent de nouveau jeter le désarroi dans la bergerie, en corrompant les bergers, en muselant les chiens et en décornant les béliers."³ It was a holding action in stark contrast to the idealistic vision of a unified Canada that he held when war broke out. Bourassa only wished to avoid greater fissures in Canadian unity, a breakdown in social order, and to stop any further transformation of the Canadian Dominion from the one he had dreamed of in 1914. His condemnation of the largely English

² Henri Bourassa, "Le 'Devoir' et les Partis Actuels," *Le Devoir*, 8 November, 1917, 1.

³ Henri Bourassa, "Le 'Devoir' et les Partis Actuels," *Le Devoir*, 8 November, 1917, 1.

Canadian Unionist Party was no surprise, nor was his reluctant support of Laurier who, he alleged, had betrayed the liberal principles that Bourassa had once admired in his former leader. It was the response that everyone expected of Canada's most famous dissenter.

Bourassa's polemic reflected his experience of the war. From the war's outset, he had cautioned against an overreaching war effort. In September 1914, he promised his audience that he would conscientiously examine the issues of the war, especially ones other commentators ignored. His duty to the public good demanded that he resist the wave of popular enthusiasm found in newspapers across the country. When it was clear that the government had no interest in moderating its military and economic contributions, and as other Canadians refused to heed his warnings, he rejected participation entirely in January 1916. The following year, Bourassa was the loudest voice against Prime Minister Borden's introduction of conscription. Facing a government that seemingly had no sympathy for French Canada and had ignored Bourassa's perspective for three years, the journalist urged his supporters to vote for Laurier's Liberals. Laurier lost the election as English Canada voted overwhelmingly for Borden's Unionist Party, but the province of Quebec voted for Laurier. The country seemed irrevocably divided along French-English lines.

The pressures of wartime split the seams of Canada's Confederation. Its French and English peoples each avowed their ability to decide Canada's direction in the war as they accused the other side of disloyalty to the "true" Canadian nation. To Bourassa, the 1917 election embodied the worst of the First World War's transformative intensity.

* * *

"People do not 'have' ideas," John Lukacs advises historians, "they choose them ... It may be important what ideas do to men, it is often even more important what people do with

their ideas.”⁴ The process by which Bourassa chose his ideas (and the beliefs he held as a result) was a long one. This study deals with the second part of Lukacs’ counsel: what Bourassa did with his ideas. It examines Bourassa’s actions during the Great War and focuses specifically on the commentary he offered to Canadians, though primarily French Canadians because of the language in which he most often wrote. His beliefs compelled him to offer his commentary to his readers through his chosen medium, his newspaper *Le Devoir*, even during the worst of the war’s political maelstroms.

The name of his newspaper evokes the purpose that directed his efforts. He explained the decision at *Le Devoir*’s founding almost eight years earlier in January 1910. Bourassa began his periodical because he wanted to awaken in his fellow citizens a commitment to public duty, which included religious duty, national duty, and civic duty. In his first editorial, he explained that “notre ambition se borne à chercher à faire de notre mieux ce que nous prêchons: le devoir de chaque jour.”⁵ The tagline attached to his title encapsulated his mission: “Fais ce que dois!”⁶ His idealistic goals were somewhat undermined by his first editorial’s belligerent title, “Avant le Combat,” as he prepared to enter a fierce political debate over the creation of a Canadian navy. From the beginning, he committed himself to public reflection without shying away from argumentative commentary. His willingness to defy popular opinion equally defined his writing during the First World War.

Bourassa was rarely an innocent bystander to the country’s discord. His own commentary, as well as that of his opponents, fuelled one-sided uncompromising views of the war. Critics in English and French Canada accused him of treasonous disloyalty while

⁴ John Lukacs, *The Future of History*, (New Haven, Conn.: Yale University Press, 2011) 123.

⁵ Henri Bourassa, “Avant le Combat,” *Le Devoir*, 10 January, 1910, 1.

⁶ For more on the decision behind *Le Devoir*’s naming, see Réal Bélanger, *Henri Bourassa: Fascinant Destin d’un Homme Libre (1869-1914)*, (Québec: Les Presses de l’Université de Laval, 2013) 280-281.

repeatedly appealing to the government to censor his writing. Bourassa offered little to sooth their outrage. His inflexible stance denounced Canadians who offered reasons to support the war as immoral hypocrites, though they believed their views as earnestly as he believed in his own. His opponents failed to convince him that political and social issues that predated the war had disappeared. Instead, Bourassa rejected their plea for new attitudes to confront Canada's role in the European conflict. To him, the Great War was a war like any other, requiring a reasoned response measured by Canadian interests and values.

This dissertation examines the nature of his reaction on the Canadian homefront through four years of war. Bourassa continued to address the issues he had prior to 1914. Throughout the conflict, he wrote about equality between French and English Canadians, the pervasive influence of imperialism, and the necessity of a liberal Canadian nationalism. The war also pushed him to examine international issues that he previously ignored. He devoted many pages to peace proposals, like the diplomatic efforts of Pope Benedict to end the conflict or American President Woodrow Wilson's neutrality and subsequent shaping of the peace that ended the war in 1918. Bourassa addressed events outside of Canada like the 1916 Easter Rising in Ireland, the 1916 American election, and the American entry into the war in 1917. Global affairs affected Canadians as they never had before, and Bourassa was one of the few voices in Canada who critically examined them. As these global events changed the Canadian nation, so too did Bourassa's ideas.

This study cannot fully describe the life, beliefs and times of Henri Bourassa even within the short period of the First World War. There were many facets to Bourassa's public life. Over the course of his prolific career, he wrote articles on political, economic and social issues to a small but attentive audience. The sheer volume and variety of his work makes it

difficult to explore in its entirety. It is similarly challenging for the historian to explain Bourassa's influence on Canadians during the Great War. The polarized politics of wartime led him and his opponents to extremes, existing on the periphery of supporting and rejecting of the war, often resorting to hyperbole if not outright intellectual dishonesty to assert their respective cases. The war years were busy ones at home and abroad, and the work published by Bourassa was understandably dense. Under the shadow of the Great War, Canadians treated solutions to old problems and new ones with an urgency that belies their complexity. The war did not initiate many of the issues that Bourassa raised, but when cast in the light of a struggle for the survival of Canada and its European allies, debates over them were intensified.

This is not a history of Canada and the war, nor is it a history solely of Henri Bourassa. It is a history of his beliefs about Canada and the war and the ideas he put forward to his readers. It is important to heed John Locke's warning from his study of St. Paul: "He that would understand St. Paul right, must understand his terms, in the sense he uses them, and not as they are appropriated by each man's particular philosophy. ... until we, from his words, paint his very ideas and thoughts in our minds, we do not understand him."⁷ This work endeavours to present Bourassa's ideas as he understood them. It interrogates what a Canadian who read Bourassa's words would understand about the war. How would they comprehend Canada and its place in the world?

This work studies the depth of Bourassa's public analysis but pays strict attention to chronology. Public commentary is in its nature reactionary: writers commented on the events and issues of the war as it unfolded. Thus any history of Bourassa's thoughts on the war must

⁷ John Locke, "A Paraphrase and Notes on the Epistles of St. Paul to the Galatians, Corinthians, Romans, Ephesians," *The Works of John Locke in Nine Volumes*, (London: Rivington, 1824 12th ed.). Vol. 7, xx-xxi. Accessed 11 October, 2014, <http://oll.libertyfund.org/titles/1556>.

consider the war itself. The successes and failures of the homefront, battlefield and international diplomacy shaped the form, content and tone of his articles. This work does not intend to offer a comprehensive exploration of Bourassa's ideas; in some cases, domestic topics are not explored as other historians have already examined them in detail. In the following pages, new details about the Canada and the world that Bourassa envisioned are developed. It follows Bourassa's war, and it is within the structure and pace of his public analysis that this work examines Canada and the First World War.

* * *

As an influential figure in Canadian history, Bourassa has elicited much attention from historians, even before his death in 1952. His prolific career⁸ and far reaching influence means that he is included in histories not focused on him specifically. Any general text of Canadian history mentions him alongside Laurier and Borden. A history of Quebec, or Canadian Catholicism, or Canadian nationalism, or the First and Second World War, usually includes a discussion of Henri Bourassa. The debates in which he engaged over the "solution" to the "problem" of French-English relations in Canada have not yet been resolved, and help explain his prominence in Canadian history, but those debates led historians to critically examine his role as a domestic commentator. As a result, the historical literature focused specifically on Bourassa is usually narrow. A few scholars have broken from this trend, but most consider Bourassa an inward-looking French Canadian nationalist, for better or for worse.

Two contrasting views characterized early historical scholarship. One is Elizabeth Armstrong's *Crisis of Quebec, 1914-18*, published in 1937, which was the first major historical

⁸ A bibliographical overview of Bourassa's work was published in 1966 with the help of his daughter; see André Bergevin, Cameron Nish and Anne Bourassa, *Henri Bourassa. Biographie. Index des écrits. Index de la correspondance publique, 1895-1924*, (Montréal, Éditions de l'Action nationale, 1966).

work to deal with French Canada during the war.⁹ Bourassa played a large role in her analysis of the province. Her view of Bourassa is ultimately negative, but she does not fail to acknowledge his influence. Describing him as a “mixture of sincere patriotism and demagoguery”¹⁰ though not a “narrow bigot or a fanatical partisan,” Armstrong recognized that his countrymen viewed him as “a real Frenchman in the cultural rather than the political sense of the word, one who combined grace with courage, logic with wit and deep learning with eloquence.”¹¹ This does not lessen the criticism that she levied against him. Armstrong condemned Bourassa’s rejection of Ottawa’s wartime policy and glossed over the detailed analysis that he offered.

The rise of extreme nationalism in the 1930s heavily influenced Armstrong’s conclusion that Bourassa was a dangerous domestic threat.¹² In her words, Bourassa dreamt of a “French Canada as a proselytizing force which ... [would] bring the American continent back to the arms of Rome and to the glories of French civilization.”¹³ Armstrong used the terms “passive” and “active” nationalism to describe Quebec and argued that the war saw a brief flare of active nationalism, spurred on by Bourassa. As a result, she treated Bourassa and his fellow nationalistes as anomalies in French Canada who preached moderation while breeding radical action. They were not representative of the true “passive” French Canadian nationalism. The “crisis” of Quebec then was not a conflict of language, or culture, or even loyalty; it was the

⁹ Elizabeth Armstrong, *Crisis of Quebec 1914-1918* (Toronto: McClelland and Stewart, 1937). Though many writers wrote about the Canadian war experience during and immediately afterwards, and included sections on Quebec and Bourassa, such as Castell Hopkins’ *Canadian Annual Review*, publications from the Canadian War Records Office, memoirs, or journalistic accounts.

¹⁰ Armstrong, *Crisis of Quebec*, 96.

¹¹ Armstrong, *Crisis of Quebec*, 143.

¹² See the Carleton Library Edition of Armstrong’s work (1974), and the introduction by Joseph Levitt, viii.

¹³ Armstrong, *Crisis of Quebec*, 53.

crisis of nationalism without restraint allegedly advocated by Bourassa and nationalistes.¹⁴

Bourassa and his cohorts, she posited, could never live in harmony with English Canada.

Instead,

[the] Nationalists were convinced that the great majority of French Canadians believed that Canada had done enough for the Dominion war effort and that their sole obligation was to fight for their own native country. To force them to fight against their innermost conviction was to make revolutionaries out of the population of Quebec.¹⁵

For Armstrong, the only acceptable Canadian nationalism could not stray across the edge between tradition and revolution. That would mean a denial of French Canada's history. By pushing across it, the nationalistes became more than aberrant in her view; they became abhorrent. French Canadian nationalism must be inherently conservative, she alleged, couched in the safety of ensuring their survival to keep it well away from the modernized, horrific fanaticism of her time. Armstrong's work was a shallow history in which Bourassa does not provide answers to political or cultural problems or react to unfolding events. He is a dangerous catalyst for French Canada, but one without agency.

Robert Rumilly, best known for his voluminous history of Quebec, expressed a more positive portrayal of Henri Bourassa in a dedicated biography of the nationalist leader.¹⁶ Almost hagiographic, Rumilly essentially credited Bourassa with creating modern Quebec nationalism. The book is a painstakingly detailed biography of Bourassa, but contains little critical historical inquiry. Take his analysis of Bourassa's role in opposing conscription that is

¹⁴ Though this term and its implications are present throughout the work, see the introduction by Levitt for a succinct overview, *Crisis of Quebec*, Carleton Library Edition, v-xviii.

¹⁵ Armstrong, *Crisis of Quebec*, 180.

¹⁶ Robert Rumilly, *Histoire de la province de Québec*, (Montréal: Valiquette, 1940); Robert Rumilly, *Henri Bourassa: La vie publique d'un grand Canadien*, (Montréal: Éditions Chantecler, 1953). Before Rumilly's work, a brief analysis of Bourassa's nationalism appeared in 1951, see Marine Leland, "Quelques observations sur le nationalisme d'Henri Bourassa," *Report of the Annual Meeting / Rapports annuels de la Société historique du Canada*, 30, no. 1 (1951): 60-63.

typical of his writing: “Bourassa développe une pensée équilibrée dans un monde affolé. Il reste seul de sang-froid dans le déchaînement des passions.”¹⁷ Though offering intense detail on Bourassa’s actions, there is no questioning of why Bourassa acted the way he did. The use of purple prose between quotes from Bourassa or simple descriptions of what he was doing provides an invaluable narrative of Bourassa’s life but offers little analytic depth. Without investigating Bourassa’s motivations, Rumilly failed to take a key inquisitive step.

Born in 1897, Rumilly was a committed nationalist, friends with Maurice Duplessis, and wrote extensively on the history of French Canada from the 1930s to his death in 1983. Both personal experience and ideological leanings obviously influenced his work on Bourassa. He was one of the founding members of the French Canadian Academy, formed to combat the colonial influence of both Britain and France on Quebec society.¹⁸ He presented Bourassa as a heroic figure in his monograph: “Je connais de jeunes Canadiens français qui, lorsque la situation nationale leur paraît décourageante, se réconfortent en pensant: << Il y a eu Bourassa ! .. >> Ainsi Bourassa, le grand Bourassa que nous venons de perdre, continue de nous protéger.”¹⁹ The conclusion consoled grieving French Canadians that Bourassa’s spirit would live on in a new generation. As one historian noted, Rumilly’s history had the air of being incomplete and superficial, but he “rediscovered” Bourassa after his death and made him as captivating a figure to Quebec as he had been in life.²⁰

The contrast between Armstrong and Rumilly’s depictions of Henri Bourassa greatly affected historians who followed them. In one, he was a dangerous instigator and in the other a

¹⁷ Robert Rumilly, *Henri Bourassa*, 577.

¹⁸ Mason Wade, *The French Canadians 1760-1945*, (Toronto: MacMillan, 1956) 1076-1077.

¹⁹ Robert Rumilly, *Henri Bourassa*, 791.

²⁰ Anne Bourassa and Patrick Allen, “Le Bourassa de Rumilly: Deux appréciations,” in *La Pensée de Henri Bourassa*, F.A. Angers, ed., (Montréal: L’Action nationale, 1954) 198.

stalwart saviour of the *patrie*. While they describe his positions and his actions, they minimize their analysis of his ideas and the war's impact on them. Instead, Bourassa is a simplified character cast in a predetermined role, more useful as an influential force on the historical outcome than as an individual influenced by his experience. These two historians are key in comprehending the historiography surrounding Bourassa, which is marked by a different understanding among French and English Canadian historians. Equally, they reveal the problem of examining Bourassa in the First World War. He was not simply a Quebec nationaliste discussing domestic issues, but a legitimate and powerful dissenter who discussed international events with the same clarity and fervour as Canadian ones.

Bourassa's death in 1952 and the centenary of his birth in 1968 produced brief flurries of academic interest in his career.²¹ Joseph Levitt's *Henri Bourassa and the Golden Calf*, published in 1969, represented the first serious academic monograph on the iconoclastic journalist. Levitt largely ignored the impact of the Great War, focusing instead on specific aspects of Bourassa's career, and the nationaliste program for Quebec.²² By the 1970s, English-

²¹ For example, see Martin P. O'Connell, "Ideas of Henri Bourassa," *Canadian Journal of Economics and Political Science* 19 (August 1953): 361-76; Martin P. O'Connell, "Henri Bourassa and Canadian Nationalism," (Ph.D. diss., University of Toronto, 1954); F.A. Angers, ed., *La pensée de Henri Bourassa*, (Montréal: L'Action nationale, 1954). This is a published version of an issue of *L'Action nationale* that appeared in January, 1954; André Laurendeau, "Henri Bourassa," in *Our Living Tradition*, R.L. McDougall ed. (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1962); James I.W. Corcoran, "Henri Bourassa et la guerre sud-africaine (suite)," *Revue d'histoire de l'Amérique française* 19, no. 1 (1965): 84-105; V.C. Smith, "Moral Crusader: Henri Bourassa and the Empire, 1900-1916," *Queen's Quarterly*, 76, no.4 (Winter 1969): 635-47. An important non-academic contribution is Casey Murrow, *Henri Bourassa and French-Canadian Nationalism: Opposition to Empire* (Montréal: Harvest House, 1968). There are numerous theses that touch on Bourassa, some of those which specifically address the man are Warren Alexander Clubb, "Henri Bourassa and the First World War," Unpublished MA Thesis, University of Saskatchewan, 1974; and Charles Michael MacMillan, "Majorities and Minorities: Henri Bourassa and Language Rights in Canada," Unpublished PhD Thesis, University of Minnesota, 1979.

²² Joseph Levitt, *Henri Bourassa and the Golden Calf: The Social Program of the Nationalists of Quebec 1900-1914*, (Ottawa: Les Éditions de l'Université d'Ottawa, 1972). Joseph Levitt, "La perspective nationaliste d'Henri Bourassa, 1896-1914," *Revue d'histoire de l'Amérique française* 22, no. 4 (1969): 567-82. It is worthwhile to read Richard Jones' reply to Levitt's article, see Richard Jones, "La perspective nationaliste d'Henri Bourassa, 1896-1914: commentaire," *Revue d'histoire de l'Amérique française* 22, no. 4 (1969): 582-6. Joseph Levitt, *Henri Bourassa on Imperialism and Bi-culturalism, 1900-1918* (Toronto: Copp Clark Publishing Company, 1970); Joseph Levitt, *Henri Bourassa – Catholic Critic* (Ottawa: Canadian Historical

speaking historians had reclaimed Bourassa as an important predecessor to the bicultural and bilingual world of post-1967 Canada and its iconic Prime Minister, Pierre Elliott Trudeau. General histories, such as Robert Craig Brown and Ramsay Cook's overview of early twentieth century Canadian history, portray Bourassa prominently as an antagonist to English Canada and an important catalyst for the development of a modern Canadian identity.²³ Historians have distilled Bourassa to his vision of a bilingual and bicultural Canada at the expense of his other views.

The works of Ramsay Cook throughout the 1960s and into the 1990s demonstrate the compelling nature of Bourassa's ideas on French and English Canada. In the midst of growing animosity between French and English Canadians as Quebec experienced the Quiet Revolution and a neo-nationalist separatist movement emerged, Cook published his 1966 book, *Canada and the French Canadian Question*. Each chapter explored different elements of Quebec's history in Canada and its different forms of nationalism. Bourassa understandably played a large role in some chapters, which was mirrored in much of Cook's future work.²⁴ Cook

Association, 1976). Levitt's chapter "Henri Bourassa: The Catholic Social Order and Canada's Mission," in *Idéologies au Canada français 1900-1929*, Fernand Dumont, Jean Hamelin, Fernand Harvey and Jean-Paul Montminy eds., (Quebec: Les Presses de l'Université Laval, 1974), 192-222, ably demonstrates how easily the war can remain absent from otherwise comprehensive works, notably on 217. Jean Drolet's succeeding chapter is similarly revealing, "Henri Bourassa: Une analyse de sa pensée," in *Idéologies au Canada français 1900-1929*, 223-50.

²³ Robert Craig Brown and Ramsay Cook, *Canada 1896-1921: A Nation Transformed* (Toronto: McClelland and Stewart, 1974) 274 and throughout. Michael Oliver, *The Passionate Debate: The Social and Political Ideas of Quebec Nationalism, 1920-1945*, (Montreal: Vehicule Press, 1991) also includes an excellent discussion of Bourassa's role, though again purely within the realm of Quebec-Canadian politics. Oliver's book was originally written in 1956, but only published in 1991, as a result it has an older view of Bourassa that is not informed by the French-English tension of the 1960s, but still reflects on them with some hindsight.

²⁴ Ramsay Cook, *Canada and the French Canadian Question*, (Toronto: Macmillan, 1966); Ramsay Cook, *Provincial Autonomy, Minority Rights and the Compact Theory, 1867-1921*, (Ottawa: Queen's Printer, 1969); Ramsay Cook, *The Maple Leaf Forever: Essays on Nationalism and Politics in Canada*, (Toronto: Macmillan, 1971); Ramsay Cook, *Canada, Québec and the Uses of Nationalism*, (Toronto: McClelland and Stewart, 1986). Some of his most famous articles on Quebec appear in Ramsay Cook, *Watching Quebec, Selected Essays*, (Montreal: McGill-Queen's University Press, 2005). For a more complete bibliography of Cook's books and articles, see Michael D. Behiels and Marcel Martel, eds., *Nation, Ideas, Identities: Essays in Honour of Ramsay Cook*, (Don Mills, ON: Oxford University Press, 2000) 233-237.

compared the nationaliste Bourassa to his neo-nationalist descendants like René Lévesque and the Parti Québécois, as well as his “successors” who were epitomized in the bilingual and bicultural policies of the Liberal Party and Pierre Trudeau. Bourassa’s antagonistic role during the war was minimized, if not ignored.

In another vein, Susan Mann has offered several works on the history of Quebec to English Canadian audiences that mention Bourassa frequently. Mann’s study of Quebec in the 1920s and the *Action Française*²⁵ offers valuable insight into Bourassa’s views on feminism and women, which is otherwise understudied in the literature.²⁶ Since the works of Mann and Cook however, English Canadian scholarship on Bourassa has stagnated.

French Canadian historians have discussed Bourassa more recently and in greater detail. René Durocher’s 1971 article focused exclusively on Bourassa’s relationship with the Catholic Church during the war. He used Bourassa’s correspondence to shed light on his disagreement between him and the Church hierarchy, but does not address other aspects of Bourassa’s war experience.²⁷ Réal Bélanger’s entry in the *Dictionary of Canadian Biography* furnished an in-depth study of Bourassa but he limits the journalist’s role in the war to two paragraphs.²⁸ The entry was a preliminary version of Bélanger’s two-volume biography of

²⁵ Susan Mann, *The Dream of a Nation a social and intellectual history of Quebec*, (Toronto: Gage Publishing Ltd., 1983); Susan Mann, *Action française: French Canadian nationalism in the twenties* (Toronto, University of Toronto Press, 1975); Susan Mann, “Variations on a nationalist theme: Henri Bourassa and Abbé Groulx in the 1920’s,” *Historical Papers*, no.1, 5 (1970): 109-19

²⁶ Susan Mann, *The Dream of a Nation, 184-200*; Susan Mann, “Henri Bourassa et la question des femmes,” in Marie Lavigne and Yolande Pinard, eds., *Les femmes dans la société québécoise: aspects historiques* (Montréal: Boréal Express, 1977) 109-24; Susan Mann Trofimenkoff, “Henri Bourassa and ‘The Woman Question,’” *Journal of Canadian Studies*, 10 (1975): 3-11. See also, Susan Mann Trofimenkoff, “Nationalism, Feminism and Canadian Intellectual History,” *Canadian Literature*, 83 (Winter 1979): 7-20.

²⁷ René Durocher, “Henri Bourassa, les évêques et la guerre de 1914-1918,” *Canadian Historical Association Historical Papers* 6 (1971): 248-75; see also, René Durocher, “Un journaliste catholique au XXe siècle: Henri Bourassa,” in Pierre Hurtubise et al eds. *Le laïc dans l’Église canadienne-française de 1830 à nos jours*, (Montréal, 1972) 185-213.

²⁸ Réal Bélanger, “Bourassa, Henri,” *Dictionary of Canadian Biography Online*. Bélanger’s article has many additional titles dealing with Bourassa than listed here, particularly French language sources.

Bourassa. The first volume was published in 2013 and covers the years between his birth to the outbreak of the First World War in 1914, while the second volume is forthcoming. It is without a doubt the most comprehensive and detailed work on Bourassa since Rumilly.²⁹ Bélanger explores Bourassa's upbringing and the first half of his political career while including a myriad of other details throughout.

Sylvie Lacombe's *La rencontre de deux peuples élus*, published in 2002, critically contrasts the religious nationalism of French Canada and the imperial nationalism of English Canada. Bourassa is the dominant figure used to analyse French Canada's "ambition nationale."³⁰ Though her specific discussion of the First World War is brief, her analysis of the "hierarchical relationship" between Bourassa's liberal political beliefs and conservative religious ones, as well as her concluding summation of his religious nationalism, offers sophisticated scholarship on Bourassa.³¹ Lacombe further examines Bourassa's contradictory beliefs and their transformation during the war, which she argues had a radicalising effect upon him.³² Yet, even as Lacombe deepens our understanding of Bourassa and French Canadian

²⁹ Réal Belanger, *Henri Bourassa: Le fascinant destin d'un homme libre (1868-1914)*, (Quebec: Presses de l'Université de Laval, 2013). Bélanger also addresses Bourassa's ideas in Réal Bélanger, "L'élite politique canadienne-française et l'Empire britannique: trois reflets représentatifs des perceptions canadiennes-françaises," in *Imperial Canada 1867-1914: a selection of papers given at the University of Edinburgh's Centre of Canadian Studies conference, May 1995*, Colin Coates, ed., (Edinburgh: University of Edinburgh, Centre of Canadian Studies, 1997) 122-140.

³⁰ Sylvie Lacombe, *La rencontre de deux peuples élus : comparaison des ambitions nationale et impériale au Canada entre 1896 et 1920* (Sainte-Foy, Québec : Presses de l'Université Laval, 2002), 10. As a Quebec academic, Lacombe is unique in that she also discusses English Canadian imperialists through a nationalist lens, rather than simply a colonial one, a thesis Carl Berger argued three decades previously in Carl Berger, *The Sense of Power: Studies in the Ideas of Canadian Imperialism 1867-1914*, (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1970), 259. Ramsay Cook makes this point in his review of Lacombe's book in *Revue d'histoire de l'Amérique française* 56, no. 4 (2003): 557-60.

³¹ Lacombe, *La rencontre de deux peuples élus*, 19-26, 37-124. For her discussion of Bourassa and the First World War, including his reaction to American neutrality and subsequent entry into the war, see 107-24. Her conclusion to the section of the book on Bourassa is both concise and informative, 122-4. Lacombe has also published "Henri Bourassa, un prophète ultramontain contre l'aplatissement moral du monde," in G.Routhier and J.-P. Warren, eds., *Les visages de la foi. Figures marquantes du catholicisme québécois*, (Quebec: Fides, 2003) 133-145.

³² Sylvie Lacombe, "Entre l'autorité pontificale et la liberté nationale: l'anti-impérialisme britannique d'Henri Bourassa," in *Le Devoir : Un journal indépendant (1910-1995)*, eds. Robert Comeau and Luc Desrochers

nationalism, her work underplays his role a Canadian intellectual and commentator in the midst of the First World War.

Some general intellectual histories of Quebec have addressed Bourassa's ideas more broadly, notably the work of Yvan Lamonde, and offer French-speaking audiences more insight into the intellectual context surrounding Bourassa's analysis than is available to English speakers.³³ A few other French language works on Bourassa have appeared as popular histories, while the literature on the history of *Le Devoir* touches on his formative role in creating the newspaper.³⁴ As with English Canadian works, Bourassa is a dominating figure in French Canadian history, and there are references to him in many studies of Quebec and the 20th century.³⁵

The focus by both French and English Canadians on Bourassa's domestic role has hampered an all-encompassing historical study of him and diminished some of his most impressive writing of the war. Most studies that touch on Bourassa's thoughts during the war do so completely removed from the context of the war's events. Since historians often focus on the domestic aspect of his editorials, it is understandable that they would not address his writing on the international aspects of the conflict. As a result, a reader of Canadian history has an incomplete picture of Bourassa's life from 1914-1918. Few historians convey the

(Québec: Presses de l'Université du Québec, 1996), 273-81. She refers to his points of radicalisation in fn.3, 273.

³³ Yvan Lamonde, *Histoire Sociale des Idées au Québec 1896-1929 vol. II*, (Quebec: Éditions Fides, 2004) 37-47 addresses Quebec during the war, but Bourassa is present throughout.

³⁴ The most comprehensive work on *Le Devoir* is Robert Comeau and Luc Desrochers, eds., *Le Devoir: un journal indépendant (1910-1995)*, (Sainte Foy, Québec: Presses de l'Université du Québec, 1996). A collection of Bourassa's articles was published with some comment by its editor, see Pierre Anctil, ed., *Fais ce que dois: 60 éditoriaux pour comprendre Le Devoir sous Henri Bourassa 1910-1932*, (Québec: Éditions du Septentrion, 2010). A popular history of Bourassa was written by a journalist, Mario Cardinal, *Pourquoi j'ai fondé Le Devoir: Henri Bourassa et son temps*, (Montréal: Libre Expression, 2010).

³⁵ Many general French language studies exist, such as Paul André Linteau, René Durocher and Jean-Claude Robert, *Histoire du Québec contemporain, de la Confédération à la Crise (1867-1929)*, (Montréal: Boréal Express, 1989).

exceptional nature of Bourassa's reasoning and coherence on a wide variety of subjects during the turbulent war years. As Bélanger recently noted, Bourassa was one of Canada's great wartime thinkers, and historians have not yet thoroughly examined the depth and breadth of his perspective.³⁶ This study addresses this historiographical shortcoming by explicitly interrogating Bourassa's wartime discourse and the events of the war that defined his experience.

* * *

The full story of the evolving philosophy of history after the Second World War and the path towards what historians over-excitedly call the "History Wars" of the 1980s and 1990s can be found in other works. Here it is sufficient to outline the methodology that underlines this work: contextual relativism. Gordon Wood describes contextual relativism emerging as a synthesis of the debates between modernist and post-modernist historians. It is grounded in "the reality of the past and our ability to say something true, however partial, about the past."³⁷ Contextual relativists accept the post-modernist conclusion that we cannot escape the subjective influence of looking at the past from the present, but rejects the contention that we cannot write *anything* objective about the past. As Wood notes, such an approach "[undermines] the ground for any historical reconstruction at all."³⁸ While contextual relativists are informed by the postmodern warning that it is impossible not to impose our vision onto the past, they echo the traditional historical endeavour of recreating the past *as it was*, to the best of our scholarly ability.

³⁶ Réal Bélanger, "Henri Bourassa and the First World War," paper presented at the *1914-1918: The Making of the Modern World*, Bill Graham Centre, University of Toronto, 30 July, 2014.

³⁷ Gordon Wood, *The Purpose of the Past: Reflections on the Uses of History*, (New York: Penguin Books, 2009) 134.

³⁸ Gordon Wood, *The Purpose of the Past*, 5.

The challenge of the historian is to take the enormity and infinity of human experience that forms “the past” and translate into the written word. The responsibility to reconstruct the past as accurately as possible is paramount, but it is matched by a duty to make the past understood by our readers. In an attempt to address that concern, this book straddles biography and intellectual history. It discusses the complicated and often messy web of intellectual beliefs of an individual, Henri Bourassa, but tempers it with a chronological narrative of the First World War. Both intellectual history and historical biography have influenced the presentation of history contained within these pages, and both deserve some exploration.

Like many historical fields, it is difficult to draw the borders of intellectual history and say, every book in this box is intellectual history, and everything outside of it is not. Still, if any definition is to be used, the best might be that from Robert Darnton. In a famous essay, he argued for four categories of intellectual history:

the history of ideas (the study of systematic thought, usually in philosophical treatises), intellectual history proper (the study of informal thought, climates of opinion and literary movements), the social history of ideas (the study of ideologies and idea diffusion), and cultural history (the study of culture in the anthropological sense, including world views and collective *mentalités*).³⁹

Canadian historians offer a wide breadth of intellectual histories ranging across Darnton’s four categories.⁴⁰ The earliest trend in Canadian intellectual history scholarship expressed “nationalism and the search for consensual values.” Michael Gauvreau has examined the

³⁹ Robert Darnton, “Intellectual and Cultural History,” *The Past Before Us: Contemporary Historical Writing in the United States*, Michael Kammen ed., (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1980) 337. Ramsay Cook presents common objections to Darnton’s list, see Ramsay Cook, “Canadian Intellectual History: What Has Been Done?,” *Les Idées en mouvement: perspectives en histoire intellectuelle et culturelle du Canada*, Damien-Claude Bélanger, Sophie Coupal, Michel Ducharme, eds., (Quebec: Les Presses de l’Université Laval, 2004) 17.

⁴⁰ Ramsay Cook uses Darnton’s definition to categorize Canadian Intellectual History in “Canadian Intellectual History: What Has Been Done?,”; Damien-Claude Bélanger and Michel Ducharme present a longer list of works, see their “Nouvelles orientations en histoire intellectuelle et culturelle du Canada: bibliographie sélective,” *Les idées en mouvement: perspectives en histoire intellectuelle et culturelle du Canada*, 263-272. The 2004 collection *Les idées* came out of a conference on Canadian intellectual history and the chapters within are a worthwhile read for any interested in Canadian intellectual history.

legacy of a generation of nationalist Canadian historians after the Second World War, concluding that scholars writing intellectual history searched “for intellectuals as essential to the elaboration of a national consciousness and the idea that conflict must ultimately be resolved into consensus in order to produce a viable Canadian nation.”⁴¹ English and French Canadian historians sought to conflate individuals into a coherent national consensus, though in differing terms coloured by ongoing academic input on debates over Quebec sovereignty. Thus, when social historians questioned elitist and nationalist narratives in the 1980s, the predisposition of intellectual history towards national narratives made it an unfortunate casualty of the criticisms of “history from below,” even as that approach expanded historical study in new fruitful directions.

As “history from below” expanded to become the dominant historical approach, fewer French and English historians wrote intellectual histories. The most successful of those that did took the “culturalist turn” and their research shifted from the individual to their institutional contexts and a social history of ideas that looked at “discourses, texts and representations in social experience or ‘practices,’” though many still clung to a need to explain Canada’s national consciousness in some form.⁴² For Gauvreau, intellectual histories that persist in ahistorically linking themselves to the development of national consensus should give way to those that examine ideas within institutional context, such as the church, the university, or the state. In effect, the future of Canada’s intellectual history should be informed by the questions that social history poses about “hierarchy, sources of authority, disparities of power, and lines

⁴¹ Michael Gauvreau, “Beyond the Search for Intellectuals: On the Paucity of Paradigms in the Writing of Canadian Intellectual History,” in *Thinkers & Dreamers: Historical Essays in Honour of Carl Berger*, Gerald Friesen and Doug Owsen eds., (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2011) 53-57. Allan Smith made a similar argument a decade earlier when he argued that even transnational and transborder histories implicitly reinforce “the sense that nation-maintenance was a matter of constant work and attention,” see Allan Smith, “Organizing Ideas and How They Work: The National-International Binary,” *Les Idées en mouvement*, 52.

⁴² Michael Gauvreau, “Beyond the Search for Intellectuals,” 80.

of social tension and conflict in their own society.”⁴³

There has been much overlap between intellectual history and historical biography in Canada. The study of an individual can, as Clarence Karr noted, “reveal the complexity and interplay of thought as well as the origins of ideas.”⁴⁴ This overlap meant both were open to similar criticisms. In 1980, Robert Craig Brown anticipated social history’s critique of biography to a meeting of the Canadian Historical Association, warning that

Biography must stand on its own. ... The biographer needs to ... disclose with sympathy and candor, and with such literary grace as he can command, as much as he can discover of his subject’s private and public life [and not to] satisfy the needs of the social historian ... [or] some contorted hybrid of biography and the monograph in social, political, economic, or cultural history.⁴⁵

Unfortunately for Brown his affirmation was poorly timed. In the 1980s historians moved away from trying to reconstruct the past of an individual. The “cultural turn” was already in motion when Brown gave his talk and new histories sought to deconstruct the past.

Over the next three decades the same concerns from social history that Gauvreau raised about intellectual history were applied to historical biography. The 2000 issue of the *Revue histoire de l’Amérique française* debated the value of biography in that light. Among other topics, the authors discussed how historical biography must borrow from different epistemological and methodological approaches if it is to remain relevant. Yves Gingras concluded that historians undertaking biography still suffer from a deficient “tool box” “qui empêche les historiens de résoudre les problèmes qu’ils s’obstinent à poser,”⁴⁶ while Hélène Pelletier-Baillargeon was more positive, reflecting that “histoire - et tout particulièrement la

⁴³ Michael Gauvreau, “Beyond the Search for Intellectuals,” 54.

⁴⁴ Clarence Karr, “What Happened To Canadian Intellectual History?” *Acadiensis*, no.2, 18 (Spring 1999): 173.

⁴⁵ Robert Craig Brown, “Presidential Address: Biography in Canadian History,” *Historical Papers*, no.1, 15 (1980): 7-8.

⁴⁶ Yves Gingras, “Pour une biographie sociologique,” *Revue histoire de l’Amérique française* no.1, 54 (2000): 131. The rest of the articles can be found in the same issue, 67-131.

biographie historique - n'en finit jamais, elle non plus, de réactualiser les jeux de la liberté et du pouvoir dans la trace discontinue laissée par un destin singulier sur son époque et dans la mémoire de ses contemporains."⁴⁷ Though biography was a less popular method of historical analysis, they argued it still had much to offer Canadian historians in their explorations of the past.

The *Dictionary of Canadian Biography* and the *Journal of Historical Biography* continued to publish concise and illuminating sketches of historical figures that highlighted its value as a narrative form, but most Canadian historians moved away from studying individuals in the way that Craig Brown outlined. Susan Margarey pointed to three important questions for biographers in 2008: Public or private? Individual or Society? Truth or beauty?⁴⁸ If a journal like *Historical Biography* is any indication, historians today write works on the private and public life on an individual, reflecting on society, while offering what "truth" they can. Much like intellectual history's broadening scope from purely a history of ideas to the history of ideas' impact on society, historical biography has moved from an inward perspective of an individual life, to one which uses individuals as a lens to study larger questions: a sort of social history of the individual.

Considering these developments during the last three decades of Canadian scholarship, an intellectual biography that does not reflect on broader societal themes sits in an awkward milieu between the two fields of intellectual history and historical biography. This work is a study of Henri Bourassa during the First World War that traces its impact on his beliefs about Canada and the world. It emphasizes the terrible consequences of the conflict through one

⁴⁷ Hélène Pelletier-Baillargeon, "La biographie: un subtil alliage d'histoire et de littérature," *Revue histoire de l'Amérique française* no.1, 54 (2000): 80.

⁴⁸ Susan Magarey, "Three Questions for Biographers: Public or Private? Individual or Society? Truth or Beauty?," *Journal of Historical Biography* no.1, 4 (2008): 1-26.

man's experience of it -- even removed as he was from the front lines. As a biography, it recounts a period in his life that seems to separate his rising political influence and activity in the years before the Great War from his diminishing role afterwards. As an intellectual history, it strives to reveal the transformative nature of the war on a single individual (an intellectual). It does not seek to insert Bourassa's beliefs into a historical narrative of the French or English Canadian war experience: it simply examines his beliefs as they were expressed at the time.

There is no doubt that Bourassa was a national figure who understood the national and international currents of his age, but the extent to which he influenced those currents is not explicitly questioned here. This book does not reflect on the nature of his society or his times other than through Bourassa's own analysis of it. Given the different (and perfectly justifiable and worthy) direction of most Canadian scholarship, it is better to look for inspiration outside of Canada's borders towards other works reflecting on intellectual history and historical biography.

While Darnton's definitions are useful to understand how to categorize other works, it is less helpful as a methodological approach for a "history of beliefs." In trying to discuss Bourassa's beliefs during the war, Mark Bevir's *The Logic of the History of Ideas* offers some useful directions. Unlike Canadian intellectual historians, who have largely ignored the "linguistic turn" in favour of the cultural one,⁴⁹ Bevir's book is rooted in the philosophical debate over the meaning of language and texts for historians.⁵⁰ He describes the complex

⁴⁹ Gauvreau, "Beyond the Search for Intellectuals," 55.

⁵⁰ Recently, the *Journal of the History of Ideas* had a section reviewing Bevir's work, see "Post-Analytic Historicism," *Journal of the History of Ideas*, 73 4 (October, 2012):. Bevir fits between foundational and post-structuralist positions on the history of thought, though as Daniel I. O'Neill points out in his article in the collection above, Bevir clearly distinguishes himself from the Cambridge School associated with Quentin Skinner and J.G.A Pollock, see Daniel I. O'Neill, "Revisiting the Middle Way: *The Logic of the History of Ideas* after more than a Decade," *Journal of the History of Ideas*, no. 4, 73 (October, 2012): 584, 589-591. Bevir concisely summarizes his ideas in his contribution: "The *Logic* described and defended a post-analytic historicism. As a historicist, I argued that human life was ineluctably historical, so explanations of ideas, texts,

process of establishing an intellectual history of beliefs. It must put together what Bevir calls a “spherical jigsaw,” where “each piece of the jigsaw, each belief, belongs where it does by virtue of the pieces around it. The puzzler completes the jigsaw by joining all the pieces together to form a single picture which then makes sense of each individual piece.”⁵¹ Bevir balances synchronic belief, where a single belief exists in one moment as part of a wider web against the background of inherited traditions, with a diachronic one, the examination of multiple beliefs changing over time. He uses the term “dilemma” to describe situations that challenge beliefs and when individuals must exercise their agency in transforming or maintaining them. In examining the origins of a web of beliefs and the dilemmas that individuals encounter, historians can trace how and why those beliefs change over time.⁵²

There is a growing literature discussing Bevir’s approach.⁵³ Bevir’s advice that “historians should assume that people meant what they said unless there is evidence to the contrary” has an appealing simplicity to it,⁵⁴ but critics have not accepted his emphasis on believing an individual’s words over a textual interpretation. Vivienne Brown has criticized Bevir’s approach and emphasized that historians must search for unintended and deeper

actions, and practices should rely on historical narratives, not appeals to formal classifications, correlations, systems, or models.... In the *Logic*, I defended a radical historicism, according to which human life consists solely of a flux of activity without any basis in a formal structure or teleological movement. There are just particular individuals engaged in particular actions in accord with their particular beliefs and desires. My radical historicism restated the idea that explanations of human life should take the form of historical narratives. Yet, because I rejected developmental perspectives with their presumed continuities, I gave a nominalist analysis of aggregate concepts (such as “language,” “discourse,” and “structure”) as referring only to the contingent beliefs and actions of particular individuals,” Mark Bevir, “Post-Analytic Historicism,” 657-658.

⁵¹ Mark Bevir, *The Logic of the History of Ideas*, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1999) 191.

⁵² Bevir, *The Logic of the History of Ideas*, Chapters 5-6. For his emphasis on individual agency and its role in shaping intellectual thought, see 49.

⁵³ In addition to the articles of the *Journal of History Ideas*, also see the articles included in a special issue of *Intellectual History Review*, titled “Post-Analytic Hermeneutics: Themes from Mark Bevir’s Philosophy of History,” 21 1 (March 2011): 1-119.

⁵⁴ Bevir, *The Logic of the History of Ideas*, 150.

meaning in textual sources.⁵⁵ Bevir's webs of beliefs may be a worthwhile method for writing intellectual history, but they must be balanced by the context of an individual's "life and environment."⁵⁶ Examining individuals without context risks their own objectivity, or that of the historian, overwhelming the factual nature of academic writing. Attention to both allows historians to attempt to reconstruct accurately a "history of beliefs."⁵⁷

Historical biography requires a similarly nuanced approach. One of the conclusions of Bevir's philosophical discussion of intellectual history is that by examining the individual

⁵⁵ Vivienne Brown, "On Some Problems with Weak Intentionalism for Intellectual History," *History and Theory*, 41 (May 2002): 198-208. Bevir positions himself as a weak intentionalist in that an author's intention can be ascertained through an examination of their "web of beliefs" via works/texts and the meaning of their statements changes for each individual, be it author or reader. Brown rejects examining the author since fundamentally there is "there is no "object" of which the historian can seek to give an adequate account other than the work/text itself," (207) as only texts exist as part of the historical record, not the author themselves. James Connelly summarizes this specific disagreement between Bevir and Brown as "whether they think that intentions can be inferred from texts or whether intentions are used to help us understand or explain texts," in "The Meaning of Intention and Meaning in Mark Bevir and Vivienne Brown," *Intellectual History Review*, no.1, 21 (March 2011): 104. Still, A.P. Martinpunch has a clearer rejection of Brown's criticism: "identification of the hermeneutic meaning depends to a large extent on identification of the literal meaning of a text because it is strong evidence of the hermeneutic meaning. Identification of the hermeneutic meaning is the goal; identification of the literal meaning is one of the means of achieving that goal. So the objection that 'authorial intention ordinarily is an epistemological redundancy' rests on the mistaken belief that the author's intentions are the means of discovering interpretation rather than its goal," A.P. Martinpunch, "A Moderate Logic of the History of Ideas," *Journal of the History of Ideas*, no.4, 73 (October, 2012): 611.

⁵⁶ Jonathan Floyd, "Why the History of Ideas Needs More Than Just Ideas," *Intellectual History Review*, no.1, 21 (2011):42. Floyd advises Bevir to place himself between the "material and the ideational," just as he has positioned himself between empiricism and postmodernism, and determinism and autonomy.

⁵⁷ In this sense, I am rejecting specific methodological or theoretical approaches to history, other than general ones of studying "beliefs" (intellectual history) and an individual (historical biography) to reconstruct a facet of past experience as much as the sources allow against the backdrop of social and political contexts (contextual reconstruction). Thus I use Bevir's philosophy of history to partly inform this decision as well as justify it. It is important to note that Bevir's defence of radical historicism in 2012 that "human life consists solely of a flux of activity without any basis in a formal structure or teleological movement" and that "purely natural processes happen temporarily to have produced a species that acts, and that thinks about its actions; that is all. Human history consists solely of the flux of activity. There are no structures (not even structures of difference) that explain this activity, nor—ultimately—are there meanings that redeem it," is not one I wholly accept; Bevir, "Post-Analytic Historicism," *Journal of the History of Ideas*, 658, 665. Martinpunch's critique of Bevir's approach is far more useful for a historian. He writes that "Bevir is right to defend objectivity, right to reject the idea that there are 'given truths,' and right to deny the possibility of a logic of discovery; but wrong, I think, to give the impression occasionally that he gives up on truth altogether, especially since he thinks historians can have 'accurate knowledge of past intentions,'" and Martinpunch continued, "even if Bevir is right to say that 'human life consists solely of a flux of activity without any basis in a formal structure or teleological movement,' he is not right in concluding that this flux cannot be categorized by words or ideas that human beings construct. 'Aggregate concepts' that refer 'only to the contingent beliefs and actions of particular individuals' nonetheless have some general application. And these constructions are generally not divorced from reality"; A.P. Martinpunch, "A Moderate Logic of the History of Ideas," 619, 624.

reaction to “dilemmas” when they change or confirm their belief grants them the agency of shaping their beliefs independent of an impersonal force or model of history. This human element to history is at the core of historical biography as well.

Recently J.M. Sardica defended historical biography in *Rethinking History* after several decades of criticisms from historians who had discarded it as a parochial and exclusionary vision of the past. He emphasizes “the purposes and value it allows as an instrument of knowledge” that supports a “‘conventional’ and reconstructionist approach to historical biography.”⁵⁸ He argues that historical biography can achieve the goal of “history from below” as much as it once fulfilled the “history from above” that preceded it. Its ability to reflect on larger questions of history while combining a more literary and communicable style is worthwhile. Historical biography, he notes, “represents a worthy academic work aimed at the greater public, a resurrection of one individual life and also a gateway to a larger understanding of one given frame of time and space with its prevailing social, cultural, moral, political, institutional and economic realities.”⁵⁹ The history of a single life uses a different lens for its examination of the past. Its utility is only reinforced when confronted with the “all too fragmented and liquid present day societies and intellectual structures [as] the writing of past lives becomes a sort of necessary connecting thread, providing human sense and moral lights to map regular lives and model inspirations to inform future options.”⁶⁰ Historical biography, though limited in scope, allows readers to immerse themselves in an individual’s view of the world that is entirely biased. Though this narrow view diminishes the scope of historical analysis, in return it provides an individual certainty about what was known and not known.

⁵⁸ J.M. Sardica, “The content and form of ‘conventional’ historical biography,” *Rethinking History: The Journal of Theory and Practice*, no.4, 17 (2013): 383-384.

⁵⁹ J.M. Sardica, “The content and form of ‘conventional’ historical biography,” 393.

⁶⁰ J.M. Sardica, “The content and form of ‘conventional’ historical biography,” 396.

Thus the following chapters are inspired by Bevir's philosophy for intellectual history and Sardica's affirmation of historical biography. It is not a complete intellectual history of an idea belonging to a group nor a complete biography of a single individual. It describes Henri Bourassa's web of beliefs about the conflict and the dilemmas he encountered that transformed him. His views on imperialism, French and English Canada, religion and international affairs all informed his analyses of Canada's war experience. Each were the result of a long contemplative career and the events of the war impacted them. As we will see, the Bourassa who emerged from the war in 1918 was not the man who entered it in 1914. This simple and factual observation reveals nothing of his struggle to stay loyal to his beliefs, of the complex politics, desires, and fears of wartime Canada, or the terrible power of modern war over the societies that fought them. Bourassa would know of these all too well by war's end, but in 1914 he carried none of those burdens.

* * *

The first chapter of this dissertation reviews Bourassa's life before the war. It introduces the major events that defined his career. From his entry onto the federal stage as a member of Wilfrid Laurier's Liberal Party in 1896, it traces his growing dissatisfaction with Laurier's treatment of French Canada. Bourassa did not accept Laurier's moderation towards imperialist ideology, particularly when he allowed volunteers to fight in the Boer War. Bourassa believed that Laurier's acquiescence to Britain's request for aid set a dangerous precedent that forever committed Canada to British foreign endeavours. Imperialism's growing influence on Canadian politics pushed Bourassa to look for other allies within his home province. As an influential member of the French Canadian nationalistes, he began his role as a non-partisan commentator on Canadian politics. He was deeply involved in national events like

the debate over a Canadian Navy, the 1911 election, and continuing debates over the role of French Canadians in Confederation. This chapter also explores the intellectual and historical context of Bourassa's career that subsequently shaped his response to the First World War.

Chapter Two turns to the first months of the war. It presents Bourassa's initial support for Canadian involvement as he asked for moderation and a limited war effort, but ultimately affirmed that the war was worth fighting. It details the response of his English and French Canadian critics, as their hostility played a crucial role in isolating Bourassa from the rest of the country. In the last months of 1914, he alone critically examined the war. Not even fellow nationalist J.S. Ewart was prepared to contravene the dominant Canadian narrative developing about the war. Bourassa presented to his readers a detailed exploration of the causes of the war, which according to him was not simply the defence of Belgium but reflected British interests in Europe as well as Russian claims to Constantinople. He urged his fellow Canadians to approach the war in pursuit of Canadian -- not British -- goals. Although some commentators agreed Bourassa had a right to express his views, his attempts to communicate his thoughts on the war to an audience in Ottawa nearly caused a riot in December 1914. The year ended with Bourassa realizing that English Canada cared little for the substance and tone of his arguments.

Chapter Three deals with 1915 as Bourassa searched for other voices in the world that opposed the war. He reviewed the work of Britain's Union of Democratic Control as well as the efforts of Pope Benedict XV to mediate the conflict. Events like the Battle of 2nd Ypres and the sinking of the *Lusitania*, which convinced others of the war's necessity, had little impact on the French Canadian journalist. Instead, he scorned the Canadian war effort that only seemed to grow more extensive and encompassing. That December, he published his first major book on the war, *Que Devons Nous à l'Angleterre?*, which summarized his opposition to the conflict.

He furnished a wide-ranging historical review of Canadian history to argue that Canada had no obligation to fight Britain's war. Britain was obliged to defend Canada, but there was no reciprocal relationship. By unquestioningly approving Canada's entry into the war, Bourassa believed that an "imperialist revolution" was taking place. Its transformation of the Canadian nation could not continue unimpeded, and Bourassa vowed to continue combatting its influence.

Chapter Four explores Bourassa's correspondence with his cousin serving in the Canadian army, Talbot Mercer Papineau, in the summer of 1916. It begins with Bourassa disavowing any support for the war in January at the annual celebration of *Le Devoir's* anniversary. From this point onward, Bourassa's writings become increasingly hostile to the forces supporting the war in French and English Canada, including the Catholic episcopacy. He published another book, *Hier, Aujourd'hui, Demain*, that repeated his arguments from December. Bourassa expanded his arguments about the nature of the imperialist revolution to include its influence on Quebec's Catholic hierarchy. He also envisioned what the war's end might look like, and emphatically supported independence from Britain. His half French Canadian and half American cousin, Talbot Papineau, had joined the Canadian forces in August 1914. Papineau's time in the trenches profoundly affected his political beliefs about the war and he wrote to Bourassa urging him to change his views. Bourassa dismissed Papineau's arguments, as they paid no attention to Bourassa's deep exploration of the war from the previous months. Papineau lectured him about the war's meaning and significance without any knowledge that Bourassa had already set out a contrary position to Papineau in great detail.

Chapter Five focuses on Bourassa's examination of international issues. He affirmed support for the worldly perspective of Pope Benedict in August 1916 and studied the goals and

plans of the Union of Democratic Control. In December, he detailed the peace proposal from Germany and the Allied response to it for his readers, asking that it be considered honestly if only because it held the possibility of ending the terrible conflict. Likewise, he supported President Wilson's request that the belligerent nations clearly explain their war aims. In the early months of 1917, the United States was gradually more involved in the war and eventually entered it that April. Bourassa, who often visited the United States at this time, offered a comprehensive perspective of American politics and the reasons why they had entered the war after three years of neutrality. Bourassa analysed these international events in far more depth than any other Canadian writer did. In his assessment, the failure to achieve peace and the American entry further emphasized the futility of the war and the growing threat of militarism.

Chapter Six returns to the homefront as Bourassa confronted Canada's enactment of conscription legislation in May 1917. Forced military service was an important element of a militarist society, and Bourassa opposed it at all costs. Prime Minister Robert Borden's involvement in the Imperial War Cabinet, which nominally gave a voice to Canada in imperial affairs, was of little importance to Bourassa unless it was matched by a reasonable policy focused on Canada's national interests. The ineffectiveness of Borden's new role was clear when, upon his return to Canada, he announced that there would be Canadian conscription. Bourassa warned that society could only withstand so much pressure before something broke. He foresaw violence and unrest if conscription was imposed upon people who could not express themselves democratically. The journalist denounced the lacklustre debate in the House of Commons when few federal politicians turned against the war that made conscription necessary. Violence that erupted in Montreal that summer confirmed Bourassa's fears.

Chapter Seven covers the final months of Bourassa's commentary during the war. It

analyses his reaction to Borden's election legislation in August and September 1917, as well as Borden's successful efforts to forge a coalition of Conservatives and Liberals in favour of conscription. Bourassa and Laurier reunited after almost two decades to oppose the conscriptionists, with both perceiving the dominance of English Canadians as a threat to Canada's national unity. If English Canadians controlled Parliament, they could pass legislation without any concern for French Canadian views. After Borden won the election that December, Bourassa lamented the isolation of French Canada – isolated because they alone had stayed loyal to the Canada of 1867, while the rest of the country embraced militarism and total war. Bourassa's writing became increasingly dissentious as he continued to hope for a peaceful end to the war. As men were called up for conscription in March 1918, riots broke out in Quebec. Bourassa urged for calm, anxious that social unrest might turn towards rebellion or revolution. The Easter Riots were quelled, but the federal government passed new censorship laws as a result. Bourassa voluntarily agreed to stop writing in *Le Devoir*, and his commentary ceased from April 1918 until the end of the war.

By war's end, Bourassa was not the same man as the one who had witnessed the war's beginning in 1914. His liberalism, once firmly entrenched in a classical British form, shifted left as he aligned with the views of radical liberals and socialists in Britain opposed to the war – though he perhaps did not realise it. His nationalist dream of a Canadian identity that united its French and English peoples seemed impossible after the crisis over conscription and the December 1917 election. His vision of bilingual, bicultural and liberal Canada that he had fostered for decades was dimmed. Bourassa emerged from the war doubting the capability of humanity to resolve the problems that plagued it. Instead, he turned towards his Catholic faith as the last bastion of rationality and hope for a broken world. It seemed to him that only the

compassionate stance of Pope Benedict XV survived the war uncorrupted. Elsewhere, the war's sacrifices and totality left no space for moderation, sound judgement, or good will. Though he never set foot on the battlefields, Bourassa's war was still a traumatic and haunting experience.

Chapter 1: Fais ce que dois! (1867-1914)

Born in 1868, Henri Bourassa was the grandson of famed Lower Canadian rebel and republican radical Louis-Joseph Papineau. As one biographer notes, he had politics in his blood and it coloured every aspect of his life from an early age.¹ His father, Napoléon Bourassa, was an artist and married Papineau's daughter, Azélie, who died six months after the birth of Henri. His mother's death left a gap in Henri's family but his relatives stepped in to help raise the intelligent boy. His uncle Augustin-Médard Bourassa, an ultramontane Oblate missionary, exposed him to his library at a young age. The young boy read the works of Catholic writers Louis Veuillot, Joseph de Maistre, and Jules-Paul Tardivel, all of whom would influence his intellectual development. Henri Bourassa recalled that it was "dans la bibliothèque de mon oncle et dans la lecture de *L'Univers*, que j'ai puisé pour toujours mes notions sur le rôle de l'Église dans la société, sur les relations qui doivent exister entre l'Église et les chefs civils."² Bourassa's early exposure to the ultramontane vision of Catholicism had a lasting effect, marking him with deeply devout faith.

Catholicism had played a powerful role in the history of French Canada. French colonists settled along the St. Lawrence in New France during the 17th century before the British conquest during the Seven Years War in 1759. Known simply as "the Conquest," British rule was relatively benign. Most of New France's ruling class fled and left behind Catholic priests and bishops, who took on the role of guiding the conquered *canadiens*. Under their leadership, the former colony refused to fight alongside the Americans during their

¹ Réal Bélanger, *Henri Bourassa: Le fascinant destin d'un homme libre (1868-1914)*, (Quebec: Presses de l'Université de Laval, 2013) 16.

² From his *Mémoires* speeches in 1943, where Bourassa recounted his life to audiences in Quebec, as quoted in Réal Bélanger, *Henri Bourassa*, 4.

revolution or in the War of 1812 a generation later. French Canadians existed together with their neighbouring colony of Upper Canada and the Maritime colonies on the coast as part of the Second British North America.

In the aftermath of the failed rebellions of 1837-38 that advocated for republican and secular control, the Catholic Church emerged as an even more powerful force in Quebec society and politics. The fading influence of the Rebellions' republican *Patriotes* and the union of Lower and Upper Canada in 1841 marked the defeat of Quebec's liberal political elite. In place of a liberal national identity, conservative nationalism arose as "the Catholic Church took over the moral and political leadership required to define the nation."³ A Quebec identity tied to the survival of Catholicism, the French language, and Quebec culture soon emerged among the Canadian minority. Known by the term *survivance*, this connection of language and religion to their cultural and national purpose, or what Sylvie Lacombe terms "national ambition,"⁴ became central to their identities. So much so, that Lacombe has termed French Canada (and Quebec in particular) not as a nation-state but as a "Church-Nation." Lacombe writes that "the quasi-state like exercise of extra-institutional functions by the Church was made possible through the liberalization of the religious sphere and by the fracturing of civil society along confessional lines."⁵ By the late 19th century, the Catholic Church had become the dominant social and cultural institution of French Canadian society. The religiosity of its citizens defined many of their political struggles.

Among its most fervent believers were Ultramontane Catholics such as Henri Bourassa

³ Sylvie Lacombe, "French Canada: The Rise and Decline of a 'Church Nation,'" *Quebec Studies*, 48 (Fall 2009/Winter 2010): 138.

⁴ Sylvie Lacombe, *La rencontre de deux peuples élus : comparaison des ambitions nationale et impériale au Canada entre 1896 et 1920*, (Sainte-Foy: Presses de l'Université Laval, 2002) 10.

⁵ Lacombe, "French Canada: The Rise and Decline of a 'Church Nation,'" 145-46.

and his uncle Augustin. Ultramontanism was first a term used to describe location, as any Catholics north of the Swiss Alps were “over the mountain” from Rome. Over time it became a description for all European Catholics who looked to Rome for direction. French Canadian ultramontanists, like Bishop J.J. Lartigue of Montreal, his successor Ignace Bourget, and Bishop L.F. Laflèche of Trois Rivières, believed their sacred duty was to protect and preserve French Canadian Catholicism in North America. Laflèche released a booklet of articles in 1866, *Quelques considérations sur les rapports de la société civile avec la religion et la famille*, where he outlined the role of Catholicism in Quebec society. He defended the “mission providentielle” that had formed and sustained the Catholic state in North America and proclaimed that French Canadian survival in North America was their solemn Catholic duty.⁶ Laflèche’s ideas had a lasting impact on Quebec Catholicism as future generations of thinkers and practitioners adopted his views. They reflected the observation of Michael Gauvreau and Nancy Christie, who write that “religion is not an identity, it is an ideological system. ... [It is] a set of structured ideas that specific groups and institutions attempt to make authoritative in various historical contexts as the dominant formulator of social values.”⁷ For Ultramontane Catholics like the Bourassas, the Catholic Church’s expression of those social values were beyond reproach. There was no power greater than God, and his representative on Earth was the Pope, who was the voice of God in human affairs. Bourassa’s initiation into these ideas would colour his political beliefs for his entire career.

Bourassa was exposed to other less conservative strains of thought as well. His aunt

⁶ Louis-François Laflèche, *Quelques considérations sur les rapports de la société civile avec la religion et la famille*, (Montréal, 1866) 47. See also, Nive Voisine, “LAFLECHE, LOUIS-FRANÇOIS,” in *Dictionary of Canadian Biography*, vol. 12, University of Toronto/Université Laval, 2003–, accessed October 4, 2014, http://www.biographi.ca/en/bio/lafleche_louis_francois_12E.html.

⁷ Michael Gauvreau and Nancy Christie, “Modalities of Social Authority: Suggesting an Interface for Religious and Social History,” *Histoires Sociales/Social History*, no. 36, 71 (May 2003): 15.

Ezilda Papineau helped raise the young Bourassa, and even as she instilled in him a lifelong belief in ultramontanism, she introduced him to non-French writers like Walter Scott and James Fenimore Cooper. By the age of nine, he had read Émile Keller's *Histoire de France* and a French translation of John Lingard's *History of England*. Often the young Bourassa listened to debates between his father and his father's friends about the social and political problems of the day. He excelled in his studies under the supervision of private tutors and as a student at various schools. For two years, he attended the Catholic Commercial Academy in Montreal, and briefly enrolled at the École Polytechnique in 1885, then switched focus to religious studies at the Holy Cross College in Massachusetts where he perfected his English. Bourassa drifted from career to career, even attending law school in the late 1890s, but never settled on one profession or the priesthood. Instead, he gained wide-ranging knowledge of many subjects and a keen passion for debate and critical thinking. Eventually, he found his calling in politics.⁸

On 22 November 1885, he was among the crowd that gathered to hear French Canadian politicians rally the province against the execution of Métis rebel Louis Riel. Riel had brought Manitoba into Confederation in 1870 while securing the rights of its Métis and French Canadian Catholic peoples against English Canadian domination. Part of the deal was the exile of Riel from the young Dominion for the murder of a Protestant, Thomas Scott. Fifteen years later, he returned to lead a Métis rebellion in Saskatchewan and proclaimed himself a messianic prophet leading his chosen people to freedom.⁹ This time authorities caught Riel and

⁸ Réal Bélanger, *Henri Bourassa*, 13-14.

⁹ For some of the traditional literature on Riel, see George Stanley, *Louis Riel*, (Toronto: The Ryerson Press, 1963) and Thomas Flanagan, *Louis 'David' Riel: Prophet of the New World*, (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1979). More recently, Riel has been re-envisioned as a Métis Father of Confederation and a sort of prototypical modern Canadian, see Jennifer Reid, *Louis Riel and the Creation of Modern Canada: Mythic Discourse and the Postcolonial State*, (Albuquerque, University of New Mexico Press, 2008). Adam Gaudry has critically addressed both John Ralston Saul and Jennifer Reid's treatment of Riel as a Métis Canadian in "The Métis-ization of Canada: The Process of Claiming Louis Riel, Métissage, and the Métis People as Canada's Mythical Origin," *aboriginal policy studies*, no. 2 2 (2013): 64–87. Geoff Read and Todd Webb

tried him for treason. French Canadians were outraged. They believed that Riel's madness obviated his responsibility and the government had equal blame in rousing the rebel Métis to action. Riel's unquestioned indictment in the eyes of the English Canadian press alongside the subsequent "show trial" that sentenced him to execution demonstrated that the government had little interest in addressing the minority rights that Riel defended.¹⁰ French Canadians publicly decried the decision as racially and religiously motivated while the Opposition Liberals gladly attacked John A. Macdonald's Conservative government on the issue.

One of the largest gatherings held by French Canadian politicians took place in November at Montreal's Champs-de-Mars. Future Liberal Party leader Wilfrid Laurier and future Quebec Premier Honoré Mercier took the stage and in the audience was a young Henri Bourassa. "Had I been born on the banks of the Saskatchewan," Laurier famously declared to a captive audience, "I would myself have shouldered a musket to fight against the neglect of governments and the shameless greed of speculators."¹¹ For French Canadians and the young Bourassa, Laurier's words cemented his place as a leader who would defend their rights in the Dominion of Canada.

The speeches convinced Bourassa to enter politics. He was elected mayor of his childhood home of Montebello in January 1890 at the age of twenty-one. By 1896, he was the successful Liberal candidate for the riding of Labelle in the federal election that brought Wilfrid Laurier to power with significant French Canadian support. The impressive Bourassa was Laurier's protégé and the Liberal leader made sure to offer guidance to the young new

have examined the international reaction to Riel, who drew comparisons to the Sudanese religious zealot, the Mahdi, see Geoff Read and Todd Webb, "'The Catholic Mahdi of the North West': Louis Riel and the Metis Resistance in Transatlantic and Imperial Context," *The Canadian Historical Review*, no. 2 93 (June, 2012): 171-195.

¹⁰ A. I. Silver, *The French-Canadian Idea of Confederation, 1864-1900*, 2nd ed., (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1997) 156-159.

¹¹ Oscar Skelton, *Life and Letters of Sir Wilfrid Laurier*, (Montreal: McGill-Queen's Press, 1965) 88.

Member of Parliament.¹²

Bourassa's early political life as a Member of Parliament was difficult. He tried to reconcile the tumultuous world of politics and his deep-rooted religious faith. After the election, Laurier appointed him part of the delegation to resolve the crisis of Manitoba Schools, where in 1890 the provincial government restricted the rights of French Canadians to learn their native tongue. The resulting compromise between Laurier and Manitoba Premier Thomas Greenway, appropriately named the Laurier-Greenway Agreement, effectively enforced the status quo. It maintained a single public school system in Manitoba, but the agreement allowed for schools with enough French-speaking students to offer French language education. French Canadian Catholics appealed to the Vatican for an intervention as Laurier also sent a delegation to Rome. Eventually, the Catholic Church dispatched an apostolic delegate, Archbishop Raphael Merry del Val, to Canada. Del Val decided that as long as the Laurier government made some administrative changes, it was best for Canadian Catholics to side with Laurier.¹³ In December 1897, Pope Leo XIII affirmed that the Laurier-Greenway agreement was "defective, imperfect, insufficient," but it was a worthwhile remedy and might eventually lead to better legislation. Leo warned that "nothing would be more detrimental than discord: union of minds and harmony of action is required." This clearly rejected Quebec's opposition to Laurier's solution.¹⁴

The papal position did not prevent Bourassa from feeling unsettled by Laurier's refusal to defend the rights of the French Canadian Catholics that he had so eloquently championed at

¹² Réal Bélanger, *Henri Bourassa*, 44.

¹³ Robert Craig Brown and Ramsay Cook, *Canada, 1896-1921: A Nation Transformed* (Toronto: McClelland and Stewart, 1974)

¹⁴ Pope Leo XIII, *Encyclical Affari vos by Pope Leo XIII On the Manitoba School Question December 8, 1897*, as reproduced in Claude Bélanger, "Documents in Quebec History," *Marianopolis College*, accessed 30 September, 2014, <http://faculty.marianopolis.edu/c.belanger/quebechistory/docs/manitoba/1897-5.htm>.

the Champs-de-Mars in 1885. Almost a decade later in the midst of another school crisis (this time in the new provinces of Alberta and Saskatchewan), Bourassa reflected on his Manitoba experience and denounced “l’histoire du Manitoba et de ses déceptions, des abus de pouvoir, des faiblesses et des fourberies qu’elle a consignés dans nos annales.”¹⁵ In 1896, however, Bourassa was still willing to work with his Liberal leader.

After a disappointing eight-day term as editor of the radical liberal paper *La Patrie*, where Liberal party members rejected Bourassa’s ultramontane perspective on moderate liberalism, Laurier hoped to expose his protégé to the world of international politics. The Prime Minister assigned the young man as secretary for the joint Anglo-American commission meeting in Quebec to settle a dispute over the Alaskan boundary between the United States and Canada.¹⁶ The talks collapsed within a year and Bourassa returned to Ottawa. Bourassa left the commission convinced that not only would Canadians would have to represent their own interests in Washington, but that they could not trust the British to do so.¹⁷ With the 1899 British invasion of the Boer republics in present-day South Africa, Bourassa felt compelled to express openly his views that were increasingly diverging from the Liberal party and his mentor, Wilfrid Laurier.

French and English Canadians fiercely contested their nation’s involvement in the British war with the Boer republics in present-day South Africa, and Bourassa was one of the loudest voices in the debate. Carman Miller has recently suggested that historians’ approach to

¹⁵ Henri Bourassa, *Les Écoles du Nord-Ouest, discours prononcé le 17 avril 1905 dans la grand salle du Monument National, à Montréal*, (Montreal: Nationaliste, 1905) 10-11.

¹⁶ Réal Bélanger, *Henri Bourassa*, 56-57. For more on the Alaska Boundary dispute, see Allan Smith, “Alaska Boundary dispute,” *Oxford Companion to Canadian History*, Gerald Hallowell ed., (Don Mills, ON: Oxford University Press, 2004) 30-31; and on Bourassa’s role in it, Norman Penlington, *The Alaska Boundary Dispute: A Critical Reappraisal*, (Toronto: McGraw-Hill Ryerson Ltd., 1972) 106-107.

¹⁷ Henri Bourassa, “Speech of Henri Bourassa M.P. on the Alaskan Boundary Commission Ottawa, Friday, October 23, 1903,” University of Alberta Libraries, CIHM 9-91168. The dispute was eventually resolved in 1903 in the Americans’ favour with British consent.

French Canada and the Boer War might require a reassessment. The Boer War was not a prelude to the divisive issues and opposition experienced during the First World War. Attitudes among French Canadians shifted from opposition to cautious acceptance.¹⁸ While this may have been true for some French Canadians, it was not so for Henri Bourassa. After his three years as a Member of Parliament for the Liberal Party, the Canadian involvement in the British war against the Boer Republics not only irrevocably broke his loyalty to his party, but also served as the basis for his developing nationalist ideas.

Months of increasing tensions between Britain and the Boer Republics preceded Britain's 11 October 1899 declaration of war. Canadians had had a long time to develop their own views, and in some cases apathy, towards the conflict.¹⁹ While imperial-minded Canadians believed it was their duty to the Empire to fight, Bourassa and other Canadians believed that Canada had no reason to send troops to far away Africa for British colonial interests. Bourassa argued that any Canadian involvement in Empire affairs that were not its direct concern set a dangerous precedent. With his typical flair for sharp comment, Bourassa claimed that "M. Chamberlain [the colonial secretary] a voulu la guerre d'Afrique pour arracher des colonies, à l'heure où l'ivresse de l'orgueil et des passions sauvages fait taire la raison, ce premier tribut du sang qu'elles lui avaient refusé jusque-là."²⁰ Bourassa distinguished two key problems with Canadian participation: a question of fact and a question of law. Not only was the Britain's justification for the war faulty, if not immoral and unjust, but Canada had no legal obligation to join it.²¹ In the age of Canadian political imperialism, Bourassa's imposition of morality and

¹⁸ Carman Miller, "Framing Canada's Great War: a case for including the Boer War," *Journal of Transatlantic Studies*, no1., 6 (April 2008): 16-17. See also Carman Miller, *Painting the Map Red: Canada and the South African War, 1899-1902*, (Montreal: McGill-Queen's Press, 1993) 154-155.

¹⁹ Carman Miller, *Painting the Map Red*, 16-17.

²⁰ Henri Bourassa, *Grande-Bretagne et Canada: Questions actuelles* (Montréal: Imprimerie du Pionnier, 1901) 32

²¹ James I.W. Corcoran, "Henri Bourassa et la guerre sud-africain (suite)," *Revue d'histoire de l'Amérique Française*, no. 1, 19 (1965): 84.

legality onto imperial responsibility was a significant intellectual intervention.

His distinction between the act of committing Canadian troops and its legal obligations as a member of the British Empire revealed a critical aspect of his burgeoning sense of Canadian nationalism. Bourassa's rejection of the Boer War was rooted in a position against Canadian Imperialism and in favour of Canadian Nationalism. He disagreed with the Liberal policy and with imperialists not simply as a matter of opinion; Bourassa advocated for a fundamentally different conception of the country and its place in the world. On the other end of the political spectrum, imperialists believed that Canada's active participation in Empire were more valuable, but Bourassa could not accept such a worldview. He believed that Canada had its own interests and values entirely separate from that of Britain.

The political ideology of Canadian imperialism against which Bourassa opposed had emerged in the late 19th century. It began as a Britain debate over the purpose and utility of its Empire and that eventually spread to Canada. "Constructive Imperialism," a term coined by W.A.S. Hewins in 1899, described "the deliberate adoption of the Empire as distinguished from the United Kingdom as the basis of public policy." Its adherents advocated "those principles of constructive policy on all constitutional, economic, defensive, and educational questions which will help towards the fulfilment of that ideal."²² It is also termed "Conservative Imperialism," though opponents and supporters did not always divide along party lines. This brand of imperialism that championed imperial unity emerged out of the changing international context of the late 19th century as rising states like Germany, France, Russia and the United States ballooned into global powers. Britain was no longer the sole

²² E.H.H. Green, "The Political Economy of Empire, 1880-1914," *The Oxford History of the British Empire, vol. III*, Andrew Porter ed., (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1999) 347. Robert Craig Brown and Ramsay Cook call this "new imperialism," see Craig Brown and Cook, *A Nation Transformed*, 31.

power spread across the world and imperialists argued that the centre and the periphery of Empire required each other for future prosperity.

Constructive Imperialism reached the peak of its influence in Britain and abroad during the two decades before the First World War. Some aspects, like Imperial Preference regarding trade and tariffs, failed to gain traction among the Empire's former colonies. Most of the Dominions considered any changes to tariffs conditional on other political concerns, not inherently appealing as a means of expressing imperial patriotism alone. Discussion of Imperial defence was more popular, as both Britain and its colonies sought solutions to growing defence costs while increasingly using military power as a means of achieving international and collective security.²³

This brand of imperialism was epitomized through Joseph Chamberlain's time as Colonial Secretary from 1895 to 1903. Chamberlain advocated for an active British presence in imperial management, accelerating the process of adopting a Constructive Imperialism approach. Until the last quarter of the 19th century, imperial governance had often been left to private concerns.²⁴ Under Chamberlain, the idea of an enlightened, united Empire was justified by the difficult British victory in the Boer War. Imperial unity offered a solution to the apparent weakness of an Empire that took three years to defeat the disparate Boer Republics. As well, the war proved that Empire could benefit from its former colonies, as demonstrated by the enthusiastic contribution of soldiers for the Boer War by the self-governing Dominions. It encouraged the view that there was popular support for stronger imperial relations among them and Chamberlain was eager to use that enthusiasm to strengthen imperial unity. He believed

²³ E.H.H. Green, "The Political Economy of Empire, 1880-1914," *The Oxford History of the British Empire*, vol. III, Andrew Porter ed., (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1999) 347-348.

²⁴ E.H.H. Green, "The Political Economy of Empire, 1880-1914," 352.

that popular British support for the Boer War proved that there was the possibility of support for imperial unity at home as well.²⁵

Paradoxically, the success of the Boer's guerrilla tactics and examples of British barbarism during the conflict also helped discredit Chamberlain's particular vision of constructive imperialism. The British failure to defeat the Boers and Britain's use of concentration camps proved to some that the Empire was not as glorious and civilized as it claimed.²⁶ Perhaps as a result, enthusiasm for the constructive imperialists' goals waned during peacetime, especially without the military necessity of defending Empire. In the end, the idea that "general support for the Empire could be translated into enthusiasm for a *particular* concept" proved false.²⁷

The Empire's response to the Boer War and subsequently the First World War demonstrated the compelling nature of a call to arms over a call to political unity. Rallying political and popular support was often most successful in a military context. Appeals to the Empire's role in defending its members from potential threats, such as Germany, or the military value of defending its prosperity as in South Africa, rallied far more citizens to the cause. In Canada, it was no different. The policies advocated by Canadian imperialists were most popular during situations like the Boer War, the Naval Crisis when Britain called on Canada to help in the naval race against Germany, or in August 1914 at the outbreak of the First World War.

