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J. S. WILLISON AND CANADIAN NATIONALISM 1886-1902

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"An ardent imperialist": that was one description of Sir John Willison offered by his obituarist in the Toronto *Globe* in 1927.[1] He was a prominent Round Tabler from 1909; as early as 1910 he favoured "a common Parliament at Westminster" to "complete the Imperial structure"; Canada's effort in World War I he saw as raising "vital questions of Empire"; and he was profoundly disillusioned by the autonomism and isolationism of the post-war years.[2] Obviously, his imperialist "vision of grandeur" was then clear. This British sentiment, however, was almost entirely missing from his early Canadian nationalism. On occasion, he even supported national independence. The change in his attitude reflected the force of that flood of Empire enthusiasm which in the 1890's and the early years of this century swept through his community. Gradually he came to regard as not mutually exclusive his faith in the future greatness of Canada and the holding of a sincere imperialist conviction.[3] It was during his career at the Toronto *Globe* that he shaped and articulated his nationalist ideology and then laid firm foundations for his imperialism. His personal linkage of the two loyalties was not yet complete when he left the Liberal journal in 1902, but it was well begun.

Willison was born in rural poverty in Huron County in 1856, the third of six children of British immigrant parents. He left school at fifteen and spent the next ten years at farm labour and store-clerking until he adopted journalism as his ladder from obscurity and poverty. His inherited Conservative allegiance had dropped away amid the horrors of the Pacific Scandal and it was with the chief Liberal organ in western Ontario, the London *Advertiser*, that he began his journalistic career in 1881. In 1883 he moved to the staff of the Toronto *Globe*.[4]

1 May 28, 1927.

2 C. Quigley, "The Round Table Groups in Canada, 1908-1938," *CHR*, XLIII (Sept., 1962), 204-224; J. S. Willison, *Partners in Peace* (Toronto, 1923), p. 73; Public Archives of Canada (hereinafter P.A.C.), J. S. Willison Papers, Willison to Col. Stanton, Jan. 5, 1915 (copy) and Willison to Arthur Meighen, May 7, 1919 (copy).

3 On the relationship of nationalism and imperialism in Canada in these years, see: Carl C. Berger, *The Vision of Grandeur: Studies in the Ideas of Canadian Imperialism, 1867-1914* (unpublished Ph.D. dissertation, University of Toronto, 1966).

4 J. S. Willison, *Reminiscences: Political and Personal* (Toronto, 1919), pp. 8-89.

Between 1886 and 1890 he served that paper as its chief Ottawa correspondent and as a sub-editor.[5] In his correspondence, in his reports from Parliament Hill, in his speeches at meetings of the Toronto Young Men's Liberal Club and in his column as the "Observer" some clear indications first emerged of his thinking on national issues.[6]

An intense admiration for Wilfrid Laurier, who assumed the Liberal Leadership in 1887, was one outstanding characteristic. Shortly after his elevation Laurier invited the young journalist to visit with him for a few days in Arthabaskaville, during which time, Willison later wrote, Laurier

> revealed his knowledge of men and of books, his clarity and vigour of mind, his inflexibility of will and purpose. At least I thought I had discovered a man of very different quality from the amiable Laodicean whom many Liberals and most Conservatives believed had been installed in a position to which he was unequal.[7]

Laurier could recognize the value of an ally and disciple who had a reliable pipeline to Ontario public opinion; he preceded his first major tour of Ontario in the summer of 1888 with a request to Willison for suggestions on themes for his speeches. Willison obliged, and afterwards assured his leader that "any service I can do for you either as an individual or as a journalist will be very very cheerfully rendered."[8]

Such a service was rendered in 1889 during the ultra-Protestant agitation in Ontario for federal disallowance of the Jesuit Estates Act of Quebec. Although the *Globe* temporarily went along with the agitation, Willison wrote Laurier, who opposed disallowance, that he had "not been much affected" by the furor, "although I am not at all convinced that it is without justification."[9] As he saw it, Honoré Mercier's blend of clericalism and Quebec *nationalisme* was "the disturbing element" in Canadian politics and "a menace to the Liberal party."[10] He feared that English-speaking Protestant Ontario might well extend its dislike of Mercier to another French-speaking Roman Catholic, Laurier. From Arthabaskaville he reported to the *Globe* that Laurier "above all... is a Canadian, and Canada has no son more loyal to Canadian institutions..."[11] It was Willison who

[5] *Ibid.*, p. 113; *Globe*, June 30, 1890.