Canadian imperialism mirrored the larger British conception of imperialism, though obviously in a local context. As historian Carl Berger famously noted in his study of the period,

²⁵ E.H.H. Green, "The Political Economy of Empire, 1880-1914," 361-362.

²⁶ This point is raised in Peter T. Marsh, "Chamberlain, Joseph (1836-1914)," *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*, Oxford University Press, 2003.

²⁷ E.H.H. Green, "The Political Economy of Empire, 1880-1914," 366. Author's emphasis.

imperialism emerged as a set of cultural values and a political ideology that was a form of nationalism unto itself.²⁸ Nationalism did not necessarily mean opposition to Empire. British writer Richard Jebb published *Studies in Colonial Nationalism* in 1905 after travelling through the British Dominions and witnessing the emergent nationalist sentiments of Britain's former colonies. Colonial loyalty was giving away to national patriotism, and "the Empire [was] less valued for its own sake and more in proportion as it subserves the interests and ideals of separate nationalism."²⁹ For Canadian imperialists, imperial loyalty united their vision of the Canadian national community. Canadian imperialists were perfectly situated at the end of the 19th century to envision a modern "nationally-imagined community" tied to the British Empire, though often at the expense of non-English speaking and non-British minorities.³⁰ These ideas were encouraged by men like George Denison, G.M. Grant, G.R. Parkin, Stephen Leacock and Andrew MacPhail, who in the late 19th and early 20th century supported a Canada more closely connected to the Empire. Organizations like Canada First, founded in 1868 but dissolved in the late 1870s, pushed for the first organized creation of a national consciousness, again linked to the British Empire.³¹ Its successor, the Canadian chapter of the Imperial Federation League in the 1880s and subsequently the British Empire League in the 1890s, cemented the connections between Canadian imperialists and the larger British discussion regarding the future of the Empire. These "colonial nationalists" sought to enlarge Canada's position in the Empire.

Other historians have qualified Berger's statement, arguing that imperialism was Britannic nationalism, not a Canadian one. Simon Potter argued that "few people used the

²⁸ Carl Berger, *The Sense of Power: Studies in the Ideas of Canadian Imperialism 1867-1914*, (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1970) 250.

²⁹ Richard Jebb, *Studies in Colonial Nationalism*, (London: Edward Arnold, 1905) 2.

³⁰ Benedict Anderson argues that nations are modern constructs, "imagined" by a community through media and common history. See Anderson, *Imagined Communities: Reflections on the Origin and Spread of Modernism*, (New York: Verso, 1991) 41.

³¹ Berger, *The Sense of Power*, 49-77.

terms ‘nationalism’ and ‘imperialism’ with either precision or consistency,” and commentators used “nation” as a term with different meanings depending on constitutional or political contexts.³² Douglas Cole distinguishes between patriotism – loyalty to the state – and nationalism – loyalty to the national idea. It is important to distinguish the difference. While almost all Canadians were loyal to the state, “some were pan-Anglo-Saxon or Britannic nationalists while being imperialists, some were Britannic nationalists while being autonomnists, perhaps some were embryonic Canadian ... nationalists, and some were unconcerned with a nationalist identity.”³³ In that respect, outside of the committed adherents that Berger outlines, most Canadians lay somewhere on a scale of imperialist and nationalist belief, regardless of their level of patriotism.

In a political context, Canadian imperialism aligned with Constructive Imperialism’s goal of creating a unified Empire, though imbued with a Canadian perspective: a close-knit Empire assured the future prosperity of the Canadian nation-state, not the British one. Unlike in Britain, where debates over the Empire were focused on their implications for Britain’s global power and economic success, in Canada the simple, abstract objective of prosperity and future Canadian greatness had a broad appeal to many on Cole’s scale (and not just avowed imperialists). These were desirable goals for any patriotic Canadian.

Thus, Bourassa’s devotion to a nationalism wedded to the Canadian nation led him

³² Simon J. Potter, “Richard Jebb, John S. Ewart and the Round Table, 1898-1926,” *English Historical Review*, no.495, 122 (2007): 107.

³³ Douglas Cole, “The Problem of “Nationalism” and “Imperialism” in British Settlement Colonies,” *Journal of British Studies*, 10 2 (May, 1971): 179. Cole’s scale is also useful for understanding the rise of English-Canadian nationalism after the war that did not reject British culture, but certainly embraced Canadian autonomy. For more comments on Berger’s arguments on imperialism, see Simon J. Potter, “The Imperial Significance of the Canadian-American Reciprocity Proposals of 1911,” *The Historical Journal*, 47 1 (March, 2004): 81-100; Douglas L. Cole, “Canada’s “nationalistic” imperialists,” *Journal of Canadian Studies*, 5 3 (October, 1970): 44-49; Terry Cook, “George R. Parkin and the Concept of Britannic Idealism,” *Journal of Canadian Studies*, 10 3 (October, 1975): 15-31.

further away from his former Liberal compatriots but made him no less patriotic. That commitment was apparent in how strongly Bourassa opposed Laurier's Boer War policy and led him to leave the Liberal Party and sit as an independent in the House of Commons. He continued to define his brand of Canadian nationalism through his commentaries on political issues. Réal Bélanger observes that, after the Boer War, Bourassa was determined to communicate to Canadians "une opinion publique éclairée en transmettant aux Canadiens une compréhension plus nette des relations du Canada avec l'Empire et de la nature des rapports entre la majorité canadienne-anglaise protestante et la minorité canadienne-française catholique du pays."³⁴ His role as a critic of all sides of the House of Commons was evident by the time the war ended in 1902. He turned to his native province to seek allies who agreed with his vision of Canada.

In 1903, Bourassa founded the *Ligue Nationaliste* along with Oliver Asselin, Armand Lavergne, Jules Fournier, Omar Héroux. Although he would never officially join the league, he still served as its *de facto* leader. All of the men were rising young professionals, part of Quebec's established intellectual class, and already involved in the province's public life. Asselin, Fournier, and Héroux were journalists while Lavergne was a lawyer. Asselin and Fournier came from farm families. All were well educated and well trained in writing.³⁵ At the helm of the group was the now well-known federal politician Henri Bourassa. The *Ligue* used

³⁴ Réal Bélanger, *Henri Bourassa*, 79.

³⁵ Joseph Levitt, *Henri Bourassa and the Golden Calf: The Social Program of the Nationalists of Quebec / 1900-1914*, (Ottawa: Les Éditions de l'Université d'Ottawa, 1969) 2. Brown and Cook describe them as middle-class professional elites, see Robert Craig Brown and Ramsay Cook, *A Nation Transformed*, 136. For a concise biography of Asselin, see Hélène Pelletier-Baillargeon, "ASSELIN, OLIVAR," in *Dictionary of Canadian Biography*, vol. 16, University of Toronto/Université Laval, 2003–, accessed October 16, 2014, http://www.biographi.ca/en/bio/asselin_olivar_16E.html; and for Fournier, Laurent Mailhot, "FOURNIER, JULES," in *Dictionary of Canadian Biography*, vol. 14, University of Toronto/Université Laval, 2003–, accessed October 16, 2014, http://www.biographi.ca/en/bio/fournier_jules_14E.html. Dictionary of Canadian Biography entries for Héroux and Lavergne have yet to be completed.

periodicals such as the aptly named weekly newspaper, *Le Nationaliste*,³⁶ to express their ideas regarding provincial and national matters. Bourassa's powerful rhetoric made him the most prominent of this band of French Canadian nationalists who argued for greater Canadian autonomy within the Empire in opposition to Canada's imperialist movement.³⁷

Nationalisme, as distinguished from other forms of Canadian Nationalism, was a uniquely French Canadian ideology.³⁸ Bourassa and the nationalistes did not support either of two dominant political parties, the Liberals and the Conservatives. Many of their ideas were deeply embedded in the intellectual currents of French Canada at the turn of the century, but their political ideology differed from their contemporaries -- though there was overlap between their social, economic and political beliefs.

Generations of French Canadian intellectuals and politicians informed the views of the nationalistes, but two notable ones were politician Joseph-Israël Tarte and journalist Jules-Paul Tardivel who directly inspired Bourassa to turn away from established political groups.

Joseph-Israël Tarte was a Quebec Conservative politician who served as their "conscience" during the 1870s and 1880s and kept the province loyal to John A. Macdonald's Conservative Party. By the 1890s, Tarte left the Party after growing dissatisfaction with its anglophone wing that paid less and less attention to French Canadian problems. The Manitoba

³⁶ These periodicals were the inspiration for Bourassa's own paper, *Le Devoir*, founded in 1910. See Hélène Pelletier-Baillargeon, "Les Débats et Le Nationaliste, de bien curieux ancêtres pour *Le Devoir*," in *Le Devoir: Un journal indépendant (1910–1995)*, Robert Comeau and Luc Desrochers eds., (Québec: Presses de l'Université du Québec, 1996) 191–197.

³⁷ For a collection of commentary on Canadian nationalism and imperialism, see Carl Berger, ed., *Imperialism and Nationalism, 1884–1914: A Conflict in Canadian Thought* (Toronto: Copp Clark Publishing Company, 1969).

³⁸ I use *nationaliste* throughout the dissertation as a general term to describe Bourassa and his supporters, not to be confused with the term *nationalists*, used for English Canadians like Ottawa lawyer J.S. Ewart. The *nationaliste* movement was a complex one formed from different people and opinions and led by the men mentioned above. For the sake of simplicity, I conflate Bourassa's and the larger movement's ideas, as they are similar in attitude if not in detail.

Schools crisis in particular proved that the party was no longer the best option for French Canada, and when Wilfrid Laurier asked that Tarte to join the Liberal Cabinet, he agreed. Tarte briefly opposed the Boer War, though he eventually accepted Laurier's argument that volunteers averted any future Canadian responsibility to a British war, but it was rumoured he might even lead an independent party in 1900.³⁹ By 1903, however, he had returned to the Conservatives over the issue of protectionist tariffs, and remained there until he died in 1907. His biographers called Tarte a "francophone, Catholic, Canadian, and British subject," never quite a Liberal or Conservative, and certainly not a nationaliste.⁴⁰ Henri Bourassa had helped Tarte win his first election as a Liberal in 1893 and Tarte inspired the young man, who described the senior politician as one of the most interesting men he had ever known.⁴¹ Tarte was one of the most prominent protectors of French Canadian identity within a united Canada in the years before the nationalistes coalesced.

Jules-Paul Tardivel was a more extreme defender of French Canada than Tarte. Indeed, he was one of the first advocates for Quebec's separation from Canada. An ultramontane, Tardivel linked together his French Canadian nationality and his Catholic religion, and believed that only an independent French Canada could protect them. From the time of the Riel affair, Tardivel developed a vision of French Canadian autonomy that advocated for a French Canadian nation distinct and separate from the English Canadian one. In his view, French Canadians had been chosen by God to christianize North America. Mathieu Girard summarized Tardivel's views: "être séparatiste c'est pour Tardivel être catholique, c'est poser un acte de

³⁹ Joseph Levitt, *Henri Bourassa and the Golden Calf*, 17, quoting Robert Rumilly, *Histoire de la Province de Québec*, vol. 9 (Montreal: n.d.) 223.

⁴⁰ Michèle Brassard and Jean Hamelin, "Joseph-Israël Tarte," *Dictionary of Canadian Biography*, vol. 13, University of Toronto/Université Laval, 2003–, accessed September 30, 2014, http://www.biographi.ca/en/bio/tarte_joseph_israel_13E.html.

⁴¹ Réal Bélanger, *Henri Bourassa*, 27.

foi.”⁴² Tardivel established an independent newspaper, *La Verité*, in 1881 to communicate his religious and political beliefs which he edited until his death in 1905. During his career as a journalist, even though Tardivel never formally entered politics, he was an influential force on French Canadian political thought.⁴³ He worked closely with Bourassa and fellow nationaliste Omar Héroux (who married his daughter) before and after the establishment of the Ligue Nationaliste. It was Tardivel with whom Bourassa consulted during his opposition to the Boer War as he debated whether to start an independent third party or find another solution.⁴⁴ He was a significant figure to the nationalistes even though they rejected his separatist perspective.⁴⁵

Instead the next generation of French Canadian nationalists combined the passions of Tarte and Tardivel, wishing neither to support an English-dominated government like Tarte or separation from Canada like Tardivel. Their ideology combined elements of British Liberalism, American Progressivism and a bilingual and bicultural Canadian nationalism. At their formation in 1903, they presented a comprehensive program of their vision of Canada’s future, which they continued to develop over the next decade through speeches and newspapers.

The social concerns of the nationalistes were rooted in the tenets of social Catholicism, which deserves some explanation. Over the course of the 19th century, Catholicism modernized

⁴² Mathieu Girard, “La pensée politique de Jules-Paul Tardivel,” *Revue d’histoire de l’Amérique française*, no.3, 21 (1967): 398.

⁴³ Pierre Savard, “Tardivel, Jules-Paul,” in *Dictionary of Canadian Biography*, vol. 13, University of Toronto/Université Laval, 2003–, accessed September 30, 2014, http://www.biographi.ca/en/bio/tardivel_jules_paul_13E.html.

⁴⁴ Réal Bélanger, *Henri Bourassa*, 79-86.

⁴⁵ His views were also less compelling after Laurier was elected as Canada’s first French Canadian Prime Minister, as it no longer seemed so urgent to have more coherent French Canadian political organization. See Robert Craig Brown and Ramsay Cook, *A Nation Transformed*, 136-137.

its approach to the social dilemma of industrialization and the demand for democratic rights.⁴⁶ As a result, liberal Catholics began advocating for Church involvement in social programs and through organizations like the Society of Saint Vincent de Paul. In 1891, Pope Leo XIII issued the *Rerum Novarum*, a papal encyclical that addressed the growing influence of Marxism and individualism and served as a general Catholic reply to political liberalism. He defined for his flock “the boundaries of the rights and duties within which the rich and the proletariat ... ought to be restricted in relation to each other.”⁴⁷ *Rerum Novarum* outlined a role for social Catholicism in the modern world. The Catholic Church and the state could, Leo wrote, address social ills without allowing private life to supersede public life or doing away with social hierarchies. It preserved the family and private property, as well as the separation between rich and poor, even as individual concerns gave way to collective ones.

In Quebec, the Catholic Church underwent a similar transformation, though with great difficulty. Liberalism, which demanded a clear separation of Church and State, and Catholicism continued to clash in Canada throughout the 19th century. It reached its peak in the 1870s, as the Guibord Affair over burial rights, and the *Programme Catholique* demanding clerical political influence, highlighted Quebec ultramontanes’ attempts to combat liberalism in the province. Only after 1877, when the young Liberal MP Wilfrid Laurier confirmed that “le libéralisme catholique n’est pas le libéralisme politique” and that Canadian Liberals had no interest in degrading the powers of the Catholic Church, did an uneasy truce emerge.⁴⁸

⁴⁶ An excellent overview of social (or political) Catholicism in Europe can be found in John W. Boyer, “Catholics, Christians and the Challenges of Democracy: The Heritage of the Nineteenth Century,” in Wolfram Kaiser and Helmut Wobnot eds., *Political Catholicism in Europe, 1919-1945*, vol. 1, (Routledge: London, 2004) 6-37.

⁴⁷ *Principles for Peace Selections From Papal Documents Leo XIII to Pius XII*, Reverend Harry C. Koenig, ed., (Washington: National Catholic Welfare Conference, 1943) 53.

⁴⁸ Yvan Lamonde, *Histoire sociale des idées au Québec (1760-1896)*, (Québec: Éditions Fides, 2000) 367-379. Huguette Lapointe-Roy has argued that even Bishop Ignace Bourget, the ultramontane at the centre of much religious controversy in the 1870s, demonstrated a willingness to pursue elements of social Catholicism, at

Eventually, the Church in Quebec accepted that in a democracy it was one voluntary association among many, but it could still balance its social role in regards to education and public charity without contravening the role of the state to intervene in public life as liberalism demanded.⁴⁹ By the turn of the century, the nationalistes could be strong advocates for social Catholicism in Quebec without contradicting conservative strains of Catholic thought.

The nationaliste vision of society was a social Catholic one and drew much from *Rerum Novarum*.⁵⁰ The Church should help create a stable and prosperous society so that Catholic values could be preserved within it rather than be at odds with it. This meant sometimes supporting unions, rejecting materialism, and improving the conditions of the poor. The nationalistes endorsed state action to fulfill the goals of social Catholicism, such as addressing social problems like poverty and class exploitation.⁵¹ Education also played a vital role in society. Schools, controlled by the Church, could impart moral and religious values to society and allow them to resist corruption and the temptation of materialism. By allowing the Catholic Church to continue directing the province's education programs, a stronger society would be able to confront the moral dilemmas of the modern age.⁵² Like Pope Leo XIII's missive, the nationalistes presented a view of society that preserved French Canada's traditional societal values in the process of modernizing their state for the 20th century.⁵³

The nationalistes' economic program reflected their social beliefs. They envisioned a

least through charitable work, see Huguette Lapointe-Roy, "L'engagement social de Mgr Ignace Bourget," *Sessions d'étude-Société canadienne d'histoire de l'Église catholique* 51 (1984): 39-52.

⁴⁹ Jean-Marie Fecteau, "La dynamique sociale du catholicisme québécois au XIX siècle : éléments pour une réflexion sur les frontières et les conditions historiques de possibilité du «social»,» *Social History / Histoire Sociale*, no. 70, 35 (2002): 515.

⁵⁰ Levitt makes this point in *Henri Bourassa and the Golden Calf* on 95 and throughout. Yvan Lamonde in *Histoire sociale des idées au Québec (1760-1896)* reflects on Catholicism's changing relationship as urban populations grew and its public role changed, and specifically addresses the *Rerum Novarum* on 481-482.

⁵¹ Joseph Levitt, *Henri Bourassa and the Golden Calf*, 115.

⁵² Joseph Levitt, *Henri Bourassa and the Golden Calf*, 93-94.

⁵³ Joseph Levitt, *Henri Bourassa and the Golden Calf*, 34.

state that could intercede in the economy for the benefit of its people. Their position was rooted in the ideas of Quebec's leading economist of the era, Errol Bouchette, who lamented Quebec traditionalism that shunned the study of economics and social sciences and its disastrous impact on French Canadian capital.⁵⁴ Bouchette argued instead that French Canada had to use its own capital and people to exploit its natural resources, which depended on the ability of a French Canadian state to intervene economically.⁵⁵ Only then could French Canadians control their economy rather than English Canada or the United States doing so. The nationalistes were willing to adapt to the economic realities of the industrial age so they succeed in this endeavour, even if it meant rejecting established elements of French Canada's identity. They espoused an economic liberalism that did not want clerical interference in economic matters, but neither did they challenge the Church control in other areas.

Politically, the nationalistes sought ways to ensure French Canadians' survival in North America. They desired greater autonomy within a bicultural and binational Canadian federation as well as independence from the British Empire. Describing the nationaliste perspective, Bourassa noted that "la patrie, pour nous, c'est le Canada tout entier, c'est-à-dire une fédération de races distinctes et de provinces autonomes. La nation [...], c'est la nation canadienne, composée des Canadiens-français et des Canadiens-anglais."⁵⁶ In their 1903 program, they

⁵⁴ Alain Lacombe, "Bouchette, Robert-Errol," in *Dictionary of Canadian Biography*, vol. 14, University of Toronto/Université Laval, 2003–, accessed September 28, 2014, http://www.biographi.ca/en/bio/bouchette_robert_errol_14E.html; see also Alain Lacombe, *Errol Bouchette, 1862-1912*, (Québec: Les Éditions Fides, 1997) 72-74, 125, for his reputation in English and French Canada, as well as the nationaliste endorsement of him from Jules Fournier. Interestingly, Bouchette was a continentalist not a nationalist of any sort, but one who understood that French Canada and the United States were irreconcilably different, see Damien-Claude Bélanger, *Prejudice and Pride: Canadian Intellectuals Confront the United States, 1891-1945*, (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2011) 134-135.

⁵⁵ Joseph Levitt, *Henri Bourassa and the Golden Calf*, 42-43.

⁵⁶ Réal Bélanger, "BOURASSA, HENRI," in *Dictionary of Canadian Biography*, vol. 18, University of Toronto/Université Laval, 2003–, accessed September 12 2014, http://www.biographi.ca/fr/bio/bourassa_henri_18F.html.

demanded for the provinces “la plus large mesure d’autonomie compatible avec le maintien du lien fédérale” alongside Canada’s political, commercial and military independence from British policy.⁵⁷ The constitutional promise of protection for minorities curtailed provincial power since French language schools had to be protected in provinces where English speaking Canadians had a majority, just as Quebec protected its English language schools. A bicultural nation allowed both of Canada’s races to prosper, and equally they argued that such a Canada could only be sustained in an autonomous Empire. As Bourassa wrote in 1901, “la première condition nécessaire à l’indépendance d’un peuple, c’est d’être assuré de la paix intérieure et extérieure.”⁵⁸ The nationaliste Canada could only exist if it upheld its internal commitments to racial equality as well as chose the manner and content of its external commitments.

The nationalistes and Bourassa sought to establish a new Canadian political ideology, though ultimately it remained limited to French Canada. Joseph Levitt argues the nationalistes ultimately failed to create a Canadian nationalism and could not convince English Canadians that their Canadian identity naturally ought to include both cultures. While the nationaliste program intended to broaden the case for a Canadian nationalism to include French and English, their chosen battleground of Quebec inherently limited their influence.⁵⁹ As a result, their *Canadian* nationalism contrasted with Jules-Paul Tardivel’s *French Canadian* nationalism. Tardivel believed that French Canada could only survive alone, not cooperatively with English Canada. He warned them that “de même que M. Bourassa se méfie de ceux qui songent à fonder un grand empire britannique, ainsi nous sommes constamment en garde

⁵⁷ *Program of the Nationalist League – 1903*, as reprinted in Joseph Levitt, *Henri Bourassa and the Golden Calf*, 148-149.

⁵⁸ Henri Bourassa, *Grande-Bretagne et Canada: Questions Actuelles*, (Montréal: Imprimerie du Pionnier, 1901) 40.

⁵⁹ Joseph Levitt, *Henri Bourassa and the Golden Calf*, 33-34.

contre ceux qui travaillent à créer un grand tout canadien.”⁶⁰ Tardivel distrusted any encompassing movement that might weaken French Canadian identity. Notwithstanding their hopes, the nationalistes remained a French Canadian movement and positioned themselves within provincial politics more than national ones. Bourassa transcended those boundaries more easily than his compatriots did.

In a broader Canadian context, nationalistes might be considered liberals but not Liberals. A conservative set of French Canadian cultural values and, for some of them, Catholic ones, mitigated their liberal ideology. Still, historian Yvan Lamonde has termed their ideas as a “*dérivatif nationaliste*” of Laurier’s liberalism since they too supported collective national values of equality, democracy, and economic intervention.⁶¹ They were pro-clerical, rather than simply not being anti-clerical like Laurier, which reflected the values of French Canadian culture. Their liberal nationalism, Oliver Asselin explained in 1909, aligned with a wider American Progressive tradition as well. He explained that they “[were] Liberals in the matter of minority rights, and Progressists in economic and social matters.” He elaborated that “it is that opposition to both Imperialism and Annexation [from the United States], that Liberalism and that Progressism[sic], which makes up our brand of Nationalism.”⁶² The nationalistes existed in a national and continental context, as did their nominal leader, Bourassa.

The nationalistes were representative of a particular French Canadian political thought, but also existed within an international reaction to liberal ideas. Historian Joseph Levitt specifically addressed the relation between the nationalistes, social Catholicism, and American Progressivism. Nationaliste ideology was different from both strains of thought due to their

⁶⁰ Yvan Lamonde, *Histoire Sociale des Idées au Québec 1896-1929*, (Québec: Fides, 2004) 27-28.

⁶¹ Yvan Lamonde, *Histoire Sociale des Idées au Québec 1896-1929*, 194-195, 226.

⁶² Olivar Asselin, *A Quebec View of Canadian Nationalism*, (Montreal: n.l., 1909) 61.

French Canadian circumstances. The nationalistes dealt with the problem of foreign corporate control, which Pope Leo XIII never addressed, since they faced a lack of French Canadian capital investment. Nor were they entirely American Progressives, whose “frontier individualism” meant that all individuals were equal in modern society.⁶³ Instead, the nationaliste ideology was a fusion of corporatism, liberalism, and social Catholicism. Levitt calls them “utopian corporatists” since their ideal society had ingrained economic inequality, state intervention, and no class distinction. The persuasive force of social elites informed by Catholic social philosophy, rather than by democratic voice or state power, guided their philosophy.⁶⁴ Though inspired by social Catholicism and American Progressivism, they chose which ideas most suited their situation in Canada.

Historians have also drawn parallels between the nationalistes and British liberalism. Bourassa was in some ways a classical liberal of the 19th century, echoing the political tradition of the Whigs that minimized the role of Empire and emphasized democracy, equality, and the rule of law.⁶⁵ He publicly admired its well-known disciples, chiefly British politician William Gladstone, who served as Prime Minister four times between 1868 and 1894.⁶⁶ James Kennedy

⁶³ Ronald J. Pestritto and William J. Atto, *American Progressivism: A Reader*, (Lanham, MD: Lexington Books, 2008) 8-9.

⁶⁴ Joseph Levitt, *Henri Bourassa and the Golden Calf*, 143-144.

⁶⁵ Réal Bélanger draws explicit comparisons between Bourassa and Laurier, as both adhered to the same brand of liberalism (though, as Lamonde noted, Bourassa’s was a nationalist derivation of it), and describe their Liberalism as “exaltation de la liberté individuelle dans le respect de la Constitution et du droit[,] ... défense du gouvernement libre et représentatif, de la souveraineté bien comprise du peuple, de la propriété et des réformes à accomplir pour assurer le progrès, le bonheur et la prospérité[,] ... nécessité de la tolérance, de la justice, du respect de l’égalité des individus devant la loi et de la démocratie, ce que ... [n’empêche] pas toutefois ... [le refus] d’étendre le suffrage électoral à plusieurs, y compris aux femmes[,] ... développement matériel du Canada[,] ... [appui au] libéré marché[,] ... [au] laisser-faire économique ... [et au] rôle réduit [de l’État] dans la société[,] ... conservatisme [social],” Bélanger, *Henri Bourassa*, 44. (Bélanger is quoting his own book, *Wilfrid Laurier. Quand la politique devient passion.*)

⁶⁶ Bourassa’s speech from 1900 is often quoted: “Je suis un disciple de Burke, de Fox, de Gladstone et des autres «Little Englanders», qui ont fait l’Angleterre et ses possessions ce qu’elles sont aujourd’hui, et je ne déserterais pas les rangs de leurs disciples fidèles, parce qu’il plairait à M. Chamberlain et à d’autres radicaux renégats, dévorés du délire de l’ambition, de traiter ces grands hommes d’insensés,” Henri Bourassa, *House of Commons Debates*, 13 March, 1900, vol. I, 1821. This text draws from the citation of Sylvia Lacombe, *La recontre de deux peuples élus*, 64, who in turn cites James I.W. Corcoran, “Henri Bourassa et la guerre sud-africaine

explored the link between the nationalistes and Gladstone comparing the French Canadians to the Young Scots, an early 20th century nationalist movement in the United Kingdom. Both groups attempted to reconcile nationalism and liberalism, and Kennedy argued that they revealed the contrasting faces of 19th century liberalism as they tried to resolve its emphasis on individuals rights against the national (or collective) rights that they championed. Both groups resolved that dilemma differently. The Young Scots were “Liberal nationalists” while the French Canadians were “liberal Nationalists.” Thus, the Scots nationalized classical liberalism, while the nationalistes liberalized their French Canadian nationalism.⁶⁷ Both coopted classical British Liberalism according to their political and social context while nurturing the national community they sought to create.

Bourassa was the leading nationalist and was the best known on the national stage, before and after the creation of their league. At the heart of the nationalist position lay the bicultural and autonomous Canada that Bourassa first articulated, where two peoples lived in equal partnership free of imperial responsibilities. In spite of parallels to American or British political traditions, Bourassa espoused a nationalist sentiment focused on Canada’s uniquely French and English Canadian character, rather than its colonial or New World heritage. His nationally-imagined community did not attach itself to the former motherlands of England or France. “Les Canadiens-français du peuple n’ont d’autre patrie que le Canada,” Bourassa wrote in 1903, “ils sont prêts à lui rendre tout ce qu’ils lui doivent; mais n’estimant rien devoir à l’Angleterre ni à aucun autre pays, ils n’en attendent rien.”⁶⁸ Bourassa believed that Canada

(suite),” *Revue d’histoire de l’Amérique française* 19, 1 (1965): 84-105. It is found in many other works on Bourassa however, and examined at length by Bélanger as a response to the Boer War and the Laurier government’s repudiation of Liberal beliefs by not letting Parliament decide the Canadian war effort, see Bélanger, *Henri Bourassa*, 74-76.

⁶⁷ James Kennedy, *Liberal Nationalisms Empire, State, and Civil Society in Scotland and Quebec*, (Montréal: McGill-Queen’s University Press, 2013) 219-222.

⁶⁸ Henri Bourassa, *Les Canadiens-français et l’Empire britannique*, (Québec: Imprimerie S.A. Demers, 1903), 40.

possessed a political culture that was a combination of French and English heritage and deserved expression in its own right. In his mind, the long history of French Canadians in North America left them best equipped to define this political culture and defend it. Bourassa, unsurprisingly, often led the charge.

Bourassa's efforts took him from federal politics in Ottawa to the provincial arena in 1907. Although he lost the first by-election he contested against the Minister of Lands and Forests, Adélar Turgeon, he beat Liberal Premier Lomer Gouin in the 1908 election. Bourassa's provincial campaign against Gouin sought to reclaim from the provincial Liberals "le vieux drapeau qu'ils ont déchiré et souillé."⁶⁹ His time in the Assemblée Nationale found him concentrating on economic issues such as the colonization of Quebec's northern frontier and the management of its natural resources. Levitt has depicted the social program of Bourassa and the nationalistes as one based on the belief that "industry and commerce were the keys to national power, that economic development was the weapons of this century and that only if it possessed economic strength would French Canada become an important nationality."⁷⁰ Strengthening Quebec, as distinct from French Canada, was an important step in towards righting the power imbalance in the Canadian federation. Equality was not simply a matter of the rights and privileges of a minority, but the equal ability to contribute to the Dominion's progress. Bourassa failed in Quebec City to accomplish his goals and he left the Quebec capital frustrated in 1912. During his time there, however, he built the connections within provincial politics and with the Quebec wing of the Conservative party that he needed to found his influential newspaper, *Le Devoir*.

Le Devoir began publishing in 1910 and quickly became Bourassa's preferred vehicle

⁶⁹ R. Rumilly, *Henri Bourassa, la vie publique d'un grand Canadien*, (Montreal: Editions de l'homme, 1953) 274.

⁷⁰ Joseph Levitt, *Henri Bourassa and the Golden Calf*, 35.

for developing ideas on national and provincial politics as well as international ones. As editor from its founding to his resignation in 1932, he offered his opinion to a numerically limited but important readership.⁷¹ The size of Bourassa's audience understates his influence. Bélanger describes Bourassa as the mouthpiece of the "élite petite-bourgeoise" who spoke for a generation of French Canadians.⁷² Bourassa did not represent the view of all French Canadians, but he acted as a crucial spokesperson for many of the province's élite, who debated French Canada's place in confederation or Canada's place in the world. His public speeches drew hundreds of interested spectators and he travelled extensively extolling his views. Nevertheless, it was always in the pages of *Le Devoir* where he began formulating the basis and details of his arguments.

Le Devoir's first target was Sir Wilfrid Laurier's decision to create a Canadian navy in light of the ongoing naval crisis between Britain and Germany. In 1909, the British government realized that Germany had increased its ship production and might surpass British naval supremacy within several years. In theory, the German navy could eventually threaten the British control over the North Sea and the Atlantic, impose an embargo, and win a war against the British Empire. New Zealand immediately offered to build or at least fund the construction of powerful battleships, the Dreadnought-class, while it spurred debate over the matter in Australia and Canada. The Opposition Conservatives demanded that Canada immediately make a gift of ships or money to Britain, and Laurier refused it as an expensive "imperial

⁷¹ *McKim's Directory of Canadian Publications* lists *Le Devoir* as having 18,894 subscribers in 1915, a number which dropped to an estimated 14,000 by 1917. See *McKim's Directory of Canadian Publications*, 1915, 1917. *McKim's* estimated that Montréal, where *Le Devoir* was published, had a population of 550 000. It is estimated that the city was 25.8 percent English and 63.5 percent French in 1915. See, Andrew Sancton, *Governing the Island of Montreal: Language differences and metropolitan politics*, (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1985), 27.

⁷² Réal Bélanger, *Henri Bourassa*, 536-537.

obligation.”⁷³ After meeting with British authorities that summer, Laurier became convinced of the need for some form of Canadian contribution, but the British demanded that any ships Canada built be under imperial control.⁷⁴ On 12 January 1910, he put forward the Naval Service Bill to the House of Commons in Ottawa that proposed a small fleet of ships to form a Canadian Navy that only the Canadian Parliament could commit to action. Laurier walked a tenuous line between the two opposing forces of English Canadian imperialism and French Canadian nationalism. He famously told the House that “when Britain is at war, Canada is at war; there is no distinction” -- although he carefully qualified his statement by noting that “if Great Britain, to which we are subject, is at war with any nation, Canada becomes liable to attack, and so Canada is at war.”⁷⁵

Laurier’s “tin-pot navy” of five cruisers and six destroyers satisfied neither imperialist nor nationaliste. Many Conservatives decried it as an insufficient contribution to the defence of the Empire. Opposition leader Robert Borden, seeing an opportunity to weaken the Liberals, demanded that Canada required a voice in imperial affairs alongside its new navy.⁷⁶ Bourassa reiterated his fear from the Boer War that such a course would implicate Canada in future

⁷³ Patrice Dutil and David Mackenzie, *Canada 1911: The Decisive Election that Shaped the Country*, (Toronto: Dundurn, 2011) 39-43.

⁷⁴ Patrice Dutil and David Mackenzie, *Canada 1911*, 47-52; Phillips Payson O’Brien, “The Titan Refreshed: Imperial Overstretch and the British Navy before the First World War,” *Past & Present*, no. 172 (August 1, 2001): 160-163. O’Brien paints the Canadians as intransigent and unwilling to spend money on the navy, while Robert Craig Brown and Ramsay Cook portray British authorities as acceding to Canadian demands, Robert Craig Brown and Ramsay Cook, *A Nation Transformed*, 169.

⁷⁵ Wilfrid Laurier, *House of Commons Debates*, 11th Parliament, 2nd Session: Vol. 1, January 12, 1910, 1735. Laurier later expanded his statement on 3 February, noting that “I was simply stating a principle of international law. It is a principle of international law that when a nation is at war all her possessions are liable to attack. If England is at war she can be attacked in Canada ... in short, anywhere that the British Fleet floats. ... I do not say that we shall always be attacked; neither do I say that we would take part in all the wars of England. That is a matter ... which the Canadian Parliament will have to pronounce and will have to decide in its own best judgment,” Wilfrid Laurier, *House of Commons Debates*, 11th Parliament, 2nd Session: Vol. 2, 3 February, 1910, 2964-2965.

⁷⁶ Robert Craig Brown and Ramsay Cook, *A Nation Transformed*, 169-171.

imperial conflicts and he denounced Laurier as a traitor.⁷⁷ This marked the journalist's first foray into international affairs through *Le Devoir*, where he dissected British policy and Germany's rising prominence. The resulting furor over the Naval Bill helped convince Bourassa and the Conservatives to work together to bring down Laurier despite their vastly different political perspectives.

The Liberals' shaky position in Quebec became clear with a by-election in the Prime Minister's old riding of Drummond-Arthabaska. The Quebec wing of the Conservative party led by F.D. Monk had grown dissatisfied with Borden's moderated support of the Naval Bill and found common cause with Bourassa and the nationalists. In January 1910, the two corresponded over possible political cooperation in Quebec. By May, they agreed to an alliance between Quebec Conservatives and nationalists to pursue the goal of creating a third party: conservative-nationalists independent of the Liberals and Conservatives.⁷⁸ Bourassa desired a counterbalance to the English – and imperialist – dominated federal parties in the House of Commons, and believed that the Quebec Conservatives might provide it. When Laurier announced a by-election in Drummond-Arthabaska in August 1910, the new coalition was ready to present a candidate to challenge what was considered a safe Liberal riding. The Liberals nominated a little known Arthabaska lawyer, Joseph-Édouard Perrault, who faced a nationaliste local farmer, Arthur Gilbert. The campaign was bitterly contested. All knew that it represented Laurier and Bourassa competing for control of the province.⁷⁹ Gilbert won the election by 200 votes, signalling to the nation that the Liberals no longer enjoyed unquestioned support in Quebec.

⁷⁷ See Bourassa's articles from 11, 13, and 17 January 1910 in *Le Devoir*.

⁷⁸ Réal Bélanger, *Henri Bourassa*, 309. For an overview of the gradual decision to form an alliance with Monk, see 302-309.

⁷⁹ Robert Craig Brown and Ramsay Cook, *A Nation Transformed*, 172; Réal Bélanger, *Henri Bourassa*, 331-332.

The Drummond-Arthabaska by-election set the scene for the 1911 federal election for French Canadians. For English Canada, the election focused on the issue of reciprocity, or free trade, with the United States. It was a shock to the ruling Liberals when American President William Howard Taft proposed an agreement to the Canadians in 1910. Previously, Canadians always had to persuade the Americans to enter into discussions. Laurier found it difficult to refuse and a trip to the Canadian West suggested strong support for lowering tariffs among Prairie farmers.⁸⁰ In January 1911, the Americans and the Canadians signed a final agreement. All Laurier had to do was pass it through Parliament. The Conservatives made every effort to impede its passage, and the debate remained unresolved when Laurier left for an Imperial War Conference in May. Laurier was confident that the country stood behind him, but his departure gave his opponents time to organise. Conservatives criticized the reciprocity agreement across the country, Bourassa expounded the dangers of imperialism, and Toronto Liberals grew apprehensive about reciprocity's effect on their business. All were ominous signs for the Liberals. The reciprocity debate stagnated after Laurier's return in mid-July. By month's end, the Government announced an election for 21 September with far less confidence about the results than it had two months earlier.⁸¹

The election yielded a victory for Conservative Robert Borden. Historians have argued that reciprocity and imperialism turned Canadians away from supporting the Liberals, in English Canada and French Canada respectively, but more recent work suggests that the Liberal loss was razor-thin. Historians Patrice Dutil and David Mackenzie argue that the Liberals lost because the Conservatives convinced between a few dozens or hundreds voters in a riding to switch their allegiance. Seventy-one seats, a third of the 221 total, were decided by

⁸⁰ Dutil and Mackenzie, *Canada 1911*, 81-87.

⁸¹ Dutil and Mackenzie, *Canada 1911*, 131-163.

less than 5% of the vote.⁸² The Conservative victory did not signify a sweeping change in the country's attitudes away from the Liberals, but it did produce a change in government.

This was especially true in Quebec. The Québec Conservatives supported Bourassa as he attempted to bring a caucus of conservative-nationalist MPs to Parliament. Quebec's election was a judgement on the naval issue and Laurier's decision to cooperate with Great Britain's naval expansion. Bourassa spoke fervently against Laurier alongside Conservative candidates, while at the same time insisting that Borden would not be much better as Prime Minister.⁸³ His goal was not to bring Borden to power but to ensure the election of conservative-nationalists. He believed they would be independent of the Conservative Party and would instead exist as a bloc of federal MPs who spoke for French Canada alone. In the end, however, most of the Québec MPs elected as conservative-nationalists joined the new Conservative government and followed the party line. Bourassa had merely helped to place Robert Borden and his imperialist allies in power.⁸⁴ The Conservative leader and his Cabinet led Canada even farther away from the nation envisioned by Bourassa and his nationalist compatriots.

After the loss in 1911, Bourassa refocused his energy on the issue of French language education. Ontario enacted Regulation 17 limiting Franco-Ontarians' access to French instruction. The politician-cum-journalist remembered well the imperfect solution of the

⁸² Dutil and Mackenzie, *Canada 1911*, 252, 278-279.

⁸³ For example, Henri Bourassa, "La Vrai Terrain de la Lutte," *Le Devoir*, 2 August 1911, 1.

⁸⁴ The extent to which Borden ignored Québec would not be fully realized until 1913 when the Conservatives introduced their own Naval Aid Bill, though it was defeated in the Liberal-dominated Senate. Patrice Dutil and David Mackenzie conclude that the Conservatives could easily afford to reject Quebec demands given the seats they had gained outside the province. They had enough seats in English Canada, that even if Quebec MPs voted against the government, they would still survive the vote, see 294. Bourassa realised it after no nationalist MP were appointed to Cabinet in November, 1911, for his perspective, see Réal Bélanger, *Henri Bourassa*, 378-381. Another useful work is Réal Bélanger, *Paul Émile-Lamarche: Le pays avant le parti (1904-1918)*, (Québec: Presses de l'Université Laval, 1984), and its exploration of Lamarche's career as a "conservative-nationalist" MP.

Manitoba School Crisis through the Laurier-Greenway agreement. Keeping a tenuous balance between minority and majority rights had been a difficult task for Canadians since before Confederation and certainly afterwards. As early as 1871, New Brunswick's banning of religious schools had violated the terms of section 93 of the *British North America Act*, which nominally recognized the educational rights and privileges of linguistic minorities but did not specifically mention French language rights outside the province. The failure of Manitoban French Canadians to protect their separate schools helped spur the Franco-Ontarian minority of the province's eastern counties to protect their rights. "Their intention," historian Marilyn Barber argues, "was not to defend their rights but to extend their rights, not only to protect existing rights but also to secure additional ones."⁸⁵ Increased agitation of these French-speaking Catholics alarmed the Protestant Orange Order. The Orange Order, a fiercely Protestant and pro-British organization, held a significant presence in Ontario's Conservative Party that had come to power in 1905. The growing hostility between Irish Catholics and Franco-Ontarians added to the tensions and culminated with Conservative Premier James Whitney passing Regulation 17 in 1912. The regulation severely restricted the use of French language in the schools of the province and had a devastating effect on French-English relations in Canada.⁸⁶

Ontario Anglophones believed they were protecting their cultural identity against a

⁸⁵ Marilyn Barber, "The Ontario Schools Issue: Sources of Conflict," in *Minorities, Schools and Politics*, eds. Ramsay Cook, Craig Brown, and Carl Berger, (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1969) 74. The chapter was similar to her earlier article, Marilyn Barber, "The Ontario Bilingual Schools Issue: Sources of Conflict," *Canadian Historical Review*, 43 3 (September 1966): 227-248.

⁸⁶ There are many other works examining the bilingual school crises of Canada, for Ontario specifically see also Margaret Prang, "Clerics, Politicians, and the Bilingual Schools Issue in Ontario, 1910-1917," *Canadian Historical Review*, no.4 41 (December 1960): 281-307; Chad Gaffield, *Language, Schooling, and Cultural Conflict. The Origins of the French Language Controversy in Ontario*, (Montreal: McGill-Queen's University Press, 1987); Gaëtan Gervais, "Le Règlement XVII (1912-1927)," *Revue du Nouvel-Ontario*, 18 (1996): 123-192; Jack Cécillon, *Prayers, Petitions, and Protests: The Catholic Church and the Ontario Schools Crisis in the Windsor Border Region, 1910-1928*, (Montreal: McGill-Queen's University Press, 2013).

restless and allegedly dangerous minority. In 1907, Robert Sellar published *The Tragedy of Quebec*, which claimed French Canadian Catholics were an insidious force bent on supplanting English Protestants in rural Quebec and eastern Ontario. “Nationalism,” Sellar warned, stood for nothing more than “French-Catholic supremacy in the Dominion.” The book went through four editions between 1907 and 1916.⁸⁷ Meanwhile, French Canadians viewed Regulation 17 as yet another English Canadian refusal to uphold the promises of Confederation. They perceived the Ontario government’s legislation as part of a sinister decades-long trend in Canada to limit French Canadians to Quebec alone. French Canadians, and certainly nationalistes, understood the compact formed in 1867 primarily as an agreement to safeguard their cultural and religious identity in the country. By the twentieth century, they believed that a guarantee of French rights outside the province should always inform government policy; particularly in light of how well Quebec’s English-speaking minority was treated.⁸⁸

On the eve of war in 1914, Bourassa’s political and journalistic career had shaped a set of ideas about the nature and purpose of a Canadian nationalism. Bourassa’s Canada was one where imperial affairs did not supersede Canadian ones, and a nation that respected and protected the pillars of French Canadian culture, its language and religion. Above all, his vision stressed equality between English and French Canadians. Canada as he saw it was neither English nor French, but a partnership of the two languages and cultures. He saw a grave threat in the dominating influence of imperialism that fundamentally placed the values and beliefs of the British (English Canadians) above those of other “races.”

“Race” was conceived differently in the early twentieth century than later usage. Today,

⁸⁷ Robert Sellar, *The Tragedy of Quebec*, (Toronto, 1916) 282-284, as quoted in Robert Craig Brown and Ramsay Cook, *A Nation Transformed*, 255 fn 13.

⁸⁸ Arthur Silver, *The French Canadian Idea of Confederation 1864-1900*, (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1982) 219-221.

we would consider “French Canadians” (or Québécois more likely) as a cultural identity rather than a distinct race. We understand that the biological or genetic differences that distinguish human beings from one another are superficial ones with no bearing on their history or culture. In the 19th century, the term race carried societal connotations. “Race” had been a concept in European thought for several centuries before Darwinian ideas of evolution were coopted into social constructs. Works like Robert Knox’s *Races of Man* in 1850 and Arthur de Gobineau’s *Essay on the Inequality of the Human Races*, though not based on Darwin’s writing on evolution, helped shape social Darwinian thought and separated “races” by their historical accomplishments and how “civilized” they were. That some races were superior to others was a vital aspect of understanding larger historical developments, such as European superiority. Equally, “nation” and “race” were used interchangeably to explain successful national accomplishments. For the British, race took on a cultural dimension as well. “Race” distinguished a set of national values and qualities.⁸⁹ Emerging out of the context of its multi-racial Empire, the “British race” was on a civilizing mission to its various colonies and Dominions, be it for Indians, Africans, or French Canadians.

In Canada, the concept of “race” mirrored European developments. Unlike Britain, which approached race from a global perspective, Canadians were more likely to encounter it in a local context as a descriptor for its French and English peoples. The two dominant “races” of Canada had a long history of conflict. Since the Conquest in 1759, when the British conquered New France during the Seven Years War, Britain had tried to incorporate its new French-speaking subjects into a governmental system with varying success. The *Quebec Act* of 1774 guaranteed the new population’s Catholicism, their use of civil law in private matters,

⁸⁹ Paul Rich, *Race and Empire in British Politics*, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1986) 7.

defined the structure of its colonial government and abandoned any structured attempt at “anglicization.”⁹⁰ The establishment of a representative assembly with the Constitution Act of 1791 did not completely assuage the concerns of a growing number of republicans in the colony and in 1837 the short-lived rebellion against the government erupted. Its failure led to an investigation by Governor General Lord Durham, who in his 1839 report wrote that “I found two nations warring within the bosom of a single state: I found a struggle, not of principles, but of races.”⁹¹ Of French Canada, he bluntly dismissed them as “a people with no history, and no literature.”⁹² Other sections of Durham’s famous report eventually led to the establishment of “Responsible Government” in the Canadian colonies of Lower and Upper Canada (Quebec and Ontario respectively), where the government was responsible to the electorate rather than the Governor General. It did not solve the “struggle of races” between Canada’s two emergent cultures.

Instead, French Canadians proved Durham wrong by setting out to describe their unique North American history and writing their own literary works devoted to their “racial achievements.” François-Xavier Garneau’s three-volume *Histoire du Canada* published from 1845-1852 focused on the accomplishments of French Canadians and their ability to survive while surrounded by Anglo-Saxon Protestants in North America. This early French Canadian historian emphasized the endurance of his people’s language, laws, and religion.⁹³ Other French Canadian historians who echoed his theme of survival, though sometimes with a more

⁹⁰ K. David Milobar, “Quebec Act,” *The Oxford Companion to Canadian History*: Oxford University Press, 2004.

⁹¹ John George Lambton, Earl of Durham, *Report on the affairs of British North America*, Sir C.P. Lucas ed., (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1912) 16.

⁹² John George Lambton, Earl of Durham, *Report on the affairs of British North America*, Sir C.P. Lucas ed., (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1912) 294.

⁹³ F.X. Garneau, *Histoire du Canada: Tome Premier*, (Quebec: Imprimerie de N. Aubin, 1845) 28. Ramsay Cook notes that Garneau is critical of the Church in his first volume but expunged these criticisms in later volumes, see Ramsay Cook, *The Maple Leaf Forever: Essays on Nationalism and Politics in Canada*, (Toronto: Macmillan Canada, 1971) 118-119.

positive view of the clerical contribution to French Canadian history or the British one followed Garneau.⁹⁴ This cultural renaissance proved that they were not simply a subjugated diaspora, but a vibrant and unique community. As discussed above, the idea of *survivance* was embedded in French Canada with aid from the Catholic Church. Cultural, religious and linguistic survival was paramount and implicit in that struggle was a dichotomy between Canada's "English" and "French" races.

By the beginning of the 20th century, most Canadians accepted a difference between "English Canadians" and "French Canadians" and used the term "race" as a descriptor for them. French sociologist André Siegfried toured Canada in 1904 and wrote *The Race Question in Canada* based on his experiences. Siegfried outlined a pessimistic view of Canada's political and cultural tensions that hinged on the religious and racial differences between its French and English speaking peoples. "There is a pronounced feeling of jealousy between [Ontario and Quebec]," he reflected. "The dominant race suffers the presence of the French because it cannot do otherwise, but it sets up its own tongue and religion and form of civilisation against theirs. An open warfare is in progress, the bitterness of which it were useless to seek to disguise."⁹⁵ He dissected the forces shaping the two sides and their impact on Canadian politics, concluding that in "the absence of ideas and doctrines dividing electors into opposite camps, there remain only questions of collective or individual interests."⁹⁶ The cultural divisions outlined by Siegfried had a racial component and, linking together "race" and "progress," he believed that without resolving the crisis of Canada's two races, its political

⁹⁴ Abbé J.-P.-A. Ferland took a more positive perspective on the Church in Quebec, while Thomas Chapais was generally accepting of the positive influence of British institutions on the province, see Ramsay Cook, *The Maple Leaf Forever*, 120-122.

⁹⁵ André Siegfried, *The Race Question in Canada*, (London: Eveleigh Nash, 1907) 2.

⁹⁶ André Siegfried, *The Race Question in Canada*, (London: Eveleigh Nash, 1907) 142.

development remained stunted.

Bourassa disagreed with Siegfried's conclusions but not his views. He too believed that French and English Canadians' language and religion were inseparable racial characteristics. Bourassa reflected on their fusion during a famous speech at the 21st Eucharistic Congress in Montreal in September 1910 (an important Roman Catholic gathering of clergy and laity to collectively practise their faith and publicly reflect on Catholicism). Various speakers addressed the audience in Montreal. The Archbishop of Westminster Francis Bourne delivered a speech arguing that the English language was the future of Catholicism in North America.⁹⁷ In return, Bourassa offered an impassioned and eloquent defence of French-speaking Catholics in the New World. French speakers, he argued, were the true bastion of Catholicism in North America. Religion and language was engrained in French Canadians' identity and Catholicism had to preserve the French language if it wanted to survive. Only then would a strong Catholic presence on the continent be assured forever.⁹⁸ Bourassa foresaw no future where the religion and language of French Canadians would come undone.

Despite Canada's racial strife, Bourassa was not as convinced as Lord Durham or Siegfried about the impossibility of unity between Canada's French and English peoples. An excellent example of his optimism is evident in an address to Montreal's English-speaking population only a few months before the outbreak of the First World War. For years it had been the city's custom to elect a French-speaking mayor followed by an English-speaking one, but Médéric Martin's successful campaign in March 1914 broke this tradition. Bourassa wrote to Montreal's English population during the election campaign in the pages of *Le Devoir* as well

⁹⁷ Guy Laperrière, "Le Congrès eucharistique de Montréal en 1910: une affirmation du catholicisme montréalais," *Études d'histoire religieuse*, 70 (2011): 21-39.

⁹⁸ Henri Bourassa, *Religion, Langue, Nationalité: Discours prononcé à la séance de clôture du XXI^e Congrès Eucharistique, à Montréal, le 10 septembre 1910*, (Montreal: Imprimerie du Devoir, 1910) 3-4.

as in a brief pamphlet. Bourassa counselled them in English that

they ought to take the lead in the crusade for the triumph of equal justice to all minorities, and the maintenance of the principle of equality of rights, for both races, all over the land. Upon that principle Confederation was built, old feuds were pacified. Upon that principle alone Confederation shall stand, and peace and harmony prevail.⁹⁹

Despite two decades in politics and much experience with an intransigent and sometimes hostile English Canada, Bourassa still believed on the eve of the war that French and English could come together as Confederation had promised. There were differences, but they were reconcilable. In Montreal, perhaps the most bilingual and bicultural city in the country, Bourassa saw a place where French and English cultures could fulfil their separate destinies together.

Bourassa's career before the war was marked by his perceptive and vocal discussion about the problems of national unity, Catholicism and Quebec, and the growing danger of imperialism. Together with his fellow liberal nationalistes, he shaped a new political ideology that differed from other French Canadian nationalists, like Jules-Paul Tardivel, and from other liberals, like Sir Wilfrid Laurier. Accordingly, pre-war ideas and experiences led Bourassa to a different understanding of the First World War than that of many other Canadians. He was intimately involved in Canada's political debates, either as an MP or as a journalist. Whether English and French Canadians accepted or understood what he was saying is less certain. His prominence on the national stage on the eve of war positioned him as a man who had a clear and well-developed set of ideas about Canada, Quebec, and the world, and he was willing to communicate them to his audience. Unfortunately, the war was unlike anything the world had ever seen. Like others, Bourassa was unprepared for its intensity or its brutality and the drastic

⁹⁹ Henri Bourassa, *French and English Frictions and Misunderstandings*, (Montreal: Imprimerie du Devoir, 1914) 22. The pamphlet was also published as articles in *Le Devoir* on 11, 12, 13, and 14 March, 1914.

impact it would have on Canadians' perspective. Bourassa's war led him down a different path than most but it was not a path he wanted to tread.

Chapter 2: The Duty of Canada at the Present Hour (1914)

Canadians filled the Russell Theatre at the corner of Queen and Elgin streets in Ottawa on 17 December 1914. Its architecture reflected the talents of its creator, J.B. McElfatrick, whose *Beaux-Arts* design echoed the Italian renaissance while incorporating new American techniques to perfect acoustics and seating arrangement. Like that night's speaker, Henri Bourassa, it fused Old World style with New World pragmatism.¹ The 1500-seat venue was packed full of journalists, citizens and soldiers who awaited the intellectual and sometime polemicist Bourassa. He was the heart and voice of the French Canadian nationalist movement and had made a career out of challenging members of Parliament, a stone's throw away from where they gathered.

Some in the audience arrived solely to disrupt the proceedings. For days, pamphlets had been circulating in Ottawa decrying the appearance of the "arch traitor" and "rebel" Bourassa. "The Skull of Rebellion must be crushed," the pamphlets declared, urging "loyal citizens" to enter with or without paying the admission fee. The text promised its reader that the police and the militia were on their side against "the rebels" who had invited Bourassa to speak on "the duty of Canada at the present hour" in the midst of the Great War.²

As Bourassa stepped onto the stage, the crowd erupted. Shouts and jeers drowned out the words of Dr. Anthony Freeland who tried to introduce the night's speaker. Bourassa

¹ Louis-Gérard Alberti, "Russell Theatre," *Canadian Encyclopedia Online*, <http://www.thecanadianencyclopedia.com/articles/emc/russell-theatre> (accessed December 16, 2012). Edward Bernard Kinsella, *Modern Theatre Construction*, (New York: Chalmers Publishing Company, 1917) 23; Don B. Wilmeth and Christopher Bigsby eds., *The Cambridge History of American Theatre, Volume II: 1870-1945*, (Cambridge: University of Cambridge Press, 1999) 489-491.

² Henri Bourassa, *The Duty of Canada at the Present Hour*, (Montreal: Le Devoir, 1915) 6. Bourassa's booklet printed the speech he was supposed to give that night and included the two pamphlets printed rousing action against his presence, one from a talk on November 22, the other for his talk on December 16.

ignored them and spoke directly and fluently in English to the journalists who had gathered. This enraged his opponents in the crowd even further. A sergeant in uniform leaped to the stage with a Union Jack and demanded that the French Canadian wave the flag. Bourassa turned from the journalists and took the flag in his hands. The tumultuous crowd quieted as they listened to his words. "I am ready to fly the British flag of freedom, but I will not do it under threat," he affirmed, turning back to the journalists. When the sergeant repeated his demand, other soldiers rushed the stage, overwhelming the organizers and journalists who encircled Bourassa. Some French Canadians in the audience sang the Marseillaise. Amidst the chaotic chanting and threatening invectives of the crowd, Bourassa left to deliver his speech at Château Laurier down the street.³ Later he would write that "the only serious aspect of the situation is the marked growth of intolerant and arrogant jingoism. There is, for all true Canadians, a danger to be more dreaded than the expansion of German militarism in Europe: it is the moral conquest of Canada by Prussianism under false British colours."⁴

It was not the first time Bourassa had referred to his fellow Canadians as Prussians, nor would it be the last, but the Russell Theatre debacle revealed the divide between the dissenter and the majority. Over the previous five months, Bourassa's editorials had repeatedly rejected the rhetoric that Canadians used to justify fighting for the British Empire in the First World War -- rhetoric that focused on British ideals, atrocities in Belgium, and upholding Canadian honour. Bourassa perceived this rhetoric as disguised imperialism and, as a veteran critic of imperialist arguments, countered that Canadian self-interest took precedence over jingoistic contributions of money, resources and soldiers. Both sides took deep offence at the other's

³ The description of the event is drawn from Robert Rumilly, *Henri Bourassa: La Vie Publique d'un Grand Canadien*, (Montreal: Les Éditions Chantecler Ltée, 1953) 521-522.

⁴ Bourassa, *The Duty of Canada*, 4.

position. Even before Canadian soldiers had reached the battlefield, the homefront was dividing into a contest between Bourassa and the rest of the country.

Bourassa's engagement with the Canadian domestic debate during the first months of war differed from critics in other belligerent nations. In France, opposition to the war was virtually non-existent in 1914. Germany's seizure of French territory and their dangerously successful push towards Paris in August united France's previously divided people and politicians. Even the fall-out from the assassination of Socialist leader Jean Jaurès on 31 July did not crack French unity. Both friends and enemies attended his funeral, though some argued that his death was the last chance for France (and Europe) to avoid the coming war.⁵ France's *Union Sacrée* brought together the bickering Right and Left sides of the political spectrum, which had been rehashing the arguments of the Dreyfuss Affairs for fourteen years in different ways. The *Union Sacrée* symbolized a French determination to oppose the oncoming German menace that superseded normal political concerns.⁶ With little room for arguments against such a direct defence of the nation and with no central figure around whom to rally, French objections to the war were silenced or absent. France faced the first months of the war with common purpose as its traditional religion of Catholicism united with its civic religion of Republicanism.⁷

Germans were also outwardly united. In Germany, the "spirit of 1914" took hold of its citizens, who entered the war believing their country was threatened by Russia and its western allies. *Feinde Ringsum*, "enemies surround us," was the motto of the war. At the Royal Palace

⁵ It is unclear what Jaurès could have done, but in her biography of Jaurès, Margaret Pease wonders what August 1914 would have looked like had the socialist leader lived, see Margaret Pease, *Jean Jaurès, Socialist and Humanitarian*, (New York: B.W. Huebsch, 1917) 151.

⁶ Leonard V. Smith, Stéphane Audoin-Rouzeau, and Annette Becker, *France and the Great War 1914-1918*, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2003) 9-41.

⁷ Leonard Smith et al., *France and the Great War*, 27.

in Berlin, the Kaiser proclaimed that he recognized “no parties, only Germans.” Discordant German politicians, as was the case in France, fell in line at the call to arms.⁸ German Socialists and pacifists, who were nominally against war, seemed to acquiesce to Germany’s right to self-defence in 1914. When they began to reject the war, they faced strong state suppression and their opposition floundered.⁹

Britain, where the motivation to fight a continental war was less clear than the nations directly involved, offered the possibility of more coherent opposition. In the early days of the July Crisis, elements within the British government had argued against intervention. By early August, almost all members of Cabinet who had opposed participation changed their positions after the German invasion of Belgium. On 4 August, British opinion supported intervention and cheered at news of British entry into the war. After news of the British retreat from Mons on 25 August and newspapers published accounts of the German atrocities in occupied Belgium, particularly after the burning of Louvain on 29 August, British enlistment surged alongside support for the war. The war transformed from a necessary intervention to preserve France and the balance of power to a crusade to defend Britain from the morally corrupt German militarism now threatening the world.¹⁰ Several prominent British intellectuals and politicians created an anti-war group, the Union of Democratic Control (UDC), which began organizing resistance to the conflict almost as soon as it began. Its members believed that British foreign policy had to be answerable to the British people, and that political and economic reasons, not the interests of the British people, lay behind Britain’s involvement in the European war. They

⁸ Roger Chickering, *Imperial Germany and the Great War, 1914-1918*, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2004) 16. For more on the Spirit of 1914, see 13-17.

⁹ Chickering, *Imperial Germany and the Great War*, 148-153.

¹⁰ Adrian Gregory, *The Last Great War: British Society and the First World War*, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2008) 9-39.

believed that foreign policy ought to be under the control of voters and thus under “democratic control.” Only then could they restrain the “secret diplomacy” that had widened the conflict to include most European nations through treaty obligations. Though their political resistance grew in popularity over the course of the conflict, particularly amongst the British Left, the UDC’s influence remained minimal in 1914 as they were sidelined from the parliamentary discussion of the war and lacked widespread popular support.¹¹

Each belligerent country formed a dominant national narrative around their entry into the war which heralded and justified their participation. Each also had exceptions to the common portrayal of cheering crowds in Paris, Berlin and London welcoming the war. Historians agree there were different reactions between urban and rural, and between regions, classes and genders. Nevertheless, the popular enthusiasm that characterizes the memory of 1914 was rooted in contemporary perceptions. As Europeans celebrated their nation’s wartime *raison d’etre*, those who mourned war’s outbreak refused to speak out against it (or, in the case of Britain’s Union of Democratic Control, were relatively muted). In the absence of a strong, vocal opposition to the war in Europe, the myth of all-encompassing support for it may as well have been true.

Among the British Dominions, South Africa had similar circumstances to the French and English union found in Canada. Both experienced August 1914 as unifying moment for its divided political groups that had good reason to distrust the British war. South Africa, which had only been a Dominion since 1910, possessed a mixture of British, conquered Boer colonists, Asian immigrants from India, and black Africans. Initially, the war served as an opportunity to unite the deeply divided nation, though throughout the conflict South Africa

¹¹ Gregory, *The Last Great War*, 28.

struggled with responses to imperial loyalty and colonial jingoism that varied between its diverse cultural groups.¹² As in Canada, it began with unquestioned declaration of war and support for Great Britain, and “help knit together new levels of national consciousness and national integration.”¹³ For instance, a group of black loyalists urged their compatriots to mobilize for war as part of their support for Britain’s multicultural imperial identity in 1914. Blacks easily linked their support for the war to more equality for their people in South Africa.¹⁴ Contrarily, Boers and some labour and socialist organization reacted hostilely to the war effort. Though the popular response was largely positive, there was still no single voice in 1914 that undermined the war effort like Henri Bourassa.¹⁵

Was Canada different? Separated from the conflict by an ocean, Canadians were familiar with the political and cultural divisions over its submission to British policy. The French Canadian nationalist movement arose in the previous fifteen years to oppose the goals of Canadian imperialists. Language issues that had raised the ire of both sides and the 1911 federal election confirmed French Canadians’ distrust of English Canada. Nationaliste candidates had campaigned alongside Quebec Conservatives to help Robert Borden defeat the Liberal incumbent, Sir Wilfrid Laurier. Of the few nationaliste candidates elected, many simply became part of the Conservative government that continued its imperialist policies without considering Quebec or its nationalists. The following three years of Conservative government was lacklustre, and certainly did not achieve any of the goals the nationalists had envisioned

¹² Bill Nasson, “A Great Divide: Popular Responses to the Great War in South Africa,” *War & Society*, no.1, 12 (May 1994): 60-61.

¹³ Bill Nasson, “War Opinion in South Africa, 1914,” *The Journal of Imperial and Commonwealth History*, no.2, 23 (1995): 249.

¹⁴ They sought to shape a place for themselves distinct from South Africa’s non-English white minority, the Boers, see Bill Nasson, “Why They Fought: Black Cape Colonists and Imperial Wars, 1899-1918,” *International Journal of African Historical Studies*, no. 1 37 (2004): 59.

¹⁵ A more recent appraisal of the South African homefront is P.S. Thompson, “The Natal home front in the Great War (1914-1918),” *Historia*, no.1, 56 (May 2011): 101-137.

from their support.

Canada, like South Africa, had developed political fault lines along which opposition to general European war could easily set off. Many Canadians may have vocalized their opposition to war in principle in the months before the July Crisis,¹⁶ but political leaders were unified in their support that August. “Ready, aye ready,” Laurier proclaimed at the onset of hostilities. “I have often declared that if the Mother Country were ever in danger, or if danger ever threatened, Canada would render assistance to the fullest extent of her power,” the Liberal leader reminded Canadians before announcing that “pending such great questions there should be a truce to party strife.”¹⁷ The party truce confirmed total parliamentary agreement on Canadian participation. Across the country, newspapers described spontaneous demonstrations of patriotism and support.

Among the figures that rushed to provide their views on the European war, Henri Bourassa and the nationalists were alone in expressing serious public dissent. Much like the UDC in Britain, Bourassa articulated a *political* objection to Canadian participation rather than a purely moral or religious one like that of J.S. Woodsworth.¹⁸ Bourassa had nurtured his French Canadian political movement for a decade, which ensured that war enthusiasm would not subsume it -- although it did influence it. His determination to adhere to and express his nationalist and anti-imperialist political views to Canadians remained intact. Committed to the tenets of Canadian nationalism that he had developed throughout his career, Bourassa had to twist his words to remain loyal to his ideas. Few European countries had a similar political

¹⁶ Castell Hopkins, *Canadian Annual Review War Series 1914*, (Toronto: The Canadian Annual Review Limited, 1918) 134-135.

¹⁷ Castell Hopkins, *Canadian Annual Review 1914*, 141.

¹⁸ His biographer Kenneth McNaught noted that “Woodsworth carried his protestantism[sic] to the most extreme pacifist position,” see Kenneth McNaught, *A Prophet in Politics: A Biography of J.S. Woodsworth*, (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1959) 317.

nexus for opposition to the war and none maintained their position after outbreak. Bourassa, drawing upon the ideas he had espoused since the Boer War, was ready and willing to offer detailed and rational criticism of Canadian involvement.¹⁹

* * *

Bourassa's experience of the war began under more dangerous circumstances than most of his fellow Canadians. On 21 May 1914, he left on his regular summer trip to Europe. He went to learn of British opinion on Canadian affairs and to explore the plight of linguistic minorities, especially in light of the 1912 Ontario Schools Crisis, which led him to research the situation among similar Europeans communities.²⁰ Bourassa's intended destinations included Wales, Belgium, Switzerland and Alsace. On 30 July he arrived in the Alsatian village of Colmar to meet with Abbé Emile Wetterlé, a member of the Reichstag for Alsace-Lorraine since 1898, editor of the newspaper *Le Nouvelliste d'Alsace-Lorraine*, and a well-known opponent to Germany's rule there.²¹ Bourassa planned to speak with the Abbé but quickly discovered that the prospect of war had forced many of Alsace's most fervent voices against German rule to flee. Wetterlé, accused of high treason, had fled to Switzerland on the day that German authorities searched his home and office for evidence of treason.²² Bourassa discovered that others, such as Chanoine Collin of the *Lorrain*, also fled to safety. Some failed to escape, like Alexis Samain, president of the *Souvenir Lorrain*, who was shot in Metz on 3

¹⁹ Bourassa outlines the similarities between his historic and contemporary position in 1914 in an editorial, see Henri Bourassa, "Deux Témoins : Un vivant et un mort," *Le Devoir*, 18 September, 1914, 1.

²⁰ A number of prominent Canadians were in the Old World that summer. Conservative party whip Colonel John Stanfield, Quebec's provincial parliamentarian Joseph-Napoléon Fancoeur, Chief Justice of the Supreme Court Sir Charles Fitzpatrick, and many others were caught in Europe as war approached. Most were in England or France and escaped easily through the Allied nations, see Réal Bélanger, *Henri Bourassa: Le fascinant destin d'un homme libre (1868-1914)*, (Quebec: Les Presses de l'Université de Laval, 2013) 514; Rumily 504.

²¹ For more about Wetterlé, see Émile Wetterlé, *Behind the scenes in the Reichstag; sixteen years of parliamentary life in Germany*, (New York: George H. Doran Company, 1918).

²² Émile Wetterlé, *Behind the scenes in the Reichstag*, 21-23.

August.²³

Unlike many Canadians who experienced news of the war as a distant event, Bourassa was close to its dangerous reality. On the night of 30 July, the secretary of *Le Nouvelliste d'Alsace-Lorraine*, a young Frenchman, invited Bourassa to his house. With war all but certain, Bourassa and his host fled the next morning. The secretary joined the French army, while Bourassa hoped to return safely home. He reached a deserted, soldier-filled Strasbourg the next day and prayed with Alsatians in the cathedral.²⁴ On 2 August he arrived in Cologne and took the train as far as the German-Belgian border which was closed to railway traffic. Undaunted, Bourassa abandoned his luggage and crossed on foot, resigned to the “fortune de la guerre.” Reaching wartime Paris, which he found had “presque l’air d’une ville religieuse,”²⁵ he witnessed firsthand the *Union Sacrée* of France’s bitterly divided politics. “Royalistes, impérialistes, républicains, socialistes, tous ne paraissent avoir qu’un coeur,” he wrote of his time in the capital.²⁶

Back in Canada a week later, he immediately described what he had seen to Omar Héroux for his first published response to the war in late August. Bourassa told his readers of the ethereal, quiet French cities through which he had passed and reminded them that “ceux qui ont vécu ces heures-là en France peuvent dire qu’ils ont vu l’âme de la nation française.”²⁷ War, Bourassa noted solemnly, “n’est pas l’enfer ... C’est le pire des châtements sur la terre; c’est aussi la plus salutaire des expiations.”²⁸ Bourassa echoed a generation of Christian

²³ Henri Bourassa, “En France et en Alsace au Début de la Guerre,” *Le Devoir*, 22 August 1914, 1.

²⁴ Rumily, *Henri Bourassa*, 503; see also Andre Bergevin, Cameron Nish, and Anne Bourassa, *Henri Bourassa: biographie, index des écrits, index de la correspondance, 1895-1924*, (Montreal: Les Éditions de l’Action Nationale, 1966) XLVII.

²⁵ Bourassa, “En France et en Alsace,” *Le Devoir*, 22 August 1914, 1. For a more detailed account of Bourassa’s trip home, see Bélanger, *Henri Bourassa*, 528-530.

²⁶ Bourassa, “En France et en Alsace,” *Le Devoir*, 22 August 1914, 1.

²⁷ Bourassa, “Le Congrès Eucharistique et la Guerre,” *Le Devoir*, 27 August, 1914, 1.

²⁸ Bourassa, “Le Congrès Eucharistique et la Guerre,” *Le Devoir*, 27 August, 1914, 1.

thinkers before him when he extolled this chance for Europe's – and maybe Canada's – regeneration.²⁹ The sense of national purpose that bound the French together was palpable and something Bourassa wished to see in his native land. His return home to Montreal on 21 August marked a moment where it seemed the war's zeitgeist that subsumed many in 1914 captured Bourassa's spirit as well. His first experience of the European war would be a stark contrast to the months that followed in Canada.

The political landscape of nationalists and imperialists that had dominated Canada during Bourassa's career still defined his understanding of Canadian political discourse. At the onset of the war, English Canada seemed replete with enthusiasm for the "Great Adventure," though this may have been the loudest urban voices crowding out the periphery.³⁰ Bourassa prepared to counter that rhetoric with a different understanding of the war. In the coming months he would furnish a tempered response to the war's supporters, detailing both Canada's potential contribution to the war as well as its causes. In August, however, he offered cautious support and in September had cautious criticisms of Canadian involvement that revolved on the axis of his political life: Canadian nationalism.

Bourassa understood that the war required a national unity that had been absent since Canada's creation almost fifty years before. He believed it possible to put on hold political arguments in favour of a national war effort, as he observed in France, but it would require compromise from both sides. In his first editorial response to the war on 29 August, he offered

²⁹ Ramsay Cook offers a more detail examination of the idea of "social regeneration" among Canadian Christian thinkers, see Ramsay Cook, *The Regenerators: Social Criticism in Late Victorian English Canada*, (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1985).

³⁰ One excellent example of the ubiquity of war support in an urban centre like Toronto is Ian Miller, *Our Glory and Grief: Torontonians and the Great War*, (Toronto : University of Toronto Press, 2002) 15. It is less clear without a more comprehensive study how much war enthusiasm extended into urban, less heavily populated areas, or what regional differences existed, though James M. Pitsula, *For All We Have and Are : Regina and the Experience of the Great War*, (Winnipeg : University of Manitoba Press, 2008) suggests similar urban reactions.

a truce to his opponents: make this truly a Canadian war, not an imperial one, and he would support it.³¹ Therefore, it had to be fought under the auspices of Canadian nationalism. If English Canadians sought to enter the Empire's war alongside Bourassa and his fellow French Canadians, the first step had to be a show of good faith. Nationalistes would compromise if imperialists compromised as well. After all, French Canadians were disadvantaged, and what reason did they have to support a British war when they themselves faced persecution at home?

Bourassa argued that the clearest peace offering by English Canada would be for Ontario Premier James Whitney to end his discriminatory Regulation 17 against Franco-Ontarians.³² This legislation had eliminated French language schooling for thousands of Franco-Ontarians since 1912, opening a wound for French Canadians who had seen their linguistic and education rights outside of Quebec minimized since Confederation. If Whitney repealed Regulation 17, Bourassa insisted, "cet acte d'élémentaire justice et de politique intelligente fera plus pour assurer l'unité de l'Empire et de la nation canadienne que tous les dons de farine ou d'argent."³³ The contradiction in asking for national unity while demanding political concessions elicited sharp criticisms, but in Bourassa's mind it represented a fair attempt at political negotiation and compromise. The Canadian *union sacrée* could only form if the Ontario bilingual schools question was resolved.

The Premier ignored his request, indicating Bourassa's excessive optimism about the war's short-term, transformative potential. Imperialists had agitated for a larger Canadian role in the Empire for decades. They had fashioned a national consciousness intrinsically linked to imperial values in the years before the war, which historian Carl Berger identified as a form of

³¹ Henri Bourassa, "Le Partage Des Responsabilités," *Le Devoir*, 29 August, 1914, 1.

³² Bourassa was repeating demands also made by Omar Héroux, see *Le Devoir*, 6 August, 1914, 1.

³³ Henri Bourassa, "Le Partage Des Responsabilités," *Le Devoir*, 29 August, 1914, 1.

nationalism unto itself.³⁴ For imperialists, Canadian domestic and international policy was best guided by an imperial connection that superseded national concerns.³⁵ The outbreak of war opened an opportunity to realize these objectives.

Consciously or not, Canadians seemingly fulfilled an imperialist vision of supporting the Empire. The impassioned speeches of Prime Minister Sir Robert Borden and Liberal leader Sir Wilfrid Laurier during the parliamentary session on the war on 19 August 1914, spoke of the need to both defend Britain and uphold Canadian honour, thus emphasizing Canada's duty to join the war. Borden declared that the Dominion entered the war "for the cause of honour, to maintain solemn pledges, to uphold principles of liberty, to withstand forces that would convert the world into an armed camp."³⁶ In December, Borden more explicitly articulated to Canadian soldiers leaving for Europe his hopes for the war effort:

There is only one respect in which we in Canada have not yet attained our full share of self-government in this Empire and that is with regard to foreign relations—the decision of those questions of alliances and understandings which in the end must determine the issues of peace and war.... I may see the day, and you young men will certainly see it, when the men of Canada, Australia, South Africa and the other Dominions will have the same just voice in these questions as those who live within the British Isles.³⁷

English Canadian Conservatives, Liberals, and newspapers across the country rallied around the cause of defending European nations (particularly Britain and Belgium), in defence of British ideals against German ones. For most of Canada's press, there was no question about

³⁴ Carl Berger, *The Sense of Power: Studies in the Ideas of Canadian Imperialism 1867-1914*, (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1970) 259.

³⁵ Sylvie Lacombe argues this in *La Rencontre de deux peuples élus: Comparaison des ambitions nationale et impériale au Canada entre 1896 et 1920*, (Sainte-Foy, Québec: Presses de l'Université Laval, 2002) 26-31 and throughout.

³⁶ Excerpts from his speech to Parliament on 19 August, 1914, as quoted in Robert Borden, *Robert Laird Borden: His Memoirs*, (Toronto: Macmillan Company, 1938) 461.

³⁷ Castell Hopkins, *Canadian Annual Review 1914*, 160-161

Canadian involvement.³⁸ The invasion of Belgium and atrocities there, alleged and real, significantly influenced Canadian public opinion in the first months of the war. Newspapers were replete with accounts of Belgium and the plight of its people.³⁹ In the light of Germany's aggression, imperialist ideas about Canada's role in the world and its relationship within the Empire seemed justified, if not triumphant.⁴⁰

A public reaction that was largely unquestioning towards the war's purpose resembled the national unity that Bourassa had found so appealing in France. Unfortunately, that was not the transformation Bourassa wished to see. With the outpouring of support for the war, he perceived that more Canadians than ever publicly believed in the supremacy of an imperial connection -- not the national one that Bourassa espoused. To him, any support for Canadian involvement in the European war was invalid if it failed to consider and integrate Quebec's nationaliste view. If Borden or any Canadian subsumed in war enthusiasm could not distinguish between national interests and imperial interests, then they inherently omitted the nationaliste and omitted what Bourassa considered true national unity.

Bourassa rejected an imperialist context to Canada's involvement in the war. As a result, his position was unacceptable to the war narrative developing throughout the rest of the country, effectively making the French Canadian journalist the largest obstacle to unity in 1914. Bourassa did not want to be a hindrance to the war effort, but he could not avoid this role without voluntarily censoring his opinions from the pages of his newspaper, a nearly

³⁸ R. Matthew Bray, "'Fighting as an Ally': The English-Canadian Patriotic Response to the Great War," *The Canadian Historical Review*, no. 2, 61 (1980): 142-143.

³⁹ This continued throughout the war, see Robert S. Prince, *The Mythology of War: How the Canadian Daily Newspaper Depicted the Great War*, Unpublished PhD Diss., University of Toronto, 1998, 249-252. The defense of Belgium was an important issue, for example both Laurier and Borden contributed statements to *King Albert's Book*, named after the Belgian King, which was sold to raise funds for Belgians, see *The Daily Telegraph*, *King Albert's Book*, (London: Houlder and Sloughton, 1914). See 24 for Borden's statement and 52 for Laurier's words.

⁴⁰ Castell Hopkins, *Canadian Annual Review 1914*, 132-142

unimaginable step to the journalist. War supporters dismissed Canadians, like Bourassa, who did not accept the legitimacy of imperialist positions as, at best, unpatriotic and, at worst, traitors.

In early September, the fate of the Allied powers in Europe remained undecided. The German offensive in August had steadily pushed back the French army and its government had fled from Paris to Bordeaux in an ominous echo of the German victory in 1870. The British Expeditionary Force, outnumbered and defeated at Mons in Belgium, had withdrawn to the Marne River where the Allied forces made their final attempt to resist the advancing German armies. The “Miracle of the Marne” that saved Paris and the western Allies in September 1914 was not certain as Bourassa wrote to his fellow Canadians of their imminent role in the war. Like many Canadians in the early months of the war, he was idealistic about what Canada’s role could mean.

Bourassa turned his critical gaze to the events at home through *Le Devoir*. “Après la Guerre, la Famine,” he warned on 2 September.⁴¹ Quoting the imperialist Lord Milner, who was in charge of organising coal and food production in Britain,⁴² Bourassa warned of an impending food crisis and its implication for Canada. Since many farmers had joined the armies of Europe and almost half of the world’s wheat grew in nations now at war, Bourassa expected a worldwide famine in 1915. Lord Milner called for a mobilization of agriculture alongside the mobilization of soldiers, and Bourassa used this declaration as a platform to question Canadians devoted to the war effort. Echoing the advice of English Canadian millionaire Herbert Samuel Holt, Bourassa wondered “s’il est nécessaire pour l’Angleterre,

⁴¹ Henri Bourassa, “Après la Guerre, La Famine,” *Le Devoir*, 2 September, 1914, 1.

⁴² Colin Newbury, “Milner, Alfred, Viscount Milner (1854-1925),” *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography Online*.

engagée directement dans le conflit européen, de tripler ses effectifs agricoles au risque de n'envoyer sur les champs de bataille qu'une armée à peine supérieure en nombre aux vaillantes phalanges belges, le Canada n'a-t-il pas là un exemple à suivre?"⁴³ Bourassa translated Milner's unease about food production into fear over the potential for Canada to succumb to a reckless war effort. Canada should look out for its own interests, just as Britain did. Why devote manpower on a large army when those men could be plowing fields?

Bourassa repeated this argument more forcibly later, but in early September he used it to introduce an intellectual manifesto laying out his position on the war. Although alarmed by the potentially devastating consequences of the world war, he took heed of Borden and Laurier's inspiring speeches in Parliament that August. Bourassa presented himself as ready to support the war effort as they had, and he proclaimed that "l'heure n'est pas aux polémiques" as he outlined the intellectual foundation that guided his writing about the war.

Dans mon humble sphère d'action je me propose de rechercher consciencieusement, en toute loyauté, et de dire en toute franchise tous ce qu'il me semblerait urgent de prévoir et de faire, se l'on veut éviter au Canada et, par répercussion, à l'Empire, des désastres dont beaucoup de gens parlent dans l'obscurité, mais sur lesquels très peu semblent avoir le courage d'appeler l'attention des gouvernants et la coopération de toutes les bonnes volontés.

Dans cette recherche et dans les conclusions qu'elle m'inspirera, je suis fermement résolu à ne pas me départir du ton que les circonstances devraient imposer à tous. Aucune provocation, aucune injure, aucune calomnie, aucune gougaterie ne m'entraîneront au dehors de cette voie. Je ne rechercherai pas même les motifs des attaques brutales ou grotesques dont je pourrai être l'objet.

Les spectacles grandioses et touchants dont j'ai été témoin en Europe m'ont mis à même de faire la comparaison entre le patriotisme désintéressé, le dévouement vrai à la chose publique, et l'exploitation sordide des choses les plus sacrées.⁴⁴

This manifesto, which guided Bourassa's commentary over the next four years, pledged to

⁴³ Henri Bourassa, "Après la Guerre, La Famine," *Le Devoir*, 2 September, 1914, 1.

⁴⁴ Henri Bourassa, "Après la Guerre," *Le Devoir*, 2 September, 1914, 1.

explore the unreported, the ignored and the unpopular. In so doing, he aligned himself against the triumphant and positive rhetoric surrounding the conflict. In making the extraordinary promise that he would discuss issues that others were afraid to address, regardless of the consequences, Bourassa revealed the essence of his wartime writing. Bourassa did not explain whether he was for or against the war, instead he committed to uncovering the dangers that the war presented to Canada -- and the Empire, he made sure to include. According to this rationale, his wartime opposition was not an expression of disloyalty, as his detractors were quick to claim. Instead, the French Canadian intellectual vowed to help Canadians better understand the war. If that meant examining the negative impact of the war, so be it. It was his *loyalty* to the nation of Canada that compelled him to dissect the conflict.

On 8 September Bourassa examined Canada's potential duty to the war effort and the legitimacy of its growing contribution. The first, aptly titled "Le Devoir National," criticized Canada's war effort for overestimating the country's importance and ability. He lamented "l'absence à peu près complète du sentiment des responsabilités réelles du Canada comme nation – responsabilités extérieures et plus encore responsabilités intérieures." Canada could not, he argued, remain indifferent to the war raging in France: a "nation anglo-française, liée à l'Angleterre et à la France par mille attaches ... a un intérêt vital au maintien de la France et de l'Angleterre."⁴⁵ Bourassa again qualified his support for the war with the caveat that Canadians remain realistic and quantify exactly what the country could or could not provide. After all, he reminded Canadians, Britain demanded no less of its own policy.

Bourassa replied to his supporters who asked if he approved today of Canadian participation in British wars or wars foreign to Canada as he had in 1899. He outlined the case

⁴⁵ Henri Bourassa, "Le Devoir National," *Le Devoir*, 8 September 1914, 1.

for nationaliste support for the war, arguing that the Canadian nation had an interest in the success of Britain and France in Europe based on historic and cultural connections. Though he did not consider the Canadian character intrinsically tied to Britain, as it could never fully accept Canada's French speaking Catholic peoples, there were connections that obliged Canadian participation in the war. He emphasized that Canada had no moral, constitutional or immediate interest in the conflict, but Canadians seemed utterly unaware of any sort of national responsibility. He wrote of "l'absence à peu près complète du sentiment des responsabilités réelles du Canada comme nation – responsabilités extérieures et plus encore responsabilités intérieures."⁴⁶ His nationaliste argument for the war reminded them of that fact, making it worthwhile even if it meant aligning too closely with imperialism.

Next, Bourassa dissected Britain's entry into the war and justifications of their actions in a five-part series. Called "Une Page d'Histoire," each editorial examined the British *White Papers* containing Foreign Secretary Sir Edward Grey's communications with the great powers of Europe in the final weeks before the war. Bourassa traced the British refusal to go to war for Serbia in July and their attempts to persuade Germany that Britain would stay out of an eastern European war. As late as 2 August, he noted, the English were committed to defending their coasts from the German Navy, but not the protection of France or Russia. The English did not want to commit to a war if peace was still viable. Only the 3 August invasion of Belgium and King Albert I's request for British intervention secured English entry into the war. By 4 August, Bourassa concluded that war with Germany was unavoidable given British public sentiment and the threat that Germany posed to the English Channel. His outline of the English efforts to sidestep the conflict exudes admiration for Sir Edward Grey, whose diplomatic

⁴⁶ Henri Bourassa, "Le Devoir Nationale," *Le Devoir*, 8 September, 1914, 1

machinations revealed a statesman who was “courageux, inlassable, dont toute l’action n’est inspirée que par ce seul mobile: l’intérêt de *son* pays.”⁴⁷ In Bourassa’s view, the Foreign Secretary’s goal was the preservation of peace for Britain’s benefit, and it was only after all hope had been extinguished that Grey used the Belgian invasion to rally public opinion for the war to unite the nation and enter the war under the most favourable circumstances.⁴⁸

Though he endorsed Grey as a statesman, Bourassa’s expressions of high regard for the English diplomat were not couched in terms that endeared him to English Canadian imperialists. Bourassa evoked Grey’s actions not as examples of English suavity in handling the crisis, but rather as a blunt refusal to compromise on issues of national self-interest. This was not the esteem that English Canadian imperialists expected. Grey was “fidèle à la grande tradition britannique, il a été avant et par-dessus tout l’homme de *son* pays,” Bourassa wrote. “Il me paraît que le Canada ne saurait mieux démontrer son «loyalisme» qu’en s’inspirant des exemples de la grande nation à qui il a emprunté ses institutions politiques.”⁴⁹ Bourassa’s articles portray the British as “perfidious seekers of peace,” willing to play all sides against each other in the name of ever-important national self-interest. British entry into the war did not stem from a moral obligation to defend Belgium, as most other Canadians believed in 1914, as much as its failure to secure England’s interests through refusing to participate in the continental conflict. Only once it was clear that participation was necessary for British interests

⁴⁷ Henri Bourassa, “Une Page d’Histoire – IV: L’Angleterre et l’Allemagne,” *Le Devoir*, 12 September, 1914, 1. For the entire series, see 9-14 September, 1914. The *White Papers* were first publicly published 5 August, 1914, when they were presented to the British House of Commons “to inform Parliament as to the events which had brought about the war and the part taken in them by the British Government,” see G.P. Gooch, D. Litt, and Harold Temperley, *British Official Documents on the Origins of the War, 1898-1914*, (His Majesty’s Office, 1926). Other governments had already published similar collections of the official documents concerning their entry into the war, such as the French Yellow Book or the German White book.

⁴⁸ Henri Bourassa, “Une Page d’Histoire – V: La neutralité de la Belgique et du Luxembourg,” *Le Devoir*, 14 September, 1914, 1.

⁴⁹ Henri Bourassa, “Une Page d’Histoire V,” *Le Devoir*, 14 September, 1914, 1.

did they enter the war. Bourassa used the articles to repeat his support for the war, and he did so in such a way that stripped away the moral ambiguity (or perhaps moral certainty) imbued upon it by English Canada's call to defend the Empire. British entry into the war was an act of self-interest for Great Britain – a national policy that Bourassa wished to see at home as well.

Bourassa noted that the value placed on Britain's self-interest by Edward Grey contrasted with many of the proffered justifications of the war, as it did not explicitly demand the defence of France or a resolve to contain German militarism. Canada as a nation, he argued, should equally have no interest in those European concerns. It should only wage war for the potential benefits to Canada itself. Implicitly, a war that was an ocean away in defence of an ally did not deserve a total Canadian war effort. Thus the events of August 1914 did not lead Bourassa to reject the validity of the war entirely. He believed that they denoted the need for Canada to mirror British policy and adjust its involvement according to its national interests. He argued that, like their British counterparts, Canadians should have a clear vision of those interests and what actions they prescribed.

Bourassa's position garnered many critics. A few months later in November, he categorized the various forms of opposition he received for his views over the last several months. One, that they were "insultes à la mère-patrie;" two, that "ce n'est pas le temps de parler de ces choses-là;" and three, "vos conclusions ne répondent pas à votre prologue et à votre démonstration."⁵⁰ He encountered each from different directions. The first largely from the fervent English Canadian war supporters, the second from moderates in French and English Canada alike, and the third from former allies or what he might term "reasonable" people who disagreed with the result of his argument, but not the act of submitting them to the public. They

⁵⁰Henri Bourassa, "Vrai Loyalisme," *Le Devoir*, 19 November, 1914.

appeared in different forms, but at their root most opposition fell into one of these three categories.

The majority of the Canadian press portrayed Bourassa's articles of late August and early September as a nationaliste polemic that once again denounced the dangers of Canada's imperial ties. Bourassa had not been so prominent on the national stage since the Boer War. Across the country, newspapers responded to his arguments with scorn and sometimes derision. None addressed Bourassa's promise of September 2 to "rechercher consciencieusement, en toute loyauté" the issues of the war or the details of his argument, but rather attacked its implication: that a *true* Canadian was a nationalist and must reject Canada's total support for an imperial war. Though the Quebec journalist lamented his opponents mischaracterizing his arguments, in truth most popular responses rejected his position regardless of its rationale. Bourassa's past political actions, such as his opposition to the Boer War and especially his support of the Conservatives in the 1911 election, suggested to many that he had always been self-serving and not above furthering his own political interests rather than Canada's interests, as he claimed in 1914. During wartime, his *nationaliste* critique (or any critique) was deemed unpatriotic. To his critics, Canada's interests lay in the historic and cultural obligations to England and perhaps France, which superseded national ones, rather than accented them as Bourassa believed. Canadians had a duty to fight which, according to the war's supporters inside and outside of Quebec in 1914, surpassed the petty political issues that Bourassa raised.

French and English Canadians had many of the same reasons for disregarding Bourassa in the early months of the war. The most common rejection of Bourassa centred on his assertion that the war effort did not serve Canada's national interests. Outside of *Le Devoir*, the French language press of Quebec had been in favour of the war in August. Accordingly, many

commentators attacked his evolving views in September.⁵¹ *La Patrie*, the second largest French language newspaper in Montreal,⁵² first responded to *Le Devoir* on 31 August and through the ensuing month. Its editors dismissed the idea that England was acting in its self-interest in July and August, as Bourassa alleged, and instead argued that England was saving the countries of France and Belgium from the German menace. *La Patrie* also denied that the war required compromise between nationalism and imperialism.⁵³ Those ideologies represented positions that were no longer relevant during the war. Instead, in the name of patriotism, those divisions should be put aside for the sake of political unity and Bourassa should abandon his partisan positions.

Editorials in smaller papers soon followed, such as *Le Pays*, *Le Clairon*, *Le Soleil*, and others. To these French Canadian editors, Bourassa seemed naively unaware of the seriousness of the European war and the consequences of defeat – he was a political agitator to be pitied.⁵⁴ Quebec’s English language papers, like Montreal’s *Daily Mail* and the *Montreal Star*, also added their voices, though in far stronger terms than their French Canadian counterparts did. In the pages of *L’Action Sociale*, the Church hierarchy’s organ, Mgr. Paul-Eugène Roy spoke in place of Cardinal Bégin who was attending the Papal Conclave, and wrote that French Canadian Catholics had a duty to the mother country and owed her cooperation.⁵⁵

A few presses would temper their criticism of Bourassa later in September. *Le Canada* responded reasonably by undertaking another interpretation of Grey’s diplomacy that rejected Bourassa’s arguments, while *Le Pays* defended the nationaliste chief’s right to offer his

⁵¹ Mason Wade, *The French Canadians 1760 – 1945*, (Toronto: Macmillan Company, 1956) 648-49, 652-653.

⁵² *McKim’s Directory of Canadian Publications*, 1915, lists *La Patrie* as having 46,494 subscribers. Montreal had an estimated population of 550,000.

⁵³ *La Patrie*, 11 September, 1914, 4.

⁵⁴ These articles are reviewed in Mason Wade, *French Canadians*, 652-653 and Rumilly, *Henri Bourassa*, 507-511.

⁵⁵ *L’Action Sociale*, 14 September, 1914, 1.

opinion.⁵⁶ Yet these exceptions were few compared to most newspapers that continued their unequivocal support for the war and their attacks against its only vocal critic.

French Canadian commentators delivered an emphatic appeal to English Canada that Bourassa did not represent them. The reminder that French Canada supported the war usually accompanied articles attacking the nationaliste leader. Thomas Chase-Casgrain, a French Canadian lawyer, Conservative politician, and imperialist, offered his interpretation of the French Canadian reaction to Bourassa's argument in a letter to *La Patrie* on 14 September. Casgrain asked how Bourassa could demand that Canada pursue its national interest when the war represented its most important interest: the defence of the two Canadian motherlands, France and England. "French Canadians," he wrote, "do not wish ... to stand aloof. Duty, gratitude and self-interest unite them to the other members of the great family in this fight for justice and right." Casgrain supported the idea that Canada could not commit everything to the war, asking "somme nous des parasites et nous contenterions de nous abreuver et de nous nourrir à sa table, sans faire de nos poitrines un rampart contre ceux qui veulent l'assassiner?" The majority of French Canadians did not support Bourassa, according to Casgrain. Instead, they remembered the French Canadians of 1775 and 1812 who fought for England.⁵⁷ The editorials of Quebec newspapers suggest that many French Canadians likely agreed with Casgrain in the first months of the Great War.

Outside Quebec, most major newspapers echoed these disputes. The *Winnipeg Free Press* wrote that Canadian and British interests in the war were the same.⁵⁸ Toronto's *Globe* and the *Toronto Star* barely mentioned the French Canadian iconoclast, perhaps an equally

⁵⁶ *Le Pays*, 19 September, 1914, 1. *Le Pays* remained critical of Bourassa and his views.

⁵⁷ *La Patrie*, 14 September, 1914, 4. Reprinted in *Winnipeg Free Press*, 19 September, 1914, 9.

⁵⁸ *Winnipeg Free Press*, 21 September, 1914, 9.

damning condemnation of his seeming irrelevance to many Canadians outside *la belle province*.⁵⁹ While some papers such as the *Kingston Standard* went so far as to demand that the arrest of the “traitor,” most were content with demanding his silence.⁶⁰ A cursory examination of the other news that garnered headlines, since many did not mention Bourassa, reveals that the Canadian press did not understand the war through the lens adopted by the journalist. For most Canadian newspapers, there was no question that Canada had to enter the war and fully fight it. Any discussion over the nature of Canada’s entry or the scale of its participation was no longer worth debating during the struggle for Europe across the Atlantic.

One of the most common rejections of Bourassa in newspapers portrayed his editorials as a craven effort to draw attention and support to his own ideological beliefs. The editor of *La Patrie* denounced the man who “nous dise maintenant ce que nous devons penser du programme politique qu’il a formulé, et que le premier coup de canon allemand a réduit en poussière.”⁶¹ For the *Daily Mail* in Montreal, Bourassa was not a man but a “troubled spirit... formed of suspicion, distrust, envy, malice, ingratitude and prejudice.”⁶² The *Winnipeg Free Press*, one of most widely circulated papers in the country, debated with its local Catholic press, *La Liberté*, over its unquestioned support of Bourassa’s desire for limited participation. As “ultramontane organs,” the *Free Press* lumped *Le Devoir* and *La Liberté* together in blindly rejecting England and France’s call to arms to further their own political objectives.⁶³ The *Free Press* hoped that Bourassa could “keep his nationalist theories to himself,” as they had little to

⁵⁹ The *Globe* mentions the debate over the Canada’s entry into the war in a 24 September editorial; *The Star* does as well after C.H. Cahan writes a letter to the editor on 19 September, 1914.

⁶⁰ Rumilly *Henri Bourassa*, 508-511. *Kingston Standard*, 29 September, 1914.

⁶¹ *La Patrie*, 31 August, 1914, 4; another editorial critical of Bourassa is published 3 September, 1914, 4.

⁶² *Montreal Daily Mail*, as quoted in *Le Clarion*, 4 September, 1914, 1.

⁶³ *Winnipeg Free Press*, 26 September, 1914, 9. The discussion of this begins earlier, see 21 and 22 September, 1914, 9.

do with Canada's present circumstance.⁶⁴ These criticisms were not altogether unwarranted: Bourassa was as committed to his ideological positions as they suspected.

Bourassa's grounding in the political views that he had nurtured for more than a decade was a weakness to his critics rather than as a testament to his sincerity. They perceived the Great War as unlike any other situation Canada had experienced. To debate political issues from before the conflict in the fall of 1914 seemed intrinsically faulty. Bourassa's arrogance in demanding concessions from English Canada, the repeal of Regulation 17, seemed like an obvious attempt to use the war to push his own political agenda and gained him few friends. The worst of the English Canadian press believed him a traitor to Canada and the Empire while French Canadian papers thought his belligerence undermined the unity he professed to desire. Regardless, none believed that wartime was an appropriate moment to divide the nation over such concerns.

For French or English Canadians critical of Bourassa's views, national unity demanded that all political considerations be put aside immediately. Unity meant total, unquestioning support for Canada's war, not a discussion over concessions. Bourassa's intransigence seemed only further proof that he was an impediment to national unity rather than an advocate. Commentators across the country presented his refusal to compromise in the face of the new wartime circumstances as ignorant and delusional. They did not accept that Bourassa's nationalist position demanded critical examination of Canada's involvement in the war to discern the best possible course of action for the country. For a Canadian nationalist like Bourassa, unity meant debating the best course of action and agreeing together on it.

While the articles that denounced Bourassa proffered an honest opinion of his

⁶⁴ *Winnipeg Free Press*, 25 September, 1914, 9; *Winnipeg Free Press*, 26 September, 1914, 16.

criticisms, they did not shy away from dishonest or dismissive portrayals. Most newspapers quoted his words in the worst possible light. They told their readers that Bourassa believed Canada had no obligation to fight in English wars, while omitting his defence of Canadian participation to the extent that it could afford to offer.⁶⁵ Other banal renunciations included the Canadian Club expelling him from its membership even though, Bourassa noted dryly, he was not actually a member.⁶⁶ Though his critics accused him of blind adherence to his own ideology and of ignoring the moral and political urgency of the war, he could easily accuse them of the same narrow-minded focus.

The words of retired Major General Sir William Dillon Otter, who returned to active service for the war and was the first Canadian-born Chief of Staff for Canada's army, exemplified the attitude of his critics. In an interview with the *Canadian Courier*, he explained that "the public mind should not be allowed to dwell too much upon what is going on in Europe. That can be safely left to the military leaders of Europe."⁶⁷ Most Canadians probably did not care about Bourassa's *Le Devoir* articles other than noting the brief mentions in small columns of their local English language papers. Apathy silenced Bourassa as effectively as any censor.

Bourassa's position did not align with some of his nationalist allies as the war revealed divisions within their political group. Armand Lavergne and Omar Héroux agreed with Bourassa and asked that Ontario repeal Regulation 17 in exchange for supporting the war. Jules Fournier did not accept Bourassa's distinction that Canada could join the war on Britain's

⁶⁵ Bourassa examines this in his own editorial, see Henri Bourassa, "British Fair Play," *Le Devoir*, 26 September, 1914, 1, again in "Vrai Loyalisme," *Le Devoir*, 19 November, 1914, 1; and once more in a series of letters to the *Winnipeg Tribune*, see "Une Lettre de M. Bourassa à la Tribune, de Winnipeg," *Le Devoir*, 25 November, 1914.

⁶⁶ Henri Bourassa, "Les Foudres de Canadian Club," *Le Devoir*, 25 September, 1914, 1.

⁶⁷ J. Castell Hopkins, *Canadian Annual Review 1914*, 289.

side as a nation without the strings of imperialism attached. He openly condemned his leader's equivocation.⁶⁸ Olivar Asselin split away from his compatriots entirely. He was convinced by the argument that Quebec's "mère-patrie" of France ought to be defended, though at the same time attacked the Catholic Church's abuse of power in the province.⁶⁹ The war separated their nationalist views, as Asselin and Fournier turned towards a Quebec-focused perspective like that of Tardivel, while Bourassa, Lavergne and Héroux still believed in a pan-Canadian combination.⁷⁰

A few English Canadians, even though they did not support Bourassa's perspective, believed he should have the opportunity to express his views. One of his most fervent defenders was prominent Montreal lawyer Charles Hazlitt Cahan, who first encountered the French Canadian journalist in the naval debate. They exchanged correspondence and remained friends in the years leading up to the war. Cahan vehemently disagreed with Bourassa's arguments, but wrote letters to editors of newspapers across the country (such as the *Gazette*, the Halifax *Herald*, and the Toronto *Star*) protesting their misrepresentation of Bourassa's argument. Cahan argued that the French Canadian was neither unpatriotic nor against the war.⁷¹ His defence of Bourassa was founded in the same British ideals that war supporters used to justify British superiority over German militarism. As Bourassa noted in a letter to Cahan, "the best feature of English civilisation is individual liberty," which always allowed for the presentation of opposing perspectives.⁷²

Cahan was an exception among Bourassa's opponents. The widespread condemnation

⁶⁸ Lamonde, *Histoire Sociale des Idées au Québec*, 40-41; René Durocher, "Henri Bourassa," 252.

⁶⁹ Hélène Pelletier-Baillargeon, *Olivar Asselin et son temps: Le militant*, (Québec : Éditions Fides, 1996) 649. See also Mason Wade, *The French Canadians 1760-1945*, (Toronto: MacMillan, 1956) 677.

⁷⁰ Lamonde, *Histoire Sociale des Idées au Québec*, 133.

⁷¹ *La Patrie*, 14 September, 1914, 4. Reprinted in *Winnipeg Free Press*, 19 September, 1914, 9.

⁷² Bourassa to Cahan, Bourassa Fonds M721, 15 September, 1914.

of Bourassa's views in newspapers across the country in September led him to denounce the war's supporters as hypocrites, a message he continued to communicate as 1914 drew to a close. Accordingly, finding common ground with his opposition proved to be a difficult task. Although Bourassa tried to respond to his critics by citing other writers who agreed with his arguments, it was not a conversation. Bourassa simply accepted those who agreed with him and summarily rejected those who did not. Just as his detractors had little influence on him, Bourassa's complete adherence to his own beliefs minimized his potential influence on his critics. For many of the newspapers in Quebec and throughout Canada, he was the primary (if not the only) voice criticizing the war effort -- but an unconvincing one. Critical comments only solidified Bourassa's belief about the pervasiveness of imperialist ideas across Canada, while his own commentaries confirmed his opponents' view of him as a dangerous iconoclast. This mutual affirmation of the worst of both sides narrowed the Canadian understanding of the war.

Despite Bourassa's growing dissent, French Canadian expressions of support for the war presented an illusion of wartime unity. In September, Montreal doctor Arthur Mignault offered the government \$50,000 to form a French Canadian battalion. A recruiting rally, held at Parc Sohmer in Montreal on 22 October, featured speeches from Quebec Premier Lomer Gouin, Sir Wilfrid Laurier, Conservative MP Thomas Chase-Casgrain, and Liberal MP Rodolphe Lemieux. "I have come here to tell you, above all that our hearts will follow you to the field of duty and honour," Premier Gouin told his fellow Quebecois, "when you return, covered with the glory of victory, you will not only have told, but have proven to the Empire and to the Province of Quebec, what you have done for them."⁷³ French Canadians appeared as

⁷³ J. Castell Hopkins, *Canadian Annual Review 1914*, 514.

committed to the war effort as English Canada in public expressions from urban newspapers and public meetings. However, despite its organizers' claims of success, by 5 November only thirty-two officers and 891 other ranks had enlisted in the 22nd Battalion, Canada's sole fully French-speaking battalion.⁷⁴ Lower recruitment numbers throughout the province of Quebec belied popular manifestations of support for the war in public and in the press.⁷⁵

In the fall of 1914, Bourassa was more preoccupied with the Quebec's Catholic Church public stance on the war. Historian René Durocher convincingly argues that Bourassa's early support for the war was purposefully ambivalent and reflected his desire not to contradict the position of the Church, which favoured Canadian participation. Durocher suggests that many members of the clergy privately supported the journalist's views but the devout Bourassa anguished over any perceived conflict with Quebec bishops.⁷⁶ Consequently, Bourassa carefully worded his editorials of 1914 to ground his support in an appropriate nationaliste critique. His dissection of British policy in September is also cautious -- especially when compared to his later wartime articles. By crafting an argument that emphasized Canada's political autonomy, Bourassa could straddle a position between supporting the war and the nationaliste opposition to any imperial involvement, without setting himself up to potentially contradict the Church. According to Durocher, Bourassa's Catholicism forced him to moderate his reaction to the war, despite the fact it went against his equally fervent political beliefs. This stance, which awkwardly placed Bourassa between favouring intervention and criticizing it, helps explain some of the incoherence of his views in 1914. He supported the war, but was

⁷⁴ A.F. Duguid, *Official History of the Canadian Forces in the Great War, 1914-1919, From the Outbreak of the War to the Formation of the Canadian Corps, August 1914-September 1915*, vol 2 (Ottawa: Department of National Defence General Staff, 1938), 344-5.

⁷⁵ Castell Hopkins, *Canadian Annual Review 1914*, 193-194.

⁷⁶ René Durocher, "Henri Bourassa, les évêques et la guerre de 1914-1918," *Canadian Historical Association Historical Papers* 6 (1971) 252-253.

critical of many aspects of Canada's involvement, much to his critics' displeasure.⁷⁷

When the Quebec Catholic Bishops clarified their position in September, it was more approving than Bourassa's views. *L'Action Social*, Quebec's official Catholic newspaper, published a detailed refutation of Bourassa's analysis on 16 September, grounding its stance in a moral obligation to fight in the conflict.⁷⁸ The bishops of Quebec released a pastoral letter on 23 September that made an emotional and moral appeal for prayers and contributions to the Patriotic Fund to supplement the money and men that Catholics had already "generously" offered. The bishops described the terrible situation in Europe for their followers and wrote that "il fera tourner cette guerre au profit de la justice et du droit. ... Ce sera l'honneur et la gloire du Canada ... d'avoir concouru, par ses pieuses supplications, à restaurer la paix dans le monde, et à soulager, par ses généreuses contributions, les maux dont aura souffert l'humanité."⁷⁹ A month later, they confirmed that "Britain is engaged in this war, and who does not see that the destiny of every part of the Empire is bound up with the fate of her armies? She counts very rightly on our cooperation, and this co-operation, we are happy to say, is being generously offered to her both in men and in money."⁸⁰

Bourassa's cautious support did not entirely align with the Church position of total support. Bourassa explained the difficulty of his position two years later in a letter to Bishop Georges Gauthier. He knew beforehand that the Catholic Church in Quebec would publish their pastoral letter and did not want to be in the position of publicly contradicting the episcopacy. Instead, Bourassa claimed that he offered a conciliatory view -- though measured and limited --

⁷⁷ This later became the basis of Jules Fournier's criticism of Bourassa's leadership of the nationaliste movement, see Chapter 4 of this work.

⁷⁸ *L'Action Social*, 11, 14, 16 September, 1914.

⁷⁹ Lettre Pastorale de NN. *SS les Archevêques et Evêques des Provinces Ecclésiastiques de Québec, de Montréal, et d'Ottawa sur les Devoirs des Catholiques dans la Guerre Actuelle*, 23 September 1914, 4.

⁸⁰ Castell Hopkins, *Canadian Annual Review 1914*, 288.

that endorsed participation in the war. In retrospect, he told Gauthier that he should have opposed any military intervention and stayed true to the principles that he had held for fifteen years, but “j’osais encore croire que les évêques parleraient en évêques *nationaux*: je voulais me tenir aussi près que possible de leur attitude probable.”⁸¹ Durocher’s review of Bourassa’s relationship with Catholic bishops during the war concludes that Bourassa was convinced that “un lien essentiel entre le catholicisme et la survivance canadienne-française” demanded that the bishops be nationaliste in their position, so as to defend the “les justes droits de la minorité.”⁸² The ultramontane Bourassa turned away from the province’s bishops and found solace in the position of the newly elected Pope Benedict XV, who condemned the war. While the Catholic Church in Quebec carefully avoided disagreeing with Pope Benedict XV’s neutrality, they still reminded their flock of Canada’s obligations in Europe to its former motherlands of Britain and France. Thus as the war continued, Bourassa increasingly turned to Rome, not the cathedrals of his native province, for guidance.

An unexpected but obviously profound influence on Bourassa during the fall of 1914 was the British radical Henry Noel Brailsford. A noted left-wing British intellectual, Brailsford’s career as a British political commentator stretched from the Boer War in 1899 to the Suez Crisis in 1956. He believed “that the citizens of a democratic society would respond in enlightened fashion if political issues were properly explained,” his biographer observes.⁸³ Brailsford visited and wrote about the tumultuous situation in Macedonia, caught between various Balkan powers in the early 20th century, and subsequently co-authored the *Report of the International Commission to Inquire into the Cause and the Conduct of the Balkan Wars*

⁸¹H. Bourassa to Gauthier, 6 May 1916., Papiers Bourassa, correspondance ecclésiastique, as quoted in René Durocher, “Henri Bourassa, les évêques et la guerre de 1914-1918,” 253.

⁸² René Durocher, “Henri Bourassa, les évêques et la guerre de 1914-1918,” 272.

⁸³ F. M. Leventhal, *The Last Dissenter: H. N. Brailsford and His World*, (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1985) 303.

published by the Carnegie Foundation in 1914.⁸⁴ He later used that experience to apply J.A. Hobson's view of British imperialism to other European powers in his own study of the "armed peace" of Europe, *The War of Steel and Gold*, published in May 1914. Brailsford condemned the British "balance of power" policy in Europe as intrinsically faulty. Its preservation, he argued, was not "self-sufficing" but represented a means to an end: the preservation of British national liberties.⁸⁵ According to Brailsford, Europe's problems in 1914 sprang from the corruption of that principle, wherein the balance of power became an end unto itself.⁸⁶ By 1914, he had made a name for himself as a left-wing commentator dissecting British imperialism and the complex Balkan crises. He joined the Union of Democratic Control alongside other well-known British leftists, and became influential enough to be included in A.J.P. Taylor's history of British "trouble-makers" -- a group of political dissenters with whom Bourassa might have found common purpose, though not common ideology.⁸⁷

In his editorials, Bourassa does not refer to Brailsford as an outsider or radical but merely introduces him as a British writer. Building upon Brailsford's recent article in the *Contemporary Review*,⁸⁸ which was unlike anything Bourassa might have read in the pages of Canadian newspapers, the French Canadian recited Brailsford's argument that Germany's invasion of Belgium did not cause the war. Instead, the Serbian alliance with Russia was a

⁸⁴Baron d'Estournelles de Constant, *Report of the International Commission to Inquire into the Causes and Conduct of the Balkan Wars*. (Washington, D.C.: Carnegie Foundation, 1914).

⁸⁵H.N. Brailsford, *The War of Steel and Gold; a study of armed peace*, (London: G. Bell & Sons, 10th edition, 1918) 29-30. It was originally published in May 1914.

⁸⁶In later editions, he emphasized that colonial and economic forces had led Europe towards a general war. For instance, "War could never have come about save for these sordid colonial and economic issues ... The stake lies outside Europe, though the war is fought on its soil," Brailsford, *War of Steel and Gold*, 338.

⁸⁷A.J.P. Taylor, *The Trouble-Makers: Dissent over Foreign Policy 1792-1939*, (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1958).

⁸⁸H. N. Brailsford, "The Empire of the East," *Contemporary Review*, 116 (1914): 334-45. His article was also republished as a Union of Democratic Control pamphlet, see H. N. Brailsford, *Origins of the Great War*, Union of Democratic Control Pamphlet No. 4 (1914). Bourassa eventually republished the article as well, see Henri Bourassa, *The Foreign Policy of Great Britain*, (Montreal: Le Devoir, 1915) 37-47.

thorn in Austria's side that precipitated the July Crisis. Germany, in turn, responded to Russian aggression and launched a defensive war.⁸⁹ According to Brailsford, and consequently Bourassa, Russia was the isolated Entente Power and agitator that pitted Serbia against Austria, drawing the other Great Powers into a European-wide conflict for its own political machinations and economic benefit.⁹⁰ Ironically, Brailsford wrote, if the Entente won and Germany, Austria and Turkey were crushed, Russia would control the Balkans, the Dardanelles and Turkey and would sit on top of Britain's road to India. In this case, imperialists would argue that only a strong Germany could balance the threat of Russia.⁹¹ In focusing his attack on the German aggression thesis to explain the war in western Europe for a British audience, Brailsford's emphasis resembled Bourassa's challenge to the dominant Canadian narrative of the war's origins.

Reviewing Brailsford's account fulfilled Bourassa's promise to interrogate issues that others ignored so Canadians might better understand the European war. Neither Brailsford nor Bourassa simply sought to alleviate Germany's blame for attacking Belgium; they discerned complexity in the political issues underlying its outbreak rather than the monocausal emphasis presented in patriotic rhetoric. Bourassa had agreed with Brailsford as early as 29 August, when he wrote that "les responsabilités sont multiplies"⁹² and that it could not simply be a war in defence of Belgium. Bourassa believed that Canadians deserved to know as much as

⁸⁹ Henri Bourassa, "L'Orientation de la Politique Anglaise," *Le Devoir*, 28 October, 1914, 1. Interestingly, Durocher cites a letter from Bourassa to Bishop Gauthier from 6 November, 1914, that a reliable source had told Bourassa that "l'une des dernières paroles prononcées par Pie X avant sa mort, c'est que 'la Russie est la grande coupable,'" see Durocher, 256. It is likely that this affected Bourassa's acceptance of Brailsford's arguments. Equally, the Papacy irrationally feared Russian control of Constantinople and setting up an "Orthodox St. Peter's," see John F. Pollard, *The Unknown Pope: Benedict XV (1914-1922) and the Pursuit of Peace*, (London: Geoffrey Chapman, 1999) 90-1.

⁹⁰ Henri Bourassa, "Les Responsabilités de la Russie," *Le Devoir*, 29 October, 1914, 1.

⁹¹ H. N. Brailsford, "The Empire of the East," *Contemporary Review*, CVI, (1914): 344.

⁹² Henri Bourassa, "Le Partage Des Responsabilités," *Le Devoir*, 29 August, 1914, 1.

possible so they could make an informed decision about the scale and nature of Canada's contribution to the war.

One of the Canadians to share Bourassa's beliefs was J.S. Ewart, a well-known English Canadian lawyer and an influential liberal nationalist. Ewart had defended the rights of Franco-Manitobans before the Privy Council in the 1890s and wrote the *Kingdom Papers* in the years before and during the First World War, a voluminous examination of Canada's legal obligations to Britain that envisioned a future distinct from the Empire.⁹³ Many of the prominent liberal politicians and academics of the day, including Bourassa, read Ewart's work on Canadian nationalism.⁹⁴ Like Bourassa, Ewart sought an independent and equal Canada that could nurture Canadian nationalism and remove it from European affairs and British wars. The only way to unify Canada's disparate peoples, Ewart argued, was to "make her a nation in name as well as in fact. Let her throw off her mean colonial wrappings and let her assume her rightful place among the nation of the world."⁹⁵ Ewart's "romantic" notions of nationalism presented it as a unifying and inevitable force of Canadian history.⁹⁶

Unlike Bourassa however, Ewart voluntarily removed himself from the debate over the war. In its early months, Ewart supported the war hoping that it would reveal the power imbalance of Canada's relationship to Britain.⁹⁷ One of the few instances that Ewart did venture into the public realm during the war years was 26 October 1914, when he published an

⁹³ J.S. Ewart, *The Kingdom Papers*, (Ottawa: 1912). The *Papers* were a series of papers eventually published together, though more were added throughout the war past its initial 1912 publication date. After the war, he published *The Independence Papers*, which updated his previous arguments and demanded Canadian independence.

⁹⁴ Douglas Cole, "John S. Ewart and Canadian Nationalism," *Historical Papers*, no.1, 4 (1969): 71-73.

⁹⁵ J.S. Ewart, *The Kingdom Papers*, vol. I, 55.

⁹⁶ Frank H. Underhill, "The Political Ideas of John S. Ewart," *Report of the Annual Meeting of the Canadian Historical Association*, no.1, 12 (1933): 32.

⁹⁷ Ewart to Sir Gilbert Parker, 18 August, 1914, as quoted in Peter Price, "Fashioning a Constitutional Narrative: John S. Ewart and the Development of a 'Canadian Constitution,'" *The Canadian Historical Review*, no.3, 93 (September 2012) 379.

article in the *Ottawa Citizen*. In it, Ewart summarized the reasons behind the war's outbreak and offered the same far ranging causes that Bourassa had -- though without the French Canadian's inflammatory invectives.⁹⁸ Bourassa translated large sections of Ewart's piece for a French-speaking audience and noted their agreement that Russian mobilization had pushed Europe into war, not the invasion of Belgium. Both distinguished between "predisposed" causes of the war, such as imperialism and national ambition, and "precipitating" ones, such as the invasion of Belgium or Russian mobilization.⁹⁹

Ewart wrote little after the October article and his silence strained the relationship between the two nationalists. Two years later, Ewart wrote to Bourassa explaining his silence: "I should not think it at all right at the present time to say anything that would tend to distract our people during the stress of war." "After the war is over," he further explained, "all those interested ... will have much to engage their attention and quite possibly I shall not be amongst the silent when the right time arrives."¹⁰⁰ While Bourassa and Ewart publicly and privately acknowledged the similarities in their views on the Empire, aside from a handful of articles, Ewart refused to threaten Canadian unity with his public commentary. In his mind, the time was not right.

Bourassa continued to espouse his views despite accusations of "disloyalism." What in a wartime context was chastised as "déloyalisme" or "trahison," Bourassa reminded his readers, was once called "patriotisme." It would be one day again, he reassured his readers, "quand les Canadiens sont guéris, qui de l'anémie coloniale, qui de la fièvre chaude de

⁹⁸ J.S. Ewart, *Ottawa Citizen*, 26 October, 1914.

⁹⁹ Henri Bourassa, "M. Ewart et la Guerre: Les causes 'predisposantes' et les causes 'precipantes,'" *Le Devoir*, 6 November, 1914, 1.

¹⁰⁰ Ewart to Bourassa, 1 December, 1916, reel-M721, 33-34, Bourassa Fonds.

l'impérialisme.”¹⁰¹

By December 1914, Bourassa stood alone as the most public voice of dissent against the Canadian war effort. The month before, a People's Forum in Ottawa invited him to speak, but opposition forced the organizers to rescind the invitation. A group of Ottawa citizens organized a second potential appearance at the Russell Theatre on 17 December. In the interim, Bourassa toured New England speaking to Franco-Americans,¹⁰² although he looked forward to the opportunity to explain himself directly to English Canadians in their own tongue. The Ottawa event nearly devolved into a riot after his opponents aggressively campaign against his presence, labelling him the arch-traitor of Canada. Bourassa was prepared to face disagreement, as he had many times before, but the violent disruption of public disorder in response to his words testified to the wartime transformation of Canada. Afterwards, he offered brave words: “[I] can well afford to laugh at the easy game played against [me] by all dealers in ‘cheap loyalty’ [I] survived it [during the South African War], and will pass through this one, in the minds at least of those people whose opinions and sympathy [I care] for.”¹⁰³ At year's end, he stood more isolated than ever on the public stage. French and English, Catholic and Protestant, even other nationalists, all rejected his equivocating position on the war. No one realized how long the war would last, nor the extent of its transformation effect on Canada and the world. However, the coming months underlined its transformative nature for all Canadians, especially as it wrought a transformation on Bourassa's cautious position in favour of Canadian intervention.

¹⁰¹ Henri Bourassa, “Vrai Loyalisme.” *Le Devoir*, 19 November, 1914, 1.

¹⁰² Rumilly, *Bourassa*, 519-520.

¹⁰³ Henri Bourassa, *Duty of Canada*, 4.

Chapter 3: What do we owe England? (1915)

The year had begun in the shadow of his appearance at Russell Theatre where he had reached out to explain his position on the war. By the end of 1915, Bourassa was convinced that compromise was nearly impossible. Like all involved, the first full year of the war had attuned Bourassa to its horrific cost. Unlike most though, it led him to a far different conclusion and he championed anyone who echoed his position. Over the course of the year, he examined the words of the Papacy, the Union of Democratic Control, and others, as he conveyed to his readers any voice that saw the conflict as he did. Despite the return of tension over French language schooling, Bourassa knew that the war had become more than a political debate over Canada's imperial ties or the relationship of its linguistic neighbours. Less certain of where it would lead and its consequences than he had been at the close of 1914, the year had reaffirmed to Bourassa that if there was one certainty in wartime it was his faith. He believed that God did indeed have a plan for the world that included such atrocity, but it was human failings that twisted the path towards salvation. He strove to convince others to join him on the right path.

The year began with Canadians still enthused by the war, but having not yet realised its consequences. Throughout the year, Bourassa looked for other voices that asked for moderation and found some in the person of Pope Benedict XV and the Union of Democratic Control. He praised their wisdom while criticizing the seemingly blind adherence of war supporters to their imperial cause. Alongside him, many French Canadians who had eagerly supported the war in August 1914 had begun to question a prolonged Canadian war effort as the year progressed. Tension between French and English Canadians only worsened as poor

recruitment in Quebec and the debate over language equality in Ontario revealed that the two sides disagreed on the nature of the war effort. English Canadian recruitment was higher due to the rate of British-born Canadians, as opposed to Canadians actually born in the country, but Henri Bourassa's dissident tone accented the low numbers for French Canada. English Canada placed blame for it on Bourassa's shoulders as well as the "bilingual issue."¹ Ontario's Regulation 17, the legislation banning French education in the province, was scheduled to appear before the Ontario Supreme Court to judge its legality in 1915. The campaign to overturn or at least mediate the law was well supported by the nationalistes and more and more French Canadians were convinced that Ontario's actions were unjust.

* * *

French Canadians contrasted the government's request to wage a war for liberty when they did not even possess liberty at home in Ontario. They gained a powerful ally in the fight when, on 9 January, Quebec Cardinal Louis-Nazaire Bégin published a letter he sent to Archbishop Bruchési on the validity of Ontario's Regulation 17. The Cardinal wrote that, "if, which God forbid, the trial ... be prolonged, it will be the noble duty of the French and Catholic province of Quebec to assist with all its influence and all its resources."² The Quebec legislature followed Bégin's lead and unanimously passed a resolution condemning the Ontario government's refusal to protect Franco-Ontarian right to French education.³ Bourassa's fellow nationaliste Armand Lavergne was more strenuous in his rejection, proclaiming in a letter to the Kingston *Standard* that "this country was born Bi-lingual[sic] and it will remain Bi-lingual,

¹ J. Castell Hopkins, *Canadian Annual Review War Series 1915*, (Toronto: The Canadian Annual Review Limited, 1918) 288. Hopkins also underlines the disproportionate share of Britain-born Canadians within English Canadian recruitment, noting that the numbers as of February 1916 broke down to 30% that were native-born, 62% that were British-born and 8% were "other," see 219.

² Castell Hopkins, *Canadian Annual Review 1915*, 564.

³ Margaret Prang, "Clerics, Politicians, and the Bilingual Schools Issue in Ontario, 1910-1917," *The Canadian Historical Review*, no. 4 41 (December, 1960): 294.

or it shall end. ... We will have [the official language of this country], just as English, taught in our schools or there will be no schools at all.”⁴ Despite disagreement between the nationalistes and other French Canadians over the war effort, they were united in defending their linguistic rights against English Canadian discrimination. As historian Mason Wade noted, a “passionate emotional reaction ... always developed [in Quebec] whenever one of the essentials of national survival [was] endangered.”⁵ That protective instinct sharpened over the course of the year as the date for a ruling by the Ontario Court of Ontario on Regulation 17 approached that fall.

The nationalistes had always been one of the leading defenders of French language schooling in Ontario, and Bourassa did not hesitate to join the Church in continuing the years-long campaign for Ontario's French minority. He had the opportunity to express his support a few days later on 14 January 1915, when he and his supporters celebrated the fifth anniversary of the founding of Bourassa's paper, *Le Devoir*, and gathered at the Monument National for the occasion.

The night began with J.-N. Cabana, President of the Friends of *Le Devoir*, G.N. Ducharme, President of the Board of Administration, and Armand Lavergne giving speeches to warm up the crowd for the main event. Eventually Lavergne introduced Bourassa to the audience, saying that, “au début, nous pensions la race condamnée à mourir, et nous n'avions plus qu'un espoir, celui de la voir mourir proprement. Mais les temps sont changés. Il n'est plus question de mourir, car la race vivra. Un homme l'a sauvée ...” The crowd drowned out Lavergne's words with cheers of “Bourassa.”⁶ My critics in English Canada want to hang me for my words, Bourassa said at one point during his speech, and a voice from the crowd

⁴ Castell Hopkins, *Canadian Annual Review 1915*, 299.

⁵ Mason Wade, *The French-Canadian Outlook*, (Toronto: McClelland and Stewart Limited, 1963) 53.

⁶ *Le 5e Anniversaire du “Devoir”*, (Montreal : Le Devoir, 1915) 15. Rumilly, *Henri Bourassa*, 526.

replied: “Et on veut être pendu avec vous!”⁷ It was a stark contrast to the hostile crowd Bourassa had faced the previous month in Ottawa. The audience adored him in Montreal that night as he used the history of *Le Devoir* to defend his vision of Canada, its importance for Quebec, and the continued relevance of his arguments.

Bourassa's anniversary speech touched on many of the criticisms directed at him over the last five months. In turn, he affirmed the value of his newspaper to Canada's public discourse. He believed that the issues confronting French Canadians in 1915 were much the same as the ones he had debated since the paper's founding. The continuing struggle of Franco-Ontarians that Cardinal Bégin had highlighted proved the necessity of shaping of public opinion, boasting to his audience that *Le Devoir* had swayed Quebec in favour of their plight.⁸

Some doubted the paper's purpose during the war, but Bourassa assured his audience that his newspaper continued its mission. It was a crucial organ of nationaliste beliefs about Canada and moreover, a Catholic journal, though he noted that it was not a voice of the Catholic hierarchy.⁹ This misconception had caused tension the year before, and the ultramontane Bourassa made sure to distinguish that *Le Devoir* was independent even though it upheld the authority and unity of the Church. He wanted to demonstrate that he could disagree with the episcopacy without ceasing to be Catholic.¹⁰ He promised *Le Devoir* would continue to be non-partisan and try to force political parties to work for the “bien de la nation au lieu d'en corrompre l'esprit.”¹¹

After reviewing the mission of *Le Devoir*, Bourassa examined the paper's previous

⁷ *Le 5e Anniversaire du "Devoir"*, 41.

⁸ *Le 5e Anniversaire du "Devoir"*, 72-73. In late February he published more on both the clergy and the parties to further reinforce the newspaper's position, Henri Bourassa, “Le 'Devoir' et le Clerge,” *Le Devoir*, 20 February, 1915, 1; Henri Bourassa, “Le 'Devoir' et les Partis,” 22 February, 1915, 1.

⁹ *Le 5e Anniversaire du "Devoir"*, 70.

¹⁰ Durocher, “Henri Bourassa,” 256.

¹¹ *Le 5e Anniversaire du "Devoir"*, 72.

campaigns, such as those against imperialism, defending French Canadian's religious and linguistic rights, and support for Catholic unions and temperance. He ended his listing with an appraisal of the greatest obstacle facing Canadians: unity between its French and English-speaking peoples. "Ce fait primordial de notre situation nationale passée, présente, et future," he said, "nous n'avons pas plus le droit de vouloir faire du Canada un pays exclusivement français que les Anglo-Canadiens n'ont le droit d'en faire un pays anglais."¹² Thus, nationalistes should be opposed to the exclusion of French *or* English as both were integral to Canadian identity, and they must put Canadian interests before those of Britain, France or any country. *Le Devoir*, Bourassa proclaimed, would continue to search for a "idéal commun, fait des traditions canadiennes, enraciné dans le sol canadien et n'ayant d'autre object que la grandeur morale et matérielle de la patrie canadienne."¹³ He ended his speech with an impassioned plea for donations, promising that:

En retour de tout ce que vous pourrez faire pour le Devoir et ses oeuvres, je ne vous fais qu'une promesse, c'est que, moi vivant, il ne déchera pas. Avant qu'il ne défaille ou trahisse la mission que je lui ai tracée, dussé-je y voir la fin de toutes mes ambitions, de toutes mes espérances, je le tuerai de ma main!¹⁴

In expressing *Le Devoir's* continuing mission, Bourassa set out his own path for the coming year. The war had not changed the political issues of the day, though they were dimmed in its long shadow.

The next week, he returned to sharp critiques of Robert Borden's wartime government, which had to represent Canada more strongly in the Empire for the sake of the Canadian war effort. In 1910, Bourassa reminded his readers that Borden had promised that if Canada were to fight an Imperial war, it would be accompanied by participation in Imperial government. The

¹² *Le 5e Anniversaire du "Devoir"*, 59.

¹³ *Le 5e Anniversaire du "Devoir"*, 68.

¹⁴ *Le 5e Anniversaire du "Devoir"*, 75.

journalist saw no evidence of it in 1915, as British Cabinet Ministers continued to meet on issues of imperial defence without Canadian input.¹⁵ Even as Minister of Justice Charles Doherty claimed that Canada's entry into the war was spontaneous and voluntary, meaning Canada had exercised its right to choose whether to participate in the British conflict, Bourassa saw little proof of Canadian autonomy.¹⁶ Borden wanted to secure imperial reform, but now that he had the opportunity, Bourassa observed little action. “Le vin est tiré, messieurs les sauveurs d'Empire,” Bourassa wrote, “vous ne le ferez pas boire qu'aux autres.”¹⁷ As Canadians waited for Borden, the British government led the war without any concern for Canadian interests.

Bourassa was not alone in his demands for a Canadian voice in imperial affairs, though he couched them differently than others. When asked about the planned Imperial Conference for 1915, Ontario Liberal Party leader N.W. Rowell told journalists on 27 January that “to have representatives from the Empire meet and take counsel together” would “give to Europe a ... splendid manifestation of the unity of the Empire and of the determination of all parts to see this fight through.”¹⁸ Though the Conference was cancelled for that year, many raised the idea of imperial reform in the coming months. Author and imperialist Castell Hopkins mused in Hamilton that February about the possibility of an Imperial Council that included the Dominions.¹⁹ As Bourassa had suspected, the war could fulfil the Canadian imperialist dream of an inclusive Empire that was not solely ruled from Westminster, but brought together its Dominion Ministers to keep each informed and advised about vital questions. When Borden

¹⁵ Henri Bourassa, “M. Doherty et le Probleme Imperial,” *Le Devoir*, 18 January, 1915, 1.

¹⁶ Henri Bourassa, “M. Doherty et le Probleme Imperial,” *Le Devoir*, 18 January, 1915, 1.

¹⁷ Henri Bourassa, “Le vin est tiré, il faut le boire,” *Le Devoir*, 26 January 1915, 1.

¹⁸ Castell Hopkins, *Canadian Annual Review 1915*, 168.

¹⁹ Castell Hopkins, *Canadian Annual Review 1915*, 168. Others followed suit throughout the year, see Castell Hopkins, *Canadian Annual Review 1915*, 168-169.

eventually did meet with the British Cabinet during his trip to England in July, advocates of imperialism were understandably pleased, and the press was effusive in its praise of the important precedent.²⁰

Bourassa met these developments with suspicion as his stance against the Empire reflected much of what he had argued for the previous decade and a half. Thus, the cancellation of the Imperial Conference became a sign that Britain had no desire to inform its colonial subjects about the war. Such hubris, as Bourassa saw it, could not sustain the imperial relationship. Bourassa predicted that eventually Canada and the other Dominions would realise that the faulty premise of their involvement in the war and the ensuing anti-imperialist reaction would pose a greater threat than the “barbarie Allemand.”²¹ Great Britain always acted in its own global interests and the war proved more than ever that they had long ago become “une puissance mondiale plutôt qu'européenne.”²² Bourassa repeated his position of moderate Canadian participation without obligation. Critics wrote to him either privately or in the pages of *Le Devoir* to refute his arguments.²³ Yet for all those who championed the Empire's defense of small nations like Belgium and the principle of nationalism, Bourassa raised the spectre of Canada's nationalities, like the Franco-Ontarians who still faced the “tyrannie assimilatrice des Prussiens d'Ontario.”²⁴ When his opponents talked of “reform” and “British liberties,” he saw little more than hypocrisy and self-delusion. To the nationaliste, the absence of representation in the Empire and the costs of the Empire for ordinary Canadians were even more important

²⁰ Castell Hopkins, *Canadian Annual Review 1915*, 179.

²¹ Henri Bourassa, “La Conference Imperiale,” *Le Devoir*, 8 February, 1915. He returned to the subject with much the same to say in April, Henri Bourassa, “Abjection Coloniale,” *Le Devoir*, 23 April, 1915, 1.

²² Henri Bourassa, “Une Critique Intelligente,” *Le Devoir*, 9 February, 1915, 1.

²³ Such as Henri Bourassa, “Une Critique Intelligente,” *Le Devoir*, 9 February, 1915, 1. In this article Bourassa responds to Maurice Hodent's criticism of Bourassa's position on the outbreak of the war. Hodent is the secretary for the *Canadienne*, and *Le Devoir* had been publishing letters from him expanding his position against its editor.

²⁴ Henri Bourassa, “Une Critique Intelligente,” *Le Devoir*, 9 February, 1915, 1

now that millions of lives hung in the balance.

The release of the Canadian budget further frustrated Bourassa. On 11 February, federal Finance Minister W.T. White revealed that Canadian debt had spiralled out of control since the beginning of the conflict. The country had spent \$190,000,000 against a revenue of only \$130,000,000. White estimated the war would cost Canada a further \$100,000,000 by the end of the fiscal year and that its debt would increase to \$110,000,000.²⁵ “Les 'sauveurs de l'Empire' pourraient bien être les destructeurs de leur propre pays,” Bourassa remarked, as it became all too evident that Canada could not in fact afford the price of “le poids de la gloire.”²⁶ As Canadians paid more taxes to save the Empire, Bourassa wondered how long it would be until they realized the farce of a poorer nation supporting a stronger one.²⁷ Bourassa saw little difference in Canadian policy despite the changed circumstances of the war. The cost of Canada's imperial obligations grew greater while their rewards dwindled -- if they had existed at all.

The House of Commons at least, should be asking questions of Canada's growing commitments to the war. Yet Bourassa observed only uncritical acceptance of the war policy in the Canadian Parliament. The “party truce” that Laurier declared in August 1914 was still in effect and the House passed legislation that, in Bourassa's eyes, the Liberals should have opposed. The Finance Minister's budget focused Parliamentary discussion on increased taxes and tariffs, which the Liberals only opposed half-heartedly. In 1910, the Liberals had campaigned against protectionist policies, yet Laurier now accepted them “due to the

²⁵ William Thomas White, *House of Commons Debates, 12nd Parliament, 5th Session, vol. 1*, 11 February, 1915, 80-82.

²⁶ Henri Bourassa, “Le Poids de la Gloire: Le budget de la guerre,” *Le Devoir*, 13 February, 1915, 1.

²⁷ Henri Bourassa, “Le 'Titan Fatigué': La “pauvre” Angleterre,” *Le Devoir*, 17 February, 1915, 1. Bourassa examined the cost of the war and war taxes in articles on 13, 15 and 16 February as well. He advocated for more taxes on revenues and increased manpower at home for the production of goods and resources that could contribute to the war effort.

exigencies of the present situation.”²⁸ Bourassa considered this policy of “tout pour l'empire, rien pour le Canada” a foolish result of the Opposition Liberals placing war patriotism over Canadian interests.²⁹ These taxes and tariffs weakened Canada's economy and the budget seemed further proof that Canada's parliament operated firmly within a colonial mindset. The only worthwhile criticism in Laurier's speech on the budget, according to Bourassa, was demanding that tariffs vary based on merchandise and the needs of the poor, echoing his own position.³⁰

These concessions had grave consequences, Bourassa foretold: “un peuple ne joue pas impunément à la guerre.”³¹ He agreed with his critics that war was not a time to make quick decisions on national matters, but the war enthusiasm pervading every level of Canadian government had serious consequences. War supporters, Bourassa emphasized, freely used loyalty and patriotism to justify their actions without a thought to long-term effects. As he had written in 1914, participation was necessary because of Canadian political and historical obligation, but that did not entail forsaking critical discussion about the budget or other political issues. All of the sacrifices the country had made for the war effort and the ones it had yet to make would only be prolonged or increased if Canada gave up on protecting its interests.³² Instead, a Canadian nationalism that demanded careful decisions, balanced and

²⁸ Castell Hopkins, *Canadian Annual Review 1915*, 201.

²⁹ Henri Bourassa, “Tout pour l'Empire, Rien pour le Canada,” *Le Devoir*, 18 March, 1915, 1.

³⁰ Henri Bourassa, “La Tactique Liberal: Sa faiblesse et ses inconséquences,” *Le Devoir*, 19 March, 1915, 1.

Bourassa discussed the budget originally in Henri Bourassa, “Les Impôts de Guerre: Sont-ils Équitables?” *Le Devoir*, 16 February, 1915, 1.

³¹ Henri Bourassa, “La Tactique Liberal: Sa faiblesse et ses inconséquences,” *Le Devoir*, 19 March, 1915, 1.

³² Henri Bourassa, “Les Consequences de la Guerre: Réaction nationaliste,” *Le Devoir*, 20 March, 1915, 1.

Bourassa did not address any positive economic consequences to the war. For a recent study of how much the war positively or negatively affected the Canadian economy, see Douglas McCalla, “The Economic Impact of the Great War,” *Canada and the First World War: Essays in Honour of Robert Craig Brown*, David Mackenzie ed., (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2005) 138-153.

informed by what was best for Canada, was the ideal course of action.³³ Bourassa saw no worthwhile perspective other than his own in the “patriotic” theatre of the House of Commons that guided the nation at war.

There was no problem with patriotism, he told his readers. It was a natural instinct, born of an attachment to a homeland; half egotism and half noble sentiment. Unfortunately, the wartime Canadian patriotism was hollow. It was “atrophié par le servilisme colonial, [était] moins fort, moins agissant, que la patriotisme d'un peuple libre, maître de son action mondiale.”³⁴ “True patriotism” was not being expressed in Canada during the war. As a result, Bourassa argued, recruitment was low among the French and English-speaking native-born Canadians because of the lack of true patriotism to the Canadian nation. War supporters used appeals to loyalty to encourage enlistment, but loyalism was not patriotism. Loyalism was “une sentiment – et souvent une hypocrite profession de foi – qui dépendent de circonstances extérieures et lointaines.”³⁵ Laurier might stand before a crowd in Quebec, as he did that August, and say “We have an interest to take part in this War. We are fighting for liberty and we are combating absolutism ... I claim for my country the supreme honour of bearing arms in this holy cause, and if I support the Government it is because I have the heart to do my duty.”³⁶ To Bourassa these were empty words. Canadians loyal to Britain joined the army, but that did not mean that all *patriotic* Canadians shared their conviction.

On 3 March, Bourassa returned to his analysis of foreign affairs and offered a more detailed examination of Russia's interest in Constantinople and its impact on the political and economic aspects of the war. Bourassa's article examined the Russian statement in February

³³ Henri Bourassa, “Les Consequences de la Guerre: Réaction nationaliste,” *Le Devoir*, 20 March, 1915, 1.

³⁴ Henri Bourassa, “Les Révélations d'Ottawa,” *Le Devoir*, 25 March, 1915, 1.

³⁵ Henri Bourassa, “Les Révélations d'Ottawa,” *Le Devoir*, 25 March, 1915, 1.

³⁶ Castell Hopkins, *Canadian Annual Review 1915*, 275-276.

1915 that it would permanently occupy the Turkish capital of Constantinople and gain access to the Mediterranean from the Black Sea. Foreign Secretary Edward Grey supported this stance in the House of Commons on 25 February,³⁷ but if the Russian declaration was true, governments had misled the public over the nature of the war. “Dans toute guerre, le gros public n'aperçoit que l'aspect dramatique et sanglant,” Bourassa wrote, “C'est la force de résistance économique qui donnera la victoire finale aux Alliés, plus que tous leurs faits d'armes; c'est l'influence politique la plus forte qui règlera les conditions de la paix et détournera ou activera les causes de conflits futur.”³⁸ While other newspapers looked to the Canadian soldiers recently sent to the trenches of the Western Front, Bourassa asked why Canadians risked their lives in Europe for Russian claims to territory a thousand kilometres away.

Unbeknownst to anyone at the time, Britain and Russia signed a secret agreement formalizing Russia's annexation of the straits and Constantinople just weeks after Grey's comment.³⁹ At the time, Bourassa took Grey at his word. In the House of Commons, Grey responded to Russia's claim saying, “that is an aspiration with which we are in entire sympathy. The precise form in which it will be realised will no doubt be settled in the terms of peace.”⁴⁰ Leaving such determinations to the terms of peace was a reasonable position, though again Bourassa asked what sort of world might emerge from an Allied victory. Allowing Russia to extend its empire so far south was as dangerous as Germany's expansion against which the Allies now fought. Quoting Noel Brailsford, he reminded his readers that “our imperialists will

³⁷ United Kingdom. *House of Commons Debates*. 25 February, 1915, Hansard vol. 70 c364. Canadian newspapers reported on Grey's statement in late February as well.

³⁸ Henri Bourassa, “La Russie a Constantinople,” *Le Devoir*, 3 March, 1915, 1.

³⁹ The Revolutionary Russian government revealed this “secret treaty” and others after the Czar was deposed. See F. Seymour Cocks, *The Secret Treaties and Understandings*, (London: Union of Democratic Control, 1918).

⁴⁰ *House of Commons*, 25 February, 1915.

be calling out for a strong Germany to balance a threatening Russia” by the end of the war if Russia controlled the Bosphorus and Dardanelles straits.⁴¹ Bourassa intimated that this “peace” led only to future war. The insatiable thirst of empires for conquest, domination and wealth had led the world to war, he warned, and only when they were extinguished would they know peace.

In the spring of 1915, Canadians confronted the brutal reality of the conflict that they had joined eight months prior. They experienced their first major casualties when the Germans launched devastating gas attacks against the Canadians at the Ypres salient in April 1915. Few Canadians were ready for the extent of the losses. Less than a month later, German U-Boats torpedoed the RMS *Lusitania* off the coast of Ireland as part of their campaign to restrict cross-Atlantic shipping. The Germans alleged that the civilian liner was carrying weapons, but few among the Allied countries believed them. Historian Ian Miller wrote in his study on Toronto during the Great War, that the events of April and May 1915 changed the war from a “Great Adventure” to a “Great Crusade,” imbued with a moral necessity to stop Germany.⁴²

For Henri Bourassa, the sinking of the *Lusitania* was significant as a commentary on British policy and the American response to it. The *Lusitania* tragedy mocked the supposed British dominance of the sea with its Dreadnought fleet that it had so urgently required in 1909 and 1910. Despite its power, it could not actually protect shipping from German U-boats. Two British admirals, Lord Charles Beresford and Sir Percy Scott, had already warned of British vulnerability against submarines. To Bourassa, bellicose patriotism had trumped common

⁴¹ Henri Bourassa, “La Russie a Constantinople,” *Le Devoir*, 3 March, 1915, 1. Bourassa is quoting Brailsford's article published in the *Contemporary Review*, titled “The Empire of the East.” He examined Brailsford article on October 28, see Henri Bourassa, “L’Orientation de la Politique Anglaise,” *Le Devoir*, October 28, 1914. He also reproduces Brailsford article in his pamphlet, *The Foreign Policy of Great Britain*.

⁴² Ian Miller, *Our Glory & our Grief: Torontonians and the Great War*, (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2002)15-66.

sense. If there were not enough destroyers to escort ships, it was because they had spent the last ten years building dreadnoughts.⁴³ Bourassa also worried that the incident would push one more nation into the worldwide conflict. The United States was still neutral in the war and U.S. President Woodrow Wilson tried to keep the American nation removed from European affairs. Wilson, Bourassa believed, was aware of “les conséquences effroyables qui découleraient d'une décision hâtive.”⁴⁴ The hope of Allied war supporters that the United States would enter the conflict over the loss of Americans lives on the *Lusitania*, who had willingly travelled the seas under threat, was farfetched to the French Canadian journalist.

Bourassa was far less sure of the possibility or justness of American intervention after the sinking of the *Lusitania* than other Canadians.⁴⁵ On 13 May, the American Secretary of State, William Jennings Bryan, warned Germany that the Americans would not hesitate to perform “[their] sacred duty of maintaining the rights of the United States and its citizens.”⁴⁶ Bourassa agreed with the Montreal Herald, which termed the American position as “boiling neutrality.”⁴⁷ If the Germans did not temper their actions, then the United States would have no choice but to enter the war in defence of its own interests. In that context, Bourassa wondered what effect Japan's entry into the war on the side of the Allies had on American opinion, as they had their own interests in the Pacific that might oppose American interests there.⁴⁸ The French Canadian did not believe that American entry into the war hinged on the single moral issue of civilian deaths. Rather, he perceived the complex political and moral facets to it that

⁴³ Henri Bourassa, “Le Désastre du “Lusitania” et l'Attitude de Président Wilson,” *Le Devoir*, 12 May, 1915, 1.

⁴⁴ Henri Bourassa, “Le Désastre du “Lusitania” et l'Attitude de Président Wilson,” *Le Devoir*, 12 May, 1915, 1

⁴⁵ See for instance, the reaction in Toronto, Ian Miller, *Our Glory & our Grief*, 44-46.

⁴⁶ United States Department of State, *Papers relating to the foreign relations of the United States, 1915. Supplement, The World War*, (Washington, D.C.: U.S. Government Printing Office, 1915) 393-396. Part of the *University of Wisconsin Digital Collections*, <http://uwdc.library.wisc.edu/collections/FRUS>, (accessed 3 May, 2014).

⁴⁷ Henri Bourassa, “La Protestation du Gouvernement Americain,” *Le Devoir*, 15 May, 1915, 1.

⁴⁸ Henri Bourassa, “La Protestation du Gouvernement Americain,” *Le Devoir*, 15 May, 1915, 1.

had no easy resolution.

By 8 June 1915, Bryan had resigned his post in protest of President Wilson asking him to send another more aggressive response to the German government. The implication that the United States could respond to any “infringement of [American] rights, intentional or incidental” was unsettling to Bryan, who believed that Wilson was effectively opening the door to an American declaration of war against Germany.⁴⁹ Bryan believed in American neutrality, and he saw Wilson’s warning as an ultimatum on the path to war. Bourassa agreed with Bryan’s principled position. Both were against the suggestion that the United States could choose sides in the conflict so blithely. Neutrality, even in the face of losses, was the only way to keep the United States out of the European war. For Bourassa, to decide between “brutalité allemande” or the “morgue britannique” was a poor set of options.⁵⁰ Although the United States did not join the war until 1917, Bryan’s resignation was an important reminder that the world was not completely subsumed in a binary between the Allies and the Central Powers. The sinking of the *Lusitania* indicated to Bourassa that few rational voices prevailed on the international stage. Those that did, like William Jennings Bryan, were forced out by the harsh demands of political brinkmanship.

Months later, Bourassa returned to the correspondence between the United States and Germany that continued after Robert Lansing replaced Bryan as Secretary of State. Bourassa analyzed the German note of 8 July, calling it “un singulier mélange d’impudence, d’habile dialectique et de franche sincérité.”⁵¹ Germany protested that the British had instructed its

⁴⁹ United States Department of State, *Papers relating to the foreign relations of the United States, 1915. Supplement, The World War*, (Washington, D.C.: U.S. Government Printing Office, 1915) 396. Bryan’s resignation letter, Wilson’s response, as well as further clarifications from Bryan are printed in “The Resignation of Mr. Bryan as Secretary of State,” *The American Journal of International Law*, 9 3 (July, 1915), 659-666.

⁵⁰ Henri Bourassa, “La Démission de M. Bryan: La Crise politique en Angleterre,” *Le Devoir*, 10 June, 1915, 1.

⁵¹ Henri Bourassa, “La Note Allemande,” *Le Devoir*, 14 July, 1915, 1.

merchant vessels to seek protection behind neutral flags while increasing the arms of its shipping fleet. They argued that the attack on the *Lusitania* and other neutral ships was for the defence of Germany.⁵² In Bourassa's view, the English had a real interest in focusing American attention on the deaths of civilians, rather than the German naval threat German to British security and commercial shipping. In fact, he wrote, it had relatively minor impact on the Americans themselves.⁵³ Bourassa considered the German reply of 7 June, where they promised to no longer attack passenger liners,⁵⁴ a polite one that considered President Wilson's desire to avoid any future incidents like the *Lusitania*. The Americans could easily “[préservent] leur pays des horreurs et des crimes de la guerre” by not using British ships to transport goods. Contrary to the protestations of the British press, the Americans were better off acceding to German demands and staying out of the war altogether.

In May, Bourassa returned to the plight of Franco-Ontarians. He delivered a speech to the Association catholique de la jeunesse canadienne at a benefit for the Franco-Ontarian struggle. Over the course of two hours, he defended “la langue française au Canada, ses droits, sa nécessité, [et] ses avantages.”⁵⁵ He argued that French was an integral aspect of French Canadian identity, and its protection was entirely legitimate in view of its legal and cultural history in North America under British rule. He affirmed that “la Confédération canadienne est née d'une pensée d'alliance féconde des deux races; elle ne vivra que par le respect réciproque de leurs droits,” and to their opponents' claim “qu'un peuple bi-ethnique et bilingue ne peut

⁵² United States Department of State, *Papers relating to the foreign relations of the United States, 1915. Supplement, The World War*, (Washington, D.C.: U.S. Government Printing Office, 1915) 463-466.

⁵³ Henri Bourassa, “La Note Allemande,” *Le Devoir*, 14 July, 1915, 1.

⁵⁴ United States Department of State, *Papers relating to the foreign relations of the United States, 1915. Supplement, The World War*, (Washington, D.C.: U.S. Government Printing Office, 1915) 435-436.

⁵⁵ Henri Bourassa, *La Langue Française au Canada: ses droits, sa nécessité, ses avantages. Discours prononcé au Monument National, le 19 mai 1915, sous les auspices du Comité régional de Montréal de l'A.C.J.C.*, (Montréal: Imprimerie du Devoir, 1915). Rumilly writes that Bourassa spoke for two hours, see Rumilly, *Henri Bourassa*, 531.

former une nation homogène et que la minorité doit parler la langue de la majorité” was one of the most ridiculous denials in all of history.⁵⁶ Bourassa reiterated the nationalists’ arguments since Regulation 17’s enactment: the French language was an irrevocable facet of Canadian identity. The right to pass it onto to the next generation was unalterable.

Bourassa also reflected on the Franco-Ontarians’ persecution in light of the ongoing war. The supporters of Regulation 17 claimed that linguistic unity and national unity were the same, especially during wartime, but “ce n'est qu'au français qu'on fait la guerre,” he reminded his audience.⁵⁷ The journalist evoked the rhetoric of war supporters to convince his listeners to donate to the cause. “Les meilleures traditions britanniques et la conservation même du patrimoine canadien” demanded a fair and intelligent solution. Surely, the Ontario schools merited as much support as the French Canadian war effort. “Dans un magnifique élan de générosité,” Quebec had donated men and money to a British war, and Franco-Ontarians now deserved the same. They fought for a cause as just and sacred as the one in Europe, Bourassa declared, “[une] cause qui n'a d'autre défaut que d'être la nôtre et de ne pouvoir attendre d'appui des nations étrangères à qui nous prodiguons notre or et notre sang.”⁵⁸ His juxtaposition of the war’s purpose and the treatment of French Canadian underlined the contradiction of recruitment campaigns in the province. Why fight for Britain, France, or Belgium, when they had not yet won the fight for Franco-Ontarians at home. At the end of the gathering, the assembled audience unanimously passed a motion supporting French language rights and “les préceptes et la pratique de l’entente cordiale qui unit l’Angleterre et la France sur les champs de bataille de l’Europe.”⁵⁹ If equality and liberty were worth dying for in the trenches of

⁵⁶ Henri Bourassa, *La Langue Française au Canada*, 35-36.

⁵⁷ Henri Bourassa, *La Langue Française au Canada*, 34, 6.

⁵⁸ Henri Bourassa, *La Langue Française au Canada*, 51-52.

⁵⁹ Robert Rumilly, *Henri Bourassa*, 533.

Europe, surely they were worth defending in Canada as well.

The journalist continued to search for fellow advocates of peace and reason. He found them across the Atlantic where British anti-war commentators earned his approval. Bourassa published a letter from Lord Leonard Courtney, a former Cabinet Minister under Prime Minister William Gladstone who had advocated with his wife against the Boer War fifteen years earlier. Courtney affirmed that he stood on common ground with Bourassa.⁶⁰ The British politician was also a member of the Union of Democratic Control and Bourassa republished sections from their first pamphlet in a June editorial.⁶¹ A group of British politicians and intellectuals formed the UDC in August of 1914 as a rejection of the British Liberal Party's decision to support the war. They criticized the British war effort and, like Bourassa, did not question the legitimacy of defending Belgium, but rather offered a more nuanced perspective about the war's reason and purpose. They asked Britons what obligations would Britain have had if its foreign policy been open to democratic approval instead of solely in the hands of government Ministers?⁶² Their first pamphlet outlined four points to inspire the “conditions of the peace”: one, that no province be transferred without plebiscite; two, that Great Britain sign no treaty without Parliamentary approval; three, that Britain should not form an alliance for the purpose of maintaining the “Balance of Power” and instead a public international council should settle disputes; and four, that Great Britain propose a drastic reduction in armaments among all belligerent nations.⁶³ Bourassa had been impressed with UDC member Noel Brailsford and continued to praise their program for the peace and their active resistance against the British

⁶⁰ H.C.G. Matthew, “Courtney, Leonard Henry,” *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography Online*.

⁶¹ Henri Bourassa, “La Saine Opinion Anglaise,” *Le Devoir*, 12 June, 1915, 1.

⁶² Marvin Swartz, *The Union of Democratic Control in British Politics During the First World War*, (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1971) 33.

⁶³ The text of this pamphlet *The Morrow of War* can be found in Randolph Silliman Bourne, *Towards an Enduring Peace, a symposium of peace proposals and programs*, (New York: American Association for International Conciliation, 1916) 86-107.

war effort.

It is little wonder that Bourassa found solidarity with the men and women of the UDC during the war years. He admired these “hommes de haute valeur, prêts à risquer leur popularité et leurs chance de succès personnel, à rompre leurs attaches de parti et leurs associations d'intérêts, pour défendre une liberté légitime et soutenir un principe ou une idée.”⁶⁴ Their radical advocacy for peace and demands for “democratic control” struck a chord with the French Canadian nationalist. Bourassa also wanted Canadians to have control over their own foreign policy. Further, the UDC demands proved that British liberty allowed dissidents to express themselves. If it was indeed “not time to talk of such things,” as his critics claimed, then why were prominent British intellectuals free to express similar thoughts?⁶⁵ To him, the UDC seemed relatively well received in Britain, free of the criticism and threats that he received in Canada. This was not in fact the case, especially after they began expanding and holding public meetings in 1915, but it never reached the same level of vitriol that he confronted in Canada.⁶⁶ Despite the glorious claims of the Empire's Canadian supporters, Bourassa saw no evidence that “la véritable liberté britannique” had made it across the Atlantic.

The UDC argument against the war's justifications closely mirrored his own. In both Canada and Britain war supporters claimed that the war would not end until Germany's destruction and that eliminating Prussian militarism would bring peace in Europe. Both the UDC and Bourassa had declared the goal an impossibly idealistic view of continental Europe. Germany would never be destroyed, unless the Allied nations -- “les champions de la

⁶⁴ Henri Bourassa, “La Saine Opinion Anglaise,” *Le Devoir*, 12 June, 1915, 1.

⁶⁵ Henri Bourassa, “La Saine Opinion Anglaise,” *Le Devoir*, 12 June, 1915, 1.

⁶⁶ Marvin Swartz, *The Union of Democratic Control*, 105-129. A more direct and negative response to the UDC was G.G. Coulton, *The Main Illusions of Pacifism: A Criticism of Mr. Norman Angell and of the Union of Democratic Control*, (Cambridge: Bowes & Bowes, 1916), which was first published as a pamphlet by the *The Times Literary Supplement* in June of 1915, see Marvin Swartz, *The Union of Democratic Control*, 110.

civilisation supérieure” -- decided to kill every man, woman and child in Germany. Even if they somehow accomplished that brutal task, militarism still thrived among the Allies states. These contradictions seemed especially relevant before a Canadian audience. The refusal to acknowledge the impossibility of the supposed purpose of the war was the crux of Bourassa's opposition. Until Canadians woke up to the “ignorance” and “invincible torpeur” of colonialism, they would never truly understand the virtues of British civilization embodied by the UDC and to which the war supporters claimed loyalty.⁶⁷

The disconnect between the purpose of the war and the means by which it could be achieved was increasingly worrisome. Where was British liberty and freedom in wartime Canada? A protest against conscription reinforced Bourassa's doubt. On 23 July, a group of about 1,000 anti-conscription protestors broke up a recruitment meeting at Montreal's Parc La Fontaine.⁶⁸ Montreal's *Gazette* declared in response that conscription may be a possibility, but it would come at too great a cost for the nation and could never happen. The law, the *Gazette* explained, did not allow for conscription for foreign wars. While a few voices advocated for conscription in 1915,⁶⁹ the government reacted to the disturbance by categorically denying the possibility of conscription in Canada. One of its Quebec ministers, Postmaster General Thomas Chase-Casgrain, issued a statement on 28 July in reply to the incident: “You can state, in the most positive manner, that the question has never come up, directly or indirectly. ... We are happy to see that in all parts of the country Canadian patriotism is manifested so eloquently ... I am pretty accurate in my political predictions, and I can say that there will be no Conscription.”⁷⁰ The government assured the people that forced military service was not

⁶⁷ Henri Bourassa, “La Saine Opinion Anglaise,” *Le Devoir*, 12 June, 1915, 1.

⁶⁸ Castell Hopkins, *Canadian Annual Review 1915*, 296.

⁶⁹ Castell Hopkins, *Canadian Annual Review 1915*, 223-224.

⁷⁰ Castell Hopkins, *Canadian Annual Review 1915*, 258.

necessary to win the war.

Bourassa doubted the *Gazette's* confidence that conscription would not happen. He would have scoffed at Chase-Casgrain's words had they not been given after the publication of his editorial, since only those who had opposed the alleged legal and moral obligation of Canada to fight for Great Britain had the right to logically argue against conscription. Anything else was idealistic, if not delusional, given how the war had proceeded in Canada to that time.⁷¹ He reminded his audience that Prime Minister Borden continued to increase the size of the Canadian Army through 1915, requiring even more recruits.⁷² Furthermore, the interpretation of the law was in the hands of politicians who were not “canadiens avant d'être impérialistes.”⁷³ Bourassa believed that they would interpret or change the law any way they desired in order to fulfil their commitment to the war with little opposition. In the Canadian press, he declared, only *Le Devoir* had thoroughly contested the claim that Canadian liberty and security was threatened by Germany. “Nous avons paru prêcher dans le désert,” he wrote.⁷⁴ Bourassa condemned the *Gazette's* naivety in *hoping* that conscription would not happen as a matter of law.

In August, the war was a year old. Canadian soldiers had experienced long months of trench warfare and had fought brutal battles at places such as Ypres in April and Festubert in May. Neither were defeats, but nor were they victories. The war had reached a stalemate. Sanitized newspaper reports from the front arrived while letters going home often downplayed

⁷¹ Henri Bourassa, “La Conscription,” *Le Devoir*, 26 July, 1915, 1.

⁷² By June, the Canadian Army had expanded to 100,000, and recruitment grew difficult, as one recruiter noted: “The first 100,000 came easily. We found that other men were not coming,” J.L. Granatstein and J.M. Hitsman, *Broken Promises: A History of Conscription in Canada*, (Toronto: Oxford University Press, 1977) 34-35. For information on 1915 recruitment, see Castell Hopkins, *Canadian Annual Review 1915*, 216-218.

⁷³ Henri Bourassa, “La Conscription,” *Le Devoir*, 26 July, 1915, 1.

⁷⁴ Henri Bourassa, “La Conscription,” *Le Devoir*, 26 July, 1915, 1.

the terrible conditions of trench life.⁷⁵ In appearance, Canadians continued to offer stalwart support for the war, though they may have been less certain of Borden's stewardship of it. There were rumours of an election that year as reports of government corruption involving numerous war contracts appeared in newspapers.⁷⁶ Liberal papers such as the *Winnipeg Free Press* were particularly vocal in their denunciations, but even its editor J.W. Dafoe believed it best to extend the government's mandate until the war was over.⁷⁷ Some Liberals urged their party to put the government performance before a vote though Laurier unequivocally stated that his party would not seek an election that year.⁷⁸ No one expected the war to conclude in 1915 and the warring nations prepared for a much longer conflict than they had foreseen a year earlier.

The Great War's first anniversary was lamented in the Vatican, where Pope Benedict XV grieved the war that marked his ascendance to the Papacy in 1914. On 28 July, exactly a year after Austria-Hungary declared war on Serbia, Benedict released an "Aspotolic Exhortation" to the belligerent nations. The Pope was saddened that his advice to end the conflict had gone unheeded. "May this cry," he hoped, "prevailing over the dreadful clash of arms, reach unto the peoples who are now at war."⁷⁹ The Pope's appeal, addressed to all those

⁷⁵ Jeff Keshen, *Propaganda and Censorship During the First World War*, (Calgary: University of Alberta, 1996) 79, 143, 165 and throughout. The Chief Press Censor Office was established in June 1915, see Keshen, *Propaganda and Censorship*, 66; a fact that Bourassa laments but seemed to have little impact on his own work, Henri Bourassa, "La Censure," *Le Devoir*, 28 July, 1915, 1. In 1915, the Press Censor declined to ban *Le Devoir*, though according to Keshen, it did temper its "propaganda," Keshen, *Propaganda and Censorship*, 76-77, 94. Tim Cook cites many letters home that were more blunt throughout his work, he also acknowledges the influence of censorship on filtering what Canadians learned about their soldiers, Tim Cook, *At the Sharp End: Canadians Fighting the Great War, 1914-1916*, (Ottawa: Viking Canada, 2007) 76, 390.

⁷⁶ Castell Hopkins, *Canadian Annual Review 1915*, 283-286.

⁷⁷ Ramsay Cook, "Dafoe, Laurier, and the Formation of Union Government," in Carl Berger, ed., *Conscription 1917*, (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, n.d.) 18.

⁷⁸ Castell Hopkins, *Canadian Annual Review 1915*, 274-275.

⁷⁹ *Exhortation Allorchè Fummo to the Belligerent Peoples and to their Leaders*, as printed in *Principles for Peace Selections From Papal Documents Leo XIII to Pius XII*, Reverend Harry C. Koenig, ed., (Washington: National Catholic Welfare Conference, 1943) 180. Originally written in Italian.

involved, was not solely couched in Christian morality. He reminded them of their “tremendous responsibility of peace and war.” It echoed the Pope’s letter to Cardinal Vannutelli in May after the sinking of the *Lusitania* and the introduction of gas warfare, when he noted that “the war continues to ensanguine Europe, and not even do men recoil from means of attack, on land and on sea, contrary to the laws of humanity and to international law.”⁸⁰ Pope Benedict XV reflected on the value of international law, and above all, moderation and compromise, as a means of ending the terrible war that beset the people of the world.

Bourassa took heed of the Pope's message. After first thanking the Sovereign Pontiff for having given to humanity “cette parole lumineuse et consolante,” he quoted the papal statement directly and thrice noted the phrase, “Why not from this moment weigh with serene mind the rights and lawful aspirations of [all] peoples?”⁸¹ Hear this, Bourassa called out to the “conquérannts de l'Alsace et du Transvaal, tyrans de la Belgique, de la Pologne et de l'Irlande, persécuteurs de Schleswig, de l'Ukraine, et de l'Ontario français!”⁸² Bourassa knew, however, that they would not listen to the Pope, who alone had a practical plan to resolve the conflict – practical, at least, to Bourassa's Catholic ultramontane thinking. Pope Benedict asked only that the nations at war work for peace rather than war; Bourassa elevated the Roman Pontiff to the position of international arbitrator.

Bourassa was not surprised to the muted response to the Pope in most quarters. The worst transgressors against peace and moderation were the nations that had turned away from the Papacy. The liberty and democracy that the belligerent nations claimed to protect had only led to “affaiblissement de tout principe d'autorité, à la laxité du lien familial, à la négation du

⁸⁰ *Letter era nostro proposito to Cardinal S. Vannutelli*, in *Principles for Peace*, 170. Originally written in Italian

⁸¹ Henri Bourassa, “L'Appel du Pape,” *Le Devoir*, 3 August, 1915, 1; *Exhortation Allorchè Fummo*, in *Principles for Peace*, 181.

⁸² Henri Bourassa, “L'Appel du Pape,” *Le Devoir*, 3 August, 1915, 1.

devoir social, à l'égoïsme individuel, à la haine des classes, au culte effréné du bien-être physique, à la soif des richesses – au paganisme.”⁸³ Bourassa looked to the world that ignored the Pope’s message and saw “une humanité sans âme.”⁸⁴ The passion and drastic tone of his words emphasized the seriousness of his discussion of Papal missives. For Bourassa, Pope Benedict XV was not simply another contributor to the array of opinions on the war. Here was the word of God given to his people. Often the most excessive and evocative of Bourassa’s war editorials dealt with the Vatican and even in 1915, long before the war intensified to more frightening levels, the Pope's words moved the devout Bourassa to dismal depths. Seeing so many Catholics ignore Benedict's words was outrageous.

He saw some hopeful signs of a “rénovation du sens chrétien des peuples” in France and England. In a three-part series, “Guerre à la Guerre,” Bourassa first introduced a French publication, the *Semaine Catholique* from Saint-Flour, which called the war a chance for penitence and atonement as Bourassa had in August 1914.⁸⁵ “Nous n'avons pas besoins de nous d'examiner la conscience de nos ennemis,” the *Semaine Catholique* wrote, “mais seulement notre propre conscience.”⁸⁶ The periodical believed that it was a Christian duty to hold fast to religious values, especially as they fought against the “anti-christian” and militaristic Kultur of Germany. They claimed to speak for French bishops and Bourassa called on French Canadian bishops to issue a similar decree against Canadian jingoism.⁸⁷

⁸³ Henri Bourassa, “La Réponse au Pape,” *Le Devoir*, 6 August, 1915, 1.

⁸⁴ Henri Bourassa, “La Réponse au Pape,” *Le Devoir*, 6 August, 1915, 1.

⁸⁵ Henri Bourassa, “Le Congrès Eucharistique et la Guerre,” *Le Devoir*, 27 August, 1914, 1.

⁸⁶ Henri Bourassa, “La Guerre a la Guerre,” *Le Devoir*, 7 August, 1915.

⁸⁷ The archives of the *Semaine Catholique* in Saint-Flour were regrettably too far a trip to explore. Bourassa offers no details on the publication, and the author has been unable to trace its origins or legitimacy. Most historians write that French Catholics joined in the *union sacrée* during the war and were reluctant to accept Pope Benedict XV's effort to mediate the conflict, while this document suggests there was some disagreement within the episcopate. See Leonard V. Smith, Stephane Audoin-Rouzeau, and Annette Becker, *France and the Great War 1914-1918*, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2003) 28. On the cool reaction of the French ecclesiastical establishment to Benedict XV's most celebrated peace note in 1917, see Jean-Marie Mayeur,

An article by John Keating also suggested changing attitudes about the war in Britain. Keating, the editor of the Jesuit periodical *Month*, attacked the rise of “British Bernhardi-ism.”⁸⁸ He warned of the Allies failing to examine their own actions in the war. Friedrich von Bernhardi was one of the most famous German authors in the years before 1914. A military historian and Prussian general, he advocated an aggressive, unrestrained foreign policy based on war to achieve German dominance. His best known book, *Germany and the Next War*, had been published in 1912 and “Bernhardi-ism” meant unrelenting militarism.⁸⁹ Alongside the works of Treitschke and Nietzsche, Bernhardi symbolized the alleged German barbarity that led many among the Allies to believe Germany had planned the war.⁹⁰

Keating was among them when he wrote that Britain must remember that war was never desirable. As the British people embraced total war against militarism, they could not fall victim to the same “Prussian ideals.”⁹¹ Keating made the same distinction as Bourassa, that war for the sake of war was a faulty and hypocritical doctrine. If British values were lost in the process of defending them, then victory over Germany mattered little. Bourassa and Keating both asserted that Britain hardly had a moral high ground upon which to stand given its record of ignoring international law. It could not ignore its national conscience. In Britain, Bourassa remarked, writers were asking important questions of their country’s actions. In Canada, Bourassa saw few public figures doing the same. Canadians were quick to ask what was wrong

“Les Catholiques Français et Benoît XV en 1917: brèves remarques,” in Nadine-Josette Chaline, ed., *Chrétiens dans la Première Guerre Mondiale : Actes des Journées tenues à Amiens et à Péronne les 16 mai et 22 juillet 1992*, (Paris 1993) 153-165.

⁸⁸ John Keating, “British Bernhardi-ism,” *Month*, February 1915, 166-179. Bourassa mistakenly identifies the author as R.P. Keating.

⁸⁹ Friedrich von Bernhardi, *Germany and the Next War*, (New York: Longmans, Green, and Co., 1914). The English translation was published in 1914.

⁹⁰ Gregory Moore, “The Super-Hun and the Super-State: Allied Propaganda and German Philosophy during the First World War,” *German Life and Letters*, no.4, 54 (October 2001): 310-330.

⁹¹ John Keating, “British Bernhardi-ism,” *Month*, February 1915, 166.

with Germany, but Bourassa asked what was wrong with England?⁹²

In the second and third parts of the series, Bourassa elaborated on its title, “La Guerre à la Guerre.” He returned to the work of the Union of Democratic Control in Britain and a recent article by its founder E.D. Morel.⁹³ Bourassa briefly reviewed their accomplishments for his readers and their key points. By mid-1915, the group had solidified but faced increasingly oppressive and sometimes violent reactions to their anti-war movement.⁹⁴ The UDC worked for the same goal as Pope Benedict: to eliminate war. They waged war on war -- not actual war as the “hommes de lucre et de sang” proclaimed -- but a true movement to abolish war as an international practice.⁹⁵ Bourassa repeated the four points that guided the UDC, emphasizing the third point that asked for an international organization to settle international disputes. The French Canadian was particularly interested in Morel's references to Canada and the British Dominions. Bourassa cited sections of Morel's work where he explained that it was now the second time the former colonies contributed money, soldiers, and lives to policies which they had no part in forming (the first being the Boer War of 1899-1901). Morel saw little chance of it continuing. If the British Empire was to be preserved, the British author wrote, the Dominions would no doubt be a part of the peace settlement.⁹⁶

The British anti-war group and Bourassa both desired an equitable peace and both believed that that peace was possible in spite of the war's dominating influence. Bourassa accepted its view of the world, though the UDC couched it in modern terms that seemingly

⁹² Henri Bourassa, “La Guerre a la Guerre,” *Le Devoir*, 7 August, 1915.

⁹³ E.D. Morel, “Union of Democratic Control,” *Contemporary Review*, July 1915, as found in E.D. Morel, *Truth and War*, (London: National Labour Press, 1918) 169-182.

⁹⁴ They were preparing to campaign against conscription in 1915 and were worried about severe government reprisals. In some cities like Glasgow UDC members faced violence, otherwise it was mostly censorship as some newspapers voluntarily refused to publish their materials, Brock Millman, *Managing Domestic Dissent in First World War Britain*, (London: Routledge, 2000) 49-58.

⁹⁵ Henri Bourassa, “Le Guerre a la Guerre II: Nationalisme et Imperialisme,” *Le Devoir*, 10 August, 1915, 1.

⁹⁶ E.D. Morel, “Union of Democratic Control,” *Truth and War*, 180.

rejected the traditional leaning of the Catholic Church. Morel spoke of “great forces, some measurable, some intangible ... [drawing] civilised people closer to one another, to accentuate the mutuality of human needs. The whole tendency of modern development emphasises the interdependence of civilised peoples.”⁹⁷ Bourassa would have read much the same message in the Pope's words: “the equilibrium of the world, and the prosperity and assured tranquillity of nations rest upon mutual benevolence and respect for the rights and dignity of others ... may they resolve from now henceforth to entrust the settlement of their differences, not to the sword's edge, but to reasons of equity and justice.”⁹⁸ The progress that compelled the UDC's vision of British foreign policy and European relations mirrored the worldly Catholic position espoused by Pope Benedict XV. The two desired to see an end to the “domination diabolique des capitalistes” who profited from a prolonged war; Morel as a left-wing radical, Bourassa as what Joseph Levitt called a “utopian corporatist.”⁹⁹ More than ever Bourassa personified the name given to him by his former mentor, Wilfrid Laurier: *castor-rouge*, denoting his fusion of conservative and liberal beliefs.¹⁰⁰ The UDC's vision of the world inspired him and he took heed of Morel's rallying call, “Organise, still Organise, again Organise!”¹⁰¹ He promised once again that, although they were isolated, the nationalistes would do their best.

With that in mind, Bourassa continued his work in the autumn of 1915. At the end of August, Britain and Germany lobbed accusations of war guilt back and forth. Russian defeats

⁹⁷ E.D. Morel, “Union of Democratic Control,” *Truth and War*, 175.

⁹⁸ Henri Bourassa, “Le Guerre a la Guerre II: Nationalisme et Imperialisme,” *Le Devoir*, 10 August, 1915, 1. Bourassa translated the passage into French, as found in *Exhortation* Allorchè Fummo, in *Principles for Peace*, 181-182.

⁹⁹ Joseph Levitt, *Henri Bourassa and the Golden Calf: The Social Program of the Nationalists of Quebec*, (Ottawa: Les Éditions de l'Université d'Ottawa, 1969) 129-145.

¹⁰⁰ Castor being the sign of Ultramontanes, rouge the colour of liberals, wherein Bourassa combined Quebec's brand of conservative Catholicism and British Gladstonian liberal politics. Bourassa was anointed with the term early in his career, six months after being elected in 1896 and still a MP with Laurier's Liberals, see Réal Belanger, *Henri Bourassa: Le fascinant destin d'un homme libre*, 44, fn. 2.

¹⁰¹ E.D. Morel, “Union of Democratic Control,” *Truth and War*, 177.

in the east allowed Germany to occupy and re-form the state of Poland. German Chancellor Theobald von Bethman-Hollweg used it as an opportunity to decry the Russian behaviour in the region while maintaining Germany was “a shield of peace, and of the freedom of great and small nations.”¹⁰² In reply, British Foreign Minister Sir Edward Grey restated Germany's guilt for invading Belgium, reiterating the Allied war aim for “freedom and safety” from Germany's desire “to control the destiny of all other nations.”¹⁰³ Bourassa ridiculed the British minister's claims. Even as Grey spoke of Germany controlling other nations, Britain continued to demand naval supremacy across the globe.¹⁰⁴ Bourassa had once appreciated Grey's suavity in dealing with the July Crisis. A year later, he believed British claims of a just war to be a lie. Neither British nor German reply spoke to the cause of peace as the Pope or E.D. Morel had done a few weeks earlier.

In September, Bourassa left for a tour of New England and presented lectures to Franco-Americans. They received him as a “champion de la race.”¹⁰⁵ The small North American francophone communities huddled in the American northeast greeted Bourassa with fanfare, decorating automobiles and proclaiming him as the great defender of French minorities. Bourassa and other nationalistes had fought hard to protect French Canadians within the Dominion, but on 18 November the Supreme Court of Ontario upheld Regulation 17 against the arguments of Napoléon-Antoine Belcourt.¹⁰⁶

¹⁰² William Mulligan, *The Great War for Peace*, (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2014) 116. Hollweg's speech is printed in Theobald von Bethmann-Hollweg, *Sechs Kriegsreden des Reichkanzlers*, (Berlin, 1916) 39-61.

¹⁰³ Grey of Fallodon, Edward Grey, *Sir Edward Grey's Reply to Dr. von Bethmann-Hollweg: being a letter addressed to the British Press on the 25th August, 1915, together with a statement issued by the Foreign Office on the 1st September, 1915, etc.* (London: T. Fisher Unwin, 1915) 9-11.

¹⁰⁴ Henri Bourassa, “Sir Edward Grey: Le Programme de l'Angleterre,” 27 August, 1915, 1; Henri Bourassa, “La Reponse de l'Allemagne a Sir Edward Grey,” *Le Devoir*, 1 September, 1915, 1.

¹⁰⁵ Rumilly, *Henri Bourassa*, 539.

¹⁰⁶ Gaétan Gervais, “Le règlement XVII (1912-1927),” *Revue du Nouvel Ontario*, no. 18 (1996): 160.

Belcourt was a former Liberal Member of Parliament and appointed to the Senate by Prime Minister Laurier in 1907. He was deeply aware of the division between French and English Canadians. As a young lawyer, he had established his office across the Ottawa River in Ontario at a time when there were no French speaking lawyers practising there. He married an Irish Catholic and, after her death, married a Protestant. Belcourt worked hard to raise his family to be as bilingual as he was.¹⁰⁷ As tensions over the issue of French language school rose in Ontario, Belcourt became more involved in advocating for Franco-Ontarians, as he had often discussed the need for unity between Canada's two peoples.¹⁰⁸ He was the first President of the Association Canadienne-française d'éducation de l'Ontario, which was founded in 1910 after it became clear that Ontario had concerns about the quality of French-language education in the province. When Regulation 17 passed in 1912 to resolve the problem by abolishing bilingual schools, Belcourt was one of the most prominent advocates against this heavy-handed solution.¹⁰⁹ He presented cases before the Ontario Appellate Court and Ontario Supreme Court defending various actions aimed at delaying or overturning Regulation 17. In November 1915, he lost the final appeal to Ontario's court and decided to appeal to Britain's Judicial Committee of the Privy Council -- what was then the highest court in the land.¹¹⁰ The following year promised to have a final decision on the matter and the delays continued to spark French

¹⁰⁷ Patrice A. Dutil, "Against Isolationism: Napoléon Belcourt, French Canada, and 'La grande guerre,'" *Canada and the First World War: Essays in Honour of Robert Craig Brown*, David Mackenzie ed., (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2005) 99-102.

¹⁰⁸ For instance, see Napoléon Antoine Belcourt, *Le Français dans l'Ontario*, (s.l. :s.n., 1912), or Napoléon Antoine Belcourt, *L'Unité Nationale au Canada*, (Ottawa: A. Bureau, 1908).

¹⁰⁹ Patrice A. Dutil, "Against Isolationism: Napoléon Belcourt," 104-105.

¹¹⁰ Belcourt lost two major cases in 1915, the appeal of *Mackell v. Trustees* in the Ontario Appellate Court where he represented the Ottawa Separate School Board. The Board had been shut down in 1914 since it could not pay its French teachers. Its closure actually allowed Ottawa to fund the board independently of Ontario's Education Ministry under an Ottawa city bylaw, thus continue its French language education program. Mackell asked for an injunction against its closure, so that the Ottawa by-law could not be used. The Appellate court sided with Mackell in July 1915. Belcourt's primary case against the legality of Regulation 17 was rejected by the Ontario Supreme Court in November 1915. See Patrice A. Dutil, "Against Isolationism: Napoléon Belcourt," 106-111.

Canadian dissent.

A single article detailed Bourassa's response to the ruling. In it, he reprinted section 133 of the *British North America Act*, which detailed the bilingual nature of Parliament and the Quebec legislature. To Bourassa, this proved that Canada recognized two official languages, and thus the right to French education in every province.¹¹¹ Unsurprisingly, Bourassa fully agreed with Belcourt's arguments. The nationaliste admired Belcourt's ardent defense of Franco-Ontarians and claimed him as one of their own, despite his Liberal allegiance. During and after the war, French Canadians praised Belcourt's actions before the court. Recent scholarship has placed Belcourt in a middle ground between Liberal and nationaliste. Geneviève Richer argues that Belcourt's fight against Regulation 17 was driven by his belief in "l'ancienneté des Canadiens français en Ontario et au Canada, le catholicisme et l'unité nationale."¹¹² They were similar, certainly, but Belcourt's vision of the Canadian nation was not the one that Bourassa proposed. Still, they remained friends until Belcourt's death in 1932.

Bourassa returned home from his visit to the United States invigorated and that October he finished his major publication of the year, *Que Devons Nous à l'Angleterre?*, and prepared for its December release. The year ended on the successful note of Bourassa's publication. He delivered speeches repeating his argument to crowds of Quebecois and, at a dollar a book, it sold quickly.¹¹³

The 420-page book was a history tracing the origins of the "profonde [et] radicale" revolution that had transformed the British Empire's constitution and government.¹¹⁴ His title

¹¹¹ Henri Bourassa, "L'Article 133 et l'Enseignement du Français," *Le Devoir*, 15 December, 1915.

¹¹² Geneviève Richer, "L'apôtre infatigable de l'irrégentisme français: la lutte de Napoléon-Antoine Belcourt en faveur de la langue française en Ontario durant les années 1910 et 1920," *Francophonies d'Amérique* no. 31 (printemps 2011) : 90.

¹¹³ Robert Rumilly, *Henri Bourassa*, 542.

¹¹⁴ Henri Bourassa, *Que devons-nous à l'Angleterre? La défense nationale, la révolution impérialiste, le tribut à l'Empire*, (Montréal, 1915) v.

echoed the celebrated slogan of Quebec Premier Honoré Mercier more than two decades earlier, who had proclaimed that “nous ne devons rien à l'Angleterre.”¹¹⁵ Using government documents and parliamentary excerpts, Bourassa argued that there was a “contrat solennel” defining Britain's relationship with Canada. Britain alone had the power and responsibility to defend its colonies against foreign powers, while the colonies were only obliged to defend themselves.¹¹⁶ He cited several moments from 1854 to 1865 that set this precedent. He began with a dispatch from Governor General Lord Elgin to Sir George Grey, the Secretary of State for the Colonies, during the Crimean War where Elgin stated that imperial authorities were tasked with protecting the colonies from hostilities “in which they had no share in provoking.”¹¹⁷ That policy was renewed through other treaties and agreements over the next decade, and once more again during the Confederation negotiations. Only in the last decades of Canadian political life, Bourassa argued, had that relationship radically diverged from the national traditions and principles of the past.¹¹⁸

In Bourassa's view, the expansion of the British Empire in the last quarter of the 19th century matched the emergence of the imperialist ideology that advocated reforming their traditional relationship. In this new Empire, colonies helped Britain maintain their newly enlarged territory while imperialism expressed a “moral obligation” to fight in its wars.¹¹⁹ Thus, when Prime Minister Laurier stated in 1910 that “when Britain is at war, Canada is at war,”¹²⁰ it revealed how the “imperialist revolution” had transformed a benevolent Britain

¹¹⁵ Gilles Gallichan, *Honoré Mercier: La Politique et la Culture*, (Sillery: Les Éditions du Septentrion, 1994) 70-71.

¹¹⁶ Henri Bourassa, *Que devons-nous à l'Angleterre?*, 83.

¹¹⁷ Bourassa reproduces the correspondence, see Henri Bourassa, *Que devons-nous à l'Angleterre?*, 277-278. Bourassa's book reproduced over 200 pages of documents underlining this point.

¹¹⁸ Henri Bourassa, *Que devons-nous à l'Angleterre?*, 91.

¹¹⁹ Henri Bourassa, *Que devons-nous à l'Angleterre?*, 96-97.

¹²⁰ Wilfrid Laurier, *House of Commons Debates*, 12 January, 1910, 11th Parliament, 2nd Session, Vol. 1, 1735.

overseeing an Empire into one collective imperial unit. The Great War, Bourassa believed, had completed the revolutionary trend as Canadians eagerly offered sacrifice after sacrifice without compensation.

In the final pages of his analysis, Bourassa returned to the war itself. He reaffirmed that while Canada had no moral or legal obligation to the British Empire to fight in the war, he stood by his statement of 8 September 1914, that “lié à l'Angleterre et à la France par mille attaches ethniques, sociales, intellectuelles, économiques, le Canada a un intérêt vital à la conservation de l'Angleterre et de la France, au maintien de leur prestige, de leur puissance, de leur action mondiale.”¹²¹ This time he added an important caveat. He gave his support only if he believed that “la puissance et l'action mondiale de la France et de l'Angleterre restent contenues dans de justes bornes et ne deviennent pas, à leur tour, une menace pour la paix et l'équilibre du monde.”¹²² Of the two, he believed Britain was most likely to cross that line. Everything he had witnessed in Canada since the beginning of the war proved the danger of a British victory. The “arrogante brutalité des anglicisateurs canadiens” against French Canadian Catholics, particularly in Ontario, hinted at the dangerous extreme of a British apogee. Still, the French Canadian did not yet fully reject Canadian participation in the war in his December publication. He only outlined the reason he might do so.

The reaction among supporters of the war was understandably negative. The editor of *Le Canada*, Fernand Rinfret, called the book “propagande antipatriotique et pro-allemande” and entirely rejected Bourassa's arguments. Canada, Rinfret argued, entered the war voluntarily

¹²¹ Henri Bourassa, “Le Devoir National,” *Le Devoir*, 8 September 1914, 1.

¹²² Henri Bourassa, *Que devons-nous à l'Angleterre?*, 253. Durocher draws attention to this addition as well, René Durocher, “Henri Bourassa, les évêques et la guerre de 1914-1918,” 259-260.

to defend the world, not just in defence of its own territorial borders.¹²³ Many other newspapers echoed Rinfret's denunciation. English Canadian papers scoffed at his claims. The papers of English Canada allowed for few dissenting voices. Those they did include seemed so ludicrous that one historian has suggested it seemed as if newspapers made deliberate attempts to provoke a patriotic response for its readers.¹²⁴ Among the responses to Bourassa, *The Globe* wrote in a 23 December editorial that Bourassa was playing the hero and the martyr, and his nationalism “repudiated all the vital claims of the Internationalism of the world. ... It is not a principle, it is a pose.”¹²⁵ Meanwhile, the Kingston *Standard* again called Bourassa a traitor, while others simply decried his “criminal” activities during wartime.¹²⁶ Most of his critics’ initial reaction focused on his conclusions rather than the evidence he provided.

The Chief Censor E.J. Chambers, appointed in June 1915, was flooded with letters demanding that he silence Bourassa, but he was reluctant. Minister of Justice Charles Dougherty told him that the government was hesitant to censor *Le Devoir* since the Order-in-Council that had formed the Censor Office was “intended to prohibit publication of facts in the nature of news or information concerning the movement and preparation of the forces, rather than criticism of the policy or administration of His Majesty's Government.”¹²⁷ Bourassa would be able to continue publishing his work despite opposition.

¹²³ As quoted in Robert Rumilly, *Henri Bourassa*, 543. One enterprising baker reacted to Bourassa’s writing by placing ads in *Le Devoir* asking “Que devez vous à votre estomac?”, see Robert S. Prince, *The Mythology of War: How the Canadian Daily Newspaper Depicted the Great War*, Unpublished PhD Diss., University of Toronto, 1998, 101 fn 57.

¹²⁴ Robert S. Prince, *The Mythology of War*, 125

¹²⁵ “Bourassa: No Martyr, No Hero,” *The Globe*, 23 December, 1915, 4.

¹²⁶ See Jean Noël Cossette, *La Censure Fédérale et les Principaux Journaux Canadiens-Français du Québec, 1915-1918*, Unpublished Master's Thesis, University of Ottawa, 1971, 28.

¹²⁷ This is a quote from Minister of Justice Charles J. Dougherty, E.J. Boag to T.C. Casgrain, 29 October, 1915, 9-10, Library and Archives Canada, *Chief Press Censor for Canada, 1915-1920*, as quoted in Jean Noël Cossette, *La Censure Fédérale et les Principaux Journaux Canadiens-Français du Québec, 1915-1918*, Unpublished Master's Thesis, University of Ottawa, 1971, 32. For newspapers responding to Bourassa's book in December 1915, the letters to the Chief Censor, and debate surrounding the possibility of censoring Bourassa in 1915, see Cossette, 27-37.

Que devons-nous was undoubtedly a historically-minded work. To the ultramontane journalist, history had a divine character. Since God was the ultimate power, what had happened in the past must be the fulfilment of God's will. Sylvia Lacombe argues that Bourassa saw the study of history as paramount to a coherent understanding of present day affairs. Bourassa believed that by studying history, “les hommes peuvent dégager la mission providentielle qui singularise leur existence collective, et la justifie par le fait même.”¹²⁸ When Bourassa referred to past events, it was imbued with a divine purpose that gave the facts he presented far more importance than simply reminding his readers that they had once occurred. History was how God's plan for humanity unfolded. Thus those who ignored history ignored Divine Providence itself. As a result, Bourassa often offered historical knowledge without context since that something had occurred proof of its import. Two hundred pages of his book consisted of reprinted excerpts from his sources with select phrases bolded for the reader's attention. His actual analysis draws quotes from these documents but does not situate them within history. The journalist focused entirely on explaining the present, not the past.

From Bourassa's perspective, the events of the present were more important than the past. Only humanity could fulfil God's purpose in the future. God had willed historical events, but contemporary ones still allowed for the possibility of conforming to God's desires. This religious urgency lingers throughout his work, helping to explain the tenaciousness of his appeals and his incomplete historical presentation. Not until 1918 would one of his critics, Louis Georges Desjardins, respond to Bourassa's treatment of history in *Que devons-nous*. Desjardins criticized Bourassa the historian, writing that no historian would read the sources he provided and come to the same conclusions. Britain's military did not form with the purpose of

¹²⁸ Sylvie Lacombe, *La Rencontre de deux peuples élus: Comparaison des ambitions nationale et impériale au Canada entre 1896 et 1920*, (Québec: Université de Laval Press, 2002) 63.

world domination, nor had imperialism coalesced around the aim to suppress the Empire's colonies.¹²⁹ Yet Bourassa's goal was not the same as a historian. He was an ultramontane Catholic and a journalist, not an academic.

On New Year's Eve 1915, Bourassa's attitude was pessimistic but hopeful. The war was almost a year and a half old with no end in sight. He reflected that "le soleil de 1915 s'est levé dans un nuage de feu. Il se couche dans une mer de sang."¹³⁰ Bourassa affirmed that only one voice in the world continued to rise above all others: Pope Benedict XV. In his mind, few had been anywhere near as devoted to the cause of peace as the Vicar of Christ in Rome. The folly of the war was wholly apparent to the French Canadian. Millions of dead and wounded from the conflict convinced Bourassa that any victory would not be worth the cost. Those who perceived the conflict the same way were rare. Few had pierced "le voile de mensonges" that stymied the free expression and exchange of ideas.¹³¹

Bourassa examined some of those who advocated for peace in light of the war's terrible consequences. He reproduced the Christmas message of the British socialist newspaper, the *Labour Leader*, noting that it was the most similar to the message of Pope Benedict XV. It demanded that the people of Europe unite against the suffering of all common people. So too did the 9-point "minimum program" of the Hague's Peace Conference of Neutral Nations from April 1915 reflect the same position of the Sovereign Pontiff, or even took directly from the program of Britain's Union of Democratic Control.¹³² He made note of their demands for annexed people to have the right to freely exercise their own language, one he hoped to see

¹²⁹ Louis Georges Desjardins, *England, Canada and the Great War*, (Quebec: Chronicle Print, 1918) 140-142.

Desjardins's work examines and rejects much of Bourassa's writings during the war.

¹³⁰ Henri Bourassa, "Le Pape et la Guerre," *Le Devoir*, 31 December, 1915, 1.

¹³¹ Henri Bourassa, "Le Pape et la Guerre," *Le Devoir*, 31 December, 1915, 1.

¹³² Henri Bourassa, "Le Pape et la Guerre," *Le Devoir*, 31 December, 1915, 1.

given to the French-speaking “free subjects” of the Empire in Ontario as well as to Alsatians, Flemings, Walloons, Poles and Ukrainians. Like the words of the *Labour Leader*, they came from an unlikely grouping of Protestants or nonreligious nations (save Catholic Spain) that agreed with the position of the Vatican. Regardless of their source, Bourassa heralded them as the most reasonable opinions on a war.

He welcomed them after what had been a bloody year. While Europe had yet to witness the slaughter of the Somme or Verdun, the first major Canadian action at Ypres in Belgium that April. German use of poison gas had shocked Allied soldiers and homefront alike.¹³³ A committee headed by Viscount James Bryce released its report on “alleged German outrages” in May, publicizing German atrocities in Belgium on the frontlines a few short weeks after their U-boats sunk the *RMS Lusitania*.¹³⁴ Letters from the front were published in newspapers across Canada detailing supposed German crimes against POWs and civilians, as were stories on the execution of British nurse Edith Cavell for supposedly spying on German authorities and aiding Allied soldiers.¹³⁵ More Canadians were committed than ever to dismantling the “evil” German empire.

The path that God had laid out for the world seemed hazardous, but Bourassa believed it was worth the cost if the voices that desired peace could overcome those that desired war. He did not see many of them in Canada. A few weeks before Bourassa's New Year message, the opposition Liberal Party affirmed that as long as the war continued, the Liberal Party would “give loyal support to all necessary war measures,” though “whilst exercising a vigilant

¹³³ Despite popular claims, gas hells had first been used as early as October 1914, see Tim Cook, *No Place to Run: The Canadian Corps and Gas Warfare in the First World War*, (Vancouver: UBC Press, 1999) 17.

¹³⁴ Viscount James Bryce, *Report of the Committee on Alleged German Outrages appointed by His Britannic Majesty's government*, (New York: Macmillan and Company, New York, 1915).

¹³⁵ Castell Hopkins, *Canadian Annual Review 1915*, 61-64. Hopkins includes some mention of German crimes on the Russian front as well, 63-64.

supervision of the conduct of the Government in military and civil matters.”¹³⁶ Bourassa could not accept such moderation and compromise with the imperialist war. To him, the war “[a marqué] l'effondrement du système politique élevé par la fausse sagesse des hommes, par la diplomatie orgueilleuse, par la soif des conquêtes et le culte païen de l'or et de la force brutale.”¹³⁷ The only feasible solution was the destruction of those systems, and perhaps re-establishing the moral authority of the Pope in world affairs. The Pope was far better than the other forces shaping the world in December 1915, which he listed as German scientific militarism, English mercantile imperialism, the debilitating democracy of the French Revolution, savage mysticism, or the perfidy of panslavism.¹³⁸

So as Bourassa reflected on the past year he lauded the rational voices among the cacophony of the “apôtres de la haine” and the “agents complaisants de l'impérialisme.”¹³⁹ He hoped that the Pope's moral authority would continue to draw together those striving for peace. He found that he could no longer abide by the war supporters' incessant demands and he found it more and more difficult to support the war in any form. In the coming year, the war intensified for Canadians once more as the Battles of the Somme raged across the Western Front. The war's savagery seemingly surpassed that of 1915 and in turn, Canadians began to wonder what price would be worth the cost of winning the war. Their answer would not satisfy the nationaliste.

¹³⁶ Castell Hopkins, *Canadian Annual Review 1915*, 278.

¹³⁷ Henri Bourassa, “Le Pape et la Guerre,” *Le Devoir*, 31 December, 1915, 1.

¹³⁸ Henri Bourassa, “Le Pape et la Guerre,” *Le Devoir*, 31 December, 1915, 1.

¹³⁹ Henri Bourassa, “Le Pape et la Guerre,” *Le Devoir*, 31 December, 1915, 1.

Chapter 4: The Soul of Canada (January – September 1916)

It was a long and brutal summer for Canadian soldiers on the frontlines in 1916. The Somme Offensive begun on 1 July, as hundreds of thousands of British soldiers surged across no man's land, yet most failed to meet their objectives. A generation of Newfoundlanders had one of the worst experiences when their regiment was devastated at Beaumont-Hamel on the opening day. In the midst of the Somme offensive, Henri Bourassa was briefly in the international spotlight for his truculent views on the war. Sharing the limelight with him was his cousin, an army officer serving on the frontlines, Talbot Mercer Papineau.¹

Papineau had written privately to his cousin demanding that if Bourassa “was truly a nationalist” he would “recognise this moment as [Canada's] moment of travail and tribulation” and urge support for the war. He repeated many of the same arguments Bourassa had already encountered, and like the imperialists, Papineau spoke of a Canada that thrived within the Empire, not in spite of it. He expressed a Canadian nationalism born on the battlefield. “If Canada has become a nation respected and self-respecting,” Papineau warned, “she owes it to her citizens who have fought and died in this distant land and not to those self-styled Nationalists who have remained at home.” In his reply, Bourassa reminded his cousin that the federal government, the press, and politicians of both parties had “applied themselves systematically to obliterate the free character of Canada's intervention.” Bourassa dismissed Papineau as “most part American” who possessed only “the most *denationalised* instincts of his French origin.” Papineau was removed from the reality of true Canadian nationalism, Bourassa reasoned, so he had little insight to offer on his country's place in the conflict. The

¹ For more on Papineau, see Geoff Keelan, *Talbot Mercer Papineau: Memory, Myth and the Search for Meaning*, Unpublished Master's Research Project, University of Waterloo, 2010.

nationaliste journalist ignored Papineau as his appeal offered little to Bourassa, only a new version of the imperialist plea to a non-existent British connection long ago rejected.² Though both spoke of Canadian nationalism, they had entirely different understandings of it.

The months preceding Papineau's plaintive letter had not oriented Bourassa towards accepting his cousin's views. Bourassa announced in January 1916 that he had officially returned to his nationaliste roots, despite the movement's growing fracture over the war. He grew further disillusioned with Canada's political leaders, and with Wilfrid Laurier in particular, as no one in Ottawa seemed willing to admit that Canadian participation demanded too much of the nation and its people. The publication of another book, *Hier, Aujourd'hui, Demain*, expanded Bourassa's views on the problems of the war and grouped Quebec bishops alongside imperialists in leading Canadians astray. Continuing tensions over the issue of Canadian bilingualism and Ontario's Regulation 17 further antagonized French Canadians. So when Papineau's letter arrived, filled with assumptions and misconceptions about the nationaliste and completely ignorant of what Bourassa had experienced, the journalist was well prepared for a rebuttal.

* * *

A month after Bourassa asked in his provocative book what Canada owed England, he formally renounced any support for the war. At the sixth anniversary of *Le Devoir's* founding on 12 January 1916, before an audience of devoted nationalists, Bourassa delivered an impassioned speech clarifying his position on the war.³ Once, he told them, he had tried to

² An English version of Bourassa's letter is cited here, see Library and Archives Canada, "Captain Papineau's Letter to M. Henri Bourassa (editor of *Le Devoir*)," Library and Archives Canada, Talbot Mercer Papineau Fonds, vol. 4. He published it in French, see Henri Bourassa, "Reponse de M. Bourassa à la letter du Capitaine Talbot Papineau," *Le Devoir*, 5 August, 1916, 1.

³ Henri Bourassa, *Le Devoir et la guerre, le conflit des races. Discours prononcé au banquet des amis du DEVOIR, le 12 janvier 1916*, (Montreal, 1916). Bourassa delivered the speech without notes, and the booklet cited is a reproduction based on Bourassa's recollection of its content.

achieve reconciliation and reach a compromise by offering conditional support for the war. Rather than discuss the concerns of nationalists, however, the war supporters had denounced them. They had ignored Canada's legal and constitutional tradition and used the war as an opportunity to impose their vision of Canada upon the country. Now, Bourassa promised his followers "un aveu complet et sincère," and a repudiation of the position he had outlined in his "si malmené" article of 8 September 1914.⁴ It was now time to "retrancher dans les solides positions du nationalisme intégral. ... C'est sur ce terrain solide que nous avons livré nos premiers combats contre l'impérialisme britannique. C'est sur le même terrain que nous résistons à l'affolement du jour."⁵ The nationaliste leader was no longer concerned with convincing Canadians of the sincerity of his position. The threat to Canada was not Germany, as his critics claimed, but the militaristic imperialism that he saw guiding Canada's war rhetoric.

The complete rejection of imperialism and foreign conflicts marked Bourassa's return to his traditional nationaliste perspective, but by early 1916, the movement had splintered considerably. Minister of Militia Sam Hughes directly asked Armand Lavergne and Olivar Asselin to enlist -- Lavergne had publicly refused, but Asselin had accepted it. In a letter to the *Montreal Gazette*, Lavergne explained that he expected compulsory service within six months and refused to ask his people to fight for England in a war that he did not support.⁶ Lavergne stood firmly on side with Bourassa. Asselin on the other hand had grown distant from his *de facto* leader's position. Asselin had spent the last two years heavily criticizing the Church's

⁴ Henri Bourassa, *Le Devoir et la guerre, le conflit des races*, 16, 18.

⁵ Henri Bourassa, *Le Devoir et la guerre, le conflit des races*, 22, 40.

⁶ J. Castell Hopkins, *Canadian Annual Review War Series 1916*, (Toronto: The Canadian Annual Review Limited, 1918) 345-346.

support for the war, which Bourassa could not support.⁷ Before joining the army with the rank of Major and placed in charge of the 163rd Battalion, Asselin wrote to Lavergne explaining his loyalty to France and a sense of adventure had led him to accept Hughes' offer. Bourassa felt betrayed: after Asselin joined the army in December 1915, Asselin's name was never to be mentioned in the offices of *Le Devoir* while its editor was present.⁸

Bourassa also faced criticism from within the nationaliste movement itself. Jules Fournier had disagreed with Bourassa's choice to support the war in 1914, and after Bourassa formally rejected it in January 1916, Fournier prepared a response to the nationaliste leader in the summer of 1916 that was unpublished during his lifetime. His wife eventually published the unfinished article, "The Bankruptcy of Nationalism," in 1922 as part of a collection of Fournier's writings, four years after he had died from influenza.⁹ It was a harsh and critical dissection of Bourassa's failure as a nationaliste. Fournier wrote that Bourassa's "impérieux besoin d'étaler son érudition[,] ... son inaptitude foncière à l'action [et] son inexpérience et son dédain des hommes" explained his failure to achieve his goals after twenty years.¹⁰ "Deux choses," Fournier concluded, "auront toujours manqué au chef nationaliste dans son action politique: un peu d'indulgence humaine et d'humaine sympathie. Il lui aura manqué de connaître les hommes, et de les aimer."¹¹

⁷ René Durocher, "Henri Bourassa, les évêques et la guerre de 1914-1918," *Canadian Historical Association Historical Papers* 6 (1971) 260. See for example, Olivar Asselin, *'L'Action Catholique' les évêques et la guerre*, (Ottawa: 1915).

⁸ Hélène Pelletier-Baillargeon, *Olivar Asselin et son temps: le militant*, (Québec: Éditions Fides, 1996) 681-690. Jules Fournier's newspaper, *L'Action*, wrote that Asselin's decision was justified. In Pelletier-Baillargeon's words, the paper justified Asselin's choice by "la nécessité morale personnelle, pour un Canadien français tel que lui, de se porter au secours de la France," see 289.

⁹ Jules Fournier and Therese Fournier, *Mon encrier*, (Montréal: Fides, 1922). For biographical details on Fournier, see Laurent Mailhot, "FOURNIER, JULES," in *Dictionary of Canadian Biography*, vol. 14, University of Toronto/Université Laval, 2003–, accessed October 9, 2014, http://www.biographi.ca/en/bio/fournier_jules_14E.html.

¹⁰ Jules Fournier, *Mon encrier*, 397-399.

¹¹ Jules Fournier, *Mon encrier*, 400-401.

Fournier did not accept that Bourassa could support the war while staying true to his nationalist principles. Instead, Fournier argued that in the first sixteen months of the war Bourassa had nominally accepted the principle of Canadian participation, before changing his mind suddenly without prior notice in January 1916. Fournier examined Bourassa's articles from 1914 in detail, and condemned the "culture intensive du *seulement*" that he found within them.¹² That is, Bourassa always qualified his reasons for supporting the war by other statements. While he continually declared himself in support of Canadian participation, he also continually found reasons that it was unjust or illogical. "Autrement dit," Fournier wrote, "l'intervention, à l'entendre, lui paraissait bien l'indiscutable « devoir de l'heure », – seulement il ne pouvait s'empêcher de reconnaître, par contre, que cette entreprise au fond n'avait pas le sens commun, et que nous avons toutes les raisons du monde de nous en abstenir."¹³ Fournier condemned Bourassa's inconsistency, offering tacit approval of the war while detailing its problems, and Fournier believed, as the title of his article suggests, that Bourassa had failed the nationaliste movement.

Bourassa's return to "les solides positions du nationalisme intégral" of 12 January was equally problematic. Fournier saw Bourassa's speech as intellectually dishonest given the reality of his position in 1914. According to him, Bourassa depicted his change in position as occurring after the publication of his 8 September article, so sometime in October 1914, despite never having publicly repudiated the war until January 1916. It also made it seem as if Bourassa had never opposed intervention, but only its imperialist character, and that there were two distinct periods where Bourassa was for the war, and then against it.¹⁴ None of this was

¹² Jules Fournier, *Mon encrier*, 447.

¹³ Jules Fournier, *Mon encrier*, 460.

¹⁴ Jules Fournier, *Mon encrier*, 469-472.

true, Fournier argued. Instead, Bourassa had vacillated between being for and against the war, never clearly explaining the contradictions of his position. What Bourassa's inability to communicate clearly meant to Fournier is unknown -- the unfinished article ends there.

A few days after *Le Devoir's* anniversary, Bourassa's new spirit of opposition emerged in earnest as he reflected on the first British conscription legislation in living memory. Amidst fierce Cabinet debate, the "Bachelor Bill" legislated compulsory service for unmarried men. British Prime Minister Asquith met resistance over the extent and effectiveness of the bill and the final compromised product did not resolve the dispute between advocates and adversaries of conscription. Sir John Simon, the only Cabinet Minister to resign over conscription, prophetically asked in parliament on 5 January, "Does anyone really suppose that once the principle of compulsion has been conceded that you are going to stop here?"¹⁵ Both Simon and the pro-conscriptionists believed its passing was a partial measure since it included many exemptions, such as for Ireland, married men, and employment of national importance.¹⁶ Britain would indeed require more men and revisit the acrimonious battle over British conscription.

In response, Bourassa compared the British debate over conscription to Prime Minister Robert Borden's Throne Speech of 13 January. Borden addressed the "unabated vigour and varying fortunes" of the war and, what Bourassa found most damning, heralded the "spirit of splendid loyalty and unfaltering devotion, India and the Overseas Dominions have vied with each other in co-operating with the Mother Country."¹⁷ The "pantomime des marionettes

¹⁵ As quoted in R.J.Q. Adams and P. Poirier, *The Conscription Controversy in Great Britain 1900-1918*, (Columbus, OH: *HIA Book Series*, 1987) 143. D.J. Sutton concludes that Simon's "opposition to conscription was on the narrow but important principle of a man's right to decide for himself whether or not he fought for his country," see D. J. Dutton, "Simon, John Allsebrook, first Viscount Simon (1873-1954)," *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography Online*.

¹⁶ R.J.Q. Adams and P. Poirier, *The Conscription Controversy in Great Britain 1900-1918*, 140-141.

¹⁷ *House of Commons Debates*, January 13, 1916, 4.

politiques” of Canadian Parliament, Bourassa responded, had deceived Canadians about the disastrous consequences of the war for too long and Borden’s empty words only further highlighted their self-serving falsehoods.¹⁸ Canada gave much but received little in return for its service. He was tired of watching the poor political theatre play out in Ottawa compared to the vigorous debates and measured compromises occurring in the British Isles. Why, Bourassa asked, could Canada not follow Ireland’s example? In return for delaying the “Home Rule” Bill for Irish autonomy until after the war allowed the Irish nationalist politician John Redmond to ask that Irish volunteers only defend Ireland and free British soldiers to fight on the continent. His influence helped secure Ireland’s exemption from British conscription.¹⁹ Bourassa noted that Ireland’s autonomy had given them a valuable distance from the imperial war effort. If Ireland had such pressing concerns that it could reject the false principle of “imperial solidarity,” so too could Canada.²⁰ Bourassa disputed Borden’s claim that the Dominions and colonies were vying over who could contribute the most. Ireland stood apart in its contribution to the war, and so could Canada. Instead, Canada had sacrificed far more than other parts of the Empire, none of which had resulted in any sort of allowances like the kind Ireland had received.

Bourassa praised moderation in British policy where he saw none in Canada. Canada’s contribution, justified as necessary to secure a definitive victory, continued to grow in scale. On 1 January 1916, Prime Minister Borden had unexpectedly announced that the Canadian

¹⁸ Henri Bourassa, “Solidarité Impériale,” *Le Devoir*, 15 January, 1916, 1.

¹⁹ Michael Laffan, “Redmond, John Edward,” *Dictionary of Irish Biography Online*. The debate over conscription in England and its impact on Ireland echoed some of the same themes as it would in Canada, that of an ethnic minority searching for exemptions with a violent result, but Canadian nationalists did not have the political dynamism of Redmond’s Irish nationalist rump in the House of Commons. See W. E. Vaughan, ed., *A New History of Ireland, Volume VI: Ireland Under the Union, II: 1870-1921*, (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2010) 208-209, 234-238.

²⁰ Henri Bourassa, “Solidarité Impériale,” *Le Devoir*, 15 January, 1916, 1.

forces were to double in size from 250,000 to 500,000 men.²¹ Meanwhile, the British offered reasoned policies such as the exemption of “employees of national importance” from British conscription, like munition factory workers. According to Bourassa, the British refusal to conscript from the munitions industry was a clear-headed policy meant to assure the continued production of armaments for Britain and its allies. “Il n’est guère croyable,” Bourassa remarked, “que le gouvernement britannique enverra au feu plus de soldats qu’il n’en peut convenablement armer – sauf les coloniaux, évidemment, ces bonnes bêtes.”²² In the same editorial, he reminded his readers of Britain’s reluctance to commit to a full blockade of Germany as further proof of his argument. The British acted only to preserve present and future economic prosperity.²³ Destroying the German economy would add little value to British interests after the war.

The French Canadian’s disdain for Parliament in Ottawa and its members grew as Bourassa urged Canadians to stop praising the heroic determination of the British people to sacrifice for Canadian liberty. Even if there was glory in serving as cannon fodder for the Empire, Bourassa saw none in “jouer les Orgons et les Dandins de la comédie impériale.”²⁴ Bourassa was certain that before the war’s end Canada would know “la dure et stérile amertume” from its leaderless government.²⁵ The “tragic comedy of Ottawa” played out to the

²¹ The reasons behind Borden’s sudden announcement are unclear. It caught his Cabinet off-guard and Borden’s biographer, Robert Craig Brown, does not offer any detailed explanation for it. See, Robert Craig Brown, *Robert Laird Borden: A Biography, Volume II: 1914-1937*, (Toronto: MacMillan, 1980) 60-61 for a short reference to it. Borden’s diary, Brown’s source for much of his work, offers similarly little detail. His entry is brief and uninteresting: “White Hughes and Reid came and I propounded to them proposal that force should be increased on 1st January to 500,000. They agreed.” *Borden Papers*, Diary, 30 December, 1916. For the text of his announcement, see Castell Hopkins, *Canadian Annual Review 1915*, 185-186.

²² Henri Bourassa, “La Conscription en Angleterre – Le rôle de la flotte,” *Le Devoir*, 26 January, 1916, 1.

²³ Henri Bourassa, “La Conscription en Angleterre – Le rôle de la flotte,” *Le Devoir*, 26 January, 1916, 1.

²⁴ Henri Bourassa, “La Conscription en Angleterre – Le rôle de la flotte,” *Le Devoir*, 26 January, 1916, 1. Dandin and Orgon are references to the work of French playwright Molière. *George Dandin ou le Mari confondu* follows the tribulations of its insipid, weak-willed and gullible protagonist, while Orgon is the foolish adulating character of *Tartuffe* who is blind to imperfections. In Bourassa’s opinion, it was an apt comparison.

²⁵ Henri Bourassa, “La Tragi-Comédie d’Ottawa,” *Le Devoir*, 19 January, 1916, 1.

detriment of the nationalistes where Laurier offered a long refutation of their position.

Parliament was in the midst of debating an extension of the Borden government's term past the five-year limit coming up in 1916. For Bourassa, the discussion surrounding its justification was more damning than the motion itself. Laurier addressed the motion with an avowal of the Liberal Opposition's responsibility to "criticise fairly under all circumstances,"²⁶ a curious echo of Bourassa's own promise from September 1914, before blaming Bourassa's nationalistes for any cracks in national unity.

To Bourassa, Laurier's renewed attack on his position against the war amounted to the "rancune sénile de l'idole déchuée."²⁷ The truth, Bourassa rejoined, was that the he and his nationalistes had offered to support the war on the "seul terrain où l'union des coeurs et des esprits pouvait s'opérer: celui d'une intervention raisonnable et efficace, proportionnée aux ressources du pays."²⁸ Though other Members of Parliament spoke at length along similar lines, Bourassa reserved special vitriol for Laurier. He listed many times when the Liberal leader had opposed militarism and imperial involvement as Prime Minister. If French Canadians were not eager to spill their blood for Britain, Bourassa concluded dryly, then Laurier could say: "Voilà la génération que j'ai élevée et instruite!"²⁹ The hypocrisy of the Liberal leader, who once ardently defended Canadian autonomy at least in part if not in full, riled his former follower. Convinced that compromise and conciliation with imperialists was futile, Bourassa attacked those who still pursued it with new vigour.

The final decision to prolong the Parliament to avoid a wartime election in 1916 passed on 8 February, with both Borden and Laurier offering eloquent approval of the extension. "It is

²⁶ Wilfrid Laurier, *House of Commons Debates*, 12th Parliament, 6th Session, vol. 1, 17 January, 1916, 22.

²⁷ Henri Bourassa, "La Tragi-Comédie d'Ottawa," *Le Devoir*, 19 January, 1916, 1.

²⁸ Henri Bourassa, "La Tragi-Comédie d'Ottawa," *Le Devoir*, 19 January, 1916, 1.

²⁹ Henri Bourassa, "La Tragi-Comédie d'Ottawa," *Le Devoir*, 19 January, 1916, 1.

sought of us,” Laurier declared, “not to do away with the control of the Canadian people over this Parliament, but simply to suspend for a short twelve months the verdict of the Canadian people upon Administration, upon its policy, and upon the general questions arising out of the war.”³⁰ Bourassa denounced the decision of Canada’s political leadership. Laurier’s justification that it was only a suspension not a modification of the constitution did not convince Bourassa. Much like Laurier’s previous “[capitulations] aux exigences de l’impérialisme” during the Boer War and Naval Crisis, the latest surrender once more ignored “les doctrines libérales, le respect des lois et des libertés populaires.”³¹ Here was the crux of Bourassa’s condemnation of his former leader. In his mind Laurier’s support for the imperialist war was not so much a rejection of Bourassa’s nationaliste views as it was a rejection of liberalism. No true liberal, Bourassa believed, would compromise the country’s or the individual’s legal and constitutional rights for the sake of war.

Laurier’s ability to compromise had always been a source of his political strength – and his weakness. Balancing the concerns of English and French Canadians while navigating the crises of the Boer War, the Alaskan Boundary dispute, and French language school issues had allowed him to stay Prime Minister for fifteen years. Yet it had been his downfall in 1911, when Bourassa accused him of being too British, while his Conservative opponents claimed he was not being British enough.³² His opponents did not understand historian Blair Neatby’s point that, for Laurier, “compromise was a means to an end, not a principle.”³³ He sought to achieve Canadian autonomy from Britain in steps, fearing the consequences from the sudden

³⁰ Wilfrid Laurier, *House of Commons Debates*, 12th Parliament, 6th Session, vol. 1, 8 February, 1916, 635. For Borden and Laurier’s speeches, see 622-636.

³¹ Henri Bourassa, “La Prolongation du Parlement: Capitulation de M. Laurier,” *Le Devoir*, 10 February, 1916, 1.

³² Quoted from a letter to Lotus Botha, 1 December, 1916, in O.D. Skelton, *Life and Letters of Sir Wilfrid Laurier*, (London: Oxford University Press, 1922) 466.

³³ H. Blair Neatby, *Laurier and a Liberal Quebec*, (Toronto: McClelland and Stewart, 1961) 212.

break that Bourassa's nationalistes advocated. Laurier's moderation led him to support the war in August 1914. By 1916, the Liberal leader still believed that the wartime conditions required flexible liberal principles, especially if the Liberals wanted to win a wartime election while maintaining their control over the province of Quebec.³⁴ At the same time, he grew wary of Bourassa's increasingly belligerent provocations. Bourassa rejected Laurier's compromise as tantamount to betrayal and Laurier saw in his former student a dangerous narrow-mindedness that focused on the nationalist's personal goals above all else. "Bourassa is playing with fire," Laurier warned Liberal Senator Raoul Dandurand in January 1915, and "if he thinks that he will be able to extinguish it he may have a rude awakening."³⁵ Liberal principles meant little if French and English animosity tore the Dominion asunder. Laurier's liberalism, notwithstanding Bourassa's criticism, continued to lead his party down a middle path between the extremes of nationalist and imperialist.

As a critic, Bourassa had little consideration for Laurier's concerns as leader of a national party. To Bourassa, extending the parliamentary term was proof that the pressures of wartime were drastically transforming Canadian governance for the worse. "Depuis cinq ans, nous avons plus rétrogradé dans la voie de l'indépendance nationale que nous n'avions avancé en un siècle. La nouvelle démarche du parlement est un pas de plus dans cette marche en arrière," Bourassa concluded.³⁶ For a castor-rouge like Bourassa, any depreciation of law and rights in order to serve the war effort was a grievous mistake. How much further would the Parliament go to win the war? "Le Canada devra se nationaliser de nouveau, et réchapper sa

³⁴ This point is made by J.W. Dafoe, *Laurier: A Study in Canadian Politics*, (Toronto: Thomas Allen, 1922) 147-163; and most recently by Réal Bélanger, *Wilfrid Laurier: quand la politique devient passion*, (Quebec: Presses de l'Université Laval, 2007) 384.

³⁵ O.D. Skelton, *Life and Letters of Sir Wilfrid Laurier*, 467.

³⁶ Henri Bourassa, "La Prolongation du Parlement: Capitulation de M. Laurier," *Le Devoir*, February 10, 1916, 1.

vie,” Bourassa warned in January 1916, “ou s’impérialiser à demeure, et se suicider.”³⁷ The more the nation bound itself to an imperial future, to imperial conflict, and to the needs of Empire over the needs of Canada, the weaker that nation would become. Bourassa believed that the laws that safeguarded society could not be casually amended for the sake of convenience. During wartime, when the threat of militarism was even greater, these laws were vital protection for society.

Bourassa saw little evidence that the nation’s protectors, its parliamentarians, shared his fears. Every policy of the sitting government (and usually the Opposition as well), he asserted, was seemingly proof of their failure to consider the interests of Canadians. Bourassa highlighted Minister of Finance Sir Thomas White’s budget on 15 February 1916.³⁸ White did not seem to weigh the economic impact of new taxation, increasing debt and short-sighted economic planning. The *Taxations of Profits Bill* imposed new taxes on Canadian profits, retroactive to the beginning of the war. To White, the government was merely taxing those businesses that had profited primarily from the war itself.³⁹ Bourassa saw it as little more than a state-sanctioned confiscation of funds. Mirroring his comments about the 1915 budget, he wrote that “après avoir ébranlé l’équilibre économique de l’État,” the government “jette la perturbation dans l’économie privée du pays. Nous aurons pourtant besoin de toutes nos forces de récupération pour réparer les désastres accumulés par nos folies.”⁴⁰ Ottawa’s new laws might be necessary for the war effort, but they also had far-reaching effects beyond the limits of the war. To Bourassa, the nation’s leaders ought to consider their consequences on

³⁷ Henri Bourassa, “La Tragi-Comédie d’Ottawa,” *Le Devoir*, 19 January, 1916, 1.

³⁸ See *House of Commons Debates*, 12th Parliament, 6th Session, vol. 1, 15 February, 1916, 807-817.

³⁹ Castell Hopkins, *Canadian Annual Review 1916*, 354-359; for further discussion about taxation during the war, see Robert Craig Brown and Ramsay Cook, *Canada 1896-1921: A Nation Transformed*, (Toronto: McClelland and Stewart, 1974) 231-234.

⁴⁰ Henri Bourassa, “Le Budget de Guerre: Les nouveaux impôts,” *Le Devoir*, 18 February, 1916, 1.

Canadians and gauge their value appropriately.

Both the war supporters and Bourassa were ensnared in the war's growing intensity, and each side repeated their arguments *ad nauseum* as the gravity of the war drove each side to extremes. When Australian Prime Minister William Hughes passed through Canada towards the "Mecca of the Empire," London, Bourassa mocked Hughes' empty speeches about the fight for freedom and liberty on European battlefields. Bourassa remarked that "cette banale ritournelle prend un goût d'amère ironie," given that French Canadians were deprived of their rights in Ontario.⁴¹ Bourassa chose a suitable turn of phrase. The ritournelle is a fast-paced dance from the 17th century set to repetitive musical phrases, as its introductory musical theme reappears throughout the piece. So too were speeches urging support for the war peppered with repetitive phrases and rhetoric -- though Bourassa himself was not innocent of playing his own ritournelle. In each editorial, he returned to the same themes of government mismanagement, unseeing devotion to the Imperial cause, and the long-term consequences of Canada's place in the conflict. Often he used the same descriptive phrases. There was little debate and neither cared about the absurd repetitiveness of their rallying cries.

Bourassa held a series of six public lectures from 2 March to 6 April for the "Friends of *Le Devoir*." The series was published as *Hier, Aujourd'hui, Demain*, a nominal sequel to the book he had published the four months earlier. He published the lectures first as *Le Devoir* editorials, but the most complete account of Bourassa's writing was within the book itself. In six sections, Bourassa outlined the new developments in his thoughts on the war. He reviewed his history of Canada's colonial autonomy, this time highlighting the role of French Canadians and their clergy throughout the process. Then he summarized the alleged "Imperialist

⁴¹ Henri Bourassa, "M. Hughes, Premier-Ministre d'Australie," *Le Devoir*, 23 February, 1916, 1.

Revolution” of England and its transatlantic transfer to Canadian shores. He examined the justifications for Canadian intervention in the European conflict, particularly the reasons raised by the war’s supporters and Quebec Bishops. He then details the disastrous consequences of the war before introducing the “solutions of tomorrow.” He concluded with a section on Canadian foreign policy and asked if “le Canada travaillera-t-il pour la paix ou pour la guerre?” Much of the content had appeared in various forms in the pages of *Le Devoir* over the preceding year and a half, but he expanded some arguments and made them more forcefully.

In *Hier, Aujourd’hui, Demain* Bourassa further elaborated on his argument that the war was a revolutionary moment for Canada. He added to his history of Canadian autonomy a damning indictment against the Quebec Catholic hierarchy. After assessing historical examples of Canadian Bishops protecting Canadian autonomy from the control of the British government, such as during the Revolutionary War, the War of 1812, and throughout the 19th century, Bourassa contrasted the bishops of yesterday with those of 1916. There was no “tradition épiscopale,” he wrote, that demanded support for the war or surrendering the right of Canada to be at peace when Britain was at war. Bourassa repeated his conclusion that “la participation du Canada à la guerre actuelle, *comme colonie britannique*, constitue donc une révolution, une révolution profonde, radicale, dans la charte nationale du Canada ... Tous ceux qui ont encouragé cette participation ... ont fait oeuvre de révolutionnaires.”⁴²

The accusation is remarkable since Bourassa’s encompassing view of the war’s impact now included the Quebec Bishops alongside Borden’s government as supporting imperialism and the war. Once Britain may have formed a liberal imperial association for its North

⁴² Henri Bourassa, *Hier, aujourd’hui, demain*, (Montreal: 1916) 39-40. Durocher also reviews these points and explains the reaction of Quebec Bishops and priests to his writing, see Durocher, “Henri Bourassa, les évêques et la guerre,” 261-263.

American Dominion, but wartime militarism had turned British and Canadian imperialists away from that possibility while drawing other elements in society to their cause. Any collusion with imperialists was a dangerous precedent. Bourassa reminded his readers that “la Grande-Bretagne veut maintenir sa suprématie maritime, garder pour elle toute seule les immense contrées qu’elle a conquises depuis un demi-siècle, et dite au monde entier: ‘*What we have, we hold.*’”⁴³ The Empire he portrayed in his book did not exist for its subjects’ sake, but for the interests of Great Britain and its grip on the world. Bourassa could not accept the cooperation of Quebec Bishops in expanding that domination.

The “imperialist revolution” was the culmination of more than a century of “good” and “bad” events. Bourassa readily acknowledged the positive benefit of British liberalism and its protection of individual freedom but contrasted it against a history of growing colonial domination that continued even after the nominal independence of Canada in 1867. To him, French Canadian nationalistes were defending “ces droits, ces traditions, ces libertés, ces devoirs” of British liberalism and “c’est à l’école de l’Angleterre que nous avons appris à les respecter, à les apprécier, à les aimer: elle ne peut trouver mauvais ni déloyal que nous les défendions jalousement.”⁴⁴ In time, Bourassa believed that the wedding of the imperialist vision of Canada to an increasingly militaristic Canadian society would prove disastrous. The supposed subservience of all aspects of Canada’s economic, political and social structures to the needs of the military was both “antisocial et antinational ... le résultat que poursuivent les révolutionnaires impérialistes.” He warned that “il est rare que les révolutions ne soient pas dirigées également contre l’ordre social et le patriotisme national.”⁴⁵ The drastic changes

⁴³ Henri Bourassa, *Hier, aujourd’hui, demain*, (Montreal: 1916) 55.

⁴⁴ Henri Bourassa, *Hier, aujourd’hui, demain*, (Montreal: 1916) 65.

⁴⁵ Henri Bourassa, *Hier, aujourd’hui, demain*, (Montreal: 1916) 107.

Bourassa observed taking place were proof enough of the transformation of Canadian society by the conflict in ways that seemed increasingly permanent and far reaching. Most of the topics he had covered in his editorials, such as the introduction of new taxation, the threat of conscription, and the efforts to quell public dissent, all suggested a turn towards militarism. The militaristic project would not disappear after the war finished, Bourassa predicted, as it deformed social structures and national identity. Here was the basis of an important aspect of Bourassa's war resistance. Canada at war seemingly had no place for the British liberal tenets (or for that matter, his Catholic values) that guided his views. His greatest fear was that this militaristic and imperialist "revolution" would lead to a lasting transformation of Canadian society, one that had no space for the French Canadian "race" to survive.

There were three potential outcomes to the "problem" of rampant militaristic imperialism. "Les solutions de demain" were independence, imperial association, or annexation.⁴⁶ Canadian independence from the British Crown was Bourassa's preferred solution – albeit with dangers. He feared the threat of war without British protection, but Canadian involvement in imperial wars was just as dangerous – as the current conflict demonstrated.⁴⁷ Independence might, he mused, also further antagonize Canada's internal conflict, such as the rivalry between French and English Canadians, between immigrants and Canadians, and between eastern and western Canada. Yet, imperialism surely did not prevent these internal fractures. If anything, its "politique d'anglicisation" further deepened the separation between Canadians. The best solution to the "problem" of imperialism was independence. While some believed that "c'est quelque chose de faire partie d'un grand empire," Bourassa told his readers that "il y a, pour soi et pour les autres, pour la paix, la

⁴⁶ Henri Bourassa, *Hier, aujourd'hui, demain*, (Montreal: 1916) 119.

⁴⁷ Henri Bourassa, *Hier, aujourd'hui, demain*, (Montreal: 1916) 124-126.

liberté, le progrès et le bon équilibre du monde, ‘quelque chose’ de mieux que de ‘faire partie d’un grand empire’: c’est d’être une nation, même modeste.”⁴⁸ Bourassa thought independence was an unlikely outcome since only a minority of Canadians supported the idea and most of those were probably French Canadians.

Instead, Bourassa wrote that it was far more likely Canada would form some sort of imperial association, “la plus logique dans l’ordre des faits anormaux créés par la révolution impérialiste.”⁴⁹ At least imperial representation would help correct the excesses of the militant imperialism that currently reigned in Britain, Canada, and its other colonies. Since his opposition to the Boer War in 1899, Bourassa had long maintained that participation in imperial conflicts deserved Canadian representation in imperial governance, so his cautious endorsement in 1916 was understandable.⁵⁰ Its most appealing aspect was the possibility of eventually dissolving the Empire. Imperial association would be an invaluable “école de réforme coloniale” that exposed the “colonial” Canadians to the larger issues of modern global politics. Perhaps after ten, fifteen or twenty years, the governments and people of the colonies would be “préparés à jouer leur rôle de nations avec infiniment plus de sobriété, de sagesse et de dignité qu’ils ne le sont aujourd’hui.”⁵¹ Though it preserved a connection to Britain and its foreign conflicts, at least imperial association held the promise of further separation. It was a solution that Bourassa could accept, though not one he embraced.

The third option was the least desirable result of Canada’s national dilemma and not a real solution at all in Bourassa’s eyes. Annexation through a political union with the United

⁴⁸ Henri Bourassa, *Hier, aujourd’hui, demain*, (Montreal: 1916) 133.

⁴⁹ Henri Bourassa, *Hier, aujourd’hui, demain*, (Montreal: 1916) 134.

⁵⁰ Bourassa himself notes his letter to Wilfrid Laurier published in *La Patrie* on 20 October, 1899. See Henri Bourassa, *Hier, aujourd’hui, demain*, 138-139.

⁵¹ Henri Bourassa, *Hier, aujourd’hui, demain*, (Montreal: 1916) 142-143.

States was, according to Bourassa, the natural outcome of “des causes et des faits accumulés par nos extravagances, et surtout par la suprême folie de notre participation dévergondée à la guerre actuelle.”⁵² Those who championed the Empire and Canada’s limitless participation in the European conflict led Canada down a road of false hope and economic ruin. When Britain emerged from the war weaker and unstable, Bourassa feared that Canadians would “naturally” turn from an imperial identity to an American one. Increased American immigration and economic integration would begin when the war ended regardless of historic and cultural connections to Europe. The devastated European states would not have the economic power they once had. Bourassa believed American supremacy would mean the extinguishment of an English Canadian identity, which for the Canadian nationalist destroyed the possibility of a Canada that fused French and English together. It was only the French Canadians, Bourassa claimed, who would resist American influence with their strong linguistic and religious identity. Though the United States would treat French Canada far better than they currently were in the Canadian Dominion, Canada as a whole would be weaker.⁵³ While French Canadians would survive in a North American union, Canada would not.

In the final section of the booklet, Bourassa examined the future of Canadian foreign relations after the war. Regardless of which of his solutions occurred, he anticipated a shifting international landscape that required an independent Canadian foreign policy removed from its “puérile et désastreuse mentalité coloniale, anglaise ou française.”⁵⁴ He believed Canada would be more autonomous and choose its own allies. France and England would still naturally be Canada’s greatest supporters, but the country could also form relationships with a wide variety

⁵² Henri Bourassa, *Hier, aujourd’hui, demain*, (Montreal: 1916) 144.

⁵³ Henri Bourassa, *Hier, aujourd’hui, demain*, (Montreal: 1916) 144-150.

⁵⁴ Henri Bourassa, *Hier, aujourd’hui, demain*, (Montreal: 1916) 154.

of other European nations. The United States and Canada would defend North America together and prosper through economic and political agreements. A North American partnership rather than a union would be even better than an “imperial association,” Bourassa argued, since the United States would keep Canada out of wars and had no interest in any sort of imperial relationship with its neighbour.⁵⁵ To Bourassa in 1916, the Americans who still refused to enter the war were the ideal partners for post-war Canada.

The United States was committed to peace and it would be the greatest ally in reforming the international system. A new system of arbitration should be introduced, one which counteracted all the failures of the current system. Bourassa outlined the causes behind the outbreak of the war as well as those behind its frightening intensity. “L’effroyable banqueroute du vieux système des alliances, de l’équilibre des forces brutales, de la diplomatie secrète, et des armements à outrance” had all been justified to “assurer la paix du monde,” Bourassa wrote, but in fact had only caused the present war to erupt.⁵⁶ A new international system focused on disarmament, the neutrality of all maritime shipping, the publication of all international treaties, the suppression of secret treaties, and the nullification of any agreements made without the assent of a nation’s representatives.⁵⁷ Each suggestion addressed the causes of the Great War and echoed the demands of Britain’s Union of Democratic Control’s first pamphlet.

The book ended on this optimistic tone for the future, neatly presenting the underlying hope that continually pushed the journalist to confront the issues raised by the war. After the war, Bourassa hoped Canada would add its voice to the “concert des nations qui [vont décider]

⁵⁵ Henri Bourassa, *Hier, aujourd’hui, demain*, (Montreal: 1916) 157-168.

⁵⁶ Henri Bourassa, *Hier, aujourd’hui, demain*, (Montreal: 1916) 172.

⁵⁷ Henri Bourassa, *Hier, aujourd’hui, demain*, (Montreal: 1916) 172-176.

du sort de l'humanité au de cette guerre."⁵⁸ If Canada supported a post-war system, and reaffirmed its right to neutrality in any war that did not menace its territory, then perhaps they could repair the damage that they had caused by listening to the "apôtres de haine" that had led them into the conflict. The Canada he envisioned would finally be "libre de poursuivre un idéal de paix, de justice, d'ordre et de vraie liberté."⁵⁹ The only way to achieve that future was if Bourassa continued his education of the public.

Bourassa's condemnation of the "revolutionary" nature of Canada's war experience alongside his vision of the future marked a new perspective on the war. "Revolution" was not an idea that Bourassa raised lightly. For the ultramontane Catholic and a French Canadian, social order was intrinsically linked to a stable and modern society. Revolution was a violent process, even if it did not appear as physical violence, and by its nature caused social turmoil. Previous certainties, such as a political balance between Liberals and Conservatives or Canada's distance from foreign conflicts, were no longer assured. The sudden reactionary change wrought by the war threw Canada's future into question. Bourassa argued then that the war was beginning to induce revolutionary transformations. They were encompassing changes that Bourassa feared might be irreversible.

Bourassa's solutions all pointed to the unsustainability of the war experience. The "imperialist revolution" bound Canada to an ephemeral identity and the temporary cause of victory in a war that was not its own. He feared the long-term consequences of that binding. In Bourassa's ideal world, the same principles and values from before the war would continue to guide Canada. Yet the "imperialist revolution" nurtured new principles, such as unthinking service to Empire, glorifying soldiers, and the oppression of dissent. If Britain won the war,

⁵⁸ Henri Bourassa, *Hier, aujourd'hui, demain*, (Montreal: 1916) 176.

⁵⁹ Henri Bourassa, *Hier, aujourd'hui, demain*, (Montreal: 1916) 177-178.

Bourassa claimed, the values that guided the nation during wartime would become permanent. Then, the imperialists' militarism would be the same as the Prussian iteration against which they now fought. The "revolutionaries" would continue to "utiliser les ressources du Canada, en hommes et en argent, pour la gloire et le profit de l'Angleterre."⁶⁰ He feared that this Canada could not survive. French Canadians would not submit to imperialism's militarism and Anglicization, worsening the divide between French and English Canadians.⁶¹ Canada would emerge from the war politically, economically and spiritually weakened, and unless Canadians adopted one of his solutions, its national life was at risk.

Strangely, Bourassa's arguments were not that different in tone from ones presented in the pages of English Canadian newspapers. There, editorials and columns all acknowledged the war's revolutionary impact on the Canadian people. English Canadian papers hailed the war's "purging of materialism and selfishness" and the "virtuous nature of the fight and its salutary influence on Canada."⁶² While Bourassa viewed the war's militarism as a corrupting revolutionary influence, English Canada perceived the war as a crucible for positive change. German militarism was a dangerous threat, but it was not the same sort of militarism appearing in Canada. As one anonymous writer in the *Montreal Star* noted in September 1916, "a patriot ... is one whose bosom swells with pride of his country ... while in a jingo the swelling appears in his head."⁶³ English Canadian public commentary justified the growing influence of militarism as necessary to defeat Germany, or at least as having potentially positive effects, but

⁶⁰ Henri Bourassa, *Hier, aujourd'hui, demain*, (Montreal: 1916) 110.

⁶¹ Henri Bourassa, *Hier, aujourd'hui, demain*, (Montreal: 1916) 116-117.

⁶² Robert S. Prince, *The Mythology of War: How the Canadian Daily Newspaper Depicted the Great War*, Unpublished PhD Diss., University of Toronto, 1998, 147, 150.

⁶³ *Montreal Star*, 20 September, 1916, 10, as cited in Robert S. Prince, *The Mythology of War*, 186 fn 42. Prince also explores the lingering doubt about militarism's growth in Canada, and argues that the English Canadian press responded by emphasizing a nostalgic view of "traditional warfare" in contrast to the industrialized slaughter of the First World War. They often talked about the use of cavalry, swords, and other "unmodern" ways of war while avoiding explicit discussion of modern military technology, see 361-369.

Bourassa made no distinction between them. To him, any ideology or circumstance that unevenly valued military endeavours and soldiers was detrimental to Canada's liberal democracy.

In his next series of articles, Bourassa turned to the international situation in the spring of 1916. There too state leaders and diplomats envisioned the resolution of the war and the future that would come of it. To Bourassa, peace was the only true solution. On 4 March 1916, Benedict XV wrote to Cardinal Pompilj, the General Vicar of Rome, asking the faithful to pray for peace during Lent. The letter added to the wealth of public statements from Rome on the necessity of peace and asked that the belligerent nations declare their "aims and objects" of the war.⁶⁴ On the heels of his appeal to Canadians to envision a future after the war, the Papal request led Bourassa to ask of the warring nations, "qui veut la paix?"

It was not, Bourassa concluded, Germany or Britain.⁶⁵ A speech by German Chancellor Theobald von Bethmann-Hollweg in April 1916 revealed the German position. Germany put out peace feelers towards Britain, but Germany was not willing to accept a return to the status quo to end the war.⁶⁶ After all, the Germans were winning. They occupied Belgium, parts of France and Russia, as well as Montenegro and Albania. Serbia offered token resistance, Italy had little chance of a breakthrough and the Russian offensive into the Ottoman Empire had stalled. Famine, Bourassa reasoned, was the biggest worry for the blockaded nations of the Central Powers. Germany was open to peace offers and Bethmann-Hollweg envisioned German support for the "oppressed" nationalities previously under Russian rule.⁶⁷

⁶⁴ "LETTER AI Tremendo Conflitto TO CARDINAL POMPILJ, VICAR OF ROME," as printed in *Principles for Peace Selections From Papal Documents Leo XIII to Pius XII*, Reverend Harry C. Koenig, ed., (Washington: National Catholic Welfare Conference, 1943) 201. It was originally written in Italian.

⁶⁵ Henri Bourassa, "Allemagne et Angleterre: Qui veut la paix? I," *Le Devoir*, 11 April, 1916, 1.

⁶⁶ Fritz Fischer, *Germany's Aims in the First World War*, (New York: W.W. Norton & Company, 1967) 286.

⁶⁷ Annemarie Sammartino, *The Impossible Border: Germany and the East, 1914-1922*, (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 2010) 34-35.

Understandably, Bourassa found the German Chancellor's words on those people who were not part of the Great Powers of Europe the most intriguing. Bourassa believed that Germany did not want to see Belgium vassalized. It supported an independent Belgium and more autonomy for their Flemish minority. Of course, Bourassa noted, Germany's proposed treatment of these "petits peuples" were hypocritical given its position on Alsace, Posen and Schleswig where French, Polish and Danish people lived under German rule.⁶⁸ Equally, the Allies who defended the small nations of Europe against German aggression ignored their own minority populations. The necessity of liberating such peoples seemed entirely contingent on one's point of view. At least Bethmann-Hollweg had offered a reasonable beginning for peace negotiations to begin, even if it was a problematic one.

In contrast, Great Britain was recalcitrant towards the possibility of peace, undoubtedly for the same reasons that Germany was supportive: Germany had the upper hand in the war. Bourassa's editorial on 12 April turned to examine the British reaction. The British government maintained "une apparence de suprême mépris" towards the German suggestion of negotiation.⁶⁹ Dissecting speeches from Minister of War Trade Robert Cecil and the Prime Minister Herbert Asquith, Bourassa dismissed their continued efforts to portray the war as a just one against Germany. German militarism, he wrote, was just the "expression la plus intense, la plus efficace, d'un système qui est commun à toutes les nations européennes."⁷⁰ If German land armies were a threat to European stability, so too was British naval supremacy. The French Canadian argued that the true goal of Britain's war was securing dominance over the seas, not the defence of nations like Belgium or France. Again, Bourassa's own bias

⁶⁸ Henri Bourassa, "Allemagne et Angleterre: Qui veut la paix? I," *Le Devoir*, 11 April, 1916, 1.

⁶⁹ Henri Bourassa, "Allemagne et Angleterre: Qui veut la paix? II," *Le Devoir*, 12 April, 1916, 1.

⁷⁰ Henri Bourassa, "Allemagne et Angleterre: Qui veut la paix? II," *Le Devoir*, 12 April, 1916, 1.

swayed his arguments. Britain did want dominance over the seas -- but surely it was for the purpose of assuring trade across them, rather than Germany's goal of controlling them entirely. The war could not balance on such a simple issue. Yet, Bourassa alleged that if the British government could guarantee that Germany would no longer be a threat to their naval supremacy, then they would be the first to talk of peace.⁷¹ Either way, the Allies and the Central Powers had such different positions and purposes for fighting the war that peace before a complete military defeat seemed an unlikely prospect.

The final article provided Bourassa's answer to the question of who wanted peace. "Le Pape seul veut la paix," Bourassa declared praising the Sovereign Pontiff's efforts to mediate the conflict from Rome. As the only figure who had "aucun intérêt à fomenter la haine des peuples," Pope Benedict XV alone could outline the conditions "d'une paix véritable, d'une paix juste, chrétienne et durable."⁷² Though Bourassa treated politicians with cynicism, he always welcomed the words from the Vatican. For the Ultramontane Catholic, the best force of moderation in Europe was the Pope as "higher concerns" rather than the foolish compulsions of humanity guided Vatican diplomacy. He translated large parts of the Pope's message from 4 March and it is clear that they drove his own beliefs. One reproduction of the papal missive is telling:

Throwing Ourselves as it were among the belligerents, as a father might do between sons at strife, We have entreated them, in the name of that God Who is Himself Love Infinite, to renounce the purpose of mutual destruction, to declare clearly once for all, whether directly or indirectly, what are the aims and objects of each nation, bearing in mind, as far as is just and practicable, the several national aspirations, but accepting, where need is, for the sake of equal good in the general commonwealth of nations, whatever sacrifice of self-love or selfish interest may be demanded. That was, that is, the only way to calm this monstrous conflict

⁷¹ Henri Bourassa, "Allemagne et Angleterre: Qui veut la paix? II," *Le Devoir*, 12 April, 1916, 1.

⁷² Henri Bourassa, "Le Pape seul veut la paix," *Le Devoir*, 13 April, 1916, 1.

according to the dictates of justice, and to reach a peace profitable not to one alone of the contending parties, but to all, and thus a peace equitable and lasting.⁷³

Bourassa's feelings are evident. "Quelle force! quelle[sic] vérité! quelle[sic] justice!," he wrote, "quelle profonde connaissance de la vraie politique humaine, fondée sur la loi divine!"⁷⁴

Pope Benedict XV was a unique figure on the world stage. Bourassa saw in him the authority and influence to bring both sides to the negotiating table and he gladly embraced the neutrality of the papal position. Since the victory that the war supporters' demanded would not fulfill Benedict's vision, it further underlined Bourassa's opposition to them.

After his comments on international affairs, Bourassa discussed one of the most important international events for many Canadians in the spring of 1916. On 24 April 1916, posters around Dublin proclaimed a provisional government for the Irish Republic. "We declare the right of the people of Ireland to the ownership of Ireland," it said, "standing on that fundamental right and again asserting it in arms in the face of the world, we hereby proclaim the Irish Republic as a Sovereign Independent State." They claimed the allegiance of all Irish and guaranteed their "religious and civil liberty, equal rights and equal opportunities to all its citizens" and "its resolve to pursue the happiness and prosperity of the whole nation and of all its parts."⁷⁵ With that high purpose, the Irish Republic fought for its national life and the "Easter Rising" had begun.

The actual fighting of the Easter Uprising was short-lived but the British reaction was swift and brutal. The rebels took control of Dublin, though they failed to seize the city's key points. Officers and students at the Officer Training Corps defended Trinity College Dublin

⁷³ "LETTER AI Tremendo Conflitto TO CARDINAL POMPILI, VICAR OF ROME," as printed in *Principles for Peace Selections From Papal Documents Leo XIII to Pius XII*, Reverend Harry C. Koenig, ed., (Washington: National Catholic Welfare Conference, 1943) 201. Originally written in Italian.

⁷⁴ Henri Bourassa, "Le Pape seul veut la paix," *Le Devoir*, 13 April, 1916, 1.

⁷⁵ For a copy of the poster, see *The Irish Times, Sinn Fein Rebellion Handbook*, (Dublin, 1917) xvii.

against the rebels, while other forces successfully held the centre of British rule in Ireland, Dublin Castle. Nor could the rebels take Dublin's train stations, so the British were able to funnel in troops and easily outnumbered the rebels within a few days. With machine guns and artillery, they slowly pinned down the rebels. Soon artillery shelled the Irish Republic headquarters at the General Post Office, underling their total defeat. On 29 April, after realising that further resistance would only waste civilian lives, the rebels surrendered to the British authorities. By its end, the British arrested 3,430 men and 79 women. In May, British authorities executed those who had signed the Proclamation announcing the short-lived Republic. Some of those the British arrested were freed, but 1,480 men were imprisoned for longer terms.⁷⁶

Bourassa offered qualified sympathy to both sides of the nationalist movement in Ireland, empathising with the politician John Redmond who had worked within the parliamentary system, as well as understanding the Irish Volunteers who had resorted to violence. Bourassa reminded his readers of the cause of the suspended national aspirations throughout Europe and within Canada itself. Though he never condoned violence, if French Canadians wanted to understand better what compelled the Irish to extreme action, they only had to reflect on their own history.⁷⁷ Redmond could easily be Louis-Hippolyte Lafontaine, the cautious political reformer of the 1830s and 40s, while the Irish Volunteers would be the party of Bourassa's grandfather, Louis-Joseph Papineau, who had led the Lower Canadian rebellions of 1837-38 and wanted political and educational reform. Surely, Bourassa asked, the Irish were

⁷⁶ There are many excellent works on the failed Easter Rising in 1916, but some of the recent histories used here are Michael Foy and Brian Barton, *The Easter Rising*, (Sutton: Stroud, 1999), or Fearghal McGarry, *The Rising: Ireland, Easter 1916*, (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2010).

⁷⁷ Henri Bourassa, "La Vengeance de l'Angleterre," 10 May, 1916, 1.

only standing up for the principles and rights of its Irish peoples?⁷⁸ Bourassa was fully aware of the limited rights of traitors who rose up against the government during wartime, but he rarely missed an opportunity to underline the implicit falsehoods of war rhetoric. The Irish were only seeking the freedom for which the Allies fought in France and Belgium.

As the Irish rose up in rebellion for the cause of freedom, Canada's French minority continued their own struggle against perceived English Canadian persecution. Liberal Senator P.A. Choquette addressed an audience on 2 March, warning of Regulation 17's impact on Quebec sentiments: "These young-blooded fellows may start an agitation to abolish the use of English in the Quebec schools, despite the calmer councils of older men like myself."⁷⁹ Meanwhile, Robert Sellar's *The Tragedy of Quebec* continued to sell well, and he updated the 1916 edition to address Regulation 17. "The issue," he wrote dismissively, "is simply whether this Canada of ours is to be British ... or whether it is to be a mongrel land, with two official languages and rules by a divided authority."⁸⁰ Both sides waited on the decision of the Judicial Committee of the Privy Council in London, but until then, they were uncompromising in their stance against the other side. On 9 May, the issue was put to debate before the House of Commons. Liberal MP Ernest Lapointe submitted a resolution to the House asking that during "this time of universal sacrifice and anxiety, when all energies should be concentrated on winning of the War ... [make] it clear [to Ontario] that the privilege of the children of French parentage of being taught in their mother tongue be not interfered with."⁸¹

Lapointe made his motion with the support of Laurier, who had grown increasingly

⁷⁸ Henri Bourassa, "La Vengeance de l'Angleterre," 10 May, 1916, 1.

⁷⁹ Castell Hopkins, *Canadian Annual Review 1916*, 393-394.

⁸⁰ Robert Sellar, *The Tragedy of Quebec*, 327-328, as quoted in Robert Craig Brown and Ramsay Cook, *A Nation Transformed*, 259 fn 37.

⁸¹ Ernest Lapointe, *House of Commons Debates*, 12th Parliament, 6th Session, vol. 4, 9 May, 1916, 3618.

interested in the plight of Franco-Ontarians. He had personally offered pragmatic compromises over the issue of French language education during his tenure as prime minister and remained aloof from the Ontario situation until the First World War. On 18 April 1916, however, he wrote to Ontario Liberal leader Newton Rowell, remarking that “If the party cannot stand up to the principles [of provincial rights and defending minorities that were] advocated, maintained and fought for by Mowat and Blake, I can only repeat to you that it is more than time for me to step down and out.”⁸² His principled position aside, Laurier believed the Lapointe motion would help him maintain leadership over Quebec in light of Bourassa and the nationalistes’ growing influence. Only Laurier and the Liberals could preserve the nation’s fragile unity.⁸³ Consequently, Lapointe’s resolution did not (and could not) compel the Ontario government to action, but rather officially stated the Liberal position and forced the federal legislature to debate the motion. Laurier threatened to resign if English Canadian Liberals who opposed the motion did not follow the party line. They voted in favour of it, but they resented “the bilingual episode” and would remember it a year later when Laurier again evoked the spectre of preserving national unity over the issue of conscription.⁸⁴

Bourassa welcomed the Liberal motion, but believed it was too moderate. Debates in parliament underlined how the ongoing dilemma weakened the Canadian war effort. Bourassa would have preferred going in the other direction. He noted two faults with Lapointe’s resolution: “l’absence de sanction pratique et l’intempestif accouplement de la question ontarienne à la participation du Canada à la guerre.”⁸⁵ Bourassa believed that the Liberals

⁸² Oskar Skelton, *Life and Letters of Sir Wilfrid Laurier*, 476.

⁸³ Réal Bélanger, *Wilfrid Laurier*, 387-389. J.W. Dafoe makes a similar point : “Laurier was out to demonstrate that he was the true champion of Quebec’s views and interests, because he could rally to her cause the support of a great national party,” J.W. Dafoe, *Laurier: A Study in Canadian Politics*, (Toronto: Thomas Allen Publisher, 1922) 158.

⁸⁴ J.W. Dafoe, *Laurier: A Study in Canadian Politics*, 158-163.

⁸⁵ Henri Bourassa, “Le Parlement et l’Iniquité Ontarienne,” *Le Devoir*, 16 May, 1916, 1.

should have raised the illegitimacy of fighting for British civilization without finding it at home. He agreed that Regulation 17 negatively affected the war effort, but not solely because it threatened national unity -- it undermined the justification of the war itself. The federal government had to intervene if they wanted French Canadian support for the war. Their refusal to do as Laurier had done for Manitoba in 1896 proved their disdain for French Canada.

Bourassa concluded,

La motion du député de Kamouraska apportait un appui moral, un témoignage public et solennel de sympathie des représentants de la nation aux Canadiens-français de l'Ontario aux vaillantes mères de famille, aux héroïques petites maîtresses d'école qui défendent la civilisation française contre la haine stupide et cauteleuse des 'Huns' de Toronto. ... La grande lutte continuera jusqu'au triomphe finale.⁸⁶

The debate solved little as all parties continued their wait for the decision of the Judicial Committee in London entirely convinced that they were in the right.

In June, weeks before receiving the letter from Talbot Papineau asking him to support the war, Bourassa highlighted two important obstacles he had encountered during his growing and vocal opposition to the war effort. First, the press consistently muted the voices of those opposed to the war. The “partisans de la guerre à outrance” interpreted any suggestion of peace in their favour. If a German spoke of peace, it meant that Germany was weakening. If an Englishman raised the subject of negotiations before Germany was defeated, he was a traitor. Nuanced discussions of the war were unpopular as they asked questions whose answers defied the rhetoric of the war. Second, the rallying *patriotic* call to support the war was misleading and dangerous. It was not patriotism expressed by the war supporters but loyalty, Bourassa repeated. They asked for absolute loyalty to the British crown and its endeavours – indeed, Canadian patriotism had often emerged in conflict with British loyalty. “C’est en

⁸⁶ Henri Bourassa, “Le Parlement et l’Iniquité Ontarienne II,” *Le Devoir*, 17 May, 1916, 1.

luttant contre l'autorité impériale et ses tenants au Canada," he claimed, "que les Canadiens des deux races s'étaient rapprochés peu à peu et avaient commencé à se lier par un commun attachement à la patrie canadienne."⁸⁷ Patriotism had once unified the Canadian nation, but now loyalism divided its French and English peoples. The suppression of dissent inhibited Bourassa's efforts to voice his opinion as his critics poisoned the audience of English Canadians who may have otherwise listened to his call for moderation and peace.

In these turbulent times, after months of repeating his position and exploring its historic and contemporary relevance, Bourassa received a letter from a cousin he barely knew. Talbot Mercer Papineau was born into privilege at his family's estate at Montebello. He spent his early years travelling between it and Philadelphia, where his mother belonged to a prominent American family. His father, the grandson of his famous forebear, was an alcoholic and estranged from his mother when Papineau was young, so his American mother near Philadelphia raised him.⁸⁸ Despite his English Presbyterian upbringing, however, he called the French and Catholic province of Quebec his home. He cherished the summer memories of his childhood at Montebello, where he and his three brothers spent many summer days exploring their expansive 2800-acre property together and playing games as Indians or as King Arthur.⁸⁹ His family's social and economic status created few worries and many opportunities as he matured. The early years of Papineau's life reflected a curious mix of English Canadian, French Canadian and American cultures. Though he primarily referred to himself as a French Canadian, he sometimes was simply Canadian - and once he noted that he was in fact "three

⁸⁷ Henri Bourassa, "L'Enseignement du Patriotisme," 12 June, 1916, 1.

⁸⁸ Sandra Gwyn, *Tapestry of War: A private view of Canadians in the Great War*, (Toronto: Harper Collins, 1992) 92-94.

⁸⁹ Library and Archives Canada, MG30 E52, vol. 1, Talbot Mercer Papineau Fonds, (TMP Fonds) Papineau to Fox, 3 October 1915.

quarters American.”⁹⁰ He moved easily between cultures and nationalities. Still, his paternal ancestry forever marked Papineau as a great-grandson of Louis-Joseph Papineau. Immediately identifiable with the prominent French Canadian name, he could not help but be intimately connected to his heritage.

Papineau was wealthy, well connected, and unsure of what to do with his life when Britain declared war in 1914. That August, he found himself on the far side of the country, speaking to the Canadian Club in Vancouver on the subject of nationalism in Quebec.⁹¹ He spoke with authority and publicly assured his listeners that “as many French Canadians as English Canadians [would] take up arms in defence of the Empire.”⁹² With that heartfelt hope, he rushed eastward to fulfil his words and volunteer for the newly formed Princess Patricia’s Canadian Light Infantry (PPCLI). Joining as a Lieutenant, Papineau hoped to be among the first Canadian soldiers to land in Europe to make a name for himself while furthering his career and public life.⁹³ The officer cadre in the Patricias was mainly of the same social class as Papineau -- wealthy enough to buy their supplies and assume positions of command in the new but rapidly expanding Canadian Expeditionary Force.

After surviving a year on the front lines and winning a Military Cross, in October 1915 he met with Sir Max Aitken while visiting London. Though not their first encounter, they were

⁹⁰ TMP Fonds, vol. 1, Papineau to Fox, 24 June 1915. His mother and grandmother were American. It should be noted that at the time he was corresponding with his love interest and American Beatrice Fox, so perhaps he was emphasizing his American heritage to his own advantage.

⁹¹ Sandra Gwyn, *Tapestry at War*, 98.

⁹² Desmond Morton and J.L. Granatstein, *Marching to Armageddon: Canadians and the Great War, 1914-1919*, (Toronto: Lester & Orpen Dennys, 1989) 6. See also, Castell Hopkins, *Canadian Annual Review 1914*, 707, for another brief excerpt from his speech.

⁹³ The Princess Patricias were formed in Ottawa and funded by Andrew Hamilton Gault with his own money in response to the pitiful size of the Canadian regular forces when the war began. They were the first Canadian unit on the frontlines Though its officers were primarily those who had previous experience in the militia or the British forces, some with little or no experience such as Papineau were accepted to form the junior officer ranks. See, Jeffery Williams, *First in the Field: Gault of the Patricias*, (St. Catherines, ON: Vanwell Publishing, 1995) 64. For a history of the Princess Pats, see David Jay Bercuson, *The Patricias: The Proud History of a Fighting Regiment*, (Toronto: Stoddart, 2001).

impressed with one another and the connection was a fruitful one. Aitken, the future Lord Beaverbrook, was an influential figure within British and Canadian political circles.⁹⁴ He had made millions before moving to England and obtaining a Parliamentary seat and knighthood. After the war broke out, Robert Borden appointed him the “Canadian Eye Witness” to the war in May 1915, effectively becoming Canada’s official record officer.⁹⁵

In February 1916, Papineau was promoted to Captain and became the Aide-de-Camp to the Canadian Corps commander, General Sir Edwin Alderson. In June 1916, Papineau joined Aitken’s War Records Office as an official “Eye Witness.” This put him in a unique position, amassing information on the activities of the Canadian units and writing communiqués released to newspapers around the world. As a result, he travelled extensively across the front lines, visiting with Generals and Privates and collecting information on every branch of the service. Papineau’s roving daily activity allowed him the chance to see the breadth of the Canadian experience of the First World War.⁹⁶

In the months before that formative experience, Papineau’s vision of Canada at war took shape as he confronted the mounting casualties among the Canadians from his perspective on the front lines. In light of Quebec’s estrangement from those who supported the war, he wanted to explain his actions to his fellow citizens and elicit their support. As well, he felt

⁹⁴ A few of the many biographies on Lord Beaverbrook are A.J.P. Taylor, *Beaverbrook*, (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1972); Anne Chislm and Michael Davie, *Beaverbrook: A Life*, (London: Hutchinson, 1992); and of his finance dealings before the war, see G. P. Marchildon, *Profits & Politics: Beaverbrook and the Gilded Age of Canadian Finance*, (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1996).

⁹⁵ Aitken’s account of Ypres was published 1 May, 1915. His own newspapers and political connections helped the publication read of the account to be widely distributed emphasizing the heroism and worthy sacrifice of Canadian soldiers. See Tim Cook, “Documenting War and Forging Reputations: Sir Max Aitken and the Canadian War Records Office in the First World War,” *War in History*, no.3, 10 (July 2003): 265-295.

⁹⁶ He described his position in a letter to his paramour, Beatrice Fox, in October 1916: “You must understand that I am not a mere newspaper correspondent. Nothing makes me angrier. I write many official staff documents as well. For instance yesterday I made a complete tour of our whole battle front- interviewed almost all the Battalion commanders – personally examined the enemy lines and finally wrote a long report which the General favourably commented upon today,” Papineau to Fox, 9 October 1916, Library and Archives Canada, Talbot Mercer Papineau Fonds, vol. 1.

obligated to counter the influence of his cousin, Henri Bourassa. To that end, Papineau drafted a letter to Bourassa in March 1916 arguing for greater French Canadian participation in the war effort. The letter is a glimpse not merely into Papineau's political beliefs, but into the life of a soldier on the front and a man torn between two cultures.

The great distance between Papineau and Canada elongated the process of finalising the public letter. Papineau first wrote a draft in March and sent it to his friend and law partner Andrew McMaster in Montreal, requesting that he release it to the newspapers as well. McMaster, when he replied in late April, doubted the value in releasing the letter. He questioned Papineau's intent and noted that the young officer did not realise how much Canada had changed during the war. "You speak of an imperial war," McMaster wrote to Papineau, "that is not the keynote of all the appeals made for patriotic purposes here – very often it is the Canadian note that is sounded & that the war is a war for civilization and liberty."⁹⁷ On 15 July, McMaster sent a revised letter written in English to Bourassa. Not knowing that Bourassa was travelling and had not received it, McMaster assumed he had no reply and released it to papers across Canada on 28 July. Within a week, the *London Times* published it and Papineau's name became known throughout the Dominion and the Empire. Bourassa issued a reply on 2 August in *Le Devoir*, to much less domestic and international publicity. The sparring between the two revealed the vast difference between their visions of Quebec and their conceptions of the war.

At best, Papineau's letter was a fervent plea for Canadian unity to the man who was at the heart of its discord; but, according to Bourassa, it was a misplaced *cri de coeur* that revealed the depth of Papineau's estrangement from the state of affairs in his province. Despite his sincerity as an honest attempt to improve the situation, Bourassa saw an irrelevancy and

⁹⁷ TMP Fonds, vol. 2, McMaster to Papineau, 14 April 1916.

distance to Papineau's arguments. Papineau was not describing the Quebec experience of the war that Bourassa had known; instead, he was speaking from the battlefields of Europe. He began with the faulty accusation that Bourassa had opposed the war from August 1914 onwards. This was an inauspicious start to a letter meant to rouse an enemy to your side. Papineau then faltered again, stating: "I shall not consider the grounds upon which you base your opposition to Canadian participation ... rather I wish to begin by pointing out some reasons why on the contrary your whole-hearted support might have been expected." Papineau refused to meet his opponent head on, dismissing not only Bourassa's long-held beliefs spanning 15 years of careful thought and reasoning, but also the vast majority of his editorials published in the previous twenty-four months. It became evident that though Papineau ostensibly wrote to Bourassa, he had not followed his cousin's evolving commentary closely. There is no mention of the Pope, or of the British radicals the Union of Democratic Control, or of numerous other inspirations and guiding forces that Bourassa publicly and repeatedly addressed.

What followed was a list of reasons why the nationaliste was wrong, and why Bourassa had betrayed his compatriots and the civilized world. Papineau's argumentation was straightforward. First, he contended that Canada became a belligerent the moment Germany declared war upon Great Britain when it became "subject to invasion and conquest." It was not a war for Great Britain, but a defensive act to protect its territory. He wrote, "proof may no doubt be made that one of the very purposes of Germany's aggression ... was the ambition to secure a part if not the whole of the English possessions in North America." This was a bold claim for 1916, but not entirely unlikely. The Americans had vigorously defended their Manifest Destiny over the western hemisphere for almost a century; so the idea that Germany's

military might could extend across the ocean was implausible.⁹⁸ On the other hand, stories of German agitation in the United States led some to believe an invasion from the south was possible. Several plots had been widely publicized, including a group of Germans in the United States who had been planning to blow up the Welland Canal.⁹⁹

It would have been even worse, said Papineau, if the Allies had won and Canada had not fought at all. He spoke directly to French Canadians' self-respect, hoping to shame them into the war, asking, "What [then] of the Soul of Canada?" How could a nation assured of its "national life" by the actions of English soldiers refuse to make sacrifices for them in their time of need? That would be a nation without pride. If Bourassa "was truly a nationalist" he would "recognise this moment as [Canada's] moment of travail and tribulation." A loyal Canadian would fight for his country in this moment of national birth. In Papineau's view, Bourassa's support should stem from this patriotic impulse to defend "Canadian territory and Canadian liberties."

Bourassa's reply repeated his familiar argument that the federal government, the press, and politicians of both parties "applied themselves systematically to obliterate the free character of Canada's intervention." He became opposed to the war when supporting it no longer became a matter of choice, but a matter of "blackmail, intimidation and threats." Surely, the high ideals of British civilization had been eroded as foreign "aliens" were imprisoned,

⁹⁸ While in Canada there were those who illogically feared a German attack on its coast (see for example, the alarming warnings of Harry W. Anderson, "If Canada were Invaded," *Maclean's*, 1 October, 1914, 5.), the main worry for American diplomats was an extension of German hegemony to South America, or the necessary militarization of America as a result of a German victory. For the most part though, while the United States was nominally neutrally, it was clearly culturally tied to Britain and its allies. It would have defended North America vigorously and there was little real fear of a German invasion. For a detailed review of the diplomatic tensions between America, Germany and Britain, see Gerhard Ritter, *The Sword and the Scepter: The Problem of Militarism in Germany; Volume III: The Tragedy of Statesmanship – Bethmann Hollweg as War Chancellor (1914-1917)*, Heinz Norden, trans., (Miami: University of Miami Press, 1972) 134-150.

⁹⁹ Castell Hopkins, *Canadian Annual Review 1916*, 225-227.

citizens harassed on the streets, and war supporters silenced dissent. Censorship and oppression pervaded Canada's public life. Bourassa did not support the war, not because he was a traitor as Papineau implied, but because he was standing by the principles he had repeatedly expressed before and during the conflict. Canada's involvement in British wars, Bourassa had once predicted during the Boer War fifteen years earlier, resigned it to future participation in what Laurier had called the "vortex of European militarism."¹⁰⁰ Inevitably, Bourassa had stated, the Old World would dissolve into conflict and this would lead to Canada's ruin. "All the nations of Europe are the victims of their own mistakes, of the complacent servility with which they submitted to the dominance of all Imperialists and traders in human flesh," Bourassa insisted in his response. He raised a sort of twisted neutrality. There was no side Canada should defend, as there was no side worth defending.

Papineau argued that a "spiritual union" existed between Great Britain and Canada, one that demanded national responsibility. These bonds "unite [Canadians] for certain great purpose and which have proved so powerful." To fight the war is "to preserve and perpetuate that invaluable *spirit* which alone makes our union possible." In addition to this connection between English and Canadian, Papineau stated, there existed the racial strength of French Canadians that superseded the century and a half old conquest. A race that survived -- and even thrived -- under British rule deserved defence. Concessions were inevitable, individuality sacrificed, all so that "the greatest opportunity ... to show unity of purpose" could be fulfilled. This would finally prove that French Canadians loved their country too. The low recruitment numbers from Quebec, Papineau believed, reflected Bourassa's negative influence. Bourassa

¹⁰⁰ Bourassa quotes Laurier in his letter, referencing a comment he made regarding his resistance during Imperial Conferences to British demands of a closer relationship between Great Britain and Canada.

built his politics upon “strife and enmity” and brought “disfavour and dishonour upon [his] race,” while the “honour of French Canada” and “the unity of [the] country” was at stake. At the very least, French Canada’s “bond of blood relationship between the Old France and the New” demanded that they fight.¹⁰¹

Bourassa scoffed at the younger man’s claims. “His long and diffuse piece of eloquence,” he replied, “proves that the excitement of warfare and the distance from home have obliterated in his mind the fundamental realities of his native country.” Papineau’s words, as grandiose as they may have sounded, reflected a view of Canada and Quebec from an ocean away. Bourassa argued that French Canadian recruitment, rather than being unusually low, was merely representative of the higher number of native-born Canadians among them.¹⁰² Those who lived on their land for centuries were less likely to leave to fight a European war. English Canadians who volunteered were largely recent immigrants from the United Kingdom, Bourassa maintained, and thus retained more affinity to Scotland or England. He alleged that low recruitment in Quebec did not stem from one man or even one movement, but from “hereditary instincts, social and economic conditions and a national tradition of three centuries.”¹⁰³ Papineau’s inability to comprehend the Quebec that Bourassa knew and nurtured is evident. Papineau represented a French Canadian of a very different sort from his cousin.

¹⁰¹ “Captain Papineau’s Letter to M. Henri Bourassa (editor of *Le Devoir*),” Library and Archives Canada, Talbot Mercer Papineau Fonds, vol. 4.

¹⁰² These reasons for lower French Canadian enlistment was widely accepted, see Castell Hopkins, *Canadian Annual Review 1915*, 216-218, but in May 1916, Brigadier General James Mason told the Senate that the army consisted of 85,000 English Canadian-born, 12,000 French Canadian-born, and 180,000 British-born soldiers, plus 18,000 foreign born, see Castell Hopkins, *Canadian Annual Review 1916*, 349-350. Borden’s government was also aware of the growing problem of Quebec enlistment in 1916, see J.L. Granatstein and J.M. Hitsman, *Broken Promises*, 40-41.

¹⁰³ Bourassa’s point may have been true in 1914, but by 1916 Quebec was clearly underrepresented in enlistment numbers (see footnote 90). As well, most English Canadian newspapers perceived the influence of Bourassa as the primary instigator of French Canadian apathy to the war and enlistment; see Castell Hopkins, *Canadian Annual Review 1916*, 309, 566-567, 571.

Not only had he joined the army, but he also defended it. He wrote in English to French Canada. Bourassa's hereditary instincts, social and economic conditions and a national tradition may be vague categories, but surely Papineau did not fill them.

Papineau closed his letter ominously, and his final flourish revealed a stark difference between him and French Canadians at home. He became the soldier: the one who had seen artillery shells explode friend and enemy alike, the one who had edged his way across no man's land under machine gun fire, the one who fought for the sole reason because not to fight was to die. Papineau wrote:

for those who grew fat with the wealth dishonourably gained by political graft and by dishonest business methods at our expense – we shall demand a heavy day of reckoning. We shall inflict upon them the punishment they deserve – not by ... violence ... but by the invincible power of our moral influence.

With these threatening words, Papineau delivered his *coup de grace*: Beware the soldiers, for *they* were the “Soul of Canada” and when they returned, they would control the country. The war had changed the young Canadian lawyer who had left for Europe in 1914. Its outcome had gained a deadly significance to him, as did the support of his fellow French Canadians in order to secure victory for the Allies and for the soldiers on the frontlines. The men in the trenches were going to fight for the Canada they wanted, not the one envisioned by those living safely on the homefront.

Papineau's dire warnings did not faze Bourassa as he saw little truth in his future predictions. His reply to Papineau ended with a similar retort:

Those [who have grown fat with the wealth dishonourably gained in war contracts] are not to be found in nationalist ranks: they are all recruited among the noisiest preachers of the holy War waged for ‘civilization’ against ‘barbarity,’ for the ‘protection of small nations,’ for the honour of England and the ‘salvation’ of France.

Bourassa did not worship soldiers simply because of their service or their courage. He did not

see the soul of Canada within those who fought in a British war. Canada had its own interests and values that ought to be defended. Who was taking advantage of the war – of the death of hundreds of thousands – to improve their circumstances? Papineau believed it to be the *nationalistes* and Bourassa, using it for their own political machinations. Bourassa believed it was the imperialists using it for profit and a means to impart their ideology to Canadians. These viewpoints were not mutually exclusive. Both were rooted in their own experiences of the war and Bourassa's supported by years of editorial comment.

Papineau's failure to clearly engage Bourassa's position on the war helps explain the latter's aggressive condemnation. Many of the points that Papineau raised, such as the nature of the war's purpose, Canada's future after the conflict, and the role of supporters and dissenters, had all been addressed by Bourassa in detail. In some ways, their positions overlapped. Contrasting Papineau's letter to Bourassa's booklet, *Hier, Aujourd'hui, Demain*, is revealing. Both believed that the war was transformative: Papineau believed it was creating a stronger Canadian national identity, while Bourassa believed it was fundamentally weakening it in favour of an imperialist one. Both foresaw a new role for Canada after the war linked to the Empire, though Bourassa preferred other possible outcomes. The key difference between their positions was that Papineau believed the war was an integral part of Canadian progress towards a more autonomous nation. Bourassa had argued since 1899 that Canada could do so alone, without British help, spearheaded by its own citizens. The Canada that Bourassa envisioned was as united in its national purpose as Papineau's, but the war had interrupted that process rather than initiating or intensifying it. At the war's beginning perhaps the cousins would have had more common ground to discuss their ideas, but by the summer of 1916 the chasm between them was insurmountable. Papineau's appeal no longer even dealt with the

same basic facts as Bourassa's view of the war. Two entirely different understandings of the war had developed. Bourassa was more committed than ever to his ideas by the fall. If anything, Papineau had only succeeded in convincing his cousin that his oppositional voice was more necessary than ever.

Chapter 5: The Possibility of Peace (September – Spring 1917)

After rejecting the impassioned plea of his cousin Talbot Papineau to support the war in August, Bourassa spent the fall and winter of 1916 examining the possibility of peace. His work was in the shadow of the Somme Offensive, which had begun with a slaughter on 1 July 1916 and finished on an equally bloody but thankfully triumphant note. Canada's sole French Canadian combat unit, the 22nd battalion, endured three days of German counterattacks as they successfully held the village of Courcellette in September.¹ In the weeks ahead, Canadian soldiers took more German lines, a series of entrenchments they called the Regina Trench, at high cost. The last months of autumn resulted in thousands of Canadian casualties. By the end of the Somme Offensive, 24,029 Canadians were killed or wounded -- nearly a quarter of the Canadian Corps' original strength.² The Allies' failure to achieve any sort of movement towards victory, and German successes against Romania and Russia, led individuals within the belligerent nations to discuss seriously the possibility of peace for the first time.

In December 1916, Germany offered its terms for negotiations, which the Allies rejected in turn. President Wilson then released a peace note asking for a clear statement of war aims so that, at the very least, the world could see what *might* end the war. Bourassa praised the American President as a voice of reason amidst the cacophony of militarism and false patriotism. The New Year quickly changed the international situation, however, as Wilson

¹ Geoff Keelan, "'Il a bien mérité de la Patrie': The 22nd Battalion and the Memory of Courcellette," *Canadian Military History*, no.3, 19 (Summer 2010): 28-40. For a more in-depth study of the 22nd Battalion, see Jean-Pierre Gagnon, *Le 22e Bataillon (canadien-français), 1914-1919: étude socio-militaire*, (Ottawa: Presses de l'Université de Laval, 1986).

² Bill Rawling, *Surviving Trench Warfare: Technology and the Canadian Corps, 1914-1918*, (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1992) 81.

delivered his famous speech “peace without victory” speech that reflected his new policy of establishing a liberal post-war international system. Germany resumed unrestricted submarine warfare in January (which they had suspended in 1915 after sinking of the *Lusitania*) meaning they were targeting neutral -- and thus American -- shipping. The public release of the Zimmerman Telegram in late February 1917 turned the American people against the Central Powers, and the United States entered the war shortly thereafter.

In May 1917, Bourassa devoted ten editorials to explaining American intervention. He had spent much time in the United States in the fall and winter of 1916-17. His wife Joséphine’s health was failing and the Bourassas travelled south of the border in hope that the better climate would help.³ Bourassa’s direct exposure to American politics allowed him to follow them much more closely than he had back home in Montreal. During his travels, he read newspapers and discussed the state of the country with Americans. He paid more attention than he otherwise might have to the American election in the fall of 1916, to the peace offers of December, and the subsequent slide from the United States as “champion de la paix” to “le héraut de la guerre.” After months of watching the “jingo press” insult and dismiss Wilson-the-advocate-of-peace, Bourassa saw the same newspapers herald Wilson-the-declarer-of-war as the one the greatest statesman of the age. “Dans tous les pays,” he counselled his readers in May, “les mobiles de l’opinion publique sont multiples.”⁴ With that in mind, Bourassa began a dissection of the complex chronology behind the American republic’s entry into the First

³ Andre Bergevin, Cameron Nish, and Anne Bourassa, *Henri Bourassa: biographie, index des écrits, index de la correspondance, 1895-1924*, (Montreal: Les Éditions de l’Action Nationale, 1966) XLIX.

⁴ Henri Bourassa, “L’intervention Americaine I: M. Wilson: son succès, sa valeur, sa sincérité – Force de l’opinion pacifiste,” *Le Devoir*, 7 May, 1917, 1.

World War. Like much of his work, it was incisive and informative, but it was also tinged with a lamenting tone that reflected the long months Bourassa had hoped to see the supporters of peace not only have their voices heard, but understood. Their failure and the American intervention seemed to extinguish the best hope for negotiating a peaceful end to the Great War.

* * *

In August 1916, following his verbal sparring with Papineau, Bourassa reviewed those who were pursuing peaceful solutions to the conflict. The list remained much the same as the one he had outlined eight months prior in December of 1915.⁵ The most prominent group was again the British Union of Democratic Control, which, Bourassa observed, every other Canadian press virtually ignored.⁶ The UDC, and other groups like the Quaker Society of Friends and The Hague's gathering of neutral nations, were concerned with more than just calling for peace. They outlined the necessary policies that might end the current war as well as avoid future ones. Their directions were straightforward: no annexations of independent states such as Belgium; reasonable attention given to "oppressed" nationalities like Poland, Alsace-Lorraine, or Slavs within the Austro-Hungarian Empire; establishing international guarantees against war on land and sea; and the creation of an organization that could mediate international disputes. All of which aligned with the position of Pope Benedict XV, and affirmed the wisdom of both positions in Bourassa's eyes. The Pope, as the greatest advocate for peace, called for an "equitable peace" that avoided laying down the foundations of another

⁵ Henri Bourassa, "Le Pape et la Guerre," *Le Devoir*, 31 December, 1915, 1.

⁶ Henri Bourassa, "L'Effort pour la Paix," *Le Devoir*, 12 August, 1916, 1. For instance, the author only found 7 references to the UDC in the *Globe* and the *Star* for the entirety of the war.

war.⁷

The failure of so many to support the cause of peace seemed to Bourassa a rejection of the Papacy. Instead, the faithful prayed for peace while working for war, which to Bourassa was “pure hypocrisie ou puérile inconséquence.”⁸ He found this especially true in Canada. Even in Germany, where voices in favour of peace were persecuted (as the imprisonment of socialist Karl Liebknecht indicated), they still seemed more prominent than those in Canada did. Bourassa noted that the Archbishop of Treves could echo the Pope’s views and condemn the jingo press in the *Petrus-Blätter*, but without the allegations of treason that the French Canadian faced in Canada. After two years of brutal warfare, Canadian voices calling for peace seemed muted except for Henri Bourassa and his supporters.

In September, the Minister of the Colonies Andrew Bonar Law raised the issue of the Empire’s future after the war, and Bourassa offered a series of articles communicating his response. The series was titled “La Reorganisation de l’Empire”⁹ and he began by quoting Bonar Law’s 14 September speech to the West India Club in London:

This War, so far as our Dominions are concerned, is being carried on under conditions which never existed in the world before. It required ... an arrangement to work by which one set of men should contribute lives and treasure and have no voice as to the way in which those lives and that treasure are expended. That cannot continue. There must be change.¹⁰

This seemed to send a clear message that despite Bourassa’s critics, who always told him that

⁷ “LETTER Al Tremendo Conflitto TO CARDINAL POMPILI, VICAR OF ROME,” as printed in *Principles for Peace Selections From Papal Documents Leo XIII to Pius XII*, Reverend Harry C. Koenig, ed., (Washington: National Catholic Welfare Conference, 1943) 201.

⁸ Henri Bourassa, “L’Effort pour la Paix,” *Le Devoir*, 12 August, 1916, 1.

⁹ Henri Bourassa, “La Reorganisation de l’Empire,” *Le Devoir*, 16 September, 1916, 1.

¹⁰ J. Castell Hopkins, *The Canadian Annual Review, War Series, 1916*, (Toronto: The Canadian Annual Review Limited, 1918) 180.

“now was not the time to speak of such things,” the future of Canadian imperial participation was open to debate. Bourassa added that even in the recent book championing Canadian accomplishments during the war, Max Aitken’s *Canada in Flanders*, Bonar Law had recognized the right of the colonies to some form of independence. “We had no power to compel any one of them to contribute a single penny, or to send a single man,” Bourassa quoted from Bonar Law’s preface to the book, “after this war the relations between the great Dominions and the Mother Country can never be the same again.”¹¹ How could Bonar Law’s position, Bourassa wondered, be reconciled with that of the British Prime Minister Herbert Asquith who at the 1911 Imperial Conference had proclaimed “that [imperial] authority cannot be shared.”¹² Bourassa decided to explore what the future might hold for Canada and the Empire, and eventually collected his series of commentaries as a booklet under the title *Le Problème de l’Empire*, with an added subtitle: “Indépendance ou Association Impériale? Étude critique du livre de M. Lionel Curtis: *The Problem of the Commonwealth*.”¹³

Lionel Curtis was a prominent imperialist intellectual whose book represented a culmination of fifteen years working towards closer imperial ties across the Empire. Curtis had begun his political journey in the midst of the Boer War where he was an Army messenger. After the conflict, he served as Sir Alfred Milner’s assistant imperial secretary in South Africa. Milner famously gathered a group of young imperialists known as “Milner’s Kindergarden” who worked to unite the fractured South African colonies. Over the next decade, they helped

¹¹ Max Aitken, *Canada in Flanders: The Official Story of the Canadian Expeditionary Force Volume I*, (London: Hodder and Stoughton, 1916) vii-viii.

¹² As quoted in Lionel Curtis, *The Problem of the Commonwealth*, (London: Macmillan and Co., 1915) 101.

¹³ Henri Bourassa, *Le Problème de l’Empire: Indépendance ou Association Impériale? Étude critique du livre de M. Lionel Curtis: The Problem of the Commonwealth*, (Montreal: Éditions du Devoir, 1916).

fashion a single state from the disparate groups, which came to fruition in 1910. Curtis believed that South Africa was a microcosm of the Empire and their methods could achieve a worldwide imperial union.¹⁴ The resulting organization, the Round Table movement, was established in 1909 and its members were tasked with setting up local groups throughout the Empire and establishing a periodical for the group, aptly titled *The Round Table*.¹⁵ The Great War increased the popularity of the movement, but it was quickly evident that wartime circumstances were changing the relationship between Britain and its Dominions faster than the Round Table had foreseen.

In 1915, Curtis published *The Problem of the Commonwealth* to spur debate about the future of the Empire. He consciously advocated views that were extreme to provoke debate and analysis.¹⁶ In it, he argued that the Dominions had to take control of their defence and foreign policy through an Imperial Parliament -- the final step of their journey towards self-government.¹⁷ Much like Bourassa's work, it was rooted in historical research and opinionated pronouncements about the shape of the future Empire. Some of Curtis' vision was not well received, like granting Britain the right to tax its Dominion subjects, even among imperialists, but it did incite debate.¹⁸ Among its opponents was Henri Bourassa, who nonetheless held a grudging respect for Curtis' clear and comprehensive arguments.

¹⁴ Deborah Lavin, "Lionel Curtis and the Idea of the Commonwealth," in Madden et al, eds., *Oxford and the Idea of the Commonwealth: Essays presented to Sir Edgar Williams*, (London: Croom Helm, 1982) 99.

¹⁵ John Kendle, *The Round Table Movement and Imperial Union*, (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1975) 64-71.

¹⁶ Kendle, *The Round Table Movement*, 186.

¹⁷ Curtis believed that Imperial Parliament was the only solution that could preserve the ability of British citizens to be involved in the democratic governance of their own country while granting the influence and rights owed to the Dominions, see Lionel Curtis, *The Problem of the Commonwealth*, 135.

¹⁸ Curtis travelled to Canada, Australia and New Zealand defending and discussing the book to gauge the reaction, see Kendle, *The Round Table Movement*, 185-205.

Curtis was the sort of opponent that Bourassa wished to see in Canada. His praise for *The Problem of the Commonwealth* was effusive: “c’est l’exposé de la thèse impérialiste la plus lucide, le plus complet, le plus tassé et aussi le plus loyal et le plus *pratique* que j’aie encore lu.”¹⁹ The first 34 pages of Bourassa’s book broke down Curtis’ thoughts on the future of the Empire for his French-speaking readers with Bourassa’s comments included. His thorough exposition of Curtis’ work proved that the nationalist and imperialist agreed on the basic facts about Canada’s relationship to the Empire. Both writers acknowledged that the national status of Canada was a matter of law. For instance, Britain could not order Canada into a war without the consent of Canadian ministers. Self-government was an integral characteristic of British government, and thus Canada could declare its neutrality in the case of British wars. Nor could Britain demand more support than the colonies were willing to offer in wars the colonies voluntarily entered. Both affirmed that the current war was, in Bourassa’s words, “une révolution radicale dans l’ordre établi par les constitutions coloniales.” In 1914, the former colonies had entered the war with Britain’s declaration, and subsequently their national forces were under British command. These circumstances necessitated systematic change where there were only two feasible options: absolute independence or imperial association with the United Kingdom. Clearly, Bourassa differed from Curtis on which choice was better but ultimately, Bourassa wrote, they agreed with the “status national des colonies autonomes” in fact and in law, as outlined historically and recently by the statesmen of Britain and Canada who shaped the Canadian constitution.²⁰

¹⁹ Henri Bourassa, *Le Problème de l’Empire*, 6.

²⁰ Henri Bourassa, *Le Problème de l’Empire*, 35-36.

Bourassa also recognized that Canadian imperialists had a significantly different perspective of Canada's imperial relationship. He underlined that, even as a French Canadian nationaliste, he was not opposed to Britain's political values. Like Curtis, he wanted to see those values entrenched in all interactions between Canada and Britain. So while Curtis and Bourassa believed in concrete principles of British constitutionalism and democracy that clearly outlined the relationship between its people and government, Canada's "nouvelle école de théologiens ultra-impérialistes" envisioned these principles as abstract guidelines for it.²¹ Instead, Bourassa claimed, Canada's imperialists opposed democracy and parliamentarianism since they did not support Canada's democratic right to govern itself. The present war had only exacerbated the problem because the British government made life and death decisions for Canadian soldiers while only answerable to the British electorate, not the Canadian one. It was one democracy's oppression by another, Bourassa declared. Canadians had no way to express disfavour with their foreign policy or the conduct of the war, an action that was essential to Canada's British-based political system. The "faux, révolutionnaire, [et] anarchique" relationship between Canada and Britain during the war and endorsed by the imperialists was unsustainable. Bourassa warned that, if the colonies did not proclaim their independence soon they would adopt the same negative sentiments of the Americans towards their former motherland.²² According to the nationaliste's logic, the imperialists ought to adopt Curtis' views if they actually wanted to improve Canada's place in the Empire.

²¹ Henri Bourassa, *Le Problème de l'Empire*, 37-38. Worse yet, Bourassa added in a footnote, was the "mauvaise foi" of clergy who attacked Bourassa for drawing attention to the danger of putting religion in service of British imperialists. He named Abbé D'Amours, the editor of the Catholic newspaper *L'Action Sociale*, who had condemned Bourassa over the course of the war. "Avec le Pape," he chided them, "nous continuerons à dire que le devoir des catholiques est de vouloir la paix et non la guerre."

²² Henri Bourassa, *Le Problème de l'Empire*, 39.

At the crux of Bourassa's opposition to imperialism was his desire to see Canadians controlling the decisions that affected their nation. His criticism, especially in the midst of a war that Canada could not leave of its own free will, was concerned with the imperial political system, not the British Empire itself. Britain was a champion of many of the democratic and liberal rights that Bourassa supported. However, he did not see those political values reflected in the system that governed the Empire and its Dominions. He saw the illusion of political freedom hiding Canada's ineffectual control over its own affairs. The freedom of Canada was really just "servitude volontaire," a state even worse than slavery imposed by force.

Nationalistes demanded change. He wrote,

nous préférons l'indépendance nationale, la neutralité et la paix. Mais s'il faut porter l'uniforme de guerre et aider l'Angleterre à faire la police du monde, nous préférons que ce soit à d'associés responsables, plutôt que sous la livrée domestique, dût-il nous en coûter plus pour *coopérer* que pour *servir*.²³

Bourassa did not think it was likely that the Empire could ever transform itself into a just, equitable system of governance, so he supported its dissolution. If he had to live under its constraints, Canada should be included as an equal partner at the very least. Then the Empire would truly represent the political values of Britain and Canada. Bourassa's problem with the imperial system was that in its current form he saw it only as "an agent of conquest, moral domination, and stifling mercantilism" rather than the form he believed it should take: a force for peace, progress, order and a place for the national aspiration of its Dominions to prosper.²⁴ Bourassa's great fear was that the war seemed to solidify the former system and discourage the growth of the latter.

²³ Henri Bourassa, *Le Problème de l'Empire*, 42.

²⁴ Henri Bourassa, *Le Problème de l'Empire*, 43.

That autumn, the question of Canadian bilingualism was finally resolved as both the Papacy and the Judicial Committee of the Privy Council pronounced their judgements on the case of French language education in Ontario. Napoléon Belcourt had presented his arguments before the Judicial Committee that summer. He argued that there was a constitutional right to French education and that Regulation 17 caused serious harm to Franco-Ontarians' religious freedom. The Judicial Committee rejected his position and ruled in favour of the Ontario government. While Regulation 17 was upheld in the October 1916 decision, they did disallow the takeover of the Ottawa Separate School Board by the province, meaning that French education could continue in some form.²⁵ It was a meagre victory for French Canadians.

A worse moral defeat had occurred a few weeks earlier when Pope Benedict XV sent a letter to Quebec's Cardinal Bégin requesting that French Canadian Catholics moderate their views and accept the decision of the Ontario government. The Pope based his comments from a report by the Apostolic Delegate to Canada, Archbishop Pellegrino Stagni, who had submitted a report to Vatican authorities that concisely reviewed the situation in Canada to date. He concluded that the bilingual schools question was "not essentially a religious matter" and specifically criticized the Quebec episcopate for interfering in the affairs of Ontario Catholics.²⁶ Intervention from Catholic clergy on both sides had fuelled the flames of the dispute, and Stagni concluded that "if priests kept themselves completely outside this and

²⁵ Patrice A. Dutil, "Against Isolationism: Napoléon Belcourt, French Canada, and 'La grande guerre,'" *Canada and the First World War: Essays in Honour of Robert Craig Brown*, David Mackenzie ed., (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2005) 113-114.

²⁶ John E. Zucchi, ed., *The View From Rome: Archbishop Stagni's 1915 Reports on the Ontario Bilingual Schools Question*, (Montreal: McGill-Queen's University Press, 2002) 33. Zucchi's introduction gives a concise and worthwhile review of the bilingual schools question.

similar matters of race the occasions for disagreement among the laity would be much rarer.”²⁷

This report shaped the Papal letter, which ultimately asked all Catholics involved to end the conflict and seek compromise because the issue was not a religious one.²⁸

Bourassa offered no public reply to the Papal decision, but he was disappointed. Privately, he admitted that on reading it he had felt “une impression pénible et même un sentiment d’irritation.” He blamed the insidious influence of the imperialists over the Catholic episcopacy, which he believed influenced the Pope as well. His opponents had won the day. The solution, Bourassa explained in a letter to F. Hébert, was to keep trying to convince the Pope of the justness of their cause.²⁹

Instead of publicly deliberating on the Papal decision, Bourassa looked to the United States for encouraging signs about the state of the world and the future possibility of peace. The re-election of Woodrow Wilson in November affirmed the importance of the Democrat’s election slogan, “he kept us out of the war.” Bourassa dismissed American concerns during the campaign about the electoral influence of “hyphenated Americans” like German-Americans or Italian-Americans as ridiculous. One might better talk about the influence of hyphenated pro-Allies and pro-Germany, he wrote, welcoming Wilson’s return to the White House.³⁰ Backed by popular support, the U.S. President was now in a position to nurture a peaceful resolution to the European war. Bourassa reasoned that if Wilson “offrait aux peuples ravagés par la guerre sa médiation et son appui afin de les aider à rentrer en possession des bienfaits inappréciables

²⁷ John E. Zucchi, *The View From Rome*, 55.

²⁸ John E. Zucchi, *The View From Rome*, 109-114.

²⁹ H. Bourassa to F. Hébert, 18 December 1916, as quoted in René Durocher, “Henri Bourassa, les évêques et la guerre de 1914-1918,” *Canadian Historical Association Historical Papers* 6 (1971) 265.

³⁰ Henri Bourassa, “L’Élection de M. Wilson,” *Le Devoir*, 15 November, 1916, 1.

dont le peuple américain, avec raison, n'a pas voulu se départir, le mouvement en faveur de la paix ne tarderait pas à devenir irrésistible.”³¹ Bourassa hoped that Wilson could make some progress on the issue of peace since no one else seemed willing. Bourassa was partially right. In December 1916, Wilson became actively involved in defining the terms of a peace treaty, but not before Germany made their own offer.

After two years of warfare, the belligerent nations seriously considered the possibility of peace for the first time in the winter of 1916. Especially after the Somme Offensive and the Battle of Verdun, European statesmen were at least willing to contemplate an end to the war to avoid more disastrous stalemates. Germany, as leader of the Central Powers, was the first to publicly issue a formal proposal to the Allies in December 1916, stating that they were spurred “by the desire to stem the flood of blood and to bring the horrors of war to an end” to enter peace negotiations.³² They offered to discuss the terms of the peace, though they did not quite outline the terms that might satisfy them.

Bourassa approached the prospect of peace with typical reason and intellect. Two days after the announcement he commented on the timing of Germany's peace offer and the hidden motivation behind it in an article in *Le Devoir* titled “La Démarche de L'Allemagne: Espoirs de paix – Obstacles probables.”³³ His careful deconstruction reminded his readers of the recent German victory in Romania and the acquisition of the oil fields there, which put them in a stronger position than the beleaguered Allies. The peace proposal did not reflect a new desire to

³¹ Henri Bourassa, “L'Élection de M. Wilson,” *Le Devoir*, 15 November, 1916, 1.

³² James Brown Scott, “Proposals for Peace Negotiations made by Germany,” *Official Statements of War Aims and Peace Proposals, December 1916 to November 1918*, (Washington: Carnegie Endowment for International Peace, Division of International Law, 1921) 3.

³³ Henri Bourassa, “La Démarche de L'Allemagne: Espoirs de paix – Obstacles probables,” *Le Devoir*, 14 December, 1916, 1.

end the war, he noted, but only a new belief that a negotiated peace would be beneficial at that time. It made sense that Germany would offer peace when they had the most to gain from it. It was clear to Bourassa that they sought to appear “devant l’opinion mondiale comme les protagonistes de la paix et à rejeter sur leurs ennemis la responsabilité d’une guerre à outrance.”³⁴

All of this could be a reason to reject the German proposal, but for Bourassa it represented a crucial opportunity. Here lay the possibility for an honourable and immediate peace. The Allies could take Germany at its word and consider the terms, and if they were not acceptable, reject them. In response, the Allies could offer their own terms, and the neutral countries and the opinion of the world could form a reasonable middle ground between the two. Then an agreeable and equitable peace could be fashioned. Only through that process could the “droits de la conscience, de la justice et de la raison” prevail against the “passions sauvages.”³⁵ In short, Bourassa did not simply react to the German offer and accept it as a means to end Canada’s involvement in a war he did not support. He honestly examined the proposal, and accepted it as a *possible* means to end the war’s suffering. The German terms should be at least met openly, he argued, as any chance at peace was worth pursuing.

Bourassa’s reaction stands as an honest intellectual inquiry about the German peace offer and the best response to it. He was not writing as a journalist agitating for a sensationalist headline to sell papers or a political figure seeking to weaken an opponent. Bourassa cut

³⁴ Henri Bourassa, “La Démarche de L’Allemagne: Espoirs de paix – Obstacles probables,” *Le Devoir*, 14 December, 1916, 1.

³⁵ Henri Bourassa, “La Démarche de L’Allemagne: Espoirs de paix – Obstacles probables,” *Le Devoir*, 14 December, 1916, 1.

through the façade of the German peace offer as a means to end the war in their favour within the first few paragraphs of his article. Rather than condemning their deceit, he accepted it as inevitable and proposed a course of action that allowed for progress. He realized that, realistically, each side would only offer peace to serve their best interest. Accepting this truth was crucial in moving towards an end to the war.

The patriotic press of English Canada did not easily recognize this important fact. Consider the headline from the *Globe* on 13 December 1916: “Foe Peace Proposals Accompanied by Threats: Allies will continue to fight for human liberty,” or its editorial, which declared that accepting the peace was “tantamount to an admission of defeat by the Allied nations [...] The Allies cannot sheathe the sword until their ends are accomplished.”³⁶ This perspective reflected English Canadians’ belief that the war had become a patriotic conflict requiring a “total Canadian war effort.”³⁷ The majority of English Canadian newspapers emphasized that Canadian triumph would be found in commitment to the war and the justifications for it. While the Canadian press was not monolithic in its coverage, it still clashed greatly with Bourassa, who articulated a very different understanding of the war.

Bourassa continued his analysis by outlining what he saw as the most significant obstacles to peace. He named the “partisans de la guerre à outrance”³⁸ as one of the greatest barriers, though they took different forms among the belligerent nations. First, he commented briefly on the aristocratic Junkers in Germany and their dwindling influence. As aristocratic

³⁶ *The Globe*, 13 December, 1916, 1, 6.

³⁷ R. Matthew Bray, “‘Fighting as an Ally’: The English-Canadian Patriotic Response to the Great War,” *Canadian Historical Review* 51, no. 2 (1980): 154. See also his unpublished PhD Thesis, Robert Matthew Bray, *The Canadian Patriotic Response to the Great War*, PhD diss., Laurentian University, 1977).

³⁸ Henri Bourassa, “La Démarche de L’Allemagne: Espoirs de paix – Obstacles probables,” *Le Devoir*, 14 December, 1916, 1.

power weakened, he argued, German socialists gained prominence. The German peace offer was, then, a consequence of the rising calls of German socialists for the end of the war.³⁹

Bourassa's appraisal of the German situation spoke to the variety, and weakness, of his sources. Still, they led him to the reasonable belief that diminishing support for total war in Germany had opened a new window of opportunity for peace.

Bourassa concluded his analysis with what he believed to be the final, and most serious, obstacle to peace: Russia. As he had since 1914, he claimed that history would come to see this as a Russian war over Turkish succession, the final struggle between "des Slaves et des Teutons pour recueillir les dépouilles du cadavre ottoman."⁴⁰ The driving force behind the prolongation of the conflict was, in his view, the Russian determination to claim Constantinople and to achieve Balkan supremacy, which closely paralleled traditional Papal fears regarding the Orthodox Church creating an "Orthodox St. Peter's."⁴¹

Bourassa's claims may seem exaggerated given what historians now know about the fate of Russia's imperial ambitions but explaining the war as a titanic struggle between German and Slavic peoples must be understood in the context of the previous decades of European history. Since the Russo-Turkish war of 1877-1878, the Balkans had been the centre of conflict between Russia, Austria, the Ottomans, and the smaller Balkan nations. Indeed, the

³⁹ Historical work demonstrates Bourassa's claim here is false. As the *Junkers* lost their influence, it was Army officers such as Generals Erich Ludendorff and Paul von Hindenburg that gained it, not the *Reichstag's* socialist members. For an excellent overview of the state of German politics throughout the war, see Roger Chickering, *Imperial Germany and the Great War, 1914-1918* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998).

⁴⁰ Henri Bourassa, "La Démarche de L'Allemagne: Espoirs de paix – Obstacles probables," *Le Devoir*, 14 December, 1916, 1.

⁴¹ John F. Pollard, *The Unknown Pope: Benedict XV (1914-1922) and the Pursuit of Peace*, (London: Geoffrey Chapman, 1999) 90-1.

First and Second Balkan Wars had been fought in 1912 and 1913. To a contemporary and informed observer of European affairs, such as Bourassa, solving the “Balkans problem” would have to be one of the final results of the bloodshed on European battlefields. The entire conflict had begun there and Bourassa argued that it would end there as well. He wrote,

Si la guerre se prolonge, si toute chance de paix est écartée, si des millions d’Anglais, de Français, de Canadiens continuent à périr dans les tranchées ou survivent mutilés, ce sera principalement parce que la Russie n’a pas encore atteint son objectif suprême: la prise de Constantinople.⁴²

The seizure of Constantinople would finish the war in the East and bring about a Russian victory, an outcome Bourassa found problematic. In his assessment, Russia was by far the least democratic of the Great Powers (though their autocratic ruler would be gone a few short months later), but it was also the lynchpin of Allied victory. As long as Russia was in the war, Germany was locked into a two-front battle. Still, he mocked Britain and France for supporting an ally so obviously not interested in liberty, civilization or progress. To him, the alliance with Czarist Russia was difficult to reconcile with Allied claims of fighting for democracy against the German *Kaiser*. As long as Russian success remained an important part of Allied objectives, their war effort would be tainted and peace would depend on victory in the East as much as the West. For Canadians, such a victory had little value.

Above all, Bourassa noted, the inability of the belligerent nations to end the war would have a terrible cost for Canada. Fighting in Europe meant the death of tens of thousands Canadians; ending the war would mean tens of thousands saved. His simplest observation was perhaps the most valid. If the war was solely about saving lives, then it would be over within a

⁴² Henri Bourassa, “La Démarche de L’Allemagne: Espoirs de paix – Obstacles probables,” *Le Devoir*, 14 December, 1916, 1.

day. Clearly, this was not the case. He wrote in his final line that “les peuples sanglants, mutilés, épuisés, finiront par l’entendre.”⁴³ His words were an ominous prediction reminding readers that the obstacles to peace were too great for the moment. That might change in the future, albeit with disastrous results. Bourassa believed the prolongation of the conflict promised far more catastrophic consequences than a compromised peace. He worried that Canadians, and all the people of the belligerent nations, would be too slow in recognizing that fact.

The article struck at the centre of the myth of the Allied war effort and at the hearts of many patriotic Canadians. Portraying the war as a political and economic manoeuvre was especially challenging to zealous patriots who claimed moral superiority over their enemies. If Britain fought for wealth and power, and not for civilization and liberty, then it was perhaps not worth the increasing cost. This view of the international system differed from that portrayed in the rest of the Canadian press. Drawing on earlier articles he had written,⁴⁴ Bourassa depicted the war for a scrap of paper and Belgian security as a means to an end, a solution to the problem of rising German dominance that had threatened the British Empire for the last two decades. Belgium, Poland, Serbia, Romania and Greece were all victims of “l’ambition et [les] infâmes calculs de leurs grands voisins, manipulateurs sans scrupules de l’équilibre européen.”⁴⁵ The primary tenet of the international system that had maintained relative peace across the continent since the Vienna Congress of 1815 had been the preservation of this

⁴³ Henri Bourassa, “La Démarche de L’Allemagne: Espoirs de paix – Obstacles probables,” *Le Devoir*, 14 December, 1916, 1.

⁴⁴ For Bourassa’s review of the role of Belgium and Britain at the beginning of the war, see his articles in *Le Devoir* from 28 August to 14 September, 1914.

⁴⁵ Henri Bourassa, “La Démarche de L’Allemagne: Espoirs de paix – Obstacles probables,” *Le Devoir*, 14 December, 1916, 1.

“balance of power.” The corruption of that balance by the great powers in the twentieth century resulted in more than just the outbreak of the First World War. Bourassa inferred that the system, which had once assured the continuance of European peace, now assured the continuance of war. The Germans were intent on influencing the small powers of Europe and were intent on seeing the scales tip in their favour, while the British and the French were determined to see the opposite. Neither of the Great Power alliances wanted to see the other benefit from the war’s end. Germany’s proposal, a gauntlet thrown when the balance was so tenuously in its favour, could not and would not be accepted.

Closely following the German peace proposal was a “peace note” released by President Wilson on 18 December 1916. Wilson’s refusal to enter the war hinged on a continuing belief that he could mediate a peace between the belligerents, as well as having a “manifest duty” to maintain a detachment from European affairs.⁴⁶ Wilson, who ran as the man who had “kept America out of the war,” wanted nothing more than to mediate the conflict but had to be circumspect before the election so as to not alienate voters. Pacifist organizations within the United States had been asking Wilson to mediate since the war’s beginning, and after defeating Hughes in November 1916, he was finally ready to launch his initiative.⁴⁷ His “peace note” was not a peace proposal. It suggested that the powers involved in the conflict declare their war aims. He proposed that this would allow neutral nations to understand better when and how the

⁴⁶ “Manifest duty” is how Wilson termed it in his Annual Message to the Congress of 7 December, 1915, see Edgar E. Robinson, *The Foreign Policy of Woodrow Wilson, 1913-1917*, (New York: Macmillan Company, 1917), 294.

⁴⁷ David S. Patterson, “Woodrow Wilson and the Mediation Movement, 1914-17,” *The Historian*, no.4, 33 (August 1971): 551. For some information on the petition given to Wilson in November asking that he demand for the war aims of the belligerent nations, see Castell Hopkins, *Canadian Annual Review 1916*, 228.

war would end.⁴⁸ Arriving on the heels of the German offer, Wilson made it clear that his note neither was a response to it nor connected to it in any way.⁴⁹ It represented the call of a neutral nation to the warring ones: a call not for peace, but for clarity.

Bourassa deconstructed Wilson's note in the same manner as the German proposal. In an article titled "Espoirs de Paix" in the 27 December 1916 issue of *Le Devoir*, he discussed the significance of the note while echoing many similar themes from the previous weeks.⁵⁰ He outlined three important facts: "la valeur intrinsèque de la note du président; l'accueil favorable qu'elle reçoit dans les milieux favorables à la paix, neutres ou belligérants [et] l'opposition violente que lui suscitent les démagogues, les jingos, et les profiteurs du massacre."⁵¹ Each of these points explored the reaction to Wilson's peace note and reinforced Bourassa's personal appraisal of the situation. The American President did not compromise his neutrality. Instead, he asked both the Allied and Central powers to present their goals for the war and let the world judge them impartially. Wilson was "la voix du chef de la plus grande des nations neutres" who among them had "la plus haute autorité morale du monde."⁵²

Bourassa argued that the best possibility for peace lay not with the belligerent nations, but with neutral intermediaries, such as Switzerland, Holland and the Scandinavian countries -- those best positioned to understand the horrors of war inflicted upon their neighbours. He believed that this granted them the moral influence and opportunity to mediate the conflict. Bourassa assumed that Wilson's call for a statement of war aims meant the mobilization of

⁴⁸ Scott, Official Statements, 15.

⁴⁹ Scott, Official Statements, 13.

⁵⁰ Henri Bourassa, "Espoirs de Paix," *Le Devoir*, 27 December, 1916, 1.

⁵¹ Henri Bourassa, "Espoirs de Paix," *Le Devoir*, 27 December, 1916, 1.

⁵² Henri Bourassa, "Espoirs de Paix," *Le Devoir*, 27 December, 1916, 1.

these neutral powers and the prospect of ending the war. Bourassa had previously set out the logic behind the self-interest of governments and their reasons for wanting the war to continue. Now he argued that it was in the best interests of the neutral nations that it ended. It was up to them to represent the “*intérêt général de l’humanité.*”⁵³ Bourassa split the political scene into its logical power blocs; separating the interests of the Allies, the Central Powers and the rest of the world. While those at war sought an end through victory, the neutral powers alone sought an end through negotiation.

In Bourassa’s eyes, the attack by ardent supporters of the war against those who wished for peace exposed their duplicity as they further abandoned the pretence of a just war. Bourassa’s arguments spiral close to the ridiculous as he accused the “vampires” of each nation of paying others to support it and terrorizing any who did not agree.⁵⁴ After first insisting that the American government give a material advantage to the Allies in the name of democracy and liberty, “*les vampires d’outre-mer lui font maintenant un crime de vouloir mettre fin au conflit, source de profits inouïs pour son propre pays.*”⁵⁵ Bourassa argued again that the war was about profit and that peace was unattainable as long as corporate and political interests suffered little but gained much. Peace offered justice and alone offered “*aux nations en guerre une chance de sortir honorablement du conflit avant leur total épuisement.*”⁵⁶ He reiterated the notion that the war would destroy its participants if not stopped immediately. With so much at stake, Bourassa wondered how the Allies could think of continuing to fight; even a major

⁵³ Henri Bourassa, “*Espoirs de Paix,*” *Le Devoir*, 27 December, 1916, 1.

⁵⁴ Having barely avoided an attack by a mob of war supporters in Ottawa in December 1914, Bourassa knew that patriots were willing to go to extreme lengths to condemn dissenters. Though an extreme situation, it characterized the severe backlash Bourassa experienced for his critical opinions.

⁵⁵ Henri Bourassa, “*Espoirs de Paix,*” *Le Devoir*, 27 December, 1916, 1.

⁵⁶ Henri Bourassa, “*Espoirs de Paix,*” *Le Devoir*, 27 December, 1916, 1.

defeat was better than total annihilation. Quoting at length from the liberal Manchester *Guardian*, he stated that many Britons were against the war, but their opinion was “malheureusement peu exprimée” and when it was expressed, “ses interprètes sont isolés, impuissants, traqués et dénoncés comme traîtres.”⁵⁷ As a result, the dominant view became the only view.

Bourassa’s religiosity infused his international political analysis with a moral attitude and supreme confidence.⁵⁸ For example, the conclusion to his article on the peace invoked the moral superiority of Pope Benedict XV. The war would not conclude until the aggressors accepted “les obligatoires et nécessaires sacrifices d’amour-propre et d’intérêts particuliers” and that the peace must not benefit “à une seule des parties, mais à toutes.” “Plus que jamais,” he continued, “[nous avons] le devoir de prier pour que la paix rétablisse.”⁵⁹ Bourassa’s assurance that he spoke of higher truths translated into a ferocious writing style and evocative imagery that emerged, particularly when discussing Pope Benedict XV’s comments on international affairs.

Yet at times Bourassa’s prose appeared out of touch with the reality of a nation at war. His deeply held beliefs left little room for compromise; just as with the “jingoists,” his was a world of black and white. You agreed with Bourassa or you were his enemy. It is little wonder that English Canada vilified him. After all, he called the most devoted of war supporters hate-mongers possessing short-sighted minds who, if they could, would have God himself in their

⁵⁷ Henri Bourassa, “Espoirs de Paix,” *Le Devoir*, 27 December, 1916, 1.

⁵⁸ As Durocher notes, Bourassa “[a accepté] sans réserve l’autorité de l’Église,” and felt obligated to “informer [les autres] des opinions,” see Durocher, “Henri Bourassa, les évêques et la guerre de 1914-1918,” 272.

⁵⁹ Henri Bourassa, “Espoirs de Paix,” *Le Devoir*, 27 December, 1916, 1.

armies.⁶⁰ These were the men and women of Toronto, or Winnipeg, or Victoria. These were his fellow Canadians. Bourassa's anger may have been justified to him, so fiercely did he hold his own opinions, but he did not earn himself many friends with it. Neither side was willing to admit the other could be correct. The legitimacy of his analyses of these peace proposals, as insightful as they may have been, often suffered from the anger they revealed. For a man supposedly trying to encourage peace, his tone was decidedly belligerent.

Despite the lack of response among Canada's political leaders to his arguments and perhaps because of the failure of a possible peace to emerge from the December discussions, Bourassa continued vigorously dissecting the Canadian and international war effort. In 1917, as Germany restarted unrestricted submarine warfare and the United States swung towards the side of the Allies, Bourassa once again chose to discuss the world could secure a lasting peace. From 17 to 24 February, he wrote a series of articles to Prime Minister Robert Borden, who had left for London on 12 February to attend the Imperial War Cabinet.⁶¹ In his Speech from the Throne, Borden had declared that the British War Cabinet would consider "urgent questions affecting the prosecution of the war, the possible conditions on which the Allies Nations could assent to its termination, and the problems which would then immediately arise."⁶² While Borden was travelling (he only arrived on the 23rd), Bourassa thought it was important to suggest how the Prime Minister should deal with these questions since the members of Parliament had forgone offering any critical perspective. Instead, Parliament had resorted to

⁶⁰ Henri Bourassa, "Espoirs de Paix," *Le Devoir*, 27 December, 1916, 1.

⁶¹ Castell Hopkins, *The Canadian Annual Review 1917*, 286.

⁶² Robert Borden, *House of Commons Debates*, 12th Parliament, 7th Session, vol. 1, January 22, 1916, 6-7.

“les phrases creuses et stéréotypées qui trainent partout depuis deux ans et demi.”⁶³ Bourassa advised that Borden should remember all those affected by the conditions of peace discussed among the Empire’s representatives, which included the belligerent nations, the nations of the British Empire, and the people of the world.

What followed echoed much of Bourassa’s previous writings, though this time his tone was demure. His vision of the peace was guided by the war supporters themselves, implying that the peace must be based on the same ideals as the war. If Canadians were fighting and dying in a war to free oppressed peoples, to make the world more peaceful, and to safeguard democracy while erasing militarism, then the peace forged by it should take a similar shape.

Bourassa wrote that the Allies should avoid demanding territorial and monetary compensation from the Central Powers as terms of peace. Canada and most of the Allied nations had not yet taken any enemy soil, so demands that adjusted European borders should be raised cautiously. As well, the current war was bankrupting all of the participants -- what money was there left to demand?⁶⁴ It was unlikely that Canada would receive any money, so Borden should not press for financial compensation from the peace. Demanding German colonies was an equally foolhardy endeavour. Again, Bourassa highlighted the absence of any benefit for Canada. Annexed territory would belong to the Empire, certainly not to any of its Dominions. Besides, he added, German colonists would only represent yet another group of British subjects that would require assimilation. If Germany lost their colonies, he reasoned, its

⁶³ Henri Bourassa, “Sir Robert Borden et les Conditions de Paix: Indemnités de guerre – Colonies allemandes,” *Le Devoir*, 17 February 1917, 1.

⁶⁴ Henri Bourassa, “Sir Robert Borden et les Conditions de Paix: Indemnités de guerre – Colonies allemandes,” *Le Devoir*, 17 February 1917, 1.

emigrants would travel to foreign countries seeking better conditions. Would they come to Canada or the United States seeking better lives, as so many already had? That had not worked out in their favour Bourassa asserted. German-Americans had demonstrated their influence on American affairs in the election when Wilson feared offending them, but in Canada “les camps de concentrations, les émeutes de Berlin-Kitchener témoignent que, chez ces ‘excellents Canadiens’, la voix du sang n’est pas éteinte.”⁶⁵ If Borden truly wanted to see a lasting peace, he would temper the “ambition impériale du junkerism prussien,” but not the “expansion coloniale du peuple allemand.”⁶⁶ Only then would the peace be beneficial to Canada and avoid another war. Any end to the war, Bourassa implied, could not be simply a matter of compensating the damage done to the victorious coalition. It had to consider the long term and future international disputes that might again cause a European war or turmoil.

The principle of free national expression, which demanded the defence of Belgium in August 1914, was worth defending in the war’s aftermath. There were two ways of envisioning European nationalism. The first stemmed from the natural rights and history of a people. Each group of people could possess the “éléments essentiels” of nationalism: territory, government, laws, and social organisation. With them they should be given the right to independence.⁶⁷ The second, “le vrai principe des nationalités” according to Bourassa, was the application of God’s eternal moral principle to international affairs: “Ne faites pas à autrui ce que vous ne voulez

⁶⁵ Henri Bourassa, “Sir Robert Borden et les Conditions de Paix: Indemnités de guerre – Colonies allemandes,” *Le Devoir*, 17 February 1917, 1.

⁶⁶ Henri Bourassa, “Sir Robert Borden et les Conditions de Paix: Indemnités de guerre – Colonies allemandes,” *Le Devoir*, 17 February 1917, 1.

⁶⁷ Henri Bourassa, “Sir Robert Borden et les Conditions de Paix II: L’affranchissement des peuples,” *Le Devoir*, 19 February, 1917, 1.

pas qui vois soit fait à vous-mêmes.”⁶⁸ Bourassa explained to his readers that the Sovereign Pontiff had already outlined how to consider freedom and nationalities. He quoted Pope Benedict XV’s letter of 28 July 1915, on the first anniversary of the outbreak of war, which clearly outlined the proper behaviour between nations, when the Pope had asked: “Why not from this moment weigh with serene mind the rights and lawful aspirations of the peoples? ... The equilibrium of the world, and the prosperity and assured tranquillity of nations rest upon mutual benevolence and respect for the rights and the dignity of others.”⁶⁹ This affirmed that national aspirations were a worthwhile cause for Bourassa and Borden alike, and reasserted the authority of Rome and the word of God to guide human affairs. Bourassa was quick to point out who ignored this wise council: the supporters of total war against Germany were more interested in imposing their social ideas, their government and their “superior civilization” on others. There was no guarantee that triumphant Anglo-French democracies, which Bourassa saw as a mixture of egalitarianism and plutocratic mercantilism, would be better than Prussian militarism.⁷⁰ The only peace worth pursuing had to follow the true principles of national expression. That meant freedom not only for the peoples of the Central Powers, like Belgium, Serbia or Montenegro, but also for those of the Allies, like Ireland, Poland, and Finland. The peace had to be all or nothing, Bourassa told Borden, or it would not be worth the lives sacrificed for it.

⁶⁸ Henri Bourassa, “Sir Robert Borden et les Conditions de Paix II: L’affranchissement des peuples,” *Le Devoir*, 19 February, 1917, 1.

⁶⁹ “EXHORTATION *Allorchè Fummo* TO THE BELLIGERENT PEOPLES AND TO THEIR LEADERS,” as printed in *Principles for Peace Selections From Papal Documents Leo XIII to Pius XII*, Reverend Harry C. Koenig, ed., (Washington: National Catholic Welfare Conference, 1943) 181. It was originally written in Italian.

⁷⁰ Henri Bourassa, “Sir Robert Borden et les Conditions de Paix II: L’affranchissement des peuples,” *Le Devoir*, 19 February, 1917, 1.

Bourassa then highlighted his fears for the future of the international system, using the familiar example of Russia's desire to control Constantinople to explain the war's prolongation. He repeated the claim to Borden in his next article, reminding the Canadian leader that the conflict meant to secure Russian control of the Dardanelles. "En vertu de quel principe de droit ou de morale internationale," Bourassa asked, "faut-il que les Canadiens versent leur sang et leur argent, afin de permettre à la Russie de s'installer à Constantinople?"⁷¹ None, he answered. Instead, the decision to support Russian expansion maintained the Entente alliance's cohesion against the Central Powers. A fairer plan would impose "absolute neutrality" on the Bosphorus straits and grant control to Greece, which had a better historical basis for ownership than Russia. Such a plan was impossible Bourassa wrote, quoting 17th century French poet Lafontaine to underscore his point: "que de tout temps / Les petits ont pâti des sottises des grands."⁷² In a line, Bourassa revealed his inquietude about the war's impact on the international system: the weak always suffered at the hands of the powerful.

The Allies had no moral high ground, or at least could not claim they were building a better world than the one wrought by German victory. Imperial ambitions would not disappear at war's end, and Russia was as likely to compete against Britain and France for control of the world as Germany had before 1914. Japan also had a precarious position in the alliance. Japan and Russia both had interests in Asian expansion and after the war, Bourassa believed, they would come into conflict again as they had in 1905. Prime Minister Borden, if he truly

⁷¹ Henri Bourassa, "Sir Robert Borden et les Conditions de Paix III: La Russie à Constantinople – La Russie et le Japon," *Le Devoir*, 20 February, 1917, 1.

⁷² Henri Bourassa, "Sir Robert Borden et les Conditions de Paix III: La Russie à Constantinople – La Russie et le Japon," *Le Devoir*, 20 February, 1917, 1. The line is from Lafontaine's poem "Les Deux Taureaux et une Grenouille" about the impossibility of tiny frogs succeeding against large bulls.

represented Canadian interests, should enquire as to the British position on the future of Asia and the Pacific.⁷³ If Canada was inexorably linked to British interests, it at least deserved to be informed about those interests. Of course, Bourassa chided, such questions might be considered too close to the “hérésie u-ti-li-ta-ris-te[sic],” an approach Canadian policy had studiously avoided.⁷⁴

Borden’s dominant argument raised to justify the Canadian war effort, and perhaps the most compelling, was to champion British democracy against Prussian militarism. Bourassa urged Borden to consider fully the validity of such justifications, translating a quote from Sir Edward Grey. In October 1916, Grey’s speech on “Why Britain is in the War” stated that “we shall fight until we have established [for all States]... free development under equal conditions, and each in accordance with its own genius.”⁷⁵ Grey, along with many of the war’s supporters, repeatedly argued that they were fighting to preserve some sort of independent democratic character for the nations of Europe. Who was to say that democracy was so much better than anything else? Democracy, Bourassa emphasized, had initiated invaluable economic and social reforms while stopping the inherent abuse of monarchies, but it had also “engendré des maux

⁷³ Henri Bourassa, “Sir Robert Borden et les Conditions de Paix III: La Russie à Constantinople – La Russie et le Japon,” *Le Devoir*, 20 February, 1917, 1.

⁷⁴ Henri Bourassa, “Sir Robert Borden et les Conditions de Paix III: La Russie à Constantinople – La Russie et le Japon,” *Le Devoir*, 20 February, 1917, 1.

⁷⁵ Bourassa translated it as follows: “assurer à tous les États *leur libre développement*, dans de conditions d’égalité, et conformément à leur *génie propre*,” (author’s emphasis) see Henri Bourassa, “Sir Robert Borden et les Conditions de Paix IV: Le triomphe de la démocratie,” *Le Devoir*, 22 February, 1917, 1. Bourassa quotes Edward Grey’s speech from 16 October, 1916, see Viscount of Fallodon, Edward Grey, *Why Britain is in the war and what she hopes from the future; a speech by the Rt. Hon. Viscount Grey of Fallodon ... addressed to the representatives of the foreign press in London on the 23rd October, 1916*, (London: T.F. Unwin Ltd, 1916) 10-11. However Grey notes that the words belong to Prime Minister H.H. Asquith addressing the House of Commons on 11 October, 1916, see *War Speeches by British Ministers 1914-1916*, (London: T.F. Unwin Ltd, 1917) 133. The mistake is likely made because Bourassa mentions another source he was reading and likely took the quote from, Herbert Adams Gibbons, “Constantinople: Principle or Pawn?,” *Century Magazine*, no.4, 93 (February, 1917) 517-526, who also incorrectly attributes it to Grey, see 521.

et des abus” of its own.⁷⁶ Further, Bourassa asked, what sort of democracy should the victors impose upon the defeated nations? Should it be the democracy of France? England? Italy? Or the democracy forming in Russia after the Tsar devolved power to the Duma (parliament)? Besides he added, democracy was subverted the moment some of the Allied nations had entered the war, because their parliaments or people had not approved their foreign policy.⁷⁷ If they were fighting to preserve democracy and replace “autocratic” Europe, they should take a closer look at their own understanding of it.

If Borden did manage to secure the peace that Bourassa envisaged, it would be meaningless if another war broke out in the future. The Allies’ goal must not be only to end the current war, but to create an international system that avoided future wars. Even if Europe liberated oppressed nations, resisted imperialist pressure, rejected the alliance system and preserved the freedom of the seas, the continent could still retread the road to war if militarism remained a viable ideology. Bourassa ridiculed the Roman axiom, *si vis pacem para bellum*; if you want peace, prepare for war. Of all maxims, he wrote, none were “plus mensongère que celle-là, de si contraire à la raison, au simple bon sens, à la réalité des faits.” “Les préparatifs de guerre mènent la guerre,” he continued and advised Borden that “si l’on veut établir la paix, il faut travailler pour la paix.”⁷⁸ It was the work of all nations of the world. Surely, not just Prussian militarism had caused the crises of Tunisia and Morocco, or wars in Afghanistan and the Sudan, or the conflict between Russia and Japan.

⁷⁶ Henri Bourassa, “Sir Robert Borden et les Conditions de Paix IV: Le triomphe de la démocratie,” *Le Devoir*, 22 February, 1917, 1.

⁷⁷ Henri Bourassa, “Sir Robert Borden et les Conditions de Paix IV: Le triomphe de la démocratie,” *Le Devoir*, 22 February, 1917, 1.

⁷⁸ Henri Bourassa, “Sir Robert Borden et les Conditions de Paix V: Liberté des mers – Destruction du militarisme,” *Le Devoir*, 23 February, 1917, 1.

Militarism was not just about the number of guns or dreadnoughts or soldiers. To Bourassa the greatest threat of militarism was the *mindset* that led nations to believe they required larger and larger armies. Armies were necessary – if only to defend against other nations – but their continual expansion was not. According to Bourassa, the “war-mongers” sought to exclusively focus on Prussian militarism, for if all militarism was rejected they would lose the source of their “odieux profits.”⁷⁹ The only way Borden could truly establish a lasting peace was to advocate for the real solution to war: abolishing militarism.

Accordingly, Bourassa insisted that the peace must address pervasive militarism. The journalist raised the arguments from an American publication, *Basis for a Durable Peace*, written by future Nobel laureate and President of Columbia University Nicholas Murray Butler (under the pseudonym “Cosmos”).⁸⁰ Butler wrote that “one way in which Prussian militarism might emerge victorious ... [was] if the spirit and policies of Prussian militarism should conquer the mind of Great Britain or that of any other allied Power.”⁸¹ Bourassa returned to the argument he had made almost a year prior in *Aujourd’hui, Hier, Demain*, highlighting the potential for Canada to be “conquered” as Butler feared. It seemed to Bourassa that soldiers had already become a separate caste of Canadian society who were treated differently by its citizens and its laws. He perceived this as a sure sign of the rising influence of militarism over

⁷⁹ Henri Bourassa, “Sir Robert Borden et les Conditions de Paix V: Liberté des mers – Destruction du militarisme,” *Le Devoir*, 23 February, 1917, 1.

⁸⁰ For a brief summary of Butler’s activity during the war, see Martin David Dubin, “The Carnegie Endowment for International Peace and the Advocacy of a League of Nations, 1914-1918,” *Proceedings of the American Philosophical Society*, no.6, 123 (December 1979): 344-368, and 358 for Butler’s use of the pseudonym Cosmos. For the book Bourassa quotes, see Cosmos, *The Basis for a Durable Peace*, (New York: Charles Scribner’s Sons, 1917).

⁸¹ Cosmos, *The Basis for a Durable Peace*, (New York: Charles Scribner’s Sons, 1917) 61. Henri Bourassa, “Sir Robert Borden et les Conditions de Paix VI: ‘Militarisme canadien’ - Conclusion,” *Le Devoir*, 24 February, 1917, 1.

the last two years of war. Prime Minister Borden should “promettre de défaire à peu près tout ce que [militarisme a] fait ici” and denounce British “navalism” if he truly sought an end to the brand of militarism in Germany and which, in theory, was one of the primary justifications for the war effort.⁸² The victorious Allies ought to impose the same principles of peace, which demanded the fight against militarism, not just in a defeated Germany, but also in Russia, France, Britain or Canada.

In this somewhat cynical mood, Bourassa witnessed the progression towards the American entry into the war. The resumption of unrestricted submarine warfare in January 1917 made American intervention increasingly likely, while the publication of the Zimmermann telegram in the US press on 1 March shocked the American public. Named after the German State Secretary for Foreign Affairs, Arthur Zimmermann, Germany sent the telegram to the German Ambassador in Mexico promising that if Mexico allied with Germany, Germany would transfer American territory to them if the United States entered the war. As Justus Doenecke argues, previous concerns over the nation’s dignity and rights were abstract concepts to the American Republic - but Germany promising entire states to Mexico (a foreign power invaded by the Americans year before) suddenly gave the Great War new relevance.⁸³ Nonetheless, President Wilson’s 5 March inauguration speech revealed his continued commitment to the “principles of a liberated mankind” that the United States stood for “whether in war or in peace.” Wilson listed the positions that defined America’s view of the

⁸² Henri Bourassa, “Sir Robert Borden et les Conditions de Paix VI: ‘Militarisme canadien’ - Conclusion,” *Le Devoir*, 24 February, 1917, 1.

⁸³ Justus D. Doenecke, *Nothing Less Than War: A New History of America’s Entry into World War I*, (Lexington, KY: University Press of Kentucky, 2011) 267.

world, including the equality of nations; that no peace could rest upon an “armed balance of power;” that government power derived from those they governed; the freedom of the seas; and the limitation of armaments.⁸⁴

On 6 April 1917, the United States entered the war on the side of the Allied Powers. It was an extraordinary turn for a country that had been trying to act as mediator a mere four months earlier. Though Bourassa did not want to see the United States go to war, he argued that at least they fought the war on a solid moral foundation. Canada could claim no such justification for its role in the conflict. “C’est tellement plus facile et plus profitable,” Bourassa wrote of his own nation, “de suivre à l’aveugle et de hurler avec les loups.”⁸⁵ In his view, the Americans went to war for rational reasons. The Germans left them no other choice. Secretary of State Robert Lansing had pointed out the tenuous nature of the American position in December 1916 after Wilson’s peace note. He announced that “the sending of this Note will indicate the possibility of our being forced into the War. That possibility ought to serve as a restraining and sobering force safe-guarding American rights.” The Americans were well aware of the probability of renewed German submarine attacks and had offered mediation alongside the ultimatum that, if mediation failed, the United States would go to war.⁸⁶ In turn, the Germans had threatened American territory in their message to Mexico. Canada, Bourassa lamented, did not share the same clarity in their war effort.

A month after the American declaration of war, Bourassa returned to the subject of the

⁸⁴ Woodrow Wilson, *In Our First Year of the War Messages and Addresses to the Congress and the People, March 5, 1917 to January 6, 1918*, (New York: Harper & Brothers, 1918) 10.

⁸⁵ Henri Bourassa, “La Crise Américain: Paix ou guerre?,” *Le Devoir*, 7 March, 1917.

⁸⁶ Justus D. Doenecke, *Nothing Less Than War*, 233.

American intervention. From 7 May to 19 May he outlined his view of the “extraordinaire évolution” of American sentiments and international policy.⁸⁷ Bourassa described the difficulty of the United States choosing one European coalition over another and painted a picture of the American sentiment towards the conflict. As President Wilson had noted in his second inaugural address, “We are of the blood of all the nations that are at war.”⁸⁸ In July and August 1914, the United States was as close to Germany as it was to the Allied nations. American suspicion of Britain still lingered while autocratic Russia remained an unlikely partner. France, according to Bourassa, was in the middle. The Franco-Americans of New England and Louisiana supported it, but its Catholics did not trust the republican anticlerical state.⁸⁹ Neutrality was the natural result of preferring neither side in a conflict.

Bourassa outlined his timeline of the American transition from neutrality to war, tracing the tide of American public opinion turned against the Germans as the war intensified. The violation of Belgian neutrality and France’s heroic defence endeared the Allies to the American people. The British blockade pushed Germany towards submarine warfare, which devastated shipping and emphasized German brutality to the public. At the same time, Bourassa claimed, newspaper barons like J.P. Morgan organised press campaigns that pushed the American people further into the Allied camp.⁹⁰ After the sinking of the *Lusitania* in May 1915, American attitudes went against the Central Powers. When the champion of American neutrality,

⁸⁷ Henri Bourassa, “L’intervention Américaine I: M. Wilson: son succès, sa valeur, sa sincérité – Force de l’opinion pacifiste,” *Le Devoir*, 7 May, 1917, 1.

⁸⁸ Woodrow Wilson, *In Our First Year of the War Messages and Addresses to the Congress and the People, March 5, 1917 to January 6, 1918*, (New York: Harper & Brothers, 1918) 8.

⁸⁹ Henri Bourassa, “L’intervention Américaine II: Opinion des Américains sur les belligérants – Influences allemandes, françaises, anglaises – La religion démocratique,” *Le Devoir*, 8 May, 1917, 1.

⁹⁰ Henri Bourassa, “L’intervention Américaine III: Évolution des sentiments – Invasion de la Belgique héroïsme de la France, finance anglaise – Pierpont Morgan & Cie: achat de la presse,” *Le Devoir*, 9 May, 1917, 1.

Secretary of State William Jennings Bryan, resigned a month later, war seemed a likely prospect. Then German renunciation of unrestricted submarine warfare allayed American fears and helped prevent their intervention that summer.⁹¹ The next year, the presidential election of 1916 seemed to indicate the desire of the American people to avoid war as they re-elected Woodrow Wilson, who had “kept them out of the war.”

In that moment, Bourassa claimed, the possibility of American intervention was uncertain. A “groupe de financiers anglo-américains” required an American declaration of war and began actively influencing American policy. They had lent hundreds of millions of dollars to the Entente powers that were in danger of defaulting. Only by lifting the embargo against the Allied nations and allowing the financiers to use foreign goods as guarantees could their dire situation be resolved. In November 1916, when the United States seemed firmly opposed to intervention, the financiers began a campaign in the newspapers that they controlled, appealing to American sentimentality on the necessity of joining the war against Germany -- all designed, Bourassa alleged, to preserve their fortunes and the British economy.⁹² Wilson’s appeal for the conditions of a peace and his own attempts to outline an American vision of “peace without victory” were part of the process of clarifying the terms and objectives of an American war effort. Wilson had honestly tried to avoid war, but Bourassa believed he had no other option. “Rarement,” he wrote, “un chef d’État a montré un tel souci de ses responsabilités, une

⁹¹ Henri Bourassa, “L’intervention Américaine IV: Torpillage du ‘Lusitania’: démission de M. Bryan – Derniers efforts pour la paix: message du président aux belligérants, son programme de paix,” *Le Devoir*, 10 May, 1917, 1. Justus D. Doenecke, *Nothing Less Than War*, 83-85, for more details on this turbulent time.

⁹² Henri Bourassa, “L’intervention Américaine IV: Torpillage du ‘Lusitania’: démission de M. Bryan – Derniers efforts pour la paix: message du président aux belligérants, son programme de paix,” *Le Devoir*, 10 May, 1917, 1. The accusation that there was an insidious campaign by these “financiers” were reflected in the American press and by some politicians as well, see Doenecke, *Nothing Less Than War*, 255-256, 269-275.

prévision si grande des conséquences de ses actes.”⁹³ The final push occurred in early 1917, when the February Russian revolution tempered the Tsar’s powers and introduced democratic government, an important step for the fiercely republican Americans. Now the Allies could present a united front against the autocracies of the German, Austrian and Ottoman Empires.⁹⁴

Next Bourassa examined the motive and mode of American intervention in the war. There was a variety of public opinion shaping discourse in the American nation, and Bourassa chose to look at President Wilson alone rather than the diverse collection of sentiments expressed by the American people. Bourassa saw much to admire in Wilson’s “peace program,” but was unsure about its translation into a “war program.”⁹⁵ The journalist wondered if Wilson could still achieve “peace without victory” now that the United States had entered the war. Wilson distinguished his position as a peacetime observer by his ability to separate the required conditions and desirable conditions of peace. He recognized the required conditions for a lasting peace, such as freedom of the seas and the democratization of governments, while other national concerns, like settling territorial disputes in Alsace Lorraine, were simply desirable conditions for it. Wilson’s goals had changed after the American intervention as he was constrained by the conditions of peace that he could expect his new allies and the Central Powers to accept, and not those conditions he hoped to see.⁹⁶ The President, Bourassa noted,

⁹³ Henri Bourassa, “L’intervention Américaine IV: Torpillage du ‘Lusitania’: démission de M. Bryan – Derniers efforts pour la paix: message du président aux belligérants, son programme de paix,” *Le Devoir*, 10 May, 1917, 1.

⁹⁴ Henri Bourassa, “L’intervention Américaine V: La révolution russe – Haine des monarchies – Influences des loges,” *Le Devoir*, 11 May, 1917, 1.

⁹⁵ Henri Bourassa, “L’intervention Américaine VI: Motifs de l’intervention – Pensée personnelle de M. Wilson – Conditions *nécessaires* ou *désirables* de la paix – ‘Affranchissement, des peuples,” *Le Devoir*, 12 May, 1917, 1.

⁹⁶ Henri Bourassa, “L’intervention Américaine VI: Motifs de l’intervention – Pensée personnelle de M. Wilson – Conditions *nécessaires* ou *désirables* de la paix – ‘Affranchissement, des peuples,” *Le Devoir*, 12 May, 1917, 1.

desired to address the underlying causes of the war, rather than right specific wrongs for one side or another. It remained to be seen if Wilson could achieve his goals while also fulfilling his new allies' war aims.

As to the mode of American intervention, Bourassa saw the war effort he had demanded for Canada since the war's beginning. He hoped that the Americans would learn harsh lessons from the previous two and a half years of Allied blunders. Already Congress had begun passing legislation to better organize national resources for the war effort, while Bourassa observed his own country bankrupt itself "pour aider la mère-patrie."⁹⁷ American conscription was reasonable and restrained, befitting a nation that had to "catch-up." In Canada, Bourassa wrote, "c'est le triomphe du militarisme sous sa forme la plus dangereuse et la plus bête." In the United States, "c'est l'assujettissement de l'organisation militaire aux intérêts suprêmes de la nation"⁹⁸

Bourassa was unfair to Canada, which had entered the war at least as unprepared as the Americans in 1917 (if not more so). His ongoing critique of Canadian militarism had focused on legislation and measures intended to secure an adequate Canadian war effort under the pressures of time and manpower. Yet Bourassa's preliminary comparison between two similar circumstances found Canada wanting.

One worrisome aspect of the American war effort was the speed at which it aligned itself with the Allied Powers. Bourassa noted that its government and financial elite were

⁹⁷ Henri Bourassa, "L'intervention Américaine VII: Mode et valeur de l'intervention – Intelligence et force du sentiment national – Mesures pratiques – Les 'bêtises' de l'Angleterre," *Le Devoir*, 14 May, 1917, 1.

⁹⁸ Henri Bourassa, "L'intervention Américaine VII: Mode et valeur de l'intervention – Intelligence et force du sentiment national – Mesures pratiques – Les 'bêtises' de l'Angleterre," *Le Devoir*, 14 May, 1917, 1.

firmly on side with Britain and France as soon as war was declared. Of the two, France might be more popular Bourassa wrote, but Britain shaped the American war effort.⁹⁹ From a nationaliste perspective, he knew the dangers of Britain's friendship. He quoted Lafontaine's translation of the Aesop fable, the Lion's Share. In it, the powerful lion was hunting with the fox, the jackal and a wolf. They kill a stag and argue about how to split the spoils of their hunt, but the lion decides as the most powerful that all of it would be his. "Ce droit," Bourassa quoted, "c'est le droit du plus fort."¹⁰⁰ The United States ought to be careful of its new ally and its interests that might conflict with their own. The cultural and economic ties between American and Britain were nothing new, but their partnership now shaped the future of the Allied war effort and the world. Their decisions affected everyone, including Canada -- for better or for worse.

Finally, Bourassa theorized about the potential result of American intervention in the war. He reminded his readers that he now entered into the realm of conjecture. American soldiers could help shorten or prolong the war, depending on the evolving situation in Russia, the army strength and domestic situation of Germany, and the performance of the global economy. A German victory on the eastern front would prolong the war while a defeat there would shorten it considerably. Otherwise, it might push Germany and Austria towards their own revolutions, in which case President Wilson might demand that these new democracies be

⁹⁹ Henri Bourassa, "L'intervention Américaine VIII: Guerre par les armes et par l'or – Partisans de la 'grande armée – Demandes de la France et de l'Angleterre – La part du lion – Puissance de l'Angleterre," *Le Devoir*, 15 May, 1917, 1.

¹⁰⁰ Henri Bourassa, "L'intervention Américaine VIII: Guerre par les armes et par l'or – Partisans de la 'grande armée – Demandes de la France et de l'Angleterre – La part du lion – Puissance de l'Angleterre," *Le Devoir*, 15 May, 1917, 1. Lafontaine's poem is titled, "La Génisse, la Chèvre, et la Brebis, en société avec le Lion," and used a cow, a goat and a sheep to accompany the lion. The lion in Lafontaine's version symbolizes the King, making Bourassa's reference to Britain all the more apt.

recognized as new nations. Then Wilson would achieve his vaunted “peace without victory.” Regardless of the war’s outcome, the global economic upheaval as nations’ economies shifted to war production and accrued billions of dollars of debt and their subsequent shift back to peacetime might make any benefit to the American entry pointless. The war had impoverished the warring nations, and now the United States, the last unaffected bastion of the global economy, had joined their ranks.¹⁰¹

The clearest consequence of American entry was that yet another nation had fallen victim to militarism. It was probable that the American intervention was beneficial, but war was a dangerous affair. Bourassa pointed to the Russian Revolution in February as demonstrative of how completely social order could dissolve under the pressures of wartime, and warned that any nation at war could suffer the same fate. “Revolution,” Bourassa wrote, “c’est tout; c’est tout l’ordre social menacé, c’est le chancre qui dévore l’Europe et le monde.”¹⁰²

Bourassa was referencing the work of Donoso Cortés, a Spanish-born Catholic diplomat and philosopher who had written *Essays on Catholicism, Liberalism and Socialism* in the shadow of the 1848 revolutions. Once a liberal, Cortés had renounced his views and published a long series of devotional tracts praising the Catholic Church. He was an anti-liberal Catholic, who posited that when religion was subordinated to the political realm, society and governance inevitably slid towards revolution, atheism, and chaos.¹⁰³

¹⁰¹ Henri Bourassa, “L’intervention Américaine IX: Conséquences de l’intervention – La guerre sera-t-elle abrégée? - Saignée d’argent, arrêt des industries, retour à la terre,” *Le Devoir*, 15 May, 1917, 1.

¹⁰² Henri Bourassa, “L’intervention Américaine X: Militarisme et Révolution – L’Angleterre et les États-Unis, pourvoyeurs de révolutions – Châtiment et rédemption – Le Pape et le Président – La ‘société des nations’ sera-t-elle chrétienne ou païenne?” *Le Devoir*, 19 May, 1917, 1.

¹⁰³ Alberto Spektorowski, “Maistre, Donoso Cortés, and the Legacy of Catholic Authoritarianism,” *Journal of the*

As a friend of another of Bourassa's intellectual inspirations, the ultramontane writer Louis Veillot, it is no surprise that Bourassa had read Cortés works.¹⁰⁴ Historian Brian Fox summarized Cortés's view of mid-19th century European politics and reveals why Bourassa would have found his writing compelling: "Authority was the moral voice of society and its amalgam of localized points of liberty embedded in various corporate institutions – the primary authority was the Catholic Church."¹⁰⁵ Cortés understood the world much like Bourassa did, though the French Canadian imagined the fusion of British liberalism and Catholicism worked so long as the Catholic Church could control the expression of that liberalism. Ultimately, Cortés' 19th century thought encapsulated Bourassa's own fears of revolution. Cortés counselled that "there [was] no revolution which [did] not involve for society a danger of death," or his warning that

to such a degree is it necessary that all things be in perfect order, that man, though turning everything into disorder, cannot conceive disorder; every revolution, when destroying ancient institutions, rejects them as absurd and injurious; and when substituting others of individual invention, says they constitute excellent order.¹⁰⁶

In his final analysis of the American intervention in the European war, Bourassa saw

History of Ideas, no. 2, 63 (April 2002): 293. Spektorowski also outlines Cortés' understanding of an apocalyptic revolution, which is worth noting given the context of Bourassa in 1916: "Donoso's apocalyptic vision was defined in three stages. The first occurs when revolution dissolves permanent armies; the second takes place when socialist expropriation extinguishes the sense of patriotism, and finally, Donoso prophesizes that a new federation of Slavic nations led by Russia will punish the world for its sins," see 294.

¹⁰⁴ Hervé Serry, "Littérature et religion catholique (1880-1914). Contribution à une socio-histoire de la croyance," *Cahiers d'histoire. Revue d'histoire critique*, 87 (2002): 22.

¹⁰⁵ Brian Fox, "Schmitt's Use and Abuse of Donoso Cortés on Dictatorship," *Intellectual History Review*, no.2, 23 (2013): 165. Fox continued his explanation with "The final result was the existence of a morally superior spiritual order which spoke with authority upon the first principles of moral and social life that the separate political, temporal order must take into account in fulfilling its task of directing the commonwealth towards the common good materially considered. Authority speaks and Power acts," see 165-166. Fox's article primarily deals with the link between Cortés views and fascism, a subject of much academic study but not worth exploring here.

¹⁰⁶ Juan Donoso Cortés, *Essays on Catholicism, Liberalism and Socialism: Considered in their Fundamental Principles*, William McDonald ed., (Dublin: M.H. Gill & Son, 1879) 267, 344.

much of the same dangers that Cortés had discussed in the aftermath of 1848. Societies were not so easily made and remade to the beholder's vision. Social authority depended upon society's belief in it. If the United States wanted to remake the society of nations, they would have to imbue that new system with authority to prevent future wars. It was a dangerous gamble. For an ultramontane Catholic, any refashioning of social order was hazardous. Bourassa only hoped that the new international society be baptized in "les eaux de l'éternelle vérité et de l'inaltérable justice [et] les accords internationaux."¹⁰⁷ As Bourassa had argued through the winter of 1916-17, Papal authority could provide the necessary bulwark for a new international system devoted to peace.

With those hopes and fears in mind, Bourassa turned his critical eye back to Canada. The government introduced conscription legislation that May and the coming months would throw Bourassa once more back into fierce debates over the meaning of patriotism, nationalism and Canada.

¹⁰⁷ Henri Bourassa, "L'intervention Américaine X: Militarisme et Révolution – L'Angleterre et les États-Unis, pourvoyeurs de révolutions – Châtiment et rédemption – Le Pape et le Président – La 'société des nations' sera-t-elle chrétienne ou païenne?" *Le Devoir*, 19 May, 1917, 1.

Chapter 6: La Muraille de Duperie (Spring-July 1917)

In late July 1917, the House of Commons was finishing its debate over conscription legislation. It was the epitome of Bourassa's fears about the war. He saw little of value in Canadian politicians' long debate: even the words of Liberal leader Wilfrid Laurier who opposed it seemed empty. Laurier's final words before the *Military Service Act* passed on 24 July 1917, called for moderation:

I oppose this Bill because it has in it the seeds of discord and disunion; because it is an obstacle and a bar to that union of heart and soul without which it is impossible to hope that this Confederation will attain the aims and ends that were had in view when Confederation was effected. Sir, all my life I have fought coercion; all my life I have promoted union; and the inspiration that led me to that course shall be my guide at all times so long as there is a breath left in my body.¹

When it did pass 119 to 55, the vote split between French and English speaking Members of Parliament. Only five French speakers voted for the bill: two Cabinet ministers, one MP from Saskatchewan, one from New Brunswick, and the former Speaker of the House.² Laurier had made his stand alongside the other French Canadians against the imposition of conscription by an English Canadian majority. For the first time in many years Laurier and Bourassa shared a position, though for different reasons. Laurier believed that conscription was unpopular among Canadians and was concerned for the future political fortunes of his party, while Bourassa rejected any military service in a war fought for Empire and not Canada. Both believed that the passing of the bill had divided Canada for the worse.

Protestors held anti-conscription meetings across the province in late July and August and some spilled over into violent riots. The atmosphere in Quebec was tense. Early in the

¹ Wilfrid Laurier, *House of Commons Debates*, 12th Parliament, 7th Session, vol. 4, 24 July, 1917, 3729.

² J.L. Granatstein and J.M. Hitsman, *Broken Promises: A History of Conscription in Canada*, (Toronto: Oxford University Press, 1977) 69.

morning of 9 August, an explosion rocked the Montreal suburb of Cartierville. The summer residence of the newly minted Baron Atholstan, Hugh Graham, had been dynamited. Graham was the owner of Montreal's largest English language newspaper, the *Montreal Star*, and an outspoken and prominent advocate of imperialism, the Canadian war effort and conscription. In May 1917, he received a peerage for his "extraordinary initiative and zeal in promoting and supporting measures for safeguarding Imperial interests."³ After an investigation, authorities discovered that masked men had stolen dynamite from a local quarry. Eventually the police arrested a group of men who and tried them for the crime. All were associated with anti-conscription agitation. Their trial revealed their motivation as, in the words of Castell Hopkins, "partly fanaticism evoked by superheated politics, partly the real criminality of desperate characters."⁴ Bourassa, no friend of Hugh Graham or his newspaper, was appalled.

In an 11 August article, he condemned the culprits and denounced violent action in reaction to conscription. Violence only weakened the legitimacy of conscription's opponents. Those who used conscription as a pretense for extremism were no better than those who sought to impose conscription on Quebec. The only successful way to oppose this "mesure tyrannique," Bourassa advised, was if all of its opponents were able to meet on a common ground. Violent action excluded anyone who believed in law and order.⁵ He scolded the most virulent leaders of the meetings, noting that conscription was not solely a measure aimed at French Canadians. There were two enemies of French Canada, those who "se sont appliqués systématiquement à boucher les yeux et oreilles du peuple" while preaching "servilisme abject

³ Enn Raudsepp, "GRAHAM, HUGH, 1st Baron ATHOLSTAN," in *Dictionary of Canadian Biography*, vol. 16, University of Toronto/Université Laval, 2003–, accessed October 26, 2014, http://www.biographi.ca/en/bio/graham_hugh_1848_1938_16E.html.

⁴ J. Castell Hopkins, *The Canadian Annual Review, War Series, 1917*, (Toronto: The Canadian Annual Review Limited, 1918) 496-497.

⁵ Henri Bourassa, "Steriles Violences," *Le Devoir*, 11 August, 1917, 1.

et un loyalisme outrancier,” and those who sought to avoid the consequence of the first groups’ faulty doctrine by “l’*émeute, le meurtre et les déprédations.*”⁶ Servility led to revolt, but only by opposing the first could they denounce the second. The symptoms should not be confused with the disease.

Bourassa concluded with a discussion about the value of passive resistance. Was the law terrible enough to justify defying it? Many laws were odious or unpopular, but that alone did not mean they ought to be disobeyed. “Pour ma part,” he told his readers, “je ne prendrai jamais la responsabilité de conseiller la résistance passive à la loi de conscription: et ceux qui n’ont pas ce scrupule ont le strict devoir d’en faire envisager toutes les conséquences.”⁷ Conscripts were soldiers and, if they disobeyed their orders, they could face the death penalty. The only legitimate resistance to militarism and military service was the rejection of the amoral means to achieve their goals: violence. French Canadians, Bourassa proclaimed, would not be complicit with the agents who sought to deceive them, nor the demagogues who sought to incite them.⁸

The long debate over conscription revealed to Bourassa how pervasive militarism had become in Canada. It affected even those opposed to it, as violence begot violence. Throughout the months-long public deliberation, Bourassa remained convinced that it would have greater repercussions beyond forced military service. The pressure of the war was drastically changing Canada and its people.

* * *

There had been calls for conscription in Canada throughout the war, but they reached a

⁶ Henri Bourassa, “Steriles Violences,” *Le Devoir*, 11 August, 1917, 1.

⁷ Henri Bourassa, “Steriles Violences,” *Le Devoir*, 11 August, 1917, 1.

⁸ Henri Bourassa, “Steriles Violences,” *Le Devoir*, 11 August, 1917, 1.

fever pitch after Prime Minister Borden doubled the size of the Canadian army in January 1916 from 250,000 to 500,000 soldiers. Faced with faltering enlistments, the Borden government established the National Service League to bolster recruitment in April 1916. Those in favour of registration often suggested conscription as another form of increasing enlistment, but Borden and his Ministers repeatedly stated that conscription would never come to pass in Canada.⁹ By the end of 1916, the National Service League sent out cards to Canadians eligible for service asking them to register.¹⁰ The government hoped that this would encourage enlistment, but in December Borden refused to rule it out and privately had doubts about sustaining the Canadian forces at its current strength with diminishing recruits.¹¹ By March, the government proposed an alternative to conscription and Minister of Militia Edward Kemp (who had replaced Sam Hughes in November 1916) launched a campaign to raise 50,000 men for Home Defence. These soldiers were stationed home in Canada as a means of encouraging enlistment without the threat of seeing battle. The government hoped that these men could eventually be convinced to go overseas.¹²

Prime Minister Borden was not in Canada in the months before he introduced conscription. He had left to meet with British officials in February 1917. On 26 December 1916, Borden had received an invitation to join the Imperial War Cabinet made up of the British War Cabinet and representatives of the Dominions. Its goal was to allow the former colonies of the Empire to discuss the conduct of the war with Britain, ostensibly as equals, and

⁹ Castell Hopkins, *Canadian Annual Review 1916*, 320-324. Laurier was also vocally opposed to conscription, noting in January 1916 that “we must repel at once the impression which has been sought to be created that [expanding the army to 500,000 men] is a preliminary step to conscription. There is to be no Conscription in Canada,” see 410.

¹⁰ Granatstein and Hitsman, *Broken Promises*, 40-45. Granatstein and Hitsman mention resistance to registration on 45.

¹¹ Granatstein and Hitsman, *Broken Promises*, 45-46; John English, *The decline of politics: The Conservatives and the party system, 1901-20*, (University of Toronto Press, 1993) 124.

¹² Granatstein and Hitsman, *Broken Promises*, 48-49.

it fulfilled the long held dream of Canadian imperialists to have an active voice in the Empire's affairs. David Lloyd George replaced Herbert Asquith as Prime Minister of Great Britain in early December 1916, and he and Lord Milner -- the old imperialist from South Africa -- had decided to call together the Dominion Prime Ministers.¹³ Borden used the Imperial War Cabinet meetings from March to May 1917 to raise the issue of Dominion autonomy and, alongside South African General Jan Smuts, helped write Resolution IX. The now famous resolution asked to hold an Imperial Conference after hostilities to recognize the Dominions as fully "autonomous nations of an Imperial Commonwealth" which had "an adequate voice in foreign policy and in foreign relations." It guaranteed that Canada would gain its autonomy after the war and Borden's biographer hails it as one of the Prime Minister's proudest accomplishments.¹⁴ Borden returned home in May enthusiastic about Canada's contributions to the war and its new role within the Empire.

With Borden away meeting Britain's highest officials and before the announcement of conscription, Bourassa anticipated its consequences for Canadians. Bourassa had warned of the perils of conscription throughout the war, and in March 1917 he considered whether National Registration and Home Defence recruitment would lead to conscription. "Aurons-nous la conscription?" he asked in *Le Devoir* on 26 March. Bourassa was uncertain, but he argued it did not matter. "La conscription ... ce n'est que le moyen extrême ... de racheter l'engagement

¹³ John Kendle assesses the influence of the Round Table movement in forming an Imperial War Cabinet, but concludes that the movement in fact desired to disseminate their ideas after the war and had not planned for the sudden shift in sentiment. For that discussion and about Lloyd George as the primary instigator, see John Kendle, *The Round Table Movement and Imperial Union*, 214-215. Lloyd George was likely not the hero of the Imperialist movement, as Brock Millman writes that "what the Imperial War Cabinet really meant to Lloyd George, however, was that an executive body had emerged, amenable to his strategies, possessed of the authority to force them on recalcitrant British military establishment and which served, further, to drive a wedge between the generals and the leadership of the Unionist Party." See Brock Millman, *Pessimism and British War Policy, 1916-1918*, (London: Frank Cass, 2001) 141.

¹⁴ Robert Craig Brown, *Robert Laird Borden: A Biography, Volume II: 1914-1937*, (Toronto: MacMillan, 1980) 80-81.

pris par le parlement tout entier de consacrer toutes les ressources du Canada au ‘salut’ de l’Empire.”¹⁵ Since the war’s beginning, he argued that Canada had effectively “conscripted” its resources to fight a war for Britain. The enormity of the war effort extended to all elements of Canadian society and conscription of manpower logically followed after committing every other national resources to the war. Both the Liberal and Conservative parties supported Canada’s contribution “sans limites et sans réserves,” perhaps epitomized in Arthur Meighen’s 1914 proclamation that Canada would bankrupt itself for the Empire.¹⁶ The size and recruitment of the Canadian force had passed through Parliament without comment or debate, he reminded his readers. Borden had expanded the army to some 500,000 soldiers without resistance. Bourassa argued that since Borden had not consulted the Canadian people before committing more men, for all intent and purposes, an “impôt du sang” already levied on the Canadian people.¹⁷ No one mentioned conscription over the winter of 1916-17, but it seemed as if the proposed options could not meet the obligations proposed by Canada’s leaders, or fulfil the contribution their rhetoric demanded.

Nor were political leaders alone in preparing the way for conscription, at least as far as Bourassa was concerned. The Quebec episcopate directed the province’s Catholics to support the war. For the first time in the country’s history, Bourassa noted, the Quebec bishops advised Canada to fight in a European war, but not for the defence of Canada. Its press organ, *L’Action Catholique* (renamed from *L’Action Sociale* in 1915), championed the war with extraordinary zeal, going so far as to argue that Canada had a legal and moral obligation to come to Britain’s

¹⁵ Henri Bourassa, “Aurons-nous la Conscription?,” *Le Devoir*, 26 March, 1917, 1.

¹⁶ Bourassa first mentions this quote in Henri Bourassa, “Conscription et Banqueroute,” *Le Devoir*, 9 December, 1914, 1. He is referring to Meighen’s speech before the Canada Club in Winnipeg, on 6 November, 1914. The words are evoked often in his articles throughout the war.

¹⁷ Henri Bourassa, “Aurons-nous la Conscription?,” *Le Devoir*, 26 March, 1917, 1.

aid.¹⁸ The Bishops gave tacit acceptance of the imperialist justification for the war. It followed that if the religious authorities accepted the necessity of fighting the war, they would also accept any measure that achieved victory. Bourassa rebuked the episcopate's decision and argued that Canada had reached the point where conscription was possible by virtue of their complicity. Conscription would come, he underlined again, because no one had opposed the ideas of militarism that made it acceptable to society.¹⁹

Bourassa also disagreed with the tepid position of the Liberal Party against conscription but in favour of the war. They nominally opposed conscription, but if Canada did possess a moral or legal obligation to participate in the war, Bourassa continued, conscription was a legitimate policy. As long as the Canadian government sought and received the approval of Parliament, it had every right to compel military service as much as it had asked for voluntary service. In Bourassa's mind, there was no way to argue against conscription without arguing against the basis of the war itself – if the war was legitimate, so was conscription. His critics had spent the last three years proving that “par le Droit Naturel, ... le Canada a l'obligation morale et même légale de combattre pour l'Angleterre, même contre le gré de ses citoyens,” yet now the Liberals were arguing that “les Canadiens, pris individuellement, ont le droit de se soustraire à cette obligation.”²⁰ “C'est de la démagogie toute pure, c'est la révolte et l'anarchie,” Bourassa stated. Neither the Liberals nor Canadians could pick and choose the scope and manner of their government's war effort. They had endorsed a total war effort and conscription was the consequence.

¹⁸ Henri Bourassa, “Aurons-nous la Conscription?,” *Le Devoir*, 26 March, 1917, 1. Bourassa's expressed his ire over the Bishops' refusal to admonish Abbé Damours' pro-war (and to Bourassa, pro-imperialist) writing in *L'Action Catholique* to Bishop Latulippe in April 1917, see René Durocher, “Henri Bourassa, les évêques et la guerre de 1914-1918,” *Canadian Historical Association Historical Papers* 6 (1971) 268.

¹⁹ Henri Bourassa, “Aurons-nous la Conscription?,” *Le Devoir*, 26 March, 1917, 1.

²⁰ Henri Bourassa, “Aurons-nous la Conscription? II,” *Le Devoir*, 27 March, 1917, 1.

Bourassa believed that the only way to combat conscription with logic and sincerity was to recognize that the *nation* of Canada had as much right to decide on its participation as the individual. Only then could a real debate begin over the advantages and disadvantages of national and individual participation. Without admitting one or the other, critics of conscription were accepting the validity of “demagogues” and “politiciens en quête de popularité.”²¹

That March Bourassa predicted that, within three months, Canadians would see conscription introduced in the House of Commons in one form or another.²² The government could act to avoid conscription, but Bourassa saw little hope of such an effort. He offered an alternative policy where, instead of enlarging the army, the government would use more manpower to continue making the vital war material and supplies that fuelled the Allied forces. It would satisfy Canadian commitments as well as enrich the nation and its people, a goal that both imperialist and nationalist could support. Bourassa was pessimistic about the likelihood of Canada adopting it. He was resigned to conscription’s eventual appearance on the Canadian homefront. There were too few voices of dissent to prevent it. “Nous n’aurons que ce que nous aurons voulu et mérité,” Bourassa lamented.²³ This was the total war against which Bourassa had spent the entire war detailing, disputing and rejecting. Without an organized and logical resistance from the people or their governments, it would continue transforming Canada and all of the belligerent nations.

Only a week after Bourassa’s lament, Canadian soldiers engaged in battle on the slopes of Vimy Ridge from 9-12 April 1917. Their success justified to many Canadians all of the sacrifices that Bourassa decried. Though later the battle would take on heroic proportions to

²¹ Henri Bourassa, “Aurons-nous la Conscription? II,” *Le Devoir*, 27 March, 1917, 1.

²² Henri Bourassa, “Aurons-nous la Conscription? II,” *Le Devoir*, 27 March, 1917, 1.

²³ Henri Bourassa, “Aurons-nous la Conscription? II,” *Le Devoir*, 27 March, 1917, 1.

Canadians as the birthplace of the Canadian nation, when it occurred in early April 1917 it was a much needed and hard-fought victory.²⁴ As part of the greater Arras offensive launched by the British Army, the Canadian success at Vimy Ridge was one victory during an operation filled with defeats. The rest of the Allied lines advanced slightly on the first day of the assault on 9 April, but stalled after their initial success.²⁵ Only the Canadian soldiers significantly expanded their front lines and held onto their gains against heavy German counterattack, but at the cost of more than 10,000 casualties. French newspapers heralded Canada's "Easter Gift to France" and King George V heartily congratulated his Canadian subjects.²⁶ Prime Minister Robert Borden visited the divisions preparing to launch the attack and the wounded afterwards, calling it a "splendid victory."²⁷ Foreign Secretary Arthur Balfour arrived in Canada on his way to the United States and told Canadians on 21 April that their sacrifice at Ypres and Vimy demonstrated that "you have combined to the utmost of your powers, energy and mercy in your prosecution of the war."²⁸ This validation of the Canadian war effort did little to convince Henri Bourassa, whose criticisms had little relation to the definitions of success held by the war's supporters.

If the battle had any impact on Bourassa at all, he did not write about it in his column. Soon after the Canadian seizure of Vimy Ridge, his arguments warning of the war's

²⁴ For a brief review of its reception in Canada, see Jonathan Vance, "Battle Verse: Poetry and Nationalism after Vimy Ridge," *Vimy Ridge: A Canadian Reassessment*, Geoffrey Hayes, Michael Bechthold, and Andrew Iarocci eds., (Waterloo: Wilfrid Laurier University Press, 2007) 265-266, and throughout Vance's chapter for how Vimy was remembered in the interwar period.

²⁵ Gary Sheffield, "Vimy Ridge and the Battle of Arras: A British Perspective," *Vimy Ridge: A Canadian Reassessment*, 24-27.

²⁶ Desmond Morton and J.L. Granatstein, *Marching to Armageddon: Canadians and the Great War, 1914-1919*, (Toronto: Lester & Orphen Dennys Ltd, 1989) 143. King George's message was delivered to General Sir Douglas Haig, see Canada, Dominion Bureau of Statistics, in *The Canada Year Book 1936*, (Ottawa: King's Printer, 1936) 59.

²⁷ Castell Hopkins, *Canadian Annual Review 1917*, 287-289; Borden Diary, 10 April, 1917.

²⁸ Castell Hopkins, *Canadian Annual Review 1917*, 359.

militarizing effect on Canadian society turned again to foreboding predictions. “Après la guerre, la révolution,” was the headline of a vitriolic editorial on 23 April. He repeated his views on the “revolutionary character” of the Canadian intervention. The two major parties colluded as “les instruments de l’impérialisme britannique et de la haute finance anglaise.”²⁹ He now alleged that Laurier had betrayed his followers and merely pretended to oppose imperialism during his decade and a half as prime minister. Further, the war had thus formalized the alliance between Liberals and Conservatives that had been ongoing at least since 1899, as the party truce in 1914 demonstrated. Enticed by wealth and power, the journalist maintained, Canada’s politicians had endorsed in all but name the imperialist revolution.³⁰ From Bourassa’s perspective, the victory at Vimy was little more than a step towards a future he did not want.

Bourassa refused to let this “revolution” continue unimpeded. He denounced the great illusion of the imperialist revolutionaries and their mistaken belief that “ils peuvent à leur gré aveugler le bon sens populaire et déguise toujours la vérité sous la duperie des formules creuses et des arguments à côté.”³¹ Bourassa believed that he saw through their falsehoods. His critics’ attack on his commentary supposedly revealed the terrible truth of Canada at war. In a revolutionary society, the revolution was indistinguishable from the state itself. Thus, any attack on the revolutionary transformation was an attack on the state itself. Denunciations that Bourassa was a traitor only further proved to him that the state and the revolution were the same. To him, he was clearly criticizing changes in Canadian society but not the state or nation

²⁹ Henri Bourassa, “Après la Guerre, la Révolution I,” *Le Devoir*, 23 April, 1917, 1. Bourassa believed that rich financiers had a role in intensifying and prolonging the war, such as American millionaire J.P. Morgan’s efforts to push the United States into the war, as he would write about in his articles on the American entry in May.

³⁰ Henri Bourassa, “Après la Guerre, la Révolution I,” *Le Devoir*, 23 April, 1917, 1.

³¹ Henri Bourassa, “Après la Guerre, la Révolution I,” *Le Devoir*, 23 April, 1917, 1.

of Canada itself. Bourassa evoked the turbulent pendulum of the French Revolution, and its excesses between autocracy and democracy, as an example of what lay ahead for Canada. The only way to avoid it was to continue his campaign against the extremes of the Canadian war effort and reveal the truth of its consequences.

For Bourassa, the worst aspect of the war narrative was that it had seemingly convinced Canadians of its benefits without reflecting on its detriments. Canadians accepted without question the necessity of a war economy, of conscription, and of winning the war at any cost. Bourassa argued that in accepting these war policies, the people of the Allied nations threatened to overturn the peaceful progressive societies of Europe and North America. In the Canadian context, they endangered the partnership of French and English Canadians crafted at Confederation. These fears had formed the basis of Bourassa's rejection of expansive and possessive British imperialism since the Boer War, but by 1917 he believed that the war had shifted the balance much farther than any other point in the young nation's history. It might soon be too late to reverse the corrupting influence of unquestioned imperialist and militarist ideologies. Bourassa began to suspect that the changes wrought by the Great War would be too great to reverse and he saw a new Canada was emerging, one defined by the brutal conditions of warfare, not by the compromise of Confederation.³²

Bourassa's distress was so great that he veered into the world of outrageous conspiracy. The Allies aided the Russian revolution, he told his readers, as they were eager to bring the United States into the war and remove the troublesome autocracy.³³ Here, he seemingly offered a new version of the war's causes, as he implicitly rejected earlier pronouncements that the war was for Russian claims on Constantinople. Instead, all monarchies, including that of the Allies,

³² Henri Bourassa, "Après la Guerre, la Révolution I," *Le Devoir*, 23 April, 1917, 1.

³³ Henri Bourassa, "Après la Guerre, la Révolution II," *Le Devoir*, 24 April, 1917, 1.

were targets of the wave of militarized “democracy” that swept the world. “Les protagonistes de la révolution sont les dénonciateurs les plus ardents de toute tentative de paix,” he wrote, “ils comptent sur les souffrances et l’exaspération des masses populaires, énervées et aigries par la guerre à outrance, pour faire triompher leur projets.”³⁴ All autocratic nations would eventually succumb to the pressures of wartime and revolutions that followed their inevitable collapse. Bourassa argued that “war democracy” was no better than imperialism; both sought the expansion of European empires, their wealth, and power.³⁵ The formation of an Imperial Republic had been the goal of imperialists for decades, and Bourassa alleged, the war overcame the opposition that once prevented it.³⁶ As with all conspiracies, a kernel of truth was present. Imperialists had indeed hoped the war could change Canada’s relationship with Britain, though of course nowhere near the scale of the “revolution” that Bourassa claimed. He offered little proof of these opinions he presented as facts other than his own interpretation of actual events.

He outlined his logic about the danger of an imperial republic. The Empire included hundreds of millions of people, stretching from Britain, to Canada, to Australia, to India, to South Africa. If bound together economically and politically, these peoples would represent the most powerful military and far-reaching economy in the world. Two obstacles, according to Bourassa, had previously stopped this imperial association: one being Canadian autonomy, the other being Britain’s traditional monarchy.³⁷ Politicians forgot the goal of Canadian autonomy in August 1914, while the British, Bourassa wrote, would overturn the British Crown by war’s end. Bourassa declared that the imperialists would not hesitate to dethrone the King if it was

³⁴ Henri Bourassa, “Après la Guerre, la Révolution II,” *Le Devoir*, 24 April, 1917, 1.

³⁵ Henri Bourassa, “Après la Guerre, la Révolution II,” *Le Devoir*, 24 April, 1917, 1.

³⁶ Henri Bourassa, “Après la Guerre, la Révolution II,” *Le Devoir*, 24 April, 1917, 1.

³⁷ Henri Bourassa, “Après la Guerre, la Révolution III,” *Le Devoir*, 25 April, 1917, 1.

necessary “pour assurer le triomphe de la plouto-démocratie armée dont ils se sont constitués les cornacs.”³⁸ He provided British Prime Minister David Lloyd George’s support for the new Russian government as proof that the monarchy was no longer sacrosanct. The figures behind the push for an Imperial Republic were the true benefactors of the war: the plutocrats, wealthy financiers who produced war armaments and bought political influence from politicians needing votes. As in all revolutions, it would be the masses who were hurt the most and exploited for their manpower and wealth. No one was safe, since the war demonstrated that even the highest political and Church offices were not beyond becoming “les instruments et les complices de la révolution.”³⁹

Amidst this horrific future, Bourassa saw Pope Benedict XV as a beacon of hope. Only Rome understood the dire situation of the world. Bourassa continued to put his faith in Rome and that one day those who refused to endorse the war would be acknowledged as “patriotes aussi clairvoyants” who had remained loyal to the British King.⁴⁰ In the meantime, Rome’s message of peace was the only voice that could be trusted. The Allies and Central Powers had too much at stake, as the sole goal of militarized societies was to win the “total war” in which they fought.

His late April series “Après la Guerre, la Révolution” was more condemnatory and alarmist than his previous writing. Bourassa was always evocative to the point of hyperbole and offered passionate fiery arguments meant to stir opinions in his reader. Here he took his basic set of assumptions about the war and its impact and pushed it further than a rejection of the war. Over three days, he outlined a global conspiracy, costing millions of lives and dollars,

³⁸ Henri Bourassa, “Après la Guerre, la Révolution III,” *Le Devoir*, 25 April, 1917, 1. Cornacs, translated to English as mahouts, is a term for elephant drivers in India.

³⁹ Henri Bourassa, “Après la Guerre, la Révolution III,” *Le Devoir*, 25 April, 1917, 1.

⁴⁰ Henri Bourassa, “Après la Guerre, la Révolution III,” *Le Devoir*, 25 April, 1917, 1.

all to increase the wealth of an elite class. The Imperialists were no longer political opponents, but extremists looking to overturn the international system in favour of the Empire. His tone took on a radical edge, one that fit better with far-left liberals or even socialists than a moderate liberal nationalist, let alone an ultramontane Catholic. The American entry into the war and Russia's February Revolution drove him to new heights of suspicions and extreme conclusions. Bourassa's political and religious beliefs repeatedly led him to question the dominant narrative put forward by the war supporters, but here his skepticism reached a fanatical level. Bourassa questioned even the basic diplomatic maneuvers of the Great Powers as part of a larger and nefarious scheme.

Three days after his return from Europe, Prime Minister Robert Borden announced in Parliament on 17 May that the government was enacting conscription legislation. It is unclear exactly what caused Borden to change his mind. J.L. Granatstein and J.M. Hitsman, in addition to detailing the failure of National Registration and Home Defence to supplement recruitment, note a letter from Borden to Archbishop Bruchési in Montreal. Borden reflected on his recent European trip, writing that "What I saw and learned ... made me realize how much more critical is the situation of the Allies and much more uncertain is the ultimate result of the great struggle."⁴¹ John English emphasizes Cabinet's agreement that conscription was necessary due to lower enlistment, despite the knowledge that it would "kill [the Conservative Party] politically ... for 25 years."⁴² Other historians such as Ramsay Cook and Robert Craig Brown

⁴¹ Quoted from G.W.L. Nicholson, *Canadian Expeditionary Force, 1914-1919: Official History of the Canadian Army in the First World War*, (Ottawa: Queen's Printer and Controller of Stationery, 1962) 342-343, quoted in Granatstein and Hitsman, *Broken Promises*, 62-63, fn 12. Granatstein also claims Borden's experience in Europe changed his mind on conscription in J.L. Granatstein, "Conscription," in *Canada and the First World War: Essays in Honour of Robert Craig Brown*, David Mackenzie ed., (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2005) 67.

⁴² John English, *The Decline of Politics*, 129. English quotes Borden's diary from 17 May, 1917. The question has been raised whether conscription was a matter of political expediency given the election that had to be held in 1917 after the Liberals rejected a further extension of government past 1916, though Borden's diary suggests

frame the decision to enact compulsory military service around Borden's recognition that a coalition government, between the Liberals and Conservatives, was the best resource for uniting the national war effort. Conscription was introduced as a "radical change in enlistment policy [that had] a catalytic effect on domestic politics by forcing a coalition of those groups who genuinely placed winning the war above every other consideration."⁴³ Regardless, faltering enlistments, increasing casualties (Canadians suffered more than 10,000 casualties at Vimy Ridge), and pressure for the Allies to fight the war without Russia at their side are the most quantifiable explanations of the government reneging on its previous promises. By April 1917, the Chief of Staff Willoughby Gwatkins warned Borden that by summer the Canadian forces would require 10,000 additional men that it did not have.⁴⁴ Conscription was a solution to a problem at a time when few others presented themselves.

Bourassa addressed conscription in late May when he published a series of articles that he eventually released as a pamphlet, *La Conscription*, in June. The pamphlet included his writing on conscription in *Le Devoir* from 28 May to 6 June as well as an appendix citing other nationaliste statements about conscription and quoting Robert Borden and Wilfrid Laurier's rejection of conscription from January 1916. Bourassa modified it slightly to consider the issue of coalition government raised after he had originally written the articles.

Bourassa hoped the pamphlet would continue to encourage resistance to conscription

nobody believed that to be true, see A.M. Willms, "Conscription 1917: A Brief for the Defence," in *Conscription 1917*, (University of Toronto Press, n.d.) 8-11. In another work, English argues that the phrase "equality of sacrifice" fuelled the calls for conscription so that everyone served the country equally, see John English, "Political Leadership," *Canada and the First World War*, 92.

⁴³ Ramsay Cook and Robert Craig Brown, *Canada 1896-1921*, 268. Robert Craig Brown similarly emphasizes the push towards coalition government in his biography of Borden, see Robert Craig Brown, *Robert Laird Borden: A Biography, Volume II: 1914-1937*, (Toronto: MacMillan, 1980) 84-94. So too did J.W. Dafoe according to Ramsay Cook, "Dafoe, Laurier, and the Formation of Union Government," *The Canadian Historical Review*, no.3 42 (September, 1961): 194-196. English examines the early beginning of Union government in greater detail, John English, *Decline of Politics*, 129-160.

⁴⁴ Granatstein and Hitsman, *Broken Promises*, 53.

and “les emprises de l’impérialisme” that drove it, since the only way to defeat conscription was by organizing opposition against it.⁴⁵ Petitions, his writing and the work of others were “infiniment plus efficace que les manifestations dans la rue” he reminded the reader. French Canadians could not afford to forget that, at as all turning points in their history, they were “les défenseurs de l’ordre et de la constitution, les gardiens de la tradition nationale et des légitimes libertés populaires.”⁴⁶ It would do no good to save Canada at the cost of social order. Opposition to conscription had to be “reasonable” and “reasoned.”⁴⁷

Bourassa had a straightforward argument. Conscription, he wrote, was not merely unjust; it led Canada closer toward bankruptcy and financial ruin. He believed that conscription was an inefficient policy that permanently damaged the Canadian nation and Canada had already contributed more than enough to the war effort. According to Bourassa’s calculations, Canada’s per capita contribution by men was at least equivalent to that of France and Britain. It was more when he compared the per capita cost to field each army since Canada paid its soldiers better daily wages.⁴⁸ As well, Canada had already spent more than a billion dollars on the war, and took on debt at a rate that Bourassa believed made it nearly impossible to pay back.

He speculated that conscription of the remaining able-bodied men would cause more economic hardships. Agricultural production would drop as farmers left their fields. Britain did not need Canadian soldiers as much as it needed the bread, meat and potatoes of Canada.⁴⁹ If food production dropped, famine alone might end the war. He stressed that industrial

⁴⁵ Henri Bourassa, *La Conscription*, (Montreal: Éditions du Devoir, 1917) 4.

⁴⁶ Henri Bourassa, *La Conscription*, (Montreal: Éditions du Devoir, 1917) 7-8.

⁴⁷ Henri Bourassa, *La Conscription*, (Montreal: Éditions du Devoir, 1917) 8.

⁴⁸ A Canadian soldier received \$1.10 a day. Henri Bourassa, *La Conscription*, (Montreal: Éditions du Devoir, 1917) 11-12.

⁴⁹ Henri Bourassa, *La Conscription*, (Montreal: Éditions du Devoir, 1917) 16.

manpower was as important as army manpower. Munitions, agriculture, lumber, mines, and nearly every Canadian industry helped the Allied war effort in ways far more important than using Canada's manpower to raise a rifle. At least, he pointed out, industrial work was more effective than the cost of equipping and sending them to die on European battlefields.⁵⁰

Even if Canada conscripted men to serve in industry rather than the army, there was no proper way to assess the value of every individual to the war effort. The government should focus on the conscription of wealth through war taxes, he argued, but only if they were imposed in proportion to citizens' capacity to pay. Anyone making profit from the war deserved to pay a respectively higher tax, as anything else was "injuste, immoral, contraire à l'ordre social et à l'équilibre économique."⁵¹ There must be equal sacrifice of wealth before human life; otherwise, conscription would lead to social unrest and economic ruin.

Bourassa noted that some supporters of conscription argued the continuing tension between English and French Canadians was a threat to national unity and the reason why conscription was necessary. French Canadians, they alleged, contributed less to the war effort. Bourassa understandably dismissed such arguments, especially since he was one of the primary instigators of French Canadian apathy (or perhaps rationality, depending on one's perspective) towards the war. Instead, he offered examples of compromise and cooperation between French and English. There had always been a divergence of opinions, sentiments and aspirations between them, but there should be no expectation that they always had to agree. If anything their differing culture and history had led to inevitable disagreement; however, that difference was reconcilable. After all, he explained, the two peoples had agreed to a constitutional arrangement that satisfied both in forming Canada in 1867. Bourassa emphasized the compact

⁵⁰ Henri Bourassa, *La Conscription*, (Montreal: Éditions du Devoir, 1917) 16-17.

⁵¹ Henri Bourassa, *La Conscription*, (Montreal: Éditions du Devoir, 1917) 17.

between the races of Confederation and its role in shaping the Canadian nation. It outlined the relationship between French and English as well the nature of the relationship between Canada and Britain. There were no obligations to defend British land, or to fight British wars, only to defend Canada when it was threatened. Implicitly, the French Canadian minority did not share an obligation undertaken by English Canada.⁵² When that compact had been upheld, national unity flourished. When it was broken, fractures in unity appeared. Conscription, Bourassa argued, broke the compact and further deepened the cracks in Canadian consensus.

Part of the problem derived from the lingering connection between English Canada and their former motherland. French Canadians had had only one *patrie* since they had separated from France centuries ago, while English Canadians still clearly identified with their British forebears. Bourassa's study of Canadian history argued that their circumstances especially changed as British immigrants had shifted the character of English Canada over the last two decades. So while French Canadians "sont restés, en masse, *exclusivement canadiens*," English Canadian interests divided between that of their *patrie* and *mère-patrie*.⁵³

National disunity and lack of French Canadian support was not a result of the differences between the two races, Bourassa clarified, but derived from a systematic deception of Canadians. He wrote that two errors explained the lack of support for the war in French Canada. First, French Canadian leaders convinced their people to support Canadian entry into the First World War using appeals of loyalty to Britain and France. Those appeals were doomed to fail as they could not transform the French Canadian mentality or temperament, particularly since French Canada had opposed the doctrine of international obligations for more than

⁵² Henri Bourassa, *La Conscription*, (Montreal: Éditions du Devoir, 1917) 20-21.

⁵³ Henri Bourassa, *La Conscription*, (Montreal: Éditions du Devoir, 1917) 21.

century.⁵⁴ French Canada could not sustain long-term interest in a British or European war that did not threaten their homes or their people. The second misstep was the English Canadian attack against French Canadians for not contributing enough to the war effort and not enrolling with the same enthusiasm. He warned that this action “[entraîne] d’acrimonieuses explications, d’amères désillusions et surtout de fort périlleuses réactions.”⁵⁵ Conscription was one more brick in “la muraille de duperie qui [les] sépare.”⁵⁶ The construction of this “muraille de duperie” had begun long before 1917, but the previous three years of war alongside the acrimonious debate over bilingual schools, had expanded it greatly.

According to Bourassa, Canadians across the country opposed conscription. Two million French Canadians certainly rejected it, but he remarked on growing opposition in English-speaking provinces. Bourassa shared conversations he had with English Canadians, who told him that Canada had done more than enough for the war effort. Even if they were not vocal, the “silent vote” in English Canada was opposed to conscription. Thus, he reasoned, foreign powers in Europe drove the political support for the policy, not the will of the Canadian people. This would become clear if Ottawa let Canadians vote on the issue. Only a referendum on the issue could avoid “une dangereuse explosion.”⁵⁷ Bourassa wrote that if a majority of the electorate unreservedly accepted conscription, then French Canada might submit to it. A majority of French and English Canadians could send a clear democratic message. On the other hand, if all of Quebec rejected the proposal and a parliamentary majority from English-speaking provinces enacted forced military service, it might result in violence or other extreme reactions. One way or another, a referendum would clearly distinguish the possibilities and the

⁵⁴ Henri Bourassa, *La Conscription*, (Montreal: Éditions du Devoir, 1917) 22.

⁵⁵ Henri Bourassa, *La Conscription*, (Montreal: Éditions du Devoir, 1917) 22.

⁵⁶ Henri Bourassa, *La Conscription*, (Montreal: Éditions du Devoir, 1917) 23.

⁵⁷ Henri Bourassa, *La Conscription*, (Montreal: Éditions du Devoir, 1917) 26-27.

limitations of conscription.

Bourassa returned to his conclusions about foreign influence as he pondered what had caused Borden to renege on his promise not to impose conscription. He proffered three major events from 1917 that might have influenced him: submarine warfare, the Russian Revolution, and American intervention. Each of these changed the nature of the war for the Prime Minister, but Bourassa disagreed that it was enough to justify conscription. The threat of submarine warfare and blockade meant that Canada had to commit more industrial and agricultural production. The revolution in Russia weakened the Allies, but did not require Canada to contribute lives to their cause. After all, the American intervention promised thousands more troops and resources than Canada could ever provide, and thousands of them had already joined the Canadian forces.⁵⁸ Yet the American intervention and enactment of their own conscription policy meant that if Canada did not do the same, “slackers” would have a refuge from the United States to avoid conscription. Bourassa proposed that the real reason Borden abruptly introduced conscription in Canada was to be consistent with their American neighbours. The declaration of war by President Wilson and the Congress vote on conscription forced Borden to accede to British demands for more troops. There was no worthwhile reason other than Borden’s continual subservience to foreign powers.

The final part of Bourassa’s analysis reflected on the proposal of coalition government. First, Canada required an election before Borden formed a coalition government. Bourassa rejected the legitimacy of the sitting Parliament that had extended its term, in violation of the

⁵⁸ Henri Bourassa, *La Conscription*, (Montreal: Éditions du Devoir, 1917) 31-33. Interestingly Bourassa did not see Borden’s participation in the Imperial War Cabinet as having any impact on his decision to enact conscription, see 34. Bourassa writes that thousands of Americans joined the Canadian army but provided no sources for his claim, though General James Moore wrote to the *Toronto Press* on 18 April noting that about 7,500 Americans joined the Canadian forces, Castell Hopkins, *Canadian Annual Review 1917*, 355.

constitution, to avoid an election in 1916. An election, with or without a coalition government, also could not be a substitute for a plebiscite on conscription. It was impossible in Bourassa's mind to vote legitimately without a separate referendum.⁵⁹ What if a riding had no candidates that supported conscription, or vice versa? How could a voter express their democratic voice in favour of or against the proposition? Coalition government restricted the choice of the voter, he proclaimed, and subverted the basic tenets of democracy. Bourassa cautioned that if Canadians could not cast their vote against conscription in an election (since both Liberals and Conservatives candidates might be a part of the coalition in favour of it) it was undemocratic. Further, taking away democratic rights was an open invitation to insurrection. Without a voice in deciding the future government, he warned, Canadians might resort to violent means to achieve their goals. Bourassa declared that "toute coalition des partis, à l'heure actuelle, serait inutile, dangereuse et immorale. ... Le parlement actuel ou future ne doit pas voter la conscription ... l'opinion du peuple ne peut s'exprimer librement que par un plébiscite."⁶⁰ Anything else denied the people's rights to express themselves.

Wilfrid Laurier had already fashioned his own position on conscription and believed that a referendum was the best compromise between wartime necessity and national unity, but he faced some dissent within his party. There was growing pressure for coalition government throughout the early months of 1917 and demands that Laurier align himself with the government position. Newspapers and some Liberal politicians demanded a coalition even as Conservatives were suspicious of any question about their party's wartime leadership.⁶¹ After the announcement of conscription, Robert Borden approached Laurier on 25 May about joining

⁵⁹ Henri Bourassa, *La Conscription*, (Montreal: Éditions du Devoir, 1917) 38-39.

⁶⁰ Henri Bourassa, *La Conscription*, (Montreal: Éditions du Devoir, 1917) 40-41.

⁶¹ Castell Hopkins, *Canadian Annual Review 1917*, 553-560.

a coalition government. Laurier gave no immediate answer and instead took stock of his support among Liberals and the reactions against conscription. Quebec Liberals would not support conscription and Laurier returned to Borden on 6 June to reject his offer while advocating for a referendum on the issue of forced military service. The delay allowed Laurier to see which Liberals supported conscription, and in turn, his referendum proposal forced pro-conscription Liberals to support conscription via plebiscite or to leave the party.⁶²

Laurier's desire for a referendum and fears about the consequence of imposing conscription shifted him closer to the position of Bourassa. Though Laurier was concerned with the legitimacy of Canadian democracy and its impact on national unity like his former MP, he was afraid of Bourassa's growing influence. Writing to Quebec Liberal Premier Lomer Gouin, Laurier explained that "as to conscription, there can equally be no hesitation. After the agitation which has been carried on upon this subject, if we were to hesitate at this moment, we would hand over the province to the extremists; in place of promoting national unity, it would open up a breach, perhaps fatal."⁶³ By raising the Liberal banner in Quebec against the imposition of conscription, Laurier provided a nexus for French Canadians to funnel their dissatisfaction. Laurier believed that he could guide the province on a more balanced path than Bourassa. The result was that, for the first time in nearly a decade and a half, Laurier and Bourassa stood in partial public agreement.

On 11 June, Borden introduced the conscription bill in Parliament, noting that "it was my strong desire to bring about a union of all parties for the purpose of preventing any such

⁶² John English, *Decline of Politics*, 134-135. Réal Bélanger makes a similar point in *Wilfrid Laurier: quand la politique devient passion*, (Quebec: Presses de l'Université Laval, 2007) 396. Laurier also believed that there was an undercurrent of opposition to conscription, suggesting that he might win an electoral contest against a pro-conscription government. See his letter to Ontario Liberal leader Newton Rowell in Oscar Skelton, *Life and Letters of Sir Wilfrid Laurier*, (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1921) 514-516.

⁶³ Oscar Skelton, *Life and Letters of Sir Wilfrid Laurier*, 512.

disunion.” The bill would not come into effect until after a general election so “that there might be a united effort to fulfill the great national purpose of winning this war ... [and] to throw the full power and effort of Canada into the scale of right, liberty, and justice.”⁶⁴ Despite Laurier’s refusal, Borden still hoped to form a coalition to lead the country and he appealed to prominent English Canadian Liberals to join him. Throughout June and July, Parliament debated forced military service under the cloud of political division and conflicted loyalties. Former Laurier Cabinet Minister Clifford Sifton, who had left the Laurier government on bad terms a decade earlier, began organizing pro-conscription Liberals to join Borden’s coalition government.⁶⁵

Laurier responded with a demonstration of the leadership that had protected his place as Liberal leader for almost three decades. Even as Liberals left to join the pro-conscriptionists, he counselled a loyal English Canadian Liberal: “Do not, however, think hard of them, for I do not. They have behaved all through most honourably, and there is not and there will not be any loss of friendship between us. The pain is not less acute on their side than on mine, and I know only too well the difficulties which faced them.”⁶⁶ Despite the divisive national debate over conscription, Laurier tried to preserve a moderate and understanding tone towards his former members. Bourassa, whose fear of conscription was quite different from Laurier’s political concerns, offered no such restraint.

On the fiftieth anniversary of Confederation Bourassa believed the war had corrupted the Dominion. The Canada that had been created half a century earlier seemed far away from

⁶⁴ Castell Hopkins, *Canadian Annual Review 1917*, 564.

⁶⁵ John English, *Decline of Politics*, 136-139.

⁶⁶ A letter from Laurier to Sir Allen Aylesworth, see Oscar Skelton, *Life and Letters of Sir Wilfrid Laurier*, 518. Blair Neatby argues that Laurier’s leadership and willingness to accept different points of view on conscription, even when it meant Liberals joining coalition government, was one of the leadership characteristics that would allow the Liberals to thrive in the post-war period. None were shamed or attacked by the Liberal leader. In Neatby’s words, “Laurier had a genuine and sympathetic understanding, the positive quality of Christian love,” see Blair Neatby, *Laurier and a Liberal Quebec*, 226-228.

that which fought the Great War, when its leaders spent the day in the “exaltation du dévouement à une cause étranger.”⁶⁷ While Prime Minister Borden spoke of how proud the Fathers of Confederation would be to see their country, Bourassa saw little reason to be proud of “une nation plongée dans une guerre dont les causes, la direction et le règlement échappent totalement à l’action immédiate de son gouvernement.”⁶⁸ It was time to have the courage, Bourassa urged, to admit that for twenty years Canada had had no true moral or intellectual progress. Its public and private morality was debased, its patriotism false, its vision obscured, its sense of order diminished, and the nation and “le goût des choses de l’esprit” were buried under vulgar ambition and vanity.⁶⁹ The pressures of wartime had deformed the nation that had entered the war in 1914.

On the anniversary, Bourassa painted a picture of an inchoate and aggressive English Canada against the calm and collected French Canada. He argued that in much of the effusive praise for Canada’s Confederation and its fifty years of “accomplishments,” French Canada’s true voice was absent from the boastful claims of government leaders. “La langue française,” he reminded his readers, “c’est la langue de la vérité, de la justice, du courage, de la probité, de la logique. Ne pas l’inviter [de] lui rendre hommage [à les dupeurs et de dupes].”⁷⁰ Bourassa reiterated the cultural divisions between Canadians over the issues of the war. He saw a divide between French and English that was greater than any previous debate within the Canadian Federation.

For the battle over conscription, Bourassa had more allies. Alongside Laurier and the Liberal party, the Quebec Bishops also renounced conscription. Though they had supported the

⁶⁷ Henri Bourassa, “Le Cinquantenaire,” *Le Devoir*, 4 July, 1917, 1.

⁶⁸ Henri Bourassa, “Le Cinquantenaire,” *Le Devoir*, 4 July, 1917, 1.

⁶⁹ Henri Bourassa, “Le Cinquantenaire,” *Le Devoir*, 4 July, 1917, 1.

⁷⁰ Henri Bourassa, “Le Cinquantenaire,” *Le Devoir*, 4 July, 1917, 1.

rallying call to support the war, it had all been on the premise that they could avoid conscription. Archbishop Bruchési felt betrayed by Ottawa's change in policy. He had supported voluntary enlistment and Borden had promised him that there would never be conscription.⁷¹ The archbishop let the public know of his anger in *L'Action Catholique*, where he rallied journalists to defend the liberties of the Church and its Catholics.⁷² Bruchési wrote privately to Bourassa admitting that "sur la conscription je pense absolument comme vous. Et je ne crois pas manquer de logique parce que j'ai admis la participation du Canada à la guerre actuelle."⁷³ Bourassa replied that he was ready to work with the Archbishop against the measure. The French language press in Quebec almost unanimously opposed the measure, except for *Le Patrie*, which attempted to explain the logic of Borden's position.⁷⁴ French Canadian opposition to conscription even extended to Borden's Cabinet. Minister of State and Minister of Mines Esioff-Léon Patenaude resigned on 5 June, citing his inability to support conscription since "the proposed law threatens to destroy unity and to give rise throughout the country to deep internal divisions, of long duration, and even detrimental to the needs of the present moment."⁷⁵ General French Canadian outrage over the imposition of conscription marked the summer of 1917.

A few voices among French speaking Canadians did stand out in support of conscription. The most prominent political voice in this vein was that of Conservative Member of Parliament Albert Sévigny. The French Canadian MP, first elected in 1911 as part of Bourassa's "Conservative-nationalistes," subsequently served as Deputy Speaker and Speaker

⁷¹ Robert Rumilly, *Histoire de la Province de Québec vol. XXII "La Conscription"*, (Montreal: Fides, 1940) 99.

⁷² *L'Action Catholique*, 28 July, 1917, 1.

⁷³ René Durocher, "Henri Bourassa, les évêques et la guerre," 269.

⁷⁴ Yvan Lamonde, *Histoire Sociale des Idées au Québec 1896-1929 vol. II*, (Quebec: Éditions Fides, 2004) 42.

⁷⁵ Castell Hopkins, *Canadian Annual Review 1917*, 318.

of the House. In 1917, Sévigny became the Minister of Inland Revenue and, as the laws dictated at the time, had to run in a by-election in January for the riding of Dorchester. The bitterly contested election was between Sévigny and a vocal opponent of the war under the Liberal banner, Lucien Cannon. Sévigny barely won the riding by 257 votes.⁷⁶ Sévigny was one of the few French Canadian Conservatives to actively campaign in favour of conscription alongside the Postmaster General, Pierre Blondin. Sévigny accepted Borden's argument that conscription was necessary and was prepared, in the words of his biographer, to commit political suicide.⁷⁷ Admittedly, he had reservations about Borden's approach to the issue of conscription in regards to Quebec. Borden's announcement of conscription without talking to Laurier or prominent Quebec politicians first proved that the Prime Minister did not understand the French Canadian mentality.⁷⁸ Still, Sévigny stood by his leader and gave speeches in favour of conscription throughout 1917.

Another voice was that of Ferdinand Roy, a Quebec City lawyer, who published a pamphlet in favour of conscription in July 1917. It was a moderate, reasoned response to the anti-conscription arguments titled, *L'appel aux armes et la Réponse canadienne-française*, and a direct response to Henri Bourassa.⁷⁹ Roy agreed with many of Bourassa's arguments. He acknowledged the insidious influence of imperialism on French Canadian society and the failure of Canada's political leaders to stem it.⁸⁰ However, Roy laid some of the blame for the

⁷⁶ John English, *Decline of Politics*, 125-126. Castell Hopkins, *Canadian Annual Review 1917*, 483-486. See also Réal Bélanger, *L'impossible défi: Albert Sévigny et les conservateurs fédéraux (1902-1918)*, (Québec: Presses de l'Université Laval, 1983) 163-165, 244-247. After his victory, his reputation was tarnished after furniture from the Speaker's house was found in his new residence.

⁷⁷ Réal Bélanger, *L'impossible défi*, 263.

⁷⁸ Réal Bélanger, *L'impossible défi*, 294-295.

⁷⁹ Ferdinand Roy, *L'appel aux armes et la Réponse canadienne-française*, (Québec: J.P. Garneau, 1917). It was translated and republished in English in February 1918 by J. Squair and J.S. Will of the University of Toronto, see Ferdinand Roy, *The Call to Arms and the French Canadian Reply*, J. Squair and J.S. Will, trans., (Québec: J.P. Garneau, 1918).

⁸⁰ Ferdinand Roy, *L'Appel*, 8-11.

state of affairs in 1917 at Bourassa's feet. Bourassa was wrong to only speak of the war as Britain's war and disassociate French Canada from the conflict.⁸¹ Roy questioned the willingness of French Canadians and their clergy to accept Bourassa's portrayal of the Canadian home front:

cette foi en un prophète qui n'a pas la fatuité de réclamer l'infailibilité n'est pas une foi aveugle, et la raison maintient son droit d'examiner avec soin sa thèse, qui n'est pas un dogme, et de juger si sa doctrine, toute logique qu'elle soit, captivante et dangereuse à la fois par l'appel qu'elle fait à nos haines de races, n'a pas pour base une erreur.⁸²

Instead, Roy believed that French Canada was indeed fighting for themselves, for their French heritage, and all that made them unique. By resorting to violence or resistance, French Canada only tarnished their reputation and left a poor legacy for their children. Would French Canada be content with the shame of refusing to fight and "ne plus lever les yeux, à courber le front?"⁸³ Roy argued that though French Canadians might resist conscription, their duty and honour required them to enlist and fight regardless of the outcome. If they did not, they risked indictment in the court of public opinion and domination from the English Canadian majority that controlled Parliament.⁸⁴ Any other reaction to the imposition of conscription led to ruin.

Like Bourassa, Roy asked for a reasonable debate on the issues of the war. He saw in the French Canadian reaction to conscription an unquestioning acceptance of Bourassa's views. He warned of the dangerous path upon which his countrymen trod, asking "veut-on que vraiment nos lignes de défense, au lieu d'être dans les Flandres, se creusent dans notre province?" "Il nous faut," he continued, "par des actes, par un changement d'attitude manifeste, sortir du remous d'incohérence où l'on nous a poussés, prendre pied sur le fond

⁸¹ Ferdinand Roy, *L'Appel*, 12-14.

⁸² Ferdinand Roy, *L'Appel*, 14.

⁸³ Ferdinand Roy, *L'Appel*, 20.

⁸⁴ Ferdinand Roy, *L'Appel*, 25-27.

solide qui est là, plus nous laisser aller, éperdus, indécis et inertes, à la dérive.”⁸⁵ Roy discussed anti-militarism, the bastion of Bourassa’s own position against the war, but apparently misunderstood Bourassa’s arguments. Roy believed any anti-militarist sentiments were pacifism and “pacifists” condemned violence, thus refused to fight for the defense of Canada.⁸⁶ Bourassa was more concerned with the pervasiveness of militarism rather than a moral judgement of war itself.

Roy’s foray into public commentary is a fascinating glimpse into the mind of a French Canadian opposed to the growing dominant narrative fashioned by Bourassa and his supporters. Much of Roy’s tone mirrors that of Bourassa. Both believe in the validity of critical thought, in the problem of mass acceptance of a single set of beliefs, and the dangerous outcome of violent resistance to conscription. Ultimately, Roy concluded however that French Canada must join the fight on the assumption that for Canada to function in the future there must be respect between its French and English peoples. Quebec ought to fight for its own honour and salvation as much as it did for Britain or France.

Bourassa also highlighted the inherent division between Canada’s peoples in his book on conscription. He also argued that cooperation between Canada’s founding peoples was only possible if both sides respected the other as equals. Yet in his view, English Canada had to respect that French Canada had no stake in the European war, rather than Roy’s interpretation that French Canada had to respect that English Canada’s absolute investment in the war. Both wanted to avoid violence, French Canadian subservience, and the rule of incoherent thought, but offered different means to do so.

It is difficult to gauge the impact of Roy’s work, though it was likely minimal.

⁸⁵ Ferdinand Roy, *L’Appel*, 34.

⁸⁶ Ferdinand Roy, *L’Appel*, 32-33.

Bourassa never refers to it in his public commentary while Castell Hopkins of the *Canadian Annual Review* bemoaned its meagre reception compared to anti-conscription writing.⁸⁷

Neither of these are definitive proofs of its impact, but it is fair to conclude that French Canadians attitudes did not change in the way Roy demanded, nor was there ever widespread support for conscription among them. In that respect, we can assume that Roy's ideas had minimal impact since anti-conscription sentiment only grew in the final year of the war. Still, it stands as a clear voice proposing an acceptance of conscription not based on English Canadian or imperialist rhetoric. Roy did not demand that his fellow French Canadians accept the legitimacy of an English Canadian war effort, but rather argued that both English Canada and Bourassa had misrepresented the war. Consequently, French Canadians could fashion their own meaning to the war. Roy's work was not an ideological polemic as much as it was an argumentative essay.

Without reference to Roy, Bourassa rejected the premise of his arguments when he succinctly summarized why Canadians opposed conscription in mid-July for the *New York Evening Post*. Americans saw the situation in Quebec as a curious phenomenon and the New York paper asked Bourassa to submit a piece on conscription, which was followed by similar articles from Édouard Montpetit, a professor of Political Economy at Laval University, and Paul-Émile Lamarche, a former Conservative MP who had resigned over the issue of bilingual schools in 1916.⁸⁸

Canada's French-speaking peoples, Bourassa wrote, could never accommodate conscription. He listed the reasons why Canada should not adopt conscription: Canada had already contributed an impressive amount to the war; any further contribution risked

⁸⁷ Castell Hopkins, *Canadian Annual Review 1917*, 475.

⁸⁸ Rumilly, *Henri Bourassa*, 584-585.

weakening Canada's agricultural production and industry; Canada could not shoulder any greater economic cost; it threatened Canada's political independence; and finally, it would create disunion and strife for the country and the continent.⁸⁹ Conscription, Bourassa argued, was not in Canada's national interest, but rather continued to serve the imperial interests of the British Empire and its European war. If Canada had an international obligation, it was to strive for a peaceful resolution to the conflict and preserve the international system, not witness its systematic degradation. Conscription he warned could create "a second Mexico north of the 45th and 49th parallels," a relevant if somewhat exaggerated warning for American readers.⁹⁰ He saw no value in the cooperation for which Roy advocated as conscription meant domination, oppression, and violent reaction.

As the *Military Service Bill* finally worked its way through Parliament and the Senate that July, Bourassa followed the debates closely. In his view, none of Canada's parliamentarians raised the question of how conscription would affect national interest or its citizens. It is likely that Bourassa's narrow vision of national interest did not include those raised by the House of Commons debate. For instance, there was a long discussion over the specific phrasing of how exemptions would be granted on the basis of "national interest." The Solicitor General, Arthur Meighen, explained that they were basing it off the British legislation that stated that, "'National interests,' has to be construed broadly. It covers not only services which minister directly to the prosecution of the war, but also services which are essential to

⁸⁹ Henri Bourassa, "Why Canada Should Not Adopt Conscription," *New York Evening Post*, July 10, 1917.

Bourassa, Lamarche and Montpetit's articles were republished a few months later as the first three volumes of a series of English language brochures that included other anti-conscription arguments, *The Case Against Conscription*, (Montréal: Éditions du *Devoir*, 1917) v. I – VI. Montpetit's article was titled "Canada's Economic Destruction," while Lamarche's was "The Free American and the Canadian Flunkey."

⁹⁰ Henri Bourassa, "Why Canada Should Not Adopt Conscription," *New York Evening Post*, July 10, 1917.

the country at the present time.”⁹¹ Liberals pressed the Government over its somewhat ambiguous definition of national interest and its fair application. Members of Parliament mentioned national unity often. Both sides of the House raised the spectre of national unity in light of conscription many times over the course of the debate’s final month. Laurier argued that the government’s introduction of conscription had committed the “greatest possible injury” to the possibility of coalition government and national unity. “There is something more important even than the [coalition government] which [Borden] has sought,” he told the House, “that is to maintain the unity of the nation, and the unity of the nation is seriously compromised today.”⁹² Similarly, Meighen concluded the debate over the *The Military Service Act*’s third reading with a damning rejection of Laurier’s appeal:

We either have national aims, a national will and a sense of national honour, or we have not. ... Let the right hon. leader of the Opposition say now whether the time has not come for him to take his place beside those who sustain the national will and the national honour of Canada. ... Then there will not be found the disunion which he predicts this afternoon; nor will there be encountered a disunion infinitely worse than that which he describes – a disunion between the nation at home and its defenders overseas.⁹³

If Bourassa had followed the debates, and perhaps he did not closely follow the long discussion of national interests, he certainly rejected Parliament’s understanding of it. Certainly Meighen’s words were distant from anything Bourassa would have believed, and even Laurier and other Liberals couched the issue in careful phrases that the nationaliste found wanting. “La politique du ministère,” he declared in late July, “menace directement la sécurité nationale et la liberté des citoyens.”⁹⁴ Where were the defenders of the Canadian nation? Bourassa saw only

⁹¹ Arthur Meighen, *House of Commons Debates*, 12th Parliament, 7th Session, vol. 4, 10 July, 1917, 3191. For the long discussion about what exactly “national interest” entailed, see 3187-3260.

⁹² Wilfrid Laurier, *House of Commons Debates*, 12th Parliament, 7th Session, vol. 4, 17 July, 1917, 3487.

⁹³ Arthur Meighen, *House of Commons Debates*, 12th Parliament, 7th Session, vol. 4, 24 July, 1917, 3736.

⁹⁴ Henri Bourassa, “La fin du Débat,” *Le Devoir*, 26 July 1917, 1.

the rejection of wartime policies as a cause of disunity, rather than the war itself. He sarcastically noted that Canada might as well be Senegal fighting for France for all the influence it had on the war effort. Bourassa pointed out that the Bill's passage without going before the electorate revealed a failing democracy. Canada was now sending its citizens to fight and die for a foreign power without acknowledging their dissent. To him, the lacklustre conscription debate pointed to the continued failure of Canadian democracy and the triumph of militarism.

For the French Canadian journalist, the government had unavoidably changed the nature of the coming election by its meagre debate over the bill in Parliament. Bourassa compared the process unfavourably to Britain's vote on conscription, where their MPs had examined its impact on Britain's domestic and international situation, or Australia where there was sufficient opposition to keep it from passing at all. Since Parliament had not consulted the people directly, Bourassa drew comparisons to the situations of Ireland or Russia, where the involuntary nature of a war effort had contributed to revolution.⁹⁵ Bourassa termed the passage of conscription as "la conscription électorale."⁹⁶ By hinging the upcoming election on the issue of conscription, Borden had turned it into a campaign on the value of Canada's contribution to the war. The election would be over conscription, Bourassa predicted, not the ability of either party to lead the country during wartime.⁹⁷

The disturbances that followed the passing of the conscription bill and the explosion at Lord Atholstan's house in August underlined the dangerous game that Canada's government was playing. Bourassa believed that such outbursts were an inevitable result of subverting

⁹⁵ Henri Bourassa, "La fin du Débat," *Le Devoir*, 26 July 1917, 1.

⁹⁶ Henri Bourassa, "La fin du Débat," *Le Devoir*, 26 July 1917, 1.

⁹⁷ Henri Bourassa, "La fin du Débat," *Le Devoir*, 26 July 1917, 1.

democratic rights.⁹⁸ For years, he had described the transformation of Canadian society because of the war, and in the summer of 1917 it seemed as if his worst fears had come to pass. He suspected it would get worse before it got better. A federal election was scheduled before the year was out and the war still seemingly had no end in sight. Bourassa's warning in August that physical violence was not the answer was worthwhile, but one that ignored his own role in it. While he never asked for popular manifestations on the street, neither were his words ever conciliatory. He had spent years of writing about the "boches of Ontario" and their discriminatory policies and the incapability of war supporters to consider anything less than total support. The final year of the war revealed how dangerous the situation had become alongside the growing disunity of the Canadian nation.

⁹⁸ Henri Bourassa, "Steriles Violences," *Le Devoir*, 11 August, 1917, 1.

Chapter 7: Silenced (August 1917 – April 1918)

The months following the enactment of conscription were arduous ones for Henri Bourassa. He advocated for the Liberal Party as Union Government coalesced and announced an election for December. He had reservations about Laurier and his party, but saw no better option for Canadians opposed to the militaristic governance promised by a Borden victory. His view of international affairs took on an anxious tone. New possibilities for peace emerged as the former British Cabinet Minister Lord Lansdowne publicly warned the British public that no victory was worth the war's continuation. The Unionist victory in December demonstrated to Bourassa that militarism would continue to rule in Canada, and across the world, so long as the war continued. He was hopeful when British Prime Minister David Lloyd George and President Woodrow Wilson offered their visions of the world after the war in January 1918, though Bourassa saw Pope Benedict XV as their true source of inspiration and guidance. If only the world listened to the Pope's rational voice, the war might end.

The dire impact of the war on Canada was clear in the midst of the 1918 German Spring offensive, when German armies pushed to the Marne River, within 100 kilometres of Paris. In late March and early April, the government enforced conscription against a sometime unwilling populace. Riots broke out in Quebec City after imprisonment of two men for not providing their exemption papers on 28 March 1918. The police eventually released them, but a crowd of about 2,000 gathered and stormed the police station. The next evening a crowd of 8,000 civilians looted the offices of two pro-conscription newspapers, the *Quebec Chronicle* and *L'Évenement*, and burned down the offices of the Military Service Act Registrar. These large mobs completely overwhelmed municipal police forces and the local armoury dispatched

300 soldiers before the crowd dispersed. On 30 March, Prime Minister Borden declared that the federal government was now taking charge of peace and order in Quebec City. Ottawa immediately deployed a force of 780 soldiers, and supplemented it by 1,000 more from Ontario to reinforce the Quebec garrison.¹ Rioting continued through to 1 April as clashes broke out each night between rioters and soldiers. Over the entire Easter weekend, official reports state that the unrest injured four civilians, wounded an unknown amount, and injured 62 soldiers.² At its peak, the government feared revolution and widespread disorder across the province of Quebec. They reacted quickly to stem further riots and deployed thousands of soldiers to Quebec City and Montreal. Bourassa, disgusted with the outbreak of violence and facing stricter censorship laws, wrote a single editorial in response on 5 April declaring that “l’ordre public doit être maintenu.”³ He was clearly dismayed with what the war had wrought.

* * *

The riots were a confirmation of what English Canada had implied – or explicitly condemned – throughout the war: the French Canadian character was not suited for war. Whether it was a result of nationalist propaganda, or some intrinsic element such as their Catholicism, English Canada had lingering suspicions over French Canada’s failure to support the war.⁴ As they suspected, Bourassa was influential in shaping French Canada’s views on the

¹ Martin F. Auger, “On the Brink of Civil War: The Canadian Government and the Suppression of the 1918 Quebec Easter Riots,” *The Canadian Historical Review*, no.4, 89 (December 2008): 508-512.

² Martin F. Auger, “On the Brink of Civil War,” 519-520.

³ Henri Bourassa, “L’ordre public doit être Maintenu,” *Le Devoir*, 5 April, 1918, 1.

⁴ Castell Hopkins lay blame firmly on the nationalists and “a continuous stream of vituperative argument presented to men who knew nothing of Europe and little of the Empire and little of the War,” J. Castell Hopkins, *The Canadian Annual Review, War Series, 1918*, (Toronto: The Canadian Annual Review Limited, 1918) 640, see also a discussion on 462-464. Robert Sellar, writer of the vehemently anti-French Canadian and anti-Catholic book, *The Tragedy of Quebec*, continued to sell well throughout 1917-1918, and Kevin P. Anderson argues that Sellar’s 1917 publication *George Brown: The Globe, Confederation* continued this trend, noting that “For Sellar the sinister influence of the Church had manifested itself most clearly in the cowardly refusal of French Catholics to go to war at the behest of their priests, allowing good English Protestants to die in a just cause.” See Kevin P. Anderson, “‘This typical old Canadian form of racial and religious hate’: Anti-

war throughout the election and in the months up to April 1918.

After the violent response to the passing of conscription in late July and August 1917, Bourassa turned his gaze outside of Canada's borders to the international stage. He looked to the chief advocate for a peaceful resolution to the ruinous conflict: Pope Benedict XV. The failed peace negotiations of 1916 and the American entry into the war compelled Pope Benedict to release his most strongly worded peace note yet. The Pope wrote to the belligerent peoples and their leaders on the third anniversary of the war's outbreak, promising

to maintain an absolute impartiality towards all belligerents, ... to endeavor continually to do the utmost good to all without distinction of persons, nationality or religion, [and] to contribute to hasten the end of this calamity by trying to bring the peoples and their leaders to more moderate resolutions in the discussion of means that will secure a "just and lasting peace."⁵

Benedict outlined a clear international position as the head of the Catholic Church that did not favour any side, since Catholics were amongst both the Allied and Central Powers. It was the sort of diplomatic balancing act that Pope Benedict was well experienced at performing.

Pope Benedict XV was born Giacomo Giambattista Della Chiesa and replaced Pope Pius X, who died on 24 August 1914 – apocryphally from a broken heart over the outbreak of a general European war. Della Chiesa had only been a Cardinal for six months before he became Pope, though he had had a long career of diplomatic posts within the Vatican. He worked closely with Cardinal Mariano Rampolla, Pope Leo XIII's (1878-1903) Secretary of State, and performed admirably. Contemporaries heralded him as the "new Consalvi," referring to the worldly Cardinal who after the Vienna Congress of 1815 had positioned the Papacy as a neutral

Catholicism and English Canadian Nationalism, 1905-1965," PhD Diss. McMaster University, 2013, 71, and 113, fn 98.

⁵ *Exhortation Dès les Début to the Belligerent Peoples and to their Leaders*, as printed in *Principles for Peace Selections From Papal Documents Leo XIII to Pius XII*, Reverend Harry C. Koenig, ed., (Washington: National Catholic Welfare Conference, 1943) 229. Originally written in French.

power, restored the Papal States and preserved its international relevance.⁶ Despite Della Chiesa's commendable credentials, his election to the Papacy came as a surprise to contemporary observers. Few people outside of Rome had heard of him but, as his biographer writes, of all the papal candidates in the 1914 Conclave, Della Chiesa was the most *papabile*. He fulfilled the description of the 'ideal' Pope who possessed "superior intelligence, holiness of life, and Christian charity."⁷

As Sovereign Pontiff, Benedict XV immediately set out to resolve the terrible conflict that split his flock -- or at least to mediate its horrific consequences as much as he could. From September 1914 onwards, the Vatican commented on and engaged with each of the belligerent powers in its efforts to stop the war. Although he ultimately failed, his long years of diplomatic intervention earned him the name the "Pope of Peace." Often unjustly characterized by contemporaries as having done nothing during the Great War besides meddle in diplomatic affairs, recent historians have demonstrated the immense commitment Benedict made towards ending the war and aiding its victims.⁸ Both the Allies and the Central Powers were suspicious of the Pope's actions during the war. The Treaty of London that brought Italy into the war specifically forbade any Papal presence at future peace negotiations. Some members of the Roman Curia hoped for a Central Powers victory precisely because it could resolve the "Rome Question" and perhaps restore the Papal States, only annexed sixty years earlier in 1860.⁹

⁶ Henry E. G. Rope, *Benedict XV The Pope of Peace*, (London: The Catholic Book Club, 1940) 33.

⁷ John F. Pollard, *The Unknown Pope: Benedict XV (1914-1922) and the Pursuit of Peace*, (London: Geoffrey Chapman, 1999) 64.

⁸ This is concisely reviewed in Charles R. Gallagher, "The perils of perception: British Catholics and papal neutrality, 1914-1923," in *The Papacy Since 1500: From Italian Prince to Universal Pastor*, eds. James Corkery and Thomas Worcester (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2010), 180-1. Pollard's work outlines Benedict's accomplishments, which included 82 million lire donated to war's victims, helping 26,000 POWs and 3,000 civilian detainees be allowed to convalesce in Switzerland, and even formally protesting the ongoing Armenian genocide in Turkey, see Pollard, *The Unknown Pope*, 112-39.

⁹ The publication of the Treaty of London by the Russians after the fall of the Czar in 1917 certainly encouraged this view, see Oliver P. Rafferty, "The Catholic Church, Ireland and the British Empire, 1800-1921,"

Though some members of the Curia may have been sympathetic to the German and Austrian war effort,¹⁰ Pope Benedict XV was committed to his policy of strict neutrality. His Papal notes throughout the conflict all sought to bring about an end to the war without favouring one side over another. The most famous was that of 1 August 1917, declaring the Pontificate's impartiality and commitment to ending the conflict.

Bourassa found Pope Benedict XV's argument that the war would only end when just and fair arbitration took precedence over the force of arms compelling. The French Canadian agreed with the underlying philosophy that participation or support for the war was a sin for Catholics (or believers in any moral code). For years he had attempted to persuade his countrymen of the validity of the Pope's words, confronting those who claimed moral superiority without the papacy's moral authority. Accordingly, Bourassa unconditionally affirmed the Pope's message and his impartiality—largely because of his religious beliefs, but also because the Pope called for a peace for the sake of peace without caring who won or lost. Whether the war ended in victory or defeat, the cost of thousands of lives every day affronted Bourassa.

In his editorial reply to the Pope's note on 18 August, Bourassa responded to the accusation that the Pope was a German sympathizer. The claim stemmed from detractors in Canada and Great Britain who attacked Benedict XV after he appealed for peace early on in the

Historical Research 84, 224 (May 2011): 305-7. Pollard has an excellent chapter on Pope Benedict XV and Italy's relationship during the war; see Pollard, *The Unknown Pope*, 85-111.

¹⁰ One such example is Rudolph Gerlach, the papal secret chamberlain, who was accused of being the lead spy in an Italian espionage ring and allegedly linked to German and Austrian intelligence. He was discovered following an investigation into the destruction of the Italian battleship, the *Leonardo Da Vinci*, in August 1916. Benedict was convinced of Gerlach's innocence, and there is little evidence of his guilt in the historical record. Gerlach was quietly sent to Switzerland but eventually had several public and embarrassing meetings with the King of Bavaria, the German and Austrian Emperors, and General Hindenburg. See David Alvarez, "Vatican Communications Security, 1914-1918," *Intelligence and National Security* 7, no. 4 (1992): 443-53; David Alvarez, "A German Agent at the Vatican: the Gerlach Affair," *Intelligence and National Security* 2, no. 2 (April 1996): 345-56; Pollard, *The Unknown Pope*, 103-7.

war. Again, after this latest proposal, the “presse vampire” painted the Pope as a “docile et hypocrite instrument du Kaiser.”¹¹ Bourassa reiterated in detail the Pope’s plan and denied what he described as falsehoods in other newspapers. Outlining each point, he defended the spiritual leader against those who tried to make his ideas seem both “trop absolues et trop favorables à l’Allemagne” and “trop vagues et insuffisantes.”¹² Bourassa remained optimistic that a true peace was possible by paying heed the reasoned and moral voice of the Pope. He hoped the Pope’s words could convince others to reject “les hideux vampires qui se gorgent du sang des nations,”¹³ so that then the people of the world forced their leaders to action.

Bourassa’s position on the war has been termed “Christian Pacifism,”¹⁴ but a more proper description may have been “Catholic Neutrality.” As a devout Catholic, his faith played an integral role in shaping his wartime views. As an ultramontane, however, his devotion influenced him in different ways than other wartime Catholics. His ultramontane belief in the supremacy of the Pope over civil authorities or national church hierarchies created a definitive understanding of the war’s events through that lens. While Bourassa may have not been absolutely certain of the Pope’s judgment in temporal affairs, he was certain that the Pope was the least fallible voice in the world.¹⁵ Bourassa’s thoughts on the war were undoubtedly Catholic in nature; however, they significantly diverged from the positions taken by other Catholics in the belligerent nations, including Canada. For instance, English-speaking Catholics used the war as a tool to emphasize further the differences from French Canadian

¹¹ Henri Bourassa, “L’Appel du Pape,” *Le Devoir*, August 18, 1917, 1. Bourassa’s first footnote also remarks on some of the offending papers, which included Montreal’s *La Patrie* and New York’s *Evening Post*.

¹² Henri Bourassa, “L’Appel du Pape,” *Le Devoir*, August 18, 1917, 1.

¹³ Henri Bourassa, “L’Appel du Pape,” *Le Devoir*, August 18, 1917, 1.

¹⁴ François-Albert Angers, “Le problème de la paix selon Bourassa,” in *La Pensée de Henri Bourassa*, 83.

¹⁵ Lacombe, 276. For a succinct yet detailed examination of Bourassa’s combination of political and religious ideology, see Sylvie Lacombe, “Entre l’autorité pontificale et la liberté nationale: l’anti-impérialisme britannique d’Henri Bourassa,” in *Le Devoir : Un journal indépendant (1910-1995)*, eds. Robert Comeau and Luc Desrochers (Québec: Presses de l’Université du Québec, 1996), 274-7.

Catholics, seeking to balance their loyalty to Britain and maintaining sympathy with their fellow Catholics.¹⁶

Just as important to understanding Bourassa's position is the concept of "Neutrality." Bourassa did not espouse a "pacifist" view (a moral opposition to any violence). He contested the justification and consequences of the First World War itself. This departed slightly from Pope Benedict XV's official position of "absolute impartiality," which denoted a subtle but often misunderstood difference from neutrality. "Absolute impartiality was more than simply a tightened concept of neutrality," Charles R. Gallagher clarifies, since "absolute impartiality distinctly forbade public moral determinations by non-belligerent states."¹⁷ The Holy See refused to draw moral judgments on warring states, with Benedict XV trying to position the Vatican as both politically *and* morally neutral in the conflict.

Bourassa's sententious writing did not follow this dictate closely. Rather, he argued for a peaceful resolution to the European war while denouncing those who refused to consider peace as a viable option. He effectively situated himself as "neutral" within an older context of neutrality. During the 19th century, neutrality was a key element in maintaining the European balance of power and restraining larger nations' aggressive tendencies. M. M. Abbenhuis observes that this was a "legitimate foreign policy option" and a nation's intent against war was just as valid as those who threatened to wage it.¹⁸ Thus, Bourassa did not oppose the war

¹⁶ Mark G. McGowan, "'To Share in the Burdens of Empire': Toronto's Catholics and the Great War, 1914-1918," in *Catholics at the "Gathering Place,"* eds. Mark McGowan and Brian Clarke (Toronto: Canadian Catholic Historical Association, 1993), 188. Duff W. Crerar argues that English-speaking Catholic priests who served in the army "fought to establish a public identity as both Catholics and Canadian nationalists," see Duff W. Crerar, "Bellicose Priests: The Wars of the Catholic Chaplains, 1914-1919," *Canadian Catholic Historical Association, Historical Studies* 58 (1991): 21-39. See also Mark G. McGowan, "Harvesting the 'Red Vineyard': Catholic Religious Culture in the Canadian Expeditionary Force, 1914-1919," *Canadian Catholic Historical Association Historical Studies* 64 (1998): 47-70.

¹⁷ Gallagher, "The perils of perception: British Catholics and papal neutrality, 1914-1923," 169.

¹⁸ M. M. Abbenhuis, "'Too Good to be True?' European Hopes for Neutrality Before 1914," *Small Powers in the Age of Total War, 1900-1940*, Herman Amersfoort and Wim Klinkert eds., (Leiden: Brill, 2011), 28.

for the sake of opposing it. He expressed, through a definitively religious lens, his belief that moderation, restraint and limited war (not total war) were the only ways to assure European stability and maintain the virtues of civilization for which both sides claimed to fight.

Bourassa's neutrality was not a passive abdication of war for religious reasons, as the term "Christian Pacifist" might suggest. It was a resolute stance against war's excessive incarnation, rooted in Benedict XV's wartime policy of impartial moderation. Above all, the French Canadian Catholic commentator trusted the righteousness of the Sovereign Pontiff to guide humanity. It was in this frame of mind that Bourassa returned to the political events developing in Ottawa.

Throughout August 1917, Prime Minister Borden's efforts to forge a coalition of Liberals and Conservatives continued without the support of Sir Wilfrid Laurier. Borden believed that he could entice a group of pro-conscription Liberals to join the government and break away from Laurier's party. Borden pursued prominent Liberals from across the country, like the Premier of Alberta, Albert Sifton (brother of Laurier's former Cabinet Minister, Clifford Sifton), Saskatchewan MP James Calder, progressive Manitoban Liberal Thomas Crerar, Ontario Liberal leader Newton Rowell, and New Brunswick MP Frank Carvell. Conscriptionist Liberals tried to wean the party away from Laurier's influence without success.¹⁹ At a Liberal meeting on 7 August, much of the rank and file enthusiastically supported Laurier, whose decision to support a referendum left the Liberals who wanted conscription unilaterally imposed with no place in the party. Consequently, the pro-conscription Liberals reluctantly agreed to enter a coalition with Conservatives as part of the new Unionist Party. Believing that the Laurier Liberals faced annihilation in the coming

¹⁹ John English, *Decline of Politics*, 141-144.

election, the Liberal-Unionists saw themselves as preserving the Liberal party outside of Quebec and ensuring its future longevity.²⁰

Bourassa approved of Laurier's refusal to support forced military service and even his policy of a referendum, recognizing that Laurier was in a complicated and difficult situation. Bourassa believed the Liberal leader was trying to avoid conscription in any form, but could not outright declare his change in position and thus had supported a referendum. Bourassa told his readers that Laurier was personally and sincerely opposed to conscription, but the circumstances of the war and the chains that Laurier himself had forged entrapped the Liberal leader. The Liberal's complicity during the Boer War and subsequent Imperial ventures -- including the last three years of the war -- had plunged Canada into its current position. Now Laurier was trying to correct his party's past mistakes. "M. Laurier," Bourassa declared, "se doit à lui-même, il doit à partisans fidèles, il doit à ses compatriotes, il doit au pays tout entier, de sortir de la brousse et de se placer sur un terrain solide pour livrer à découvert la bataille électorale."²¹ A Liberal election victory was dependent on not alienating the party from the pro-conscription vote. Bourassa believed that Laurier offered support for conscription as a means of ensuring electoral success for the Liberal party. During the debate over the legislation, Bourassa had been lukewarm towards Laurier's efforts to oppose the bill, but now Bourassa accepted that a Liberal victory was the only way to correct the country's wayward direction.

The election preoccupied Canada's political leaders in the fall of 1917, while Canadian soldiers fought costly engagements in the mud of Passchendaele. Prime Minister Borden,

²⁰ John English, *Decline of Politics*, 151-159. English provides a comprehensive explanation of the trials and tribulations behind the formation of Union government between July and October, see 136-185. Also a detailed if somewhat bland narrative is found in Castell Hopkins, *Canadian Annual Review 1917*, 569-586.

²¹ Henri Bourassa, "La Comédie Parlementaire II: Savante manoeuvre de M. Laurier," *Le Devoir*, 25 August, 1917, 1.

fearing an election loss even with some Liberals on his side, passed two crucial pieces of election legislation in August and September: the *Military Voters Act* and the *War Time Elections Act*. The *Military Voters Act* gave the vote to all soldiers, and those who did not name a constituency were able to cast a “floating vote” that was assigned to any constituency the government wanted. In mid-September, the *War Time Elections Act* gave the vote to the wives, widows, mothers and sisters of soldiers and simultaneously disenfranchised “enemy alien” citizens naturalized after 1902, unless they had relatives serving in the armed forces. Borden’s legislation aimed to assure a victory for his coalition government, regardless of any lingering disputes over conscription.²² Two Liberal victories in the provincial elections of Alberta and Saskatchewan earlier that year were allegedly attributable to the “foreign vote” and the Conservatives were wary of their influence.²³

The Liberals stood firmly against the bill and spoke out vehemently against it in the House of Commons. They did not accept the government’s claims that the legislation would reveal “the real views of the Canadian people,”²⁴ insisting that the legislation was intended only to bolster the government’s electoral results. J.H. Sinclair, the Liberal MP for Guysborough in Nova Scotia, asked on 10 September, “Let me suggest to the Secretary of State that he change the name, and call it ‘The War-Times Prussian Junker Act.’” “The idea behind this measure is military autocracy,” he continued, reminding his fellow parliamentarians that “we, on this side of the House, I am proud to say, stand for democracy.”²⁵ The Liberals

²² John English, *Decline of Politics*, 154-156.

²³ Granatstein and Hitsman, *Broken Promises*, 71-73. In a footnote on page 72, these authors recount a letter to Borden that explained how the “foreign vote” negatively affected Conservative support and the necessity of only allowing “loyal citizens” to participate in future elections.

²⁴ Castell Hopkins, *Canadian Annual Review 1917*, 332. Hopkins devotes a mere four pages to the bill, 330-334. Hopkins, a clear supporter of the war and Union Government, spends little time examining either piece of legislation in detail. Though he offers details on Liberal opposition to it, it is portrayed as a patriotic measure, not electoral manipulation.

²⁵ J.H. Sinclair, *House of Commons Debates*, 12th Parliament, 7th Session, Vol. 6, 10 September, 1917, 5567.

condemned the establishment of what they saw effectively as a separate social caste for the military, calling it the founding of a Prussian Junker aristocracy and “oligarchic Kaiserism.”²⁶ None accepted that expanding the electoral franchise was bettering Canadian democracy.

Bourassa understood the government’s intention as well, baptizing it the “Mad-Time Elections Act.”²⁷ Bourassa also perceived the legislation as the creation of “une caste militaire privilégiée,” where women related to soldiers earned suffrage solely because of their relation “les héros.” Even giving women the vote seemed an extraordinary act, adding yet another revolutionary facet to his critique of the war.²⁸ Equally unsettling was the government disenfranchising foreign-born Canadians. To Bourassa, disavowing the Canadians already acknowledged as citizens was outrageous. “Voilà la confiance,” he wrote, “que les sauveurs des ‘petits nationalités’ accordent à leurs protégés.”²⁹ They were already British subjects, they had paid taxes, they had set down roots and became Canadian, yet now they were to live as pariahs in their new home. In the conclusion to his thoughts on the *Wartime Elections Act*, Bourassa ranked it even worse than conscription. He told his readers that, “par son inspiration, ses motifs, ses conséquences immédiates, sa portée lointaine, cette législation est infiniment plus criminelle et dangereuse que la loi de conscription. Elle suinte par tous les pores l’iniquité, le mensonge, la fourberie, le despotisme lâche.”³⁰ At least, Bourassa concluded, the Liberals opposed the motion. For the first time in several years, Bourassa readily admitted that the Opposition was doing its job to resist unjust government action.

The debates over conscription and Borden’s election legislation finally rehabilitated

²⁶ Castell Hopkins, *Canadian Annual Review 1917*, 333.

²⁷ Henri Bourassa, “Le Dernier Accès: La Loi Électorale,” *Le Devoir*, 11 September, 1917, 1.

²⁸ Bourassa was no fan of women’s rights or suffrage. See Susan Mann, “Henri Bourassa and the ‘Woman Question,’” *Journal of Canadian Studies*, 10 (Nov. 1975): 3-11. He had a firm conception of the idea of family within a Catholic order that offered a firm role to women. See Joseph Levitt, *Catholic Critic*, 11-12.

²⁹ Henri Bourassa, “Le Dernier Accès: La Loi Électorale II,” *Le Devoir*, 12 September, 1917, 1.

³⁰ Henri Bourassa, “Le Dernier Accès: La Loi Électorale II,” *Le Devoir*, 12 September, 1917, 1.

Laurier in Bourassa's eyes. "Au noms de tous les vrais et sincères nationalistes," Bourassa wrote that summer, "j'accepte le remède proposé par M. Laurier."³¹ Robert Rumilly recounts the story of their first meeting after several years in the fall of 1917. Louis-Athanase David, a Quebec Liberal MLA, wrote to both Bourassa and Laurier telling them that they wished to see one another. Bourassa travelled to Ottawa to see his former chief, and Laurier opened his arms, saying, "ce qui m'arrive aujourd'hui, vous me l'avez prédit il y a onze ans. Je sais maintenant où trouver les vrais amis."³² The two had reconciled their differences and could work together against a common foe.

When Prime Minister Borden formally announced the formation of Union Government on 12 October and presented its program and Cabinet on the 18th,³³ Bourassa affirmed that Laurier and his partisans had to have "la clairvoyance et l'énergie de comprendre la situation."³⁴ The only hope for the future of Laurier and his Liberal party was to understand the depth of Canada's "complaisance envers les faux dieux." Real and honest Canadians were tired of the government's lies, Bourassa predicted, and were waiting for a party to lead them. Laurier's Liberals had become that party.

In late October, just days before Borden called the 17 December election, Bourassa outlined the international situation enmeshing Canada. He attached none of the high meaning to the cause of victory repeated in newspapers, posters, and speeches across the country.

³¹ Réal Bélanger, *Wilfrid Laurier: quand la politique devient passion*, 399.

³² Robert Rumilly, *Henri Bourassa*, 587. Rumilly does not offer any citation for his story, but it is likely to have been drawn from interviews with Bourassa or his *Memoirs* speeches during the Second World War. Rumilly cites a quotation from a 20 October Bourassa article as following the meeting, so it lays between 12 September and 20 October in Rumilly's timeline. Bourassa confirmed that he met with Laurier in 1917 in a speech to the House of Commons in 1935 (see chapter 8), but Réal Bélanger's biography of Laurier makes no mention of the 1917 meeting. Bélanger does discuss a meeting between them in August of 1918, though it is hosted by L.A. David's father, L.O. David, see Réal Bélanger, *Wilfrid Laurier: quand la politique devient passion*, 415-416.

³³ Castell Hopkins, *Canadian Annual Review 1917*, 584-585. John English, *Decline of Politics*, 162-163.

³⁴ Henri Bourassa, "Le Pot-pourri du Grand Ministère," *Le Devoir*, 20 October, 1917, 1.

Bourassa saw little proof that the war was anything more than for the profit of “financiers.”³⁵ He drew new inspiration on the topic from an article by American writer Frederic C. Howe entitled “Financial Imperialism.”³⁶

Howe was the President of the League for Small and Subject Nationalities, a New York based organization that aimed to ensure that all the nationalities of the world had representation on the international stage as well as at the peace conference that would one day decide the terms of the war’s end.³⁷ Like Bourassa, Howe agreed with the work of British radicals such as Noel Brailsford and J.A. Hobson, and pointed to “financial imperialism” as one of the leading causes of modern war.³⁸ Howe considered imperialism, or “dollar diplomacy” in an American context, as the fusion of financial development with foreign policy. It was an action of finance rather than trade and included “(1) the lending of money, often to weak or dependant countries or to rulers of doubtful legitimacy, (2) the building of railroads, canals, and the public utility enterprises; and (3) the development of mines, plantations, and other resources.”³⁹ He explored the history of these practises in recent memory, touching on the British and French intervention in Egypt and the 1911 Moroccan Crisis, while connecting each international incident to financial investment from Great Powers. He considered these investments as dishonest or

³⁵ Henri Bourassa, “La Guerre de l’Or,” *Le Devoir*, 27 October 1917, 1. Bourassa never really described who these financiers were other than the super-rich like J.P. Morgan. He implied that they were the industrialists in charge of war industries and investors who were making money off the war, but rarely addressed in detail how this category is defined.

³⁶ Frederick C. Howe, “Financial Imperialism,” *The Atlantic Monthly*, 120 (July-December 1917): 477-484. Bourassa and the article both spell Howe’s first name as Frederick, but it was actually Frederic.

³⁷ Kenneth E. Miller, *From Progressive to New Dealer: Frederic C. Howe and American Liberalism*, (University Park: Penn State University Press, 2010) 279-280. Howe was a progressive reformer and lawyer who wrote prolifically about the financial topics and American democracy in the early 20th century. There is no major literature on the League for Small and Subject Nationalities, so it is difficult to ascertain its impact on the formation of the League of Nations after the war. The author was also unable to find if French Canadians were represented there in any way, but it seems unlikely.

³⁸ Miller, *From Progressive to New Dealer*, 256. Howe’s work *Why War* was published in 1916 and elaborated on many of the points in his article, see Frederic C. Howe, *Why War*, (New York: Charles Scribner’s Sons, 1916). Howe cites Hobson, Brailsford and other writers critical of Imperialism throughout.

³⁹ Frederick C. Howe, “Financial Imperialism,” 477.

exploitive, benefitting the wealthy and powerful nations of the world at the expense of poor or less developed peoples. Thus, the global economic conflict between Great Powers was a cause of the current war, Howe argued, and only democratic freedom and economic peace could correct these “monopolistic conditions” and avoid future conflict.⁴⁰

Finance was the arbiter of international politics, Bourassa declared, and he repeated Howe’s narrative of events and his argument. Britain would emerge from the war as a financier and creditor regardless of Germany’s victory or defeat. The only desire of the “ploutocratie anglaise” was to entrap every nation of the world in their financial clutches. Just as they had ensnared France and Russia, so too did “le démon de l’or s’est emparé des chefs de la société américaine.”⁴¹ Amazingly, Bourassa alleged that Britain had been one of the firmest opponents to the American entry before the collapse of Russia in 1917 because the United States had little value to British plutocrats. The end of the war might see democracy in Germany, but it would come after British (and now American) financiers had total economic control.⁴² Behind all of the justifications for the war, he wrote, “se dresse partout le spectre hideux de la cupidité mercantile, l’horrible et insatiable démon de l’or.”⁴³ If that was the war for which Canadians died and campaigned, Bourassa saw no hope of redemption for the “les fauteurs de la révolution.”⁴⁴

In his final article on the subject, Bourassa investigated the “deteriorating moral character” of the Canadian nation in light of the upcoming election. On 31 October, the day Borden announced the election, Bourassa wondered what future lay with the “ministère de la

⁴⁰ Frederick C. Howe, “Financial Imperialism,” 484.

⁴¹ Henri Bourassa, “L’Impérialisme Financier,” *Le Devoir*, 29 October, 1917, 1.

⁴² Henri Bourassa, “Pourquoi la Paix ne se fait pas,” *Le Devoir*, 30 October, 1917, 1.

⁴³ Henri Bourassa, “Pourquoi la Paix ne se fait pas,” *Le Devoir*, 30 October, 1917, 1.

⁴⁴ Henri Bourassa, “Pourquoi la Paix ne se fait pas,” *Le Devoir*, 30 October, 1917, 1.

trahison nationale.”⁴⁵ Canada had everything to lose and nothing to gain. The nation ruined itself for the profit of Great Britain today and for the United States tomorrow. There was little chance of economic recovery after the war, Bourassa predicted, thus it would look to the United States: “la seule nation capable de nous remettre sur pied est, en même temps, notre unique créancière.”⁴⁶ Ottawa took orders from London and New York, claimed Bourassa. How else to explain the alliance between the “ultra-jingos de Toronto” with “les annexionnistes anciens et modernes de l’Ouest et de la Nouvelle-Écosse” (the pro-conscription Liberals)?⁴⁷ He believed the newly formed Unionist Party had committed national treason as they sold out Canada to foreign powers, which made the choice between Borden and Laurier clear. Laurier was “intègre, honorable, [et] notoirement supérieur à tout ce qui se meut dans les bas-fonds,” Bourassa wrote. Despite his writing from earlier in 1917, he now declared that Laurier “au moins, ne s’est jamais vendu.” Borden was “obéissant au mot d’ordre de l’étranger,” so Laurier had to rally all those of “convictions sincères pour défendre ce qui reste du patrimoine national.”⁴⁸ Canada under Union Government was on a dangerous path, and only a Laurier victory could prevent further degradation.

Despite his impassioned pleas, Bourassa held little hope for a Liberal victory, but he remained optimistic about the party’s future. The war had corrupted and broken the spirit of the Liberal party as some of its members left to join Union Government. Neither it nor the Conservative party, he wrote, would ever be the same party they had been before the Great

⁴⁵ Henri Bourassa, “Le Canada Vendu: Le ministère de la trahison nationale --- Que fera M. Laurier?,” *Le Devoir*, 31 October, 1917, 1.

⁴⁶ Henri Bourassa, “Le Canada Vendu: Le ministère de la trahison nationale --- Que fera M. Laurier?,” *Le Devoir*, 31 October, 1917, 1.

⁴⁷ Henri Bourassa, “Le Canada Vendu: Le ministère de la trahison nationale --- Que fera M. Laurier?,” *Le Devoir*, 31 October, 1917, 1.

⁴⁸ Henri Bourassa, “Le Canada Vendu: Le ministère de la trahison nationale --- Que fera M. Laurier?,” *Le Devoir*, 31 October, 1917, 1.

War. “Les noms subsisteront peut-être,” he foresaw, “mais les groupes ne seront plus les mêmes, ni les hommes, ni l’esprit.”⁴⁹ Instead, Canada’s political parties would emerge as new entities. “Les partis – comme le peuple lui-même,” he wrote, “vont se refaire dans la norme des courants nouveaux, des idées de demain, selon l’antagonisme des principes qui correspondent à la dure réalité des choses nées de la guerre et de l’après-guerre.”⁵⁰ He hoped then that Laurier could help one day repair the damage that had been done. The Liberal leader had the solemn responsibility of making the “suprême effort pour rendre à la nation canadienne conscience d’elle-même, de ses devoirs réels, de ses droits positifs pour l’arracher aux faux dieux de l’impérialisme, pour l’arrêter dans sa course au suicide, pour fermer ses plaies béantes et lui préparer une nouvelle vitalité.”⁵¹

During the election campaign, Bourassa maintained a pessimistic tone throughout his editorials. For years he had extolled in the pages of his newspaper how and why the war should end, yet in the final months 1917 he had less confidence in the immediacy of that change. Instead, he hoped that one day in the future Canada could become the country he envisioned, as it was obvious that it would not happen under Union Government.

The federal election campaign of November and December 1917 was, as historian Michael Bliss described, “the most bitter in Canadian history, viciously fought on both sides. Virtually everyone’s loyalty and morality were called into question.”⁵² Though the Unionists and the Liberals had comprehensive electoral platforms, the election was ultimately about the

⁴⁹ Henri Bourassa, “Le Canada Vendu: Le ministère de la trahison nationale --- Que fera M. Laurier?,” *Le Devoir*, 31 October, 1917, 1.

⁵⁰ Henri Bourassa, “Le Canada Vendu: Le ministère de la trahison nationale --- Que fera M. Laurier?,” *Le Devoir*, 31 October, 1917, 1.

⁵¹ Henri Bourassa, “Le Canada Vendu: Le ministère de la trahison nationale --- Que fera M. Laurier?,” *Le Devoir*, 31 October, 1917, 1.

⁵² Michael Bliss, *Right Honourable Men: The Descent of Canadian Politics from Macdonald to Mulroney*, (Toronto: Harper Collins, 1995) 84.

future conduct of the war effort. The Unionist platform promised conscription and civil service reforms such as abolishing patronage and providing oversight for government purchasing.⁵³ The Laurier Liberals vowed to reduce wartime taxes and tariffs, better provide for soldier's families, and eliminate the corruption that had plagued Borden's government.⁵⁴ These platforms were superfluous. The Unionists would impose a unified war effort through conscription while the Liberals appealed for a referendum for the sake of a unified war effort. The Unionists had to focus on conscription and the war, given that pro-conscription Liberals did not trust the Conservative-led coalition, while some Conservatives did not accept the Liberal presence in the new party. The war and conscription were the only issue on which they could all agree. Laurier, on the other hand, embraced the conscription as an electoral issue. He returned to familiar territory to defend traditional liberal values of individual freedom, liberty and resistance to oppression.⁵⁵ Both sides argued that only they could successfully navigate the turbulent waters of wartime unity by virtue of their positions on conscription.

In an election campaign focused solely on the war, there was little room for compromise or moderation. As Unionist and former Liberal Newton Rowell remarked on 21 November, "What is the alternative to this Union Government? ... If you think of quitting the War, you have an alternative, but if you are in favour of ... a victorious conclusion [to the war], then I say in all sincerity you have no alternative to Union Government."⁵⁶ Both Unionists and Liberals presented voters with a stark choice: choose us or face ruin. In Quebec, the decision

⁵³ Castell Hopkins, *Canadian Annual Review 1917*, 593.

⁵⁴ Castell Hopkins, *Canadian Annual Review 1917*, 597-599.

⁵⁵ John English, *Decline of Politics*, 188-189. English cites O.D. Skelton, *Life and Letters of Sir Wilfrid Laurier: volume II*, 511, for Laurier's thoughts on the campaign, and examines the reasons why the December election focused solely on conscription. His chapter on the election, 186-203, remains one of the most comprehensive historical examinations of its results.

⁵⁶ Castell Hopkins, *Canadian Annual Review 1917*, 592.

was clear.⁵⁷ Few wanted conscription and fewer trusted Union Government, which had a definitively anti-Catholic and anti-French Canadian tone.⁵⁸ Unionist candidates in the province faced unruly mobs, interrupted speeches, few press organs that would express their views, and even death threats.⁵⁹

Bourassa was arguably at the height of his fame and notoriety. The election helped cement his position as leader of the Quebec resistance to the war in both English and French speaking Canada, with varying degrees of animosity and praise for it. “Le programme unioniste,” he told French Canadians, “c’est antithèse de tout ce que nous aimons, de tout ce que nous croyons, de tout ce que nous voulons. C’est la synthèse de tout ce que nous détestons, de tout ce que nous avons conspué – hommes, idées et tendances – dans les deux partis.”⁶⁰ Nationalistes, he advised, should vote for Laurier. As in 1911, it was in their best interest to support one party over the other rather than abstain or vote for independent candidates.⁶¹ The

⁵⁷ It is less clear how uniform opposition to conscription and Union government was across the whole of French Canada. While it is probably reasonable to assume that Franco-Ontarians, Franco-Manitobans, and most French Canadians had no love for English speaking Canadians after their experiences with bilingual schooling, there is not much work examining their reaction. John English’s work points out that of 67 ridings with French Canadian majorities, 65 voted for the Liberals, John English, *Decline of Politics*, 197. Other work has examined aspects of French Canadian rejection of Union government, such as Andrew Theobald’s novel work on Acadians where he notes they supported conscription, Andrew Theobald, “Une Loi Extraordinaire: New Brunswick Acadians and the Conscription Crisis of the First World War,” *Acadiensis*, no.1, 34 (Autumn 2004): 80-95; and Tarah Brookfield’s exploration of women in Montreal, Tarah Brookfield, “Divide by the Ballot Box: The Montreal Council of Women and the 1917 Election,” *The Canadian Historical Review*, no.4, 89 (December 2008): 473-501. Meanwhile some Franco-Americans responded to the conscription crisis by advocating for the annexation of Quebec by the United States, see Robert G. LeBlanc, “The Franco-American Response to the Conscription Crisis in Canada, 1916-1918,” *American Review of Canadian Studies*, no.3, 23 (Fall 1993): 343-372.

⁵⁸ For an excellent exploration of anti-Catholicism and the Unionist Party, see Kevin P. Anderson, *This typical old Canadian form of racial and religious hate’: Anti-Catholicism and English Canadian Nationalism, 1905-1965*, Unpublished PhD Thesis, McMaster University, 2013, 67-72. John English reflects on the lack of a French Canadian presence among Unionists as well, John English, *Decline of Politics*, 199-201.

⁵⁹ Castell Hopkins, *Canadian Annual Review 1917*, 607-610.

⁶⁰ Henri Bourassa, “Le ‘Devoir’ et les Partis Actuels,” *Le Devoir*, 8 November, 1917, 1.

⁶¹ Henri Bourassa, “Pas de Lutte à Trois,” *Le Devoir*, 12 November, 1917, 1. Bourassa also favourably reviewed Laurier’s platform earlier, see Henri Bourassa, “Le Programme de M. Laurier I: Les droits du peuple---Le Nord-Canadien---Loi électorale---Cherté des vivres,” *Le Devoir*, 9 November, 1917, 1, and Henri Bourassa, “Le Programme de M. Laurier II: La conscription reste---Plébiscite---Que deviennent les conscrits?,” *Le Devoir*, 10 November, 1917, 1.

chance of a Unionist winning Quebec seats was too dangerous to risk. Bourassa's appeals and Laurier's careful positioning of the Liberal Party as nominally against conscription virtually assured a Liberal victory in the province. As one historian noted, Québécois would have voted for a telephone pole so long as it was not in favour of conscription.⁶²

The united Canada that Bourassa had one hoped for was little more than a dream in the final months of 1917. English Canadian Unionists painted French Canadians as "shirkers" who did not want to do their duty, or worse, as traitors to Canada and the British Empire. They did their best to associate Bourassa with Laurier as much as possible to tarnish the Liberal leader's reputation. They called Bourassa the "King of Quebec" and suggested that a Laurier victory meant Bourassa ruling Canada.⁶³ Unionist propaganda pamphlets, such as *Plain Facts for English-Speaking Electors*, linked Bourassa and Laurier together while quoting from *Le Devoir* and other French Canadian newspapers as proof that French speaking Canadians sought the dissolution of Confederation and took orders from the Pope in Rome.⁶⁴ Laurier did his best to disassociate his party from the nationalistes, at least outside of the borders of Quebec, emphasizing that he was not against the war effort, only the government's conduct of the war.⁶⁵ Despite his efforts, many English Canadian papers condemned the Liberal leader, some more virulently than others. The Toronto *News* called Laurier "a demagogue, a charlatan and a mountebank," while in Montreal an English-speaking Canadian wrote that "if Laurier were to

⁶² Réal Bélanger, *Wilfrid Laurier: quand la politique devient passion*, 405.

⁶³ Rumilly, *Henri Bourassa*, 591-592.

⁶⁴ Union Government Publicity Bureau, *Plain Facts for English-Speaking Electors: Facts Which Should be Digested and Taken Seriously to Heart*, (Toronto: W.S. Johnston's Company Limited, 1917) 3-14. It also quotes extensively from *Le Croix*, a Catholic and nationaliste Montreal newspaper with a limited readership of 3,500 and edited by Joseph Bégin, son-in-law to nationaliste journalist, Jules-Paul Tardivel, see James Kennedy, *Liberal Nationalisms: Empire, State, and Civil Society in Scotland and Quebec*, (Kingston: McGill-Queen's University Press, 2012) 232.

⁶⁵ Castell Hopkins, *Canadian Annual Review 1917*, 601; Rumilly, *Henri Bourassa*, 592.

win he would win leading the cockroaches of the kitchen of Canada to victory.”⁶⁶ Both sides used vitriol and hyperbole to convince voters that only they could lead the nation.

In the last two months of 1917, Bourassa wrote only one article that did not discuss the election. It examined a new public advocate for peace in Britain, Lord Lansdowne. Almost a year after the German peace proposal and President Wilson’s note, Henry Petty-Fitzmaurice, 5th Marquess of Lansdowne, released a letter to the press in late November. Lansdowne, former Governor General of Canada as well as the former leader of the Conservative party in the House of Lords, had an illustrious career in service of Britain.⁶⁷ The “Lansdowne Letter” was an edited version of a memorandum originally circulated to the British Cabinet after Prime Minister Herbert Asquith asked for their views on potential peace terms in early November 1916.⁶⁸ Though its context was the aftermath of the Somme campaign, not the fall of 1917, Lansdowne specifically chose to respect Cabinet tradition and never disclosed to the public that the upper echelons of British government had already discussed it in 1916. In it, he called for a negotiated peace that preserved Germany as a Great Power while ensuring economic trade and European stability. He eventually published it in the London *Daily Telegraph* on 29 November, 1917, to “set out aims that are moderate and will appeal to moderate minds in all countries.”⁶⁹

A long history of diplomatic and government service had convinced Lansdowne of the

⁶⁶ O.D. Skelton, *Life and Letters of Sir Wilfrid Laurier: volume II*, 537. Skelton includes other examples of the scorn directed at Laurier.

⁶⁷ P. B. Waite, “PETTY-FITZMAURICE, HENRY CHARLES KEITH, 5th Marquess of LANSDOWNE,” *Dictionary of Canadian Biography*, vol. 15, University of Toronto/Université Laval, 2003–, accessed October 26, 2014, http://www.biographi.ca/en/bio/petty_fitzmaurice_henry_charles_keith_15E.html.

⁶⁸ Lansdowne’s biographer, Lord Newton, suggests that Lansdowne’s memorandum split the Cabinet and helped break up Britain’s Coalition Government, allowing David Lloyd George to come to power in December, though more recent studies have questioned its influence, see Thomas Wodehouse Legh Newton, *Lord Lansdowne, A Biography*, (London: Macmillan and co., 1929), 449-50. One of the most recent works on Lansdowne rejects Newton’s conclusion, see Frank Winters, “Exaggerating the Efficacy of Diplomacy: The Marquis of Lansdowne’s ‘Peace Letter’ of November 1917,” *The International History Review*, no.1, 32 (March 2010): 32-33.

⁶⁹ From a letter Lansdowne wrote to Wilson’s advisor, Colonel Edward House, in early November, as cited in Frank Winters, “Exaggerating the Efficacy of Diplomacy,” 36.

power of diplomacy to resolve disputes and secure a peaceful solution to European and Imperial conflicts.⁷⁰ With that in mind, he urged for a negotiated end to the war. For Lansdowne, no victory would be worth the cost of the war's continuation, which simply shed more blood while threatening the stability of Europe and Britain. He argued that "we are not going to lose this war, but its prolongation will spell ruin for the civilized world and an infinite addition to the load of human suffering."⁷¹ Lansdowne feared that the necessary reparations for such a brutal war would make lasting peace impossible, since as dreadful as the Great War was, he was sure that "the next war [would] be even more dreadful than this."⁷² The belligerents had to balance reparations with their impact on the defeated peoples, Lansdowne wrote, and that might mean asking for little or nothing at all. Ending the war and preventing future ones ought to be the Allies' sole war aim.⁷³

Few British commentators agreed with him during wartime. When he published his letter in the *Daily Telegraph*, his plea for peace was widely denounced in British Parliament and British newspapers, though the press reaction among Allied powers varied from ignoring it to praise.⁷⁴ While those deliberating over peace negotiations received Lansdowne's note well,⁷⁵

⁷⁰ Frank Winters, "Exaggerating the Efficacy of Diplomacy," 26.

⁷¹ This work draws from the copy of the letter found in "Letter of Lord Lansdowne to the London *Daily Telegraph*, November 29, 1917," *International Conciliation: Documents of the American Association for International Conciliation, 1918*, (New York: Carnegie Endowment for International Peace, 1918) 5-10. This citation is on page 8.

⁷² "Letter of Lord Lansdowne," *International Conciliation*, 6.

⁷³ "Letter of Lord Lansdowne," *International Conciliation*, 9.

⁷⁴ Thomas Newton, *Lord Lansdowne*, 469-73. For a review of British newspapers' response to Lansdowne's letter, see Frank Winters, "Exaggerating the Efficacy of Diplomacy," 37-39.

⁷⁵ Thomas Newton notes the influence it had on President Wilson and quotes his advisor Edward M. "Colonel" House, who credited it in encouraging them to create Wilson's Fourteen points which would shape the peace conference of 1919, see Thomas Newton, *Lord Lansdowne*, 481. For a longer view of the impact of the Lansdowne letter over the winter of 1917-18, see Douglas Newton, "The Lansdowne 'Peace Letter' of 1917 and the Prospect of Peace by Negotiation with Germany," *Australian Journal of Politics and History*, no.1, 48 (2002): 16-39.

others in Britain denounced him as a “defeatist.”⁷⁶ The UDC meanwhile praised Lansdowne’s vision and one of its members, British pacifist Bertrand Russell, noted optimistically that the “letter represents the first beginnings of a return to a sanity.”⁷⁷ Still, Lansdowne’s letter ultimately did not have the impact that he hoped. The venerable politician later published two more letters in the press analysing Allied diplomacy as the end of the war drew closer.⁷⁸ Their publication occurred in much better circumstances for the Allies than the first and the reaction to them improved considerably as a result.

Bourassa’s comments on Lansdowne were brief but significant.⁷⁹ Whereas Lansdowne was more concerned with ending the war in a way that was still beneficial to Great Britain, Bourassa saw the proposal as another initiative to stop the war before it caused greater harm. The first portion of his article reminded his readers of such and linked it to thoughts that the Pope had already expressed. The letter was merely “la traduction, dans le langage politique et humain, des diverses manifestations de la pensée du Souverain Pontife.”⁸⁰ It mirrored the Papal peace, which aimed at stopping the terrible slaughter of the war as soon as possible; it was not a political or economic analysis of the disastrous cost of the war for England. In this case, Bourassa’s own Catholic values clouded his reaction to Lansdowne’s words. He saw what he wanted to see in the aristocrat’s writing. He compared it to Wilson’s grand claims of a peace

⁷⁶ Brock Millman offers a nuanced discussion of this epithet and Lansdowne, see Brock Millman, *Pessimism and British War Policy*, 1-2, 29-32, and 112-129.

⁷⁷ Bertrand Russell, “Lord Lansdowne’s Letter [1917],” *Pacifism and Revolution, 1916-18*, Richard A. Rempel ed., (New York: Routledge, 1995) 371.

⁷⁸ One was published 5 March, 1918, in response to a speech by the German Chancellor Count Hertling, who in turn had been replying to Wilson’s Fourteen Points, and another on 31 July, 1918, in response to a parliamentary motion to suppress pacifism, see Newton, *Lord Lansdowne*, 475-6.

⁷⁹ While many papers reported on the letter, few offered any editorial commentary as Bourassa. A notable exception was *The Globe*’s editorial condemning the peace proposal and suggesting Lansdowne’s argument and attitude was a reaction to the economic impact on Britain’s aristocratic upper class society, *The Globe*, 1 December, 1917, 6.

⁸⁰ Henri Bourassa, “Le Manifeste Lansdowne,” *Le Devoir*, 1 December, 1917, 1.

that would “make the world safe for democracy.” Lansdowne proposed a peace that was not “uniquement la seule paix juste et durable, c’[était] aussi la seule paix possible.”⁸¹ To Bourassa, the President’s willingness to participate in the butchery in France had corrupted the American vision of peace and he welcomed new allies who understood the war’s senselessness. Instead, he heralded Lansdowne as a true supporter of peace because he called for the cessation of hostilities and killing by both sides without regard for political or military considerations.

The war’s quick end was the best possible solution for humanity and Bourassa approved of Lansdowne’s five points to encourage peace negotiations.⁸² The journalist agreed that reassuring Germany that defeat did not mean destruction, politically or economically, would make the Germans more amenable to negotiations. Nonetheless, Bourassa noted the irony of the belligerents’ positions. The situation in late 1917 was a reversal from the previous year, and he asked if “les exploiters de chair humaine gagneront [...] la partie cette année, en Allemagne, comme ils l’ont gagnée l’an dernier, en pays alliés?”⁸³ The greatest impediment was not, he suggested, that one side feared a peace without victory; both the Allies and the Central Powers feared a peace with defeat. Just as the Allies had rejected losing the war through peace terms in 1916, Germany now refused to consider a peace that amounted to an Allied victory. Bourassa repeated Lansdowne’s belief that the Great Powers fought for security foremost, and

⁸¹ Henri Bourassa, “Le Manifeste Lansdowne,” *Le Devoir*, 1 December, 1917, 1.

⁸² They are as follows, “(1) That we do not desire the annihilation of Germany as a great power; (2) That we do not seek to impose upon her people any form of government other than that of their own choice; (3) That, except as a legitimate war measure, we have no desire to deny to Germany her place among the great commercial communities of the world; (4) That we are prepared, when the war is over, to examine in concert with other powers the group of international problems, some of them of recent origin, which are connected with the question of ‘the freedom of the seas’; (5) That we are prepared to enter into an international pact under which ample opportunities would be afforded for the settlement of international disputes by peaceful means,” see “Letter of Lord Lansdowne,” *International Conciliation*, 9.

⁸³ Henri Bourassa, “Le Manifeste Lansdowne,” *Le Devoir*, 1 December, 1917, 1.

a longer war meant a greater chance of revolution and disorder. Bourassa warned that to ignore the cause of peace, which echoed “dans l’âme des millions d’êtres humains,” would lead to a war against any state that denied it and lead to universal civil war.⁸⁴ Ultimately, Bourassa wanted to put an end to the tragic loss of hundreds of thousands of lives before more died.

In a final appeal to his readers two days before the 17 December election, Bourassa lamented the sorry state of Canadian democracy and urged them to vote against Union government. He longed to see the former nationalists who had ran for the Conservatives in 1911 finally punished for their treason. “Il faut nettoyer la scène politique de leur présence et de leur contorsions,” Bourassa wrote.⁸⁵ At least the election would allow Quebec to flush out its “disloyal” representatives, even if the process was a poor example of democratic government. “L’une des pires et des plus absurdes inconséquences du régime électoral,” he explained, was that “il est impossible de soutenir à la fois le meilleur candidat et la meilleur politique.”⁸⁶ He told voters that the electoral contest had become a plebiscite whereby Canadians could either vote for conscription or vote against it. It was not a fair contest between policies and leaders. He advised Canadians to vote for the Laurier Liberals, who offered the best alternative to the Unionists.

When election day arrived, the Union Government won a resounding victory in English Canada. Out the 264 seat Parliament, the Unionists took 152 seats and the Liberals took 82 seats. Sixty-two of Quebec’s 65 seats went to the Liberals, where they garnered 73% of the popular vote. The Unionists swept the English speaking parts of the country. The Liberals fared better in the Maritimes, winning 10 out of 21 seats, but in Ontario they won only eight out of

⁸⁴ Henri Bourassa, “Le Manifeste Lansdowne,” *Le Devoir*, 1 December, 1917, 1.

⁸⁵ Henri Bourassa, “Comment Voter?,” *Le Devoir*, 15 December, 1917, 1.

⁸⁶ Henri Bourassa, “Comment Voter?,” *Le Devoir*, 15 December, 1917, 1.

82 seats. Borden, worried that the Liberals might benefit from rural objections to conscription, had promised farmers exemption from forced military service -- an action that helped the Unionists achieve such an overwhelming victory in English Canada. A single French Canadian Unionist candidate was successful, Conservative incumbent Dr. John Léo Chabot for Ottawa.⁸⁷ In the words of one Liberal candidate, “the 1917 election was essentially a one-party election, one party only in Quebec and one party only in other provinces.”⁸⁸ The country divided between French and English, Unionist and Liberal, conscripted and voluntary service.

After the result, Bourassa denounced the great danger of Union Government that ignored Canada’s racial divide and further threatened Canadian national unity. Bourassa reversed his previous position that the election had effectively been a plebiscite on conscription. Instead, he now proclaimed that the election was not just about conscription and it did not signify general acceptance of a war without limits. The promised exemption of farmers had led many of them to vote for Union Government, Bourassa argued, and thus a true referendum on conscription would have seen their vote go to the Liberals.⁸⁹ Bourassa disagreed with those who argued the election demonstrated “l’isolement du Québec.” The truth, he explained, was that “les divers groupes et provinces du pays ont voté contre l’unionisme en raison directe de leur force de résistance à l’entraînement impérialiste.”⁹⁰ True Canadians had voted against conscription, Bourassa insisted. He pointed to the West’s support for it, since they were newer and less traditional provinces with populations that had only “recently”

⁸⁷ John English, *Decline of Politics*, 191-195, 200. For a complete list of results, see Castell Hopkins, *Canadian Annual Review 1917*, 638-642.

⁸⁸ John English, *Decline of Politics*, 191-200. English is quoting Charles G. Power’s memoir, *A Party Politician: The Memoirs of Chubby Power*.

⁸⁹ Henri Bourassa, “L’Alignement des Forces Politiques: “De quoi demain sera-t-il fait?,” *Le Devoir*, 20 December, 1917, 1.

⁹⁰ Henri Bourassa, “L’Alignement des Forces Politiques: “De quoi demain sera-t-il fait?,” *Le Devoir*, 20 December, 1917, 1.

arrived in the country. The Prairies “ont perdu la notion des *stabilités* nationales.”⁹¹ Ultimately, the country’s disunity was not the fault of French Canada. Instead, the Union victory demonstrated that the rest of Canada was isolated from those who preserved its true character, like the French Canadians.

Bourassa explained that Union Government would have the opposite result that its name implied. The Unionists had spent months denigrating French Canadians over the course of the election campaign and they had divided the country. Therefore, Bourassa wrote, French Canada was not isolated from the rest of Canada of their own accord. They had been the targets of anti-Catholic and anti-French rhetoric. “La prétendue ‘union nationale,’” Bourassa argued, “a désuni la nation canadienne et planté un nouveau germe de désagrégation dans le sol, déjà fort crevassé, de l’Empire britannique.”⁹² While Canada had dealt with racial and religious division before, Bourassa clarified that wartime had allowed the Unionists to weld English Canadian patriotism to the interests of a foreign power, Britain. Unlike previous conflicts between French and English Canadians, he explained, nobody could oppose the war without becoming traitors to the Canadian nation. Thus, supporting the war meant supporting Canada, and in turn, supporting Canada meant supporting Britain. The three were indivisible in the minds of English Canadian war supporters, and to reject one was to reject them all. Bourassa predicted that after the war that Liberals and Conservatives would cleanly divide along racial and regional lines, French versus English and East versus West. Confederation, he mourned, was broken.⁹³

⁹¹ Henri Bourassa, “L’Alignement des Forces Politiques: “De quoi demain sera-t-il fait?,” *Le Devoir*, 20 December, 1917, 1.

⁹² Henri Bourassa, “ ‘L’Isolement’ des Canadien-Français: Fausses manoeuvres de conciliation,” *Le Devoir*, 26 December, 1917, 1.

⁹³ Henri Bourassa, “ ‘L’Isolement’ des Canadien-Français: Fausses manoeuvres de conciliation,” *Le Devoir*, 26 December, 1917, 1

Even if French Canadians were present and influential in Union Government, Bourassa asserted that it could not repair the damage the election had caused. He no longer believed that French-speaking Canadians were in an equal partnership with English Canada. Any French Canadians in government were mere puppets of English Canadian politicians. Their role consisted of “à rompre les énergies de leur compatriotes, à endormir leur vigilance, à leur faire consentir d’humiliantes concessions, toujours sous le prétexte facile de concilier la majorité, de conserver leur influence dans le cabinet et d’obtenir pour la province de Québec sa part de dépouilles.”⁹⁴ The supposed “isolation of French Canada” was not the result of French Canada turning its back on English Canada; English Canada turned its back on them, reneging on the implicit promise of equality and compromise that had been implicit in when it pushed through conscription. The will of the majority triumphed over the will of the minority. For Bourassa, the solution to problem of French Canada’s place in the Canadian democracy was clear:

A tout le moins, la délégation de la province de Québec au parlement fédéral n’a aucune raison de se lier à aucun gouvernement, à aucune parti, avant d’avoir obtenu les conditions d’association absolument honorables pour elle-même, avantageuses sans excès pour la nationalité canadienne-française, profitables à toute la nation canadienne.⁹⁵

Quebec’s MPs had to represent French Canadian interests in the House of Commons since they could no longer trust the federal parties that drew support from English Canadian voters.

In December 1917, Bourassa was effectively arguing that the Liberal Party had to become a French Canadian Party. In his mind, only a balance between French and English interests could guide Canada properly, and now he seemed to endorse the racial division that he had once strenuously rejected. The war undermined his vision of a united Canada. If the

⁹⁴ Henri Bourassa, “‘L’Isolement’ des Canadien-Français: Pas de basses compromissions,” *Le Devoir*, 27 December, 1917, 1.

⁹⁵ Henri Bourassa, “‘L’Isolement’ des Canadien-Français: Pas de basses compromissions,” *Le Devoir*, 27 December, 1917, 1.

English-speaking majority was not willing to listen to the French minority, then it was up to French Canadians to compel action, and the Liberal Party was the only vessel they had available.

In the first month of 1918, Bourassa published his final book of the war, *Le Pape Arbitre de la Paix*. It collected his articles concerning Pope Benedict XV's attempts to produce a peaceful end to the European conflict and reflected on the papal influence on other peace initiatives. Though largely comprised of articles written over the previous four years, it marked Bourassa's final serious effort to discuss the possibility of peace, the international context of the war, and his last reflection on Pope Benedict XV. The final chapters were editorials from January 1918 addressing the war's latest international developments.

The first examined the latest effort by British Prime Minister David Lloyd George to present British war aims. At a speech on 5 January, Lloyd George responded to the Lansdowne Letter as well as the terms of the Treaty of Brest-Litovsk that ended the war between Russia and the Central Powers. The Prime Minister outlined conditions that could end the war based on national self-determination and the establishment of an international organization to settle disputes after the war.⁹⁶ Historians have disagreed whether Lloyd George was attempting to moderate British war aims to make peace viable, responding to the demands of British radicals while bolstering morale, or affirming the results of Brest-Litovsk as a formula for future peace deals.⁹⁷ To an outside observer like Bourassa, it was a welcome statement that perhaps harkened further peace initiatives. At least, he maintained, it aligned more closely with the

⁹⁶ David Lloyd George, *British War Aims: Statement by the Right Honourable David Lloyd George, January Fifth, Nineteen Hundred and Eighteen*, (New York: George H. Duran Company, 1918) 14-15.

⁹⁷ Andrew G. Gregory, *"They Look In Vain": British Foreign Policy Dissent and the Quest for a Negotiated Peace During the Great War with Particular Emphasis on 1917*, Unpublished PhD Thesis, McMaster University, 1997, 216-219. Gregory summarizes the speech as well as reviewing historians' thoughts on it.

Papal views on the matter.

Bourassa perceived Lloyd George's speech as an extraordinary evolution of the British position towards peace. Reading between the lines, Bourassa wrote, Lloyd George's speech, the Lansdowne letter, and the Pope formed "un remarquable accord de fond."⁹⁸ Lansdowne, Bourassa agreed, had been correct in predicting terrible consequences by prolonging the war and Lloyd George was attempting to avert them. Still, many details about the speech did not impress Bourassa. Lloyd George's affirmation that France and Italy would recover territory from the Central Powers drew Bourassa's criticism because he anticipated that this would only lengthen the war and entail additional sacrifice. He added his familiar refrain that nationalities deserved autonomy among all states, not just those that formed the Central Powers. Yet despite its inconsistencies and shortcomings, Bourassa wrote, the speech was "la plus formelle faite jusqu'ici, du côté des Alliés, à une paix qui 'ne profite pas à une seule des parties, mais à toutes' — la seule paix 'juste et durable' appelée par le Pape."⁹⁹

If Bourassa was impressed by Lloyd George's speech, he was enthusiastic about President Woodrow Wilson's "Program for World Peace" presented to American Congress on 8 January. Wilson outlined his famous Fourteen Points to guide any possible peace settlements, proclaiming that "it is the principle of justice to all peoples and nationalities, and their right to live on equal terms of liberty and safety with one another, whether they be strong or weak."¹⁰⁰ His speech set out the points that would guide the Treaty of Versailles a year later and drastically transform the international system. Bourassa supported Wilson's confirmation of

⁹⁸ Henri Bourassa, *Le Pape Arbitre de la Paix*, (Montreal: Le Devoir, 1918) 128. Two editorials on Lloyd George's speech were published and then inserted into the book, see Henri Bourassa, "Le Discours de Lloyd George I," *Le Devoir*, 8 January, 1918, 1, and Henri Bourassa, "Le Discours de Lloyd George II," *Le Devoir*, 9 January, 1918, 1.

⁹⁹ Henri Bourassa, *Le Pape Arbitre de la Paix*, 134. Bourassa is quoting the Pope.

¹⁰⁰ Arthur Ray Leonard, ed., *War Addresses of Woodrow Wilson*, (New York: Ginn and Company, 1918) 18.

national self-determination and enthusiastically endorsed his peace program.¹⁰¹ Its fourteen points spoke to a new vision of the international system that resolved grave problems that had led to the outbreak of the First World War nearly four years earlier. Bourassa was caught in the “Wilsonian moment,”¹⁰² where it seemed possible that the war would bring about substantial reform to the international system and yield a new liberal international order that emphasized self-government and democracy.

In a two-part series, Bourassa compared and contrasted Wilson with Lloyd George, focusing on Wilson’s call to “free oppressed nationalities.”¹⁰³ Both aligned with Pope Benedict XV’s position by supporting a negotiated peace and rejecting the idea of annexation through conquest.¹⁰⁴ All these commentators claimed to reject the subjugation of one nationality by another. Bourassa was glad that the statesmen had finally learned the lessons of history that

¹⁰¹ Recently historians have questioned how much national self-determination was an aim of Wilson’s Fourteen Points and whether he was proposing self-government instead. That is, as Trygve Throntveit argues, Wilson advocated for self-government which meant the “participation, by all constituents of a polity, in determining its public affairs” and not the right for separate self-determination by nationalities. See Trygve Throntveit, “The Fable of the Fourteen Points: Woodrow Wilson and National Self-Determination,” *Diplomatic History*, no.3, 35 (June 2011): 446. In a similar vein, Borislav Chernev argues that the principle of self-determination owed as much to Lenin and the treaty of Brest-Litovsk as it did to President Wilson and ultimately “the historical origins of the concept of self-determination had less to do with Woodrow Wilson than with the specific circumstances during the last phase of the Great War,” see Borislav Chernev, “The Brest-Litovsk Moment: Self-Determination Discourse in Eastern Europe before Wilsonianism,” *Diplomacy & Statecraft*, no.3, 22 (2011): 383.

¹⁰² The term “Wilsonian Moment” has been used to describe the period between January 1918 when Wilson published his Fourteen Points and the conclusion of the Treaty of Versailles in June of 1919, though some historians argue it only began in November 1918 alongside the formal peace process. The first use of the term that this author could find was Frank Ninkovich, *Modernity and Power: A History of the Domino Theory in the Twentieth Century*, (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1994) 60. Tony Smith used it in his analysis on the future of America’s global influence in Tony Smith, “Morality and the use of force in a unipolar world: the ‘Wilsonian moment’?,” *Ethics & International Affairs*, 14 (2000): 11-22. It was also used in James Chace, “The Wilsonian Moment?,” *Wilson Quarterly*, 25 4 (Autumn 2001): 34-41, but its most well-known use is probably in Erez Manela, *The Wilsonian Moment: Self-Determination and the International Origins of Anticolonial Nationalism*, (New York: Oxford University Press, 2007), and his article on the topic, Erez Manela, “The Wilsonian Moment and the Rise of Anticolonial Nationalism: The Case of Egypt,” *Diplomacy & Statecraft*, no.4, 12 (December 2001): 99-122.

¹⁰³ Henri Bourassa, *Le Pape Arbitre de la Paix*, 136-137; Arthur Ray Leonard, ed., *War Addresses of Woodrow Wilson*, (New York: Ginn and Company, 1918) 18. Bourassa’s analysis was published in *Le Devoir* as well, see Henri Bourassa, “Le Message du Président I,” *Le Devoir*, 10 January, 1918, 1, and Henri Bourassa, “Le Message du Président II,” *Le Devoir*, 11 January, 1918, 1.

¹⁰⁴ Henri Bourassa, *Le Pape Arbitre de la Paix*, 137.

conquest only led to further conflict.¹⁰⁵ Wilson's vision was far grander than that of the British Prime Minister. While Lloyd George spoke specifically about peace, Wilson "encadre ses réclamations ou ses suggestions de faits dans des principes d'application générale," allowing them to apply more broadly to the entire international system.¹⁰⁶ Bourassa believed that the American President was extending a hand to Germany and acted in good faith towards the Central Powers. "Il la convie à se joindre à ce programme de réfection mondiale," Bourassa wrote, "sans rien sacrifier de sa grandeur, de ses aspirations, de son régime même, pourvu qu'elle renonce à toute idée de domination et se contente d'une 'place égale parmi les nations du monde.'"¹⁰⁷ He saw in Wilson's words an international system not based on fear and antagonism but on good will and justice, thus fulfilling the Catholic vision of international order espoused by Benedict XV.

Bourassa concluded the book with an article titled "Triomphe et justification du Pape" that discerned the growing influence of the Papacy on international affairs. "Le monde a plus que jamais besoin du Pape," he professed. He argued that the Papal position must have inspired both Lloyd George and Wilson, whether they admitted it or not. One way or another, "ils sont forcés d'emprunter davantage au programme de paix du Souverain Pontife."¹⁰⁸ Bourassa reviewed Pope Benedict's various peace notes during the war and highlighted how the Pope had proposed a just and equitable peace that recognized national self-determination in an effort to forge a lasting and peaceful resolution to the war. "Que tout cela était vrai, fort, juste et infiniment plus pratique," he concluded, "que tous les conseils de la haine, les efforts de la

¹⁰⁵ Henri Bourassa, *Le Pape Arbitre de la Paix*, 139.

¹⁰⁶ Henri Bourassa, *Le Pape Arbitre de la Paix*, 140.

¹⁰⁷ Henri Bourassa, *Le Pape Arbitre de la Paix*, 142.

¹⁰⁸ Henri Bourassa, *Le Pape Arbitre de la Paix*, 142.

force brutale et les roueries de l'astuce diplomatique!"¹⁰⁹ Pope Benedict's careful vision and impartial attitude had convinced the belligerent nations of the validity of his position over time. His enlightened analysis had shepherded the war's participants towards the possibility of peace, and the Catholic leader deserved credit for helping to avoid further catastrophe. Only the Pope, Bourassa wrote, could finish the work he had started and finally guide the world safely towards an unbiased peace:

Que la paix se fasse demain, ou que les nations, obstinées à leur perte, poursuivent leur oeuvre de suicide et de dévastation, ce n'est ni la paix allemande, ni la paix française, ni la paix anglaise, ni la paix américaine, ni la paix impérialiste, ni la paix démocratique, qui mettra fin au massacre: ce sera la paix chrétienne, ou la révolution sociale.¹¹⁰

The ultramontane Bourassa relied heavily on Papal discourse as a crucial component to his judgements. While Bourassa engaged with Canadians who gauged the war's political purpose through concepts of imperialism and democracy, Bourassa saw it entirely as a moral and religious issue. Whether Ontario Protestants¹¹¹ or French Canadian Catholics of Quebec,¹¹² religious Canadians had to reconcile the war's atrocities with their religious convictions. Bourassa did so by unquestioningly accepting the Pope's position. Bourassa did not so much find the Vatican's position in agreement with his own; rather he allowed the Vatican's to define his own. In the introduction *Le Pape*, he noted that "je désavoue tout ce qui pourrait, dans mes déductions et mes jugements, apporter la plus légère altération à la pensée de l'auguste

¹⁰⁹ Henri Bourassa, *Le Pape Arbitre de la Paix*, 145

¹¹⁰ Henri Bourassa, *Le Pape Arbitre de la Paix*, 146.

¹¹¹ The influence of Protestant faith on the war effort has been explored by numerous historians, notably in Jonathan Vance, *Death So Noble: Memory, Meaning, and the First World War*, (Vancouver: UBC Press, 1997), chapters 2 and 3; see also Ian Miller, *Our Glory and our Grief: Torontonians and the Great War* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2002), chapters 2 and 3; Michael Bliss, "The Methodist Church and World War I," *Canadian Historical Review* 49, no. 3 (1968): 212-33; Michelle Fowler, "Death is not the Worst Thing': The Presbyterian Press in Canada, 1913-1919," *War & Society* 25, no. 2 (2006): 23-38.

¹¹² Some French Canadians fought the war for religious reasons just as Protestants did. This is most evident among the soldiers of the French Canadian 22nd Battalion, see Geoff Keelan, "Il a bien mérité de la Patrie': The 22nd Battalion and the Memory of Courcelette," *Canadian Military History* 19 (Summer 2010): 28-40.

Pontife.”¹¹³ Bourassa was not in his usual role of impassioned advocate, he was the humble interpreter. While Bourassa often cited other texts or writers to complement his arguments, he treated the words of the Pope as sacred. Pope Benedict XV was the inspiration for his ideas, a voice of moderation, and the spiritual and intellectual leader who steered his religious beliefs. None could compare to the righteousness of Pope Benedict. Throughout the war, Bourassa contrasted other -- sometimes faltering -- voices with that of the Papacy. The Pope’s consistency only further solidified his legitimacy in Bourassa’s eyes.

A few English Canadian Catholic commentators shared Bourassa’s views. For example, Toronto Archbishop Neil McNeil’s 24-page pamphlet in February 1918 titled *The Pope and the War* sold over 5,000 copies and refuted accusations against the Holy Father, telling readers that “the Catholic Church is the only international power remaining unbroken by the conflict of nations and empires.”¹¹⁴ For most Anglophone Catholics however, the years-long battle over language education in Ontario had created so much tension between English and French speakers that they equally vilified Bourassa as Protestants did.¹¹⁵ The hierarchy of the French Canadian Church had originally committed to the war effort but only with the imposition of conscription did they align with the Pope’s position. Their decision to support the war was a source of strain for French Canadian Catholics, since many parish priests sided with

¹¹³ Henri Bourassa, *Le Pape Arbitre de la Paix*, (Montreal: Le Devoir, 1918) x. The introduction was printed in *Le Devoir* as well, see Henri Bourassa, “Le Pape Arbitre de la Paix,” *Le Devoir*, 26 January, 1918, 1.

¹¹⁴ Neil McNeil, *The Pope and the War*, (Toronto: W.E. Blake, 1918), 1. See also McNeil’s biography, George Boyle, *Pioneer in Purple*, (Montréal: Palm Publishers, 1951).

¹¹⁵ For a concise overview of the Anglophone Catholic (predominantly Irish) wartime experience and the continuing hostility towards French Canadians, see Adrian Ciani, “An Imperialist Irishman: Bishop Michael Fallon, the Diocese of London and the Great War,” *Canadian Catholic Historical Association, Historical Studies* 74 (2008): 73-94. One of the most stringent opponents of Bourassa was Father Alfred Edward Burke, who frequently and venomously denounced Bourassa and French Canadians, see Mark G. McGowan, “BURKE, ALFRED EDWARD,” in *Dictionary of Canadian Biography*, vol. 15, University of Toronto/Université Laval, 2003–, accessed October 26, 2014, http://www.biographi.ca/en/bio/burke_alfred_edward_15E.html.

Bourassa's wider view of the war.¹¹⁶ Bourassa was not unique among Canadian Catholics for contesting conscription or advocating the Papal position; but Bourassa alone publicly rejected the war itself based on a combination of Catholic devotion and critical inquiry.

In the final weeks of January, Bourassa examined the failure of Lloyd George and Wilson's tentative but positive remarks on the peace to establish negotiations. A two-part article, "Vers la Paix," questioned the Central Powers' reluctance to agree to a peace. He delved into Germany's war aims and outlined what they still hoped to achieve from the war. Bourassa concluded that German Chancellor Georg von Hertling agreed with President Wilson and Prime Minister Lloyd George on almost every point of Europe's territorial readjustment, except one: Alsace-Lorraine, where "le tort fait à la France [devrait être] réparé," the Germans had no response but silence.¹¹⁷ This single issue blocked peace negotiations and it was the biggest challenge the two sides had to overcome. Until Germany was willing to negotiate, the war would continue.

That meant that Canada and the Allies might soon face more difficult circumstances at home than on the battlefield. The terms of peace aside, two threats endangered the world of 1918: famine and revolution. Bourassa warned that if the forces of a starving, ravaged people met "la panse monstrueuse et la bourse débordante" of the plutocracy before the ruined nations of the world could regain normalcy, then "malheur aux chefs d'État, malheur aux riches, malheur aux peuples, malheur au monde!"¹¹⁸ The terrible consequences of the war were deeper than a simple moral transgression. Continuing to fight the war to achieve security and power was at best idealistic and, at worst, suicidal. By 1918, the war stretched the morale and

¹¹⁶ Durocher, "Henri Bourassa, les évêques et la guerre de 1914-1918," *passim*.

¹¹⁷ Henri Bourassa, "Vers la Paix, Partie 1," *Le Devoir*, 29 January, 1918, 1.

¹¹⁸ Henri Bourassa, "Vers la Paix, Partie 2," *Le Devoir*, 30 January, 1918, 1.

cohesion of all the nations involved. The spectre of the Russian Civil War loomed, and the belligerent countries risked devastation that might prevent them from fighting any war.

After the December federal election, the chance to end the war became a profoundly ethical issue for Bourassa. He focused entirely on international issues in the first months of 1918. Despite his moral indignation that the war continued and over the actions of those who sustained it, Bourassa did not allow himself to forget the real political implications of war and peace on the international stage. It was not about attacking English Canadians, or British imperialism, or championing his province's rights. His visceral reaction was rooted in his analysis of events, his Catholic faith and his confidence in Pope Benedict XV. It was more than a matter of political importance. Though his liberal nationalism shaped his political beliefs and the ideas he expressed, the devout French Canadian seemed ethically obliged to question why the war could not be ended. To evade such questions, as politicians did time and again, was morally dishonest.

In the weeks before Easter 1918, Bourassa devoted much of his writing in *Le Devoir* to disseminating information revealed by Russia's new Bolshevik government. On 22 November, 1917, the Bolsheviks published the text of all treaties signed by the Allies and the former Czarist government. The UDC wasted no time in publishing the treaties as a pamphlet, noting that "our statesmen have given the world a steady flow of assurance that we have entered and sustained the war for unselfish aims, that we coveted no territory, and that we were not fighting for conquests or annexations," and urged its readers to "critically examine the following treaties as a commentary on these wise intentions."¹¹⁹ The publication had helped spur President Wilson and Prime Minister Lloyd George to offer a more moderate peace program

¹¹⁹ F. Seymour Cocks, *The Secret Treaties and Understandings*, (London: Union of Democratic Control, 1918) 9.

that January,¹²⁰ and Bourassa welcomed the release of treaties that seemingly justified all of his claims about the war. He was determined to break the press silence on them and detailed their contents over four weeks from 21 February to 18 March. “Puisse cette confession forcée être au moins suivie,” he hoped, “chez tous les peuples et dans l’âme de tous les gouvernants, d’une sincère repentance et d’un salutaire ferme propos!”¹²¹ His examination repeated many of his arguments concerning the war, President Wilson, and the position of the Pope, as he detailed exactly where and how the secret treaties affirmed his views.

Over the course of Easter Weekend, Bourassa published several editorials condemning female suffrage, which went to print while he was observing the religious holiday. As Quebec City rioted, he questioned whether giving women the vote truly improved democracy. He presented a series of philosophical, political, and practical arguments against female suffrage. The “social contract” included women in the family, not as voters, he argued.¹²² On 30 March he dismissed supporters of women’s suffrage as “les esprits superficiels et courts, incapables de saisir les relations des causes et des effets, les insoucians et les opportunistes, toujours prêts à concilier le bien et le mal, le faux et le vrai.”¹²³ It was the last comprehensive analysis he offered Canadians before accepting the imposition of censorship later that month.

His glib words of 30 March, though directed against suffrage supporters, could have

¹²⁰ David Stevenson, *With Our Backs to the Wall: Victory and Defeat in 1918*, (New York: Penguin, 2011) 25-26.

¹²¹ Henri Bourassa, “Diplomatie Secrete,” *Le Devoir*, 21 February, 1918, 1. The following articles detail the contents of the treaties in articles published between 22 February and 18 March, 1918. In Canada, printing the secret treaties was banned; though Bourassa avoided falling foul of those censorship laws that were not in place until later in the spring of 1918. Some labour activists were not so lucky, see Benjamin Isitt, *From Victoria to Vladivostok: Canada’s Siberian Expedition, 1917-19*, (Vancouver: UBC Press, 2010) 67.

¹²² Henri Bourassa, “Le Suffrage des Femmes I: Désarroi des cerveaux – Triomphe de la Démocratie,” *Le Devoir*, 28 March, 1918, 1.

¹²³ Henri Bourassa, “Le Suffrage des Femmes II: Le ‘droit’ de voter – La lutte des sexes – Laisserons-nous avilir nos femmes?,” *Le Devoir*, 30 March, 1918, 1. Bourassa published one more editorial on the issue, Henri Bourassa, “Le Suffrage des Femmes III: L’influence politique des femmes – Pays avancés – Femmes encolottés,” *Le Devoir*, 1 April, 1918, 1.

described his feelings towards the violent demonstrators who roamed the street that night. He repeated his counsel of August 1917, telling them that it was “ni légitime ni *pratique de combattre*” conscription with violence.¹²⁴ No matter how justified the rioters may be in opposing conscription, Bourassa wrote, the primary duty of the state was to maintain public order. The government might enact legislation that was unfair or foolish, but it still played a vital role in protecting its citizens. Citizens, even ones facing unjust laws, “n’[ont] pas le droit d’y mettre obstacle par la violence, au détriment de l’ordre public.” “Les principes généraux d’ordre social,” he continued, “priment tous les griefs particuliers.”¹²⁵ He feared armed insurrection against the government, an outcome that violated his belief in order and justice and promised far worse than anything Borden’s government had enacted. Bourassa’s categorical condemnation of the riots did not leave any room for rejoinders to his arguments.

For months, the nationaliste journalist had faced the threat of censorship. Throughout the election campaign that fall and into the winter of 1917-18, citizens wrote to the Censor Office asking it to silence Henri Bourassa. During the tense months, leading up to the December election, Chief Press Censor E.J. Chambers refused to censor *Le Devoir* for fear that political opponents would see it as “an act of political warfare.”¹²⁶ Chambers kept in contact with Georges Pelletier, one of *Le Devoir*’s editors, and through their communication agreed to temper Bourassa’s writing in the months leading up to April 1918.¹²⁷ According to this correspondence, Bourassa changed the tone and content of his articles to make it more

¹²⁴ Henri Bourassa, “L’ordre Public doit être Maintenu,” *Le Devoir*, 5 April, 1918, 1.

¹²⁵ Henri Bourassa, “L’ordre Public doit être Maintenu,” *Le Devoir*, 5 April, 1918, 1.

¹²⁶ E.J. Chambers to T. Mulvey, 5 December, 1917, as quoted in Jean-Noël Cossette, *La censure fédérale et les principaux journaux canadiens-français du Québec, 1915-1918*, Unpublished MA Thesis, University of Ottawa, 1972, 133. A month earlier Chambers notes that “such action would be impolitic and would give Mr. Bourassa and his friends a chance to pose as martyrs and to misrepresent the action taken as being due to political persecution,” E.J. Chambers to M. Burrell, 2 November, 1917, as quoted in Cossette, *La censure fédérale*, 97.

¹²⁷ Cossette, *La censure fédérale*, 99, 115.

amenable to the censor in the fall of 1917. Nonetheless, after the election ended, Chambers tried to stop *Le Devoir*'s publication for the duration of the war in February 1918 after Bourassa published his articles on the possibility of peace. The government rejected Chambers' suggestion.¹²⁸

Two weeks after the Quebec City Riots, Prime Minister Borden passed an Order-in-Council that prohibited the press from publishing, or an individual from publicly expressing, "any adverse statement, report, or opinion concerning the action of the allied nations in the prosecution of the war."¹²⁹ Two days later, Bourassa explained to his readers that the government "qui porte l'entière responsabilité des mesures de guerre" believed that "le moment venu d'interdire toute expression d'opinion qu'il jugera propre à créer des discussions ou à alimenter des divergences d'opinion sur l'objet ou la conduite de la guerre." "Il nous reste," he concluded, "qu'à nous soumettre à cette décision des autorités et à laisser à l'avenir le soin de démontrer si elle est conforme aux meilleurs intérêts du pays."¹³⁰

Bourassa wrote nothing for *Le Devoir* until October, except for a single article in May, and waited out the war's end in uncharacteristic silence. His wife Josephine's illness worsened and Bourassa grew depressed.¹³¹ He welcomed the new Apostolic Delegate, Archbishop Pietro di Maria, to Canada in October during such troubled times.¹³² When Borden left for Versailles

¹²⁸ Cossette, *La censure fédérale*, 116-118.

¹²⁹ A description of the law is found in Canada, *Sessional Papers of the Dominion of Canada*, vol. 53 no. 1 (1918) 23. The French text of the law is in Cossette, *La censure fédérale*, 141. Otherwise, the text of the Order-in-council can be found at Library and Archives Canada, RG 2, Reel T-5034, Order-in-Council PC 915, 16 April 1918. For one of the most recent discussions of censorship during the war, see Jeff Keshen, *Propaganda and Censorship During Canada's Great War*, (Edmonton: University of Alberta Press, 1996). On 77, Keshen cites the May 1918 Order-in-Council PC 1241, which forbade any individual from persuading or inducing any person to resist or impede the Military Service Act (see Keshen, 66), as the reason for Bourassa's silence. However, Bourassa writes in his paper a month earlier on 18 April 1918 about the new censorship laws in place and their impact on *Le Devoir*, and afterwards he published only one article until October 1918, which makes it seem likely that PC 915 was the reason. Cossette explains as much on 141-143.

¹³⁰ Henri Bourassa, "Nouveau Régime de Presse," *Le Devoir*, 18 April, 1918, 1.

¹³¹ Robert Rumilly, *Henri Bourassa*, 603.

¹³² Henri Bourassa, "Hommage au Délégué du Pape," *Le Devoir*, 25 October, 1918, 1.

in early November to “take part in preliminary discussions respecting the terms of peace,” Bourassa lightly questioned his wisdom in abandoning Parliament.¹³³ When word reached the journalist of the declaration of the armistice on 11 November, he feared the revolution growing in Germany and a return of “force brutale” in deciding worldly affairs. Bourassa declared it was time for prayer:

Remercions Dieu d’avoir fait taire la voix meurtrière des canons, c’est-à-dire la voix de l’orgueil, de la haine, de la force brutale et aveugle. Demandons-lui de faire parler plus haut que jamais la voix de l’humilité, du repentir, de la raison éclairée par la foi, de la vraie charité sociale. Supplions-le d’éclairer la conscience des peuples et l’esprit des gouvernants.¹³⁴

His prayer marking the end of the war reflected on the world he had not seen for four terrible years. Now that the conflict was finally over, Bourassa prayed that humanity might emerge wiser from it so that they could “remettre l’ordre dans le chaos des ruines morales et matérielles annoncées par les folles passions des hommes.”¹³⁵ So too would Canadians have to rebuild their fractured nation – but Bourassa would play little part in it.

¹³³ Henri Bourassa, “Les Préliminaires de Paix: M. Borden et le Parlement,” *Le Devoir*, 9 November, 1918, 1.

¹³⁴ Henri Bourassa, “Paix et Révolution: Le doigt de Dieu – Le devoir de la prière,” *Le Devoir*, 11 November, 1918, 1.

¹³⁵ Henri Bourassa, “Paix et Révolution: Le doigt de Dieu – Le devoir de la prière,” *Le Devoir*, 11 November, 1918, 1.

Conclusion: Bourassa at Peace

The end of the First World War in November 1918 brought welcomed tranquillity for most of its war-wearied participants. The conflict had torn out the heart of the Old World and laid its crass inhumanity bare for all to see. Few could claim Europe to be the enlightened continent that held the future of human civilization. The belligerent nations that emerged from the conflict began the long road to recovery and struggled to make sense of the experience, free from the dark cloud of war.

For the French Canadian nationalist Henri Bourassa, the armistice changed little. The war had vanquished his vision of a bicultural and bilingual Canada unifying its English and French speaking peoples. He no longer saw the future for the Canada that he had struggled to create over two decades as a politician, writer, journalist, and political critic. Canada's war had unleashed forces far worse than the imperialism he had rallied against before 1914: the mismanagement of parliamentary government, rampant militarism, social unrest bordering on revolution, and growing secularism.

Worse, his beloved wife and mother to their eight children, Joséphine Papineau, died after a long illness on 26 January 1919. Sir Wilfrid Laurier wrote his final letter to Bourassa mourning the passing of Joséphine. Bourassa replied, and Laurier received the letter two days before he died on 17 February. Their passing, one who had inspired Bourassa's heart and the other his mind, was a devastating blow to the fifty-year old.¹ His *joie de vivre* was gone. He withdrew from the active role he had played in Canadian politics for more than twenty years.

¹ Robert Rumilly, *Henri Bourassa: La Vie Publique d'un Grand Canadien*, (Montreal: Les Éditions Chantecler Ltée, 1953), 606-608. André Bergevin, Cameron Nish and Anne Bourassa, *Henri Bourassa, Biographie, Index des Écrits*, (Montreal: Les Éditions de l'Action Nationale, 1966) LI.

The man who had been the beating heart of the French Canadian nationalist movement, whose evocative and passionate writing was republished in newspapers across the Dominion, whose words could entertain an ebullient audience for hours, was diminished. The war had taken away his hope of a better Canada, while cruel fate had taken away the love of his life as well as his former mentor-turned-nemesis.

The comparison between Bourassa and Laurier is compelling. Politically, both were French Canadian Liberals, Canadian nationalists (though in different ways), and deeply involved in the politics of their time. In character, both were passionate, evocative speakers, capable of inspiring others to follow them -- though Laurier was always willing to compromise to achieve his long-term goals. Bourassa could never accept capitulation on his positions. They took different paths throughout their careers, though it once seemed like Bourassa would follow in Laurier's footsteps. Their opposing trajectories were often closer to each other than they would have admitted. Though Bourassa had spent the last decades opposing Laurier, their rapprochement over the course of 1917-18 revealed how much they had in common. In late summer of 1918, the two met on friendly terms for a final time at the home of Laurier's close friend and Quebec MLA, L.O. David.² In 1935, Bourassa was again a Member of Parliament, and when asked by Conservative MP I.D. MacDougall why he had betrayed Laurier, Bourassa reflected on his long relationship with his former leader:

If my friend knew something more about the political history of the country, he would know that I fought Laurier when he was at the height of his popularity. When the Tory party was denouncing him from the Atlantic to the Pacific as the instrument of Catholicism and French domination, I stood by him. When he was the idol of Quebec, I stood almost alone against him in defence of the principle for which I have fought all my life. But when he was betrayed by his Liberal friends, when he was downtrodden during the war, I came to him and freely

² Réal Bélanger, *Wilfrid Laurier: quand la politique devient passion*, 415-416; Robert Rumilly, *Henri Bourassa*, 601-603.

tendered him a helping hand, not to carry but to go through the elections of 1917. ... He knows now that although I fought him because of differences in principle, I loved him all my life; and he knew it then. The day I passed in his house in 1917, when he was betrayed by men whom he had covered with honours and favours – I never received anything from him and never asked – that day he pressed me on his bosom and said to me: “Bourassa, what has happened to me today you predicted eleven years ago. I know now where my true friends are to be found.”³

It is difficult to ascertain whether the reconciliation was as complete as the one Bourassa outlined after the fact. Had Laurier forgiven his wayward protégé? Both had offered harsh criticisms of the other before and during the war, almost up to the moment when their reunion occurred. After Laurier’s death, Bourassa painted a picture of deep respect between the two that was not at all publicly evident before August 1917.

The day after Laurier died, Bourassa wrote a straightforward and respectful editorial appealing to all Christians to pray for Laurier. It would be difficult, he lamented, to properly convey the man's greatness. He wrote:

Dans la vie d'un chef d'état et de parti, l'historien consciencieux a le devoir de rechercher les multiples facteurs de son influence et de son action publique, de distinguer entre les actes volontairement posés et les causes subies ou simplement acceptées. Toujours difficile, cette tâche est particulièrement ardue dans un pays et à une époque où il n'existe à peu près pas d'opinion libre des passions de parti. Elle est presque impossible tant que vivent les contemporains d'un homme éminemment sympathique et charmeur, dont la force et l'influence tenaient plus à l'affection des coeurs qu'aux convictions raisonnées de l'intelligence.⁴

Bourassa’s effusive praise is a stark contrast from his depiction of “Laurier the traitor” for much of the last two decades. Clearly, Bourassa had forgiven Laurier for his mistakes.

Bourassa’s words are a useful warning for historians: Laurier so dominated his era that

³ Henri Bourassa, *House of Commons Debates*, 17th Parliament, 6th Session, Vol. 1, 22 January, 1935, 106-107. This was partially quoted by Omar Hérroux in “Sir Wilfrid Laurier et Henri Bourassa,” *Hommage à Henri Bourassa*, (Montreal: Le Devoir, 1952) 73.

⁴ Henri Bourassa, “M. Laurier,” *Le Devoir*, 18 February, 1919, 1.

he overwhelmed it. Few could separate the political career that had intertwined with his life for nearly fifty years. Historians could say much the same about the grieving Henri Bourassa. Like Laurier, his life and his legacy was so broad and far-reaching that to this day it remains difficult for historians to capture its entirety.

This work has endeavoured to portray Henri Bourassa's life during the First World War through the beliefs that he embraced and the ideas that he espoused. His ideas about the war's international consequences were as rooted in his political and religious beliefs as his views about Canada itself. Historians have long acknowledged the impact of Bourassa's religious and political beliefs on his role as a critic of Canadian society. Thus, as one of Canada's most forceful war resisters, historians' review of Bourassa's vocal criticisms has traditionally been rooted in this domestic commentary on the war. Yet, his liberal and Catholic beliefs shaped and impelled an interpretation of the war's international consequences. At home and abroad, he saw the state abusing its power and deceiving its people as militarism warped the societies at war. So too did he perceive the international system's failure to avoid the war or work towards a peaceful resolution. Citing perspectives from Britain and the United States, Bourassa saw that the failure of the international system itself had caused the war to erupt and continue. The Great War proved to Bourassa that although the balance between the Great Powers of Europe had once brought stability and progress, it now promised only destruction as it collapsed. Their insatiable imperialism, unrelenting greed, and lust for power had corrupted the world. Bourassa agreed with Britain's Union of Democratic Control for a new system of international arbitration, rooted in democratic and liberal ideas. In turn, he urged Canada and the people of the world to support peace proposals from the belligerent nations, concurred with the actions of American President Woodrow Wilson and praised the careful diplomacy of Pope Benedict XV.

Bourassa was paradoxically a French Canadian Catholic and a liberal Canadian nationalist. As a French Canadian, he saw his language, culture, and Catholic religion as inseparable parts of a whole. French was the language and Catholicism the faith of French Canada that had guided them over three centuries of inhabiting the North American continent. Bourassa was more devout than others were in that respect. The ultramontane Catholic accepted that the Catholic Church had to be the guiding force for society. In Quebec and in the world, Catholicism was a force for social order and progress. The Pope, as God's representative on Earth, delivered the holy wisdom of God to humanity. Though Bourassa sometimes disagreed with the Quebec bishops' interpretation of the Papal position, he never questioned the sanctity of their place within the province's social hierarchy. Nor did he question Papal dictates, even when they opposed his own position.

It might be easy to point out that he was a Catholic first and French Canadian second, but it was a distinction that Bourassa would have never made. Despite his devotion to Catholic authority, Bourassa tempered his religiosity with a deep admiration for British liberalism. It was not so contradictory -- both demanded a respect for social order and the rule of law and both sought to better society, though one by defending individual rights, and the other through Catholic duty. Liberal nationalism defended the right of the French Canadian Catholic community to exist within a largely English and Protestant dominion. His Canadian nationalism was in opposition to Canadian Imperialism as it was inherently bicultural and bilingual and included both of its French and English speaking peoples. Bourassa's Canadian identity accepted the two as equally important to its formation. As proven by Confederation in 1867, only the union of the two created something uniquely "Canadian." Bourassa's beliefs

overlapped seemingly without contradiction -- though not without a hierarchy,⁵ which the war gradually laid bare.

As the war continued, Bourassa was less confident that the world could avoid moral deterioration and chaos that were antithetical to his Catholic faith and liberal ideals. Only the holy words of Rome, which proposed a system based on trust, goodwill and the word of God, could provide order. Bourassa did not necessarily imagine a Catholic world, but simply one that realised the truth and virtue of the Pontiff's message. He increasingly found solace in his unshakeable faith as war supporters in Canada ignored his political beliefs. Faced with a deficient political culture at home and a crumbling international order abroad, Bourassa turned to Pope Benedict XV as the sole moral power capable of surpassing human interests and defending the common good of all people.

The transforming effect of the war on Canada and the world deeply dismayed Bourassa. Militarism was overtaking the values of the world's liberal democracies. From his perspective, his critics' relentless attacks against his position and their accusations that he was unpatriotic or treasonous proved the pervasive nature of the militarism behind the Canadian war effort. The most ardent of the war supporters did not distinguish between the Canadian state and the war effort. According to this logic, Bourassa's dissent was an attack on the nation itself. The expansion of state powers during wartime to organize the Canadian economy and industry, and eventually the individual through conscription, revealed the totality of the conflict. While other Canadians accepted these measures as necessary for the cause of victory, Bourassa rejected them as manifestations of the same Prussian militarism that the war meant to overturn in

⁵ Sylvie Lacombe, *La rencontre de deux peuples élus : comparaison des ambitions nationale et impériale au Canada entre 1896 et 1920*, (Sainte-Foy: Presses de l'Université Laval, 2002) 124.

Germany.

The difference between Bourassa's position and the rest of Canada reflects historians' own disagreement over the war's causes. Bourassa may have been correct in lamenting the structural causes to the war that were innate to, or accepted by, the international system of late 19th and early 20th century Europe. Yet his belief that imperialism and militarism caused the war and sustained it allows little room for individual agency. On the other hand, the war could have been solely a result of decision-makers' actions at the head of nations and armies. In that case, as other Canadians believed, the war was a legitimately defensive action against a German aggressor.⁶ Each necessarily created a different understanding of the war's purpose in Canada, and in the case of Bourassa, a reaction unlike his contemporaries. Bourassa's frustration over his inability to influence other Canadians is in better focus if we understand that his view of the war links it to militarism, imperialism, and other *impersonal* causes. His arguments and his rhetoric are out of touch with Canadians who not only do not understand the war as he saw it, but do not even conceive of the war in the same way.

In this respect, Bourassa aligned with other international liberal dissenters from the war who pointed to systemic causes rather than individual ones. Consider the words of Bertrand Russell, perhaps the most famous British radicals to oppose the war. Like Bourassa, Russell gradually believed that the war was not a conflict between nations, but a great struggle between militarism and anti-militarism.⁷ As a member of the Union of Democratic Control imprisoned

⁶ Historian John F.V. Keiger reviewed the distinction between "structuralist" and "intentionalist" causes to the war, calling for future research to "be replaced by a more integrated analysis that brings together long-term and immediate causes so that a clearer picture of causality emerges from the given conditions with which governments necessarily live at various moments and the actions that they and individual decision-makers take." See John F.V. Keiger, "The War Explained: 1914 to the Present," *A Companion to the First World War*, John Horne ed., (Oxford: Wiley-Blackwell, 2010) 21-24.

⁷ This point is made in Richard Rempel's introduction to Russell's writing on Pacifism and Revolution, see Bertrand Russell, *Pacifism and Revolution, 1916-18*, Richard A. Rempel, ed., (New York: Routledge, 1995)

for his views during the war, Russell offered many of the same points as Bourassa in his wartime writing. “One of the most surprising things in this war,” Russell noted in 1916, “is the universal appeal to atavistic moral notions which, in times of peace, civilised men would have repudiated with contempt.”⁸ He echoed Bourassa’s fear that the war’s rampant militarism would wreak greater havoc than could be repaired after its end:

The fear of defeat and the longing for victory have made men oblivious of the common task of Europe and of the work which Europe had been performing for mankind at large. In all that has made the nations of the West important to the world, they run the risk of being involved in a common disaster, so great and so terrible that it will outweigh, to the historian in the future, all the penalties of military defeat and all the glories of military victory. ... [If] the war lasts much longer, ... it is to be expected that a blind fury of destruction will drive us on and on until the good and evil of the old world have perished together in universal ruin. For this reason, [it is important to realise that] all that is detestable in the enemy is the result of war, is brought out by war, in a greater or lesser degree, on our side as well on the other, and will cease with the conclusion of peace but not before.⁹

Neither Bourassa nor Russell saw a difference between a militarized democracy and the autocratic militarism of Germany. The result was the same. The Allied Powers and the Central Powers had lost the authority to claim the moral high ground after total war demanded greater sacrifices and state control.

After the war, Russell and other dissidents turned to socialism and internationalism as a solution to militarism.¹⁰ Bourassa turned towards Rome. As he had stated repeatedly during the war, only the Pope remained uncorrupted by the influence of militarism. After the war, Bourassa saw a world overtaken by individualism and secularism. As individuals turned away

xlvi. Rempel points to Bertrand’s 1917 pamphlet for the No-Conscription Fellowship as proof of Russell’s anti-militarism, see 493-494.

⁸ Bertrand Russell, *Justice in War Time*, 2nd Edition, (London: The Open Court Publishing Company, 1917) 3.

⁹ Bertrand Russell, *Justice in War*, 105, 112.

¹⁰ Richard Rempel terms Russell’s views as Guild Socialism in the introduction to *Roads to Freedom* written in late 1917 and early 1918, see Bertrand Russell, *Roads to Freedom*, Richard Rempel, ed., (New York: Routledge, 1996) vii.

from God, the Catholic social order threatened to dissolve. Réal Bélanger notes that after the war, Bourassa “the ideologist and moralist would prevail over the politician and journalist, but not completely replace them.”¹¹ In 1922, he had a semi-private audience with Pope Pius XI and received his blessing.¹² Four years later, Bourassa returned to Rome to have an hour-long private audience with Pius. This time, the Pope warned his follower about the dangers of devotion to nationalism and praised Bourassa’s position against Quebec nationalism. “A l’heure actuelle, le principal obstacle à l’action de la Papauté et de l’Église dans le monde,” Pius IX shared with Bourassa, “c’est la prédominance des passions de race dans tous les pays, c’est la substitution du nationalisme au catholicisme.” Bourassa left the meeting profoundly affected, and he disavowed his former actions and partially withdrew from public life.¹³ Though he continued writing articles on some international and constitutional issues, Bourassa gradually and voluntarily abandoned his role as the leader of the nationalist movement.

With renewed vigour, Bourassa opposed the rising Quebec nationalist movement of *L’Action Française* during the 1920s, inspired by Pope Pius XI’s condemnation of extreme nationalism. Consequently, he rejected the movement’s separatist aspirations. “The preservation of the faith,” Bourassa advised a new generation of French Canadian nationalists, “is more important than the preservation of any language, than the victory of any human cause.”¹⁴ Bourassa’s denunciation weakened their movement,¹⁵ and over the next two decades, Quebec nationalist Abbé Lionel Groulx replaced Bourassa as nationaliste leader. By the late

¹¹ Réal Bélanger, “BOURASSA, HENRI,” in *Dictionary of Canadian Biography*, vol. 18, University of Toronto/Université Laval, 2003–, accessed October 12, 2014, http://www.biographi.ca/en/bio/bourassa_henri_18E.html.

¹² Robert Rumilly, *Henri Bourassa*, 637.

¹³ Robert Rumilly, *Henri Bourassa*, 692-693.

¹⁴ Réal Bélanger, “BOURASSA, HENRI,” in *Dictionary of Canadian Biography*.

¹⁵ For the result of Bourassa’s position, see Catherine Pomeyrols, “Les intellectuels nationalistes québécois et la condamnation de l’Action Française,” *Vingtième Siècle. Revue d’histoire*, no. 73 (Jan. - Mar., 2002): 92-94.

1920s, Bourassa was clearly out of step with the emergent nationalist movement in Quebec. They no longer advocated for the Canadian nationalism that Bourassa and the nationalistes had supported for two decades, but rather a Quebec nationalism.¹⁶

Bourassa himself had experienced much since his election alongside Wilfrid Laurier in 1896. Some of his beliefs remained unchanged. He still believed in Catholicism, liberalism and moderate nationalism, but the hierarchy he applied to them was clearer as the ideas he chose to express changed considerably. He was no longer an ardent liberal nationalist, preferring to side unequivocally with the view from Rome.

It is less clear how much his opponents during the war understood this transformation, or even the basis of his support and rejection of the war. Jules Fournier's unpublished article from 1916 stands as a solid critique of Bourassa's position from within the nationaliste movement. Why Fournier never published the article is unknown, but it highlights the war's impact on the nationaliste movement and the shift away from Bourassa's brand of liberal and Canadian nationalism. Historian H el ene Pelletier-Baillargeon considers the article a reflection of Fournier's dissatisfaction with Bourassa's role in the formation and continuation of the nationaliste movement itself,¹⁷ but it is equally a substantial criticism of Bourassa during the war. Fournier could not endorse any acceptance of the war effort as Bourassa did from August 1914 until January 1916, and he perceived a contradiction in Bourassa's support for Canadian participation while critiquing its character so completely. As R ene Durocher has argued,

¹⁶ For a more detailed examination of Quebec nationalism in the 1920s, see Susan Mann, *Action fran aise: French Canadian Nationalism in the twenties*, (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1975). Groulx still acknowledged in 1952 that Bourassa played the "r ole de semeur, r ole de redresseur" as a foundational influence on the nationalist movement, see Lionel Groulx, "RUMILLY, Robert, *Henri Bourassa*, La vie publique d'un grand Canadien. Les  ditions Chantecler Lt e, Montr al, 1953. In-8. 792 pages," *Revue d'histoire de l'Am rique fran aise*, no. 37 (1953): 450.

¹⁷ H el ene Pelletier-Baillargeon, *Olivar Asselin et son temps: le volontaire*, (Qu ebec:  dition Fides, 2001) 98.

Bourassa's ambiguity over the war was partly due to the position of the Catholic Church and his anxiety over any apparent contradiction with them.¹⁸

Even without knowing Bourassa's difficulty in contravening the Church position, Fournier is unfair to Bourassa. While Bourassa offered careful approval of the war, he promised his readers on 2 September 1914 that he would "rechercher consciencieusement, en toute loyauté" the issues of the war that others ignored.¹⁹ This promise shaped Bourassa's critiques in the months following, which Fournier held up as proof of an untenable and hypocritical position. We should consider the promise an honest attempt to satisfy both his loyalty to the Church and to the nationalistes. Bourassa supported the war, but not unquestioningly, and he continued to follow the spirit if not the letter of the nationaliste movement. After all, because of his promise, Bourassa was the sole voice raising questions about the nature and extent of the Canadian war effort, resisting the war narrative that took hold throughout the rest of the country.

To Bourassa, supporting the war was not as great a leap as Fournier believed. The nationalists who succeeded Bourassa within Quebec were not federalists who perceived the whole of Canada as united through the pact of Confederation. Instead, they saw Quebec as a unique entity that had agreed to enter Confederation, an agreement that had failed because English Canadian views were inherently opposed to theirs.²⁰ Bourassa's bicultural and bilingual nationalism could consider and endorse the position of English Canada, even if it was not one that he wanted. In the same way, Bourassa expected that English Canada would

¹⁸ René Durocher, "Henri Bourassa, les évêques et la guerre de 1914-1918," *Canadian Historical Association Historical Papers* 6 (1971) 252-253.

¹⁹ Henri Bourassa, "Après la Guerre," *Le Devoir*, 2 September, 1914, 1.

²⁰ Yvan Lamonde, *Histoire Sociales des Idées au Québec 1896-1929*, 272-273.

recognize and accept French Canadian differences. Thus English Canada's failure to acknowledge French Canadian views on the war helped convince Bourassa to withdraw his support. The imposition of conscription underlined just how broken Confederation had become, but unlike Fournier, Bourassa never assumed that that division must occur.

English Canadian intransigence during the war, particularly over the issue of conscription and the 1917 election, made Bourassa's nationalist vision seem increasingly untenable. This explains his turn towards his faith after the conflict. "All that I asked [of the imperialists]," Bourassa wrote to J.S. Ewart in 1918, "was to take no advantage of the wave of blind enthusiasm to compromise the issue of interimperial relations. Far from responding to that offer of truce ... [they] did their best to becloud the real issues of the war, to foster the blind hatred of everything German." Instead, Bourassa was convinced of his "duty to denounce [the Imperialist Revolution] and open the eyes of the people on the true object of the war policy."²¹ Of course, after four acrimonious years of warfare, hindsight coloured Bourassa's perspective of the war's beginning. Still, his complaint to Ewart reveals how he wished the war had unfolded. In his perfect world, a Canada not overtaken by the "imperialist revolution" could have offered its support to the European conflict and united its two people through the war effort rather than divide them.

For some of the nationalists, Bourassa's distinctions were esoteric. Fellow nationaliste Olivar Asselin was still committed to their movement, but saw no problem in joining the Canadian Army in late 1915 to defend France against German aggression, not as part of a British or imperial effort. Asselin fought at the battle of Vimy Ridge and experienced firsthand

²¹ Henri Bourassa to J.S. Ewart, 18 January 1918, Bourassa Fonds, Library and Archives Canada. Bourassa uses the term Imperialist Revolution a sentence before to describe his perspective of how Canadians reacted to the war in the fall of 1914 and afterwards.

the terrible brutality of trench warfare. Writing to a friend in May 1917, he explained that his conscience had demanded he enlist, as “il y a eu trop de gens qui ont enrôlé les autres sans aller eux-mêmes au feu.” He did not regret the decision, but he discovered war was “une sale chose.”²² Asselin did not wholeheartedly accept the imperialist vision of the war – for instance, he and many other French Canadian soldiers opposed conscription.²³ Instead, Asselin fashioned a nationaliste position in favour of the war.²⁴

Outside of the nationaliste movement, the perception of Bourassa’s position assumes a strangely impersonal tone. Most of his critics did not comprehend the basis and motivations that lay behind Bourassa’s views on the war. Some did, such as Ferdinand Roy, whose *L’appel aux armes et la Réponse canadienne-française* rationally rejected Bourassa’s perspective on conscription as a path that would inevitably be detrimental to French Canadians’ place within Confederation.²⁵ Most commentators simply rejected any position that did not endorse their views or, in the case of politicians, viewed Bourassa purely through a political lens.

Political perspectives of Bourassa raise an interesting and unstated dilemma within the historiography. Bourassa was not a politician, but this did not stop politicians like Wilfrid Laurier and Robert Borden from fearing his impact on the fortunes of the parties that they led. Laurier wrote that he could not leave Quebec to the extremists, epitomized in his warning to Senator Raoul Dandurand in January 1915 that “Bourassa is playing with fire and if he thinks

²² Hélène Pelletier-Baillargeon, *Olivar Asselin et son temps: le volontaire*, 145-146.

²³ Hélène Pelletier-Baillargeon, *Olivar Asselin et son temps: le volontaire*, 182-183.

²⁴ It was one which endeared Asselin to French Canadian soldiers. At one point, his friend and fellow 22nd Battalion officer Joseph Chaballe urged Asselin to take over *Le Devoir* from Bourassa. Asselin refused, knowing that the newspaper’s readers would never accept his position on the war, nor could he see himself betraying Bourassa in such a way, see Hélène Pelletier-Baillargeon, *Olivar Asselin et son temps: le volontaire*, 246-247.

²⁵ Ferdinand Roy, *L’appel aux armes et la Réponse canadienne-française*, (Quebec: J.P. Garneau, 1917) 34 and throughout.

that he will be able to extinguish it he may have a rude awakening.”²⁶ Laurier was convinced that Bourassa’s wartime commentary was part of a campaign to manoeuvre himself against Laurier’s leadership of the province, as he had done since 1899. Borden also was cynical about Bourassa’s dissent. In 1915, as officials and the public demanded that Bourassa be censored, Borden remarked in his diary that “Bourassa would like nothing better. I would not be so foolish.”²⁷ Both federal party leaders portray Bourassa as a sort of political mastermind or manipulator willing to become a martyr on the altar of oppressed nationalism.

Though it is certain that Bourassa was a political agent, the cynicism imbedded in Laurier and Borden’s views speaks to a larger problem when considering Bourassa’s wartime commentary. Neither considered that Bourassa wrote because he honestly sought to dissect the issues of the national war effort in which Canada had engaged. They believed that Bourassa was like them, playing a political game for political victories. Bourassa, however, had no party he wanted to see in power or political influence to build. He was a political writer, not a politician, and had none of the concerns and responsibilities of those in the House of Commons. He was a journalist in 1914, and remained so throughout the war. Clearly, Bourassa had political goals in mind when he published his articles, but to ascribe solely political motivations to his writing is a disservice to the public discourse he offered.

Bourassa believed that political issues ought to be debated publicly and argued rather than accepted without question on a politician’s word. His promise of 2 September 1914 publicly established this obligation to his readers. When contemporaries limited their response to Bourassa solely within a political lens, they failed to appreciate fully Bourassa’s arguments

²⁶ O.D. Skelton, *Life and Letters of Sir Wilfrid Laurier*, 467. Laurier wrote to Quebec Premier Lomer Gouin of handing Quebec to the extremists, see Oscar Skelton, *Life and Letters of Sir Wilfrid Laurier*, 512.

²⁷ Robert Borden Diary, 30 May, 1915.

about the war when he was a devoted public commentator in the truest sense of that title. His examination of international events revealed the breadth of his commitment: Canada was deeply involved in global affairs. For the first time, Canadians consider global events from a Canadian perspective and have something relevant to add. However, in Canada only Bourassa devoted weeks of editorials to American politics, international diplomacy, and other distant happenings that affected Canada even if they did not appear to directly affect Canadians. His readers were exposed to events of the war in greater detail than appeared in other newspapers, just as they were confronted with a Canadian perspective of them. Bourassa's writing was coloured by his beliefs to be sure, and sometimes weakened by them, but it is without question that Bourassa presented global affairs through a uniquely Canadian lens throughout the conflict.

Bourassa's opposition cemented his role as a grandfather to Quebec's neo-nationalism movement and as a critic of the war. Afterwards his dissent was entrenched in a growing but divergent popular memory of the war in French and English Canada. As English Canadians championed the enduring purpose of the war for English Canada within Victorian ideals, French Canadians remembered the defeats in 1917 over conscription and the election victory of Union government as well as the Easter Riots.²⁸

Two historical works reveal his influence on these memories, Elizabeth Armstrong's *The Crisis of Quebec 1914-18* and Robert Rumilly's biography, *Henri Bourassa: La Vie Publique d'un Grand Canadien*. Armstrong wrote in the 1930s and Rumilly during Bourassa's

²⁸ The two most well-known studies of English and French Canadian memory of the war are Jonathan F. Vance, *Death So Noble: Memory, Meaning, and the First World War*, (Vancouver: UBC Press, 1997), and Mourad Djebabla, *Se Souvenir de La Grande Guerre: La Mémoire Plurielle de 14-18 Au Québec*, (Montréal: VLB, 2004).

final years, though it was published after Bourassa's death in 1952.

Armstrong was an American scholar and her work on Quebec was the first to consider Bourassa through a historian's lens. She approached Bourassa as a case study for a larger examination of Quebec nationalism during the First World War. Bourassa became a political figure for Armstrong who was driven by his "dreams of French Canada as a proselytizing force which shall eventually bring the American continent back to the arms of Rome and to the glories of French civilization."²⁹ In her account, Bourassa was inhibited by his nationalism and Catholicism and unable to look beyond the borders of Canada or North America to understand the war's greater purpose. Consequently, Armstrong considered Bourassa's defining characteristics through questions relating to his Canadian nationalism, rather than a detailed examination of him as a wartime dissenter.

Armstrong's portrayal of Bourassa reveals his role in the English Canadian remembrance of the war. In the war's immediate aftermath, men like Castell Hopkins, author of the *Canadian Annual Review*, preferred to minimize Bourassa's influence other than as a contrast to these "true" French Canadians.³⁰ As Jonathan Vance notes, English Canadians preferred to evoke men like Talbot Papineau, or 22nd Battalion Victoria Cross winners Joseph Kaeble and Jean Brilliant, to demonstrate Quebec's service during the war.³¹ The war could then serve as an example of Canadian unity -- at least, an English Canadian vision of that unity. English Canadians and some French Canadians were convinced by the new national identity

²⁹ Elizabeth Armstrong, *Crisis of Quebec 1914-1918* (Toronto: McClelland and Stewart, 1937) 53.

³⁰ One only has to read Hopkin's writing in the *Canadian Annual Review* to see this distinction. For example, from the 1917 volume, Hopkins wrote that Bourassa was engaged in "bitter and unscrupulous denunciation of Great Britain and the British people and soldiers in the War with the reiteration of every possible misconception as to Allied policy and action," while on the other hand, "no man could die more gallantly for his country and Empire than Major Talbot Papineau," Castell Hopkins, *Canadian Annual Review 1917*, 477, 474.

³¹ Jonathan Vance, *Death So Noble*, 253-254.

forged during the war, expressed by the “spirit of the trenches.”³² The soldier experience shaped English Canadian nationalism and memory of the war in the interwar period, and in comparison, they dismissed French Canadian opponents to the war like Bourassa as, in Armstrong’s words, “passive nationalists” who would never fulfil their national desires.³³ Bourassa’s French Canadian nationalism was not equal to the vigorous English Canadian nationalism that had proven its worth on the battlefields.

Rumilly’s biography of Bourassa, written in French for a Quebec audience, described a completely different picture of Bourassa’s actions that reflects Quebec’s memory of the war. He opens his history remarking that Bourassa “rassemblait des atavismes qu’il faut bien appeler contradictoires.”³⁴ It reflected a common theme throughout the work. Bourassa epitomized the best of French Canada. The traits that had propelled him to enter politics and defend French Canada were inherent to French Canadians themselves. Rumilly describes Bourassa in 1918, writing that he “n’a pas fondé un parti, et se ses atavismes l’entraînent dans la lutte politique, sa mystique, fortifiée dans les retraites fermées, lui inspire une conception plus haute.”³⁵ This constant reference to Bourassa’s atavism is not derogatory, but integral to Rumilly’s

³² Jonathan Vance, *Death So Noble*, 228-230.

³³ Elizabeth Armstrong, *Crisis of Quebec*, 242-245.

³⁴ Robert Rumilly, *Henri Bourassa*, 7.

³⁵ Robert Rumilly, *Henri Bourassa*, 597.

portrayal.³⁶ It exposes Bourassa's own role in shaping Rumilly's history.³⁷ Rumilly had the opportunity to interview the nationalist and his history reflects the fallibility of personal memory as much as it does a lack of analysis.³⁸ Bourassa also gave a series of ten lectures during the Second World War and these "spoken memoirs" reviewed his life in detail. Rumilly relied on them for his biography, and in concluding the section on Bourassa's spoken memoirs, Rumilly divided Bourassa's career between his opposition to imperialism and his devotion to Catholicism, noting that "l'atavisme Papineau et l'atavisme Bourassa sont disputé la vie la plus riche de la première moitié du vingtième siècle, au Canada."³⁹ Just as Louis-Joseph Papineau inspired Bourassa to become a "grand Canadien," now Rumilly mobilized Bourassa to inspire French Canadians to continue defending nationalism -- though a far different version than the one Bourassa had defined forty years earlier.

Rumilly's appeal to ingrained French Canadian traits likely reflects his close relationship with Abbé Lionel Groulx. Bourassa's defacto successor within the Quebec nationalist movement defended inherently atavistic conceptions of the French Canadian race in North America and integrated them into his vision of Quebec nationalism.⁴⁰ Rumilly echoes

³⁶ It appears throughout Rumilly's history of Quebec as well, for instance, "Henri Bourassa, en qui frémissait l'atavisme des Papineau," Robert Rumilly, *Histoire de la Province de Québec vol. IX F.G. Marchand*, (Montréal: Montreal-Editions, n.d.) 117; or "Bourassa, personnalité complexe aux atavismes contradictoires, curieux mélange de doctrinaire réaliste et de mystique chrétien," Robert Rumilly, *Histoire de la Province de Québec vol. XX Philipe Landry*, (Montréal: Montreal-Editions, n.d.) 86. Allegations of atavism were also used to criticise Bourassa. In 1911, a pamphlet denounced Bourassa's position against Laurier during the election that, like Rumilly, cited Bourassa's atavism as following in the footsteps of Papineau, though it argued that Papineau had failed to recognize the changing nature of the times, see *L'oeil ouvert!: Bourassa et l'anti-Laurierisme, pretention, haine et impuissance, lachete et ingratitude*, (s.l:s.n) 8-9.

³⁷ Such as "Toutes les évolutions d'un peuple sont la résultante, harmonieuse ou incohérente, de ses mouvements antérieurs, de ses instincts ataviques," Henri Bourassa, *Que devons-nous à l'Angleterre? La défense nationale, la révolution impérialiste, le tribut à l'Empire*, (Montréal, 1915) viii.

³⁸ Several mistakes are noted by Anne Bourassa, see Anne Bourassa and Patrick Allen, "Le Bourassa de Rumilly: Deux appréciations," in *La Pensée de Henri Bourassa*, F.A. Angers ed., (Montréal: L'Action nationale, 1954) 185-194.

³⁹ Robert Rumilly, *Henri Bourassa*, 784.

⁴⁰ Frédéric Boily, *La pensée nationaliste de Lionel Groulx*, (Sillery, QC: Septentrion, 2003) 21-50.

Groulx's beliefs about the French Canadian race. As a result, the Bourassa that Rumilly describes is not an individual struggling to express his ideas about Canada and the war. Bourassa becomes a symbol for Quebec's struggle within the Canadian Confederation. The final pages of his work places Bourassa's life in almost spiritual terms as Rumilly reminded Quebecois that "ainsi Bourassa, le grand Bourassa que nous venons de perdre, continue de nous protéger."⁴¹ Rumilly's work is barely less than hagiographic in its praise for the nationaliste leader, a fitting tribute to the man who had prepared the way for the Quebec nationalists to whom Rumilly's biography would most appeal.

Despite the flaws of Armstrong and Rumilly's works, they provide insight into the context of their times. They represented a constructed memory of Bourassa's career. Both misunderstand Bourassa's role in the First World War as limited to domestic issues. Consequently, they emphasize Bourassa's fierce nationalism, his place as a French Canadian and a Catholic, but not his international perspective that, despite its local Canadian lens, presented the world to his readers in a way unlike any of his Canadian contemporaries.

When academic Canadian historians returned to the First World War and Henri Bourassa in the 1960s, misconceptions lingered as English and French Canadians dealt with a new generation of answers to the "French Canadian Question." Battles over bilingualism, Quebec nationalism, and Canadian identity marked the Canada of the 1960s and kept Bourassa's ideas and legacy at the forefront of political consciousness. Scholars rarely explicitly examined Bourassa's wartime career, with most historians focusing on his pre-war career. Claude Ryan, editor of *Le Devoir*, offered a useful snapshot of Bourassa's historical significance on the centenary of his birth in 1968. He noted that Bourassa's redemption in

⁴¹ Robert Rumilly, *Henri Bourassa*, 791.

English Canada as the prophet of an independent nation strengthened by the coexistence of its two founding peoples.⁴² To solve the “French question,” the Liberal government of Prime Minister Lester Pearson proposed a bilingual and bicultural Canada. Quebec was no longer an intransigent minority unwelcome under the umbrella of the ambiguous British-Canadian identity forged after the First World War. The new Canada influenced historians and the public alike as they searched for new foundational myths.⁴³ Bourassa, whose support for a bilingual and bicultural Canada was a solution to a much different Canadian problem, was easily subsumed in the new story Canadians sought to tell about themselves.

As Canada rethought what it meant to be Canadian, Quebecois were also reimagining their province and their perspective on Henri Bourassa. The province faced serious societal conflict in the aftermath of the transformative Quiet Revolution that modernized Quebec. A new historical consciousness was developing as historians debated the legacy of New France and Confederation on the Quebec of the 20th century.⁴⁴ Most writers skipped over Bourassa's career as a subject for direct historical study, but reflected on many of the same themes of nationalism, clericalism, and survival. Claude Ryan reminded his readers that Quebecois were praising Bourassa on the anniversary of his birth as a unifying figure and the grandfather of a new Quebec nationalism even as English Canadians commended his bilingualism and

⁴² Claude Ryan, “Henri Bourassa devant l’histoire,” *Le Devoir*, 31 August 1968, 4.

⁴³ On British-Canadian identity in the 1960s, see Phillip Buckner, *Canada and the End of Empire* (Vancouver: UBC Press, 2004); José Eduardo Igarua, *The Other Quiet Revolution: National Identities in English Canada, 1945-71* (Vancouver: UBC Press, 2006); C.P. Champion, *The Strange Demise of British Canada: The Liberals and Canadian Nationalism, 1964-1968* (Montreal: McGill-Queen’s University Press, 2010). Each examined the disappearance of a British-Canadian identity and its consequences, though Champion suggests it was transformed instead of disappearing.

⁴⁴ The well-known debate between the Montreal and Laval school of historians over the character of Quebec's history is explored in detail by many, notably in English by Ronald Rudin's *Making History in Twentieth Century Quebec* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1997). Ramsay Cook has also examined Quebec historians' influence on Quebec nationalism, such as Maurice Séguin and Michel Brunet, see for instance, Ramsay Cook, *Canada and the French-Canadian Question* (Toronto: Macmillan, 1966) 119-142.

biculturalism.⁴⁵

Bourassa was enshrined as a fundamental figure for both a new generation of English and Quebec nationalists, though it was a distorted view of him inherently framed by the context of Canada in the 1960s. Historians like Ramsay Cook portrayed Bourassa as a sort of modern Canadian nationalist. Cook and Robert Craig Brown used their contribution to the Canadian Centenary Series to emphasize that the crux of Bourassa's position had been that Canada was more Canadian than British.⁴⁶ Cook, who wrote extensively about "the French Canadian question," portrayed Bourassa's role in Quebec as a visionary of a unified Canada, though tainted by his nationalism and religion.⁴⁷

Recent scholarship on the First World War is not as bound as it once was to the commemorative narrative of the war that emerged in its aftermath, but Bourassa remains a stilted figure within the literature. In English Canada, historians have moved away from exploring political and intellectual figures during the war or reflecting on the questions about national unity that Bourassa raised, though their lens has widened considerably since the 1960s.⁴⁸ Meanwhile, Quebec historians have not studied the First World War in detail, largely as a repudiation of its continuing resonance for English Canadian scholars as a national

⁴⁵ Claude Ryan, "Henri Bourassa devant l'histoire," *Le Devoir*, 31 August 1968, 4.

⁴⁶ Robert Craig Brown and Ramsay Cook, *Canada 1896-1921: A Nation Transformed*, (Toronto: McClelland and Stewart, 1974) 274.

⁴⁷ Ramsay Cook, *The Maple Leaf Forever: Essays on Nationalism and Politics in Canada*, (Toronto: Macmillan, 1971) 74-5; Ramsay Cook, *Canada and the French Canadian Question*, 122. Cook is never negative towards Bourassa, but the greater thrust of his arguments regarding the problems of Canadian nationalism (and French-Canadian nationalism) is against both its existence and its justifications. Throughout his many essays on the subject, Cook did not investigate the First World War other than as the context behind problems that related to Canadian unity and the cultural and linguistic divides of the 1960s. Bourassa's role as an international commentator is entirely ignored.

⁴⁸ For an excellent and review overview, see Mark Osborne Humphries, "Between Commemoration and History: The Historiography of the Canadian Corps and Military Overseas," *The Canadian Historical Review*, no. 3, 95 (September, 2014): 384-397.

moment for English Canadian identity.⁴⁹ As different as the memories of Bourassa are in Quebec and in English Canada, both cast him in their nationalist theatre. He is the opponent to the war that unified Canadians at Vimy Ridge in English Canada, and the dissenter who failed to prevent conscription, but ultimately nurtured the beginning of Quebec nationalism in French Canada.

Certainly, historians have placed Bourassa in an influential role within Canadian history, but actually gauging his influence is difficult. Countless French and English Canadians read his articles or heard his speeches. The venerable journalist directly influenced French Canadian nationalists during the Second World War, who organized Bourassa's return to public lectures over the issue of conscription. The Bloc Populaire, a Quebec nationalist party, attempted to recreate a group of Quebec MPs who stood for Quebec's interests just as Bourassa had attempted in 1911 and demanded in 1917. The Bloc brought together a disparate group of old and new nationalists, some of whom were more loyal to Bourassa's vision, and younger ones who wanted to move away his religious nationalism. The party dissolved after the Second World War, failing to unify the old and new strains of French Canadian nationalism.⁵⁰ There are also examples of Bourassa influencing English Canadian nationalists, such as George Grant who privately cheered Bourassa's criticism of Prime Minister William Lyon Mackenzie King for aligning so closely with the United States during the Second World

⁴⁹ Mourad Djebabla, "Historiographie francophone de la Première Guerre mondiale: écrire la Grande Guerre de 1914-1918 français au Canada et au Québec," *The Canadian Historical Review*, no. 3, 95 (September, 2014): 407.

⁵⁰ Michael Oliver, *The Passionate Debate: The Social and Political Ideas of Quebec Nationalism 1920-1945*, (Montreal: Véhicule Press, 1991) 198-204; or as Oliver concludes on 179: "the Bloc populaire party which brought briefly together the varying elements, left and right, old and new, of French Canadian nationalism and, perhaps finally, demonstrated their incompatibility."

War.⁵¹ Perhaps a better testament to Bourassa's lasting impact is the Quebec term *bourassisme*, used to describe the ideas and beliefs of his generation of French Canadian nationalists.⁵² The ubiquity of Bourassa's ideas contributes to the difficulty in categorizing him by historians and contemporaries alike.

* * *

Bourassa helped shape 20th century French and English Canada, but he remains a product of the 19th. His ultramontane Catholicism mixed with Gladstonian British liberalism was a product of European thought a generation out of date by 1914, and certainly by 1918. He conceived of a Canada with united races of French and English, a distinctly different conception than the cultural unity envisioned by 1960s Canadians. Bourassa's belief in the implicit promise of equality between French and English at Confederation shaped his nationalism, but he had to accept the untenable nature of such a balance by 1918. By the war's end, Canada had changed too much and too divided to create the sort of compromise Bourassa demanded. While his ideas may have evolved over the course of the war, his core beliefs remained unchanged.

The war revealed the hierarchy Bourassa applied to his complex web of beliefs as a liberal nationalist and devoted ultramontane Catholic. He aligned himself with radicals like the Union of Democratic Control, but made sure to couch reception of their ideas through the words of Pope Benedict XV. He critiqued the imposition of conscription as anti-democratic and

⁵¹ Scott Staring, "Not Heaven-Endowed to Run the World": The British Empire in the Early Thought of George Grant," *Journal of Canadian Studies* no.1, 45 (Winter 2011): 52 Fn 17. A recent Master's Thesis also explores the extent of Bourassa's influence among English Canadians, see Benoit Longval, *Au-delà des « jingos » et des « coquins » : Henri Bourassa et ses relations avec le Canada anglais (1896-1935)*, Unpublished Master's Thesis, University of Ottawa, 2014.

⁵² Gabriel Martin, *Dictionnaire des onomastismes québécois: les mots issus de nos mots propres*, (Sherbrooke, Québec: Éditions du Fleurdelysé, 2013) 35-36. Bourassisme often follows papineauisme, and precedes groulxisme.

illiberal, yet envisioned a religious Quebec society attached to the Catholic Church, not the state. He demanded that the Canadian state recognize the rights of its linguistic and religious Franco-Ontarian minority for the sake of national unity, but refused to moderate his own comments for the same effect. Achieving the national cohesion he envisioned was more important than building one that rejected his views. Time and again, Bourassa criticized the imperialist vision of the war that did not align with his beliefs about Canada and its place in the world.

The great difficulty of historians in dissecting Bourassa's positions, particularly during the First World War, is accepting the contradictory nature of them but not subsuming Bourassa within the powerful memory of the war itself. Despite the memory of war shaping modern Quebec and English Canadian nationalism, reading these movements back into the past is historical hindsight. Despite Bourassa's acceptance by modern English and French Canadian nationalists, he was an anti-modern figure who does not fit the role imposed upon him. Bourassa understood Canadian nationalism as a union of races, far different from its cultural conception in the latter half of the 20th century. He would have disagreed with modern Quebecois nationalism and their demands for protected privilege from the English majority. Bourassa preferred an equal contest between French and English Canadians where both could express their views. He did not want special status, but equal status.⁵³ The great tragedy of the war was not necessarily the persecution of French Canadians, but that it demonstrated the power imbalance between French and English. Even minute details, like the fact that the renowned newspaper journalist refused to own or listen to radio,⁵⁴ reveal a man firmly

⁵³ Michael Oliver makes this distinction in *The Passionate Debate: The Social and Political Ideas of Quebec Nationalism 1920-1945*, (Montreal: Véhicule Press, 1991) 208.

⁵⁴ Henri Bourassa, *House of Commons Debates*, 17th Parliament, 6th Session, Vol. 1, 22 January, 1935, 105.

entrenched in the Canada of pre-1914.

Bourassa's passion and fiery rhetoric inspired enemies and allies alike. Only 15,000 subscribers read his writing in *Le Devoir* during the war years, but it was his name that English Canadians would have heard during the 1917 election. French and English Canadians considered Bourassa the leader of the resistance to the war -- a claim demonstrated by how often critics and allies alike portrayed him taking a primary role in it. Whether you agreed or disagreed with him, Bourassa provoked a reaction. He knew how to incite a response among Canadians. His particular combination of political and religious views only could have appeared in French Canada, but it is easy to overlook them in a Canadian context. Nonetheless, there is a uniqueness to his war experience compared to other international dissenters. Where else could a Catholic liberal nationalist advocate so strenuously against the war, and not only avoid imprisonment, but directly influence elections and political events? Bourassa will was a prominent dissenter at home and given great latitude by authorities to promote his views because of his French Canadian context.

In speeches to Parliament in 1935, on the cusp of retirement from political life, Bourassa reflected on his actions during the war:

If I go out of public life with one feeling, with one conviction, it is this: a deep regret for many bitter words that I have used in my life, deep and sincere repentance for all my violences of language; but I hope they will be forgiven me by God and man because not once in my life have I attacked anybody unjustly, from my point of view at least, and without believing it was my duty to do so.⁵⁵

This sense of duty compelled Bourassa to public commentary, to dispute government actions, and to examine international events critically. He was not afraid to anger his opponents, but sometimes he was too eager to reveal their falsehoods. Even as Bourassa sought the truth at all

⁵⁵ Henri Bourassa, *House of Commons Debates*, 17th Parliament, 6th Session, Vol. 1, 22 January, 1935, 107.

costs, he did not necessarily recognize it every time. The First World War intensified his duty, turning his editorials into a fervent search for the true meaning and consequence to the war. The world at war was terrifying. Events once debated calmly were suddenly a matter of life and death. Old political issues took on new meaning and rancor. For Henri Bourassa, an intense man by nature, the war years pushed him to new heights of analytical insight and depths of conspiratorial allegations. Yet as other Canadians failed to confront the issues and debates that should have taken place during such a serious time, Bourassa refused to ignore them. Bourassa's war, fought through words on the page, was no less important to him than the one fought by Canadian soldiers on the battlefield. In his view, the only way for Canada to emerge stronger from the war, regardless of victory or defeat, was if Canadians could honestly and openly discuss the international and domestic challenges that confronted their nation.

Bourassa looked out to the world first and foremost as a Canadian. All of his beliefs were enmeshed in a Canadian context. His views were not intrinsically correct, or unbiased, or even justified, but they represent the views of an individual Canadian concerning a global event. Few Canadians have left a record of their views like Bourassa, let alone offered them publicly throughout the war years. Thus, he stands as one of the most prominent Canadian intellectuals to consider the global and local context of Canada at war. At the same time, Bourassa deserves recognition outside of Canada. This work has addressed his ideas as they were presented so that they might stand on their own – not simply as part of a domestic debate in Canada about its identity and the war, but as part of a larger international reaction against the Great War. Bourassa rejected the war for a wide variety of reasons, but concluded like so many commentators across the belligerent nations that peace and international reform required solutions to ensure that a war like it never erupted again. Around the world, Bourassa and

others like him were part of a larger movement spurred on by the First World War, dissenters who helped to shape interwar politics and the League of Nations, as well as the politics of their country. The legacy of their efforts and the ideas they espoused profoundly affected the world that emerged after 1918, even if they did not succeed in their goals during the war years.

Likewise, Bourassa did not win or lose his war on the battlefield, but in its lasting impact on Canadian history. Though he failed as a dissenter during the war itself, his influence on his country and province proved the success of his wartime career. While the splash might mark the stone's speed, the ripples mark its size.

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