[6] The first column of "Observations" appeared on June 15, 1888. That Willison was the "Observer" was made clear at a *Globe* staff banquet, Jan. 12, 1889 (*Globe*, Jan. 14, 1889).

[7] Willison, *Reminiscences*, p. 162.

[8] P.A.C., Sir Wilfrid Laurier Papers, Willison to Laurier, July 19 and September 6, 1888.

[9] *Ibid.*, June 17, 1889.

[10] *Ibid.*, April 26, 1889.

[11] *Globe*, Aug. 24, 1889, "Observations."

persuaded Laurier to hold a public rally in Toronto where, in spite of the heckling of Protestant extremists, he won the respect, if hardly the voting support, of that city. [12] Willison's reward for his loyalty came in 1890 with Laurier's successful pressure for his selection as editor-in-chief of the *Globe*. [13]

In a speech in the House of Commons in 1888 Laurier argued that he was unwilling to regard loyalty to Britain in trade or any other matter as necessarily identical with fidelity to Canada. If the two allegiances conflicted, he announced, "I stand by my native land." [14] Willison was in thorough agreement: he told Laurier that the young men of Ontario, presumably including himself, were "strongly *Canada first,* not quite Commercial Unionists, but loyal to Unrestricted Reciprocity, kindly disposed toward the States, and while perhaps not quite against British connection still in favor of our exercising full material rights." [15]

His abhorrence of the idea of political union with the States he emphasized in his column on Dominion Day, 1888, Canada's twenty-first birthday. "Cousin Jonathon" was the United States; "the farm," Canada.

> We decline Cousin Jonathon's offer to run the farm. We are able to get in our own harvest and attend to our own stock and catch our own fish and mind our own business. We will exchange work and lend things and be neighbourly, but we will not tolerate stray cattle in our meadow nor trespassers in our corn patch... We are of age today and we propose to manage our own affairs. [16]

Then, in November of that year, when he was president of the Toronto Young Men's Liberal Club, he led a majority in the organization to vote support for independence as the most desirable national destiny for Canada. [17] In his column he explained why. He considered support for annexation "humiliating... an admission that we are unequal to the task of self-government." Anyway, he asked: Did Canadians seriously desire involvement in the dangerous sectional divisions, the "peril of the Negro problem" or the "inferior institutions" of the United States? He described as "mere trifling" the argument that Canada drew significant economic benefit from the fact that she was "nominally" a dependency of Britain, and as "folly" the idea that

[12] Laurier Papers, Willison to Laurier, June 17 and July 16, 1889; Willison, *Reminiscences,* pp. 169-174.

[13] *Reminiscences,* pp. 204-205; Willison Papers, Laurier to Willison, June 26, 1890.

[14] Canada, Parliament, House of Commons, *Debates on Reciprocity and The Fisheries Treaty, March 14-May 3, 1888,* pp. 595-596.

[15] Laurier Papers, Willison to Laurier, July 19, 1888.

[16] *Globe,* July 1, 1888, "Observations."

[17] *Ibid.,* Nov. 13, 1888, report of Y.M.L.C. meeting. The vote was: Independence, 24; Annexation, 19; and Imperial Federation, 1.

Britain would ever go to war with the United States on Canada's behalf. Although as a good Liberal he condemned the "wicked extravagance" of Tory development policy, he contended nonetheless that Canada had as a result "a national system of public works such as no young country has ever before possessed." He concluded that "no people ever faced a grander destiny than ours may be if we have but the faith and courage to work it out to its legitimate development." [18] A few months later he added this comment while addressing a meeting of his club:

> ... until we take our place as a nation among nations, devoted only to the working out of our own destiny, and with the single ambition to make the best of our opportunities and resources, the best that is in our people will not be developed in literature, in art, in government, or in any of the finer and higher pursuits that lie open to human effort and ambition. [19]

Oddly enough, Willison's nationalist faith was not immediately reflected in the *Globe*'s editorial policy when he became its editor in June 1890. Sir Richard Cartwright, Laurier's chief federal lieutenant in Ontario, had long wanted the *Globe* to acquire the services of Edward Farrer, formerly the editor of the Toronto *Mail* and well known as a highly skilled propagandist for continental free trade. [20] He had his way: Farrer was hired as Willison's "principal editorial writer," with practically a free hand. Willison later wrote that he "recognized that for the time Mr. Farrer's authority over the editorial page could not be challenged." [21] For the two years he remained on staff Farrer, according to Willison, handled "alone" the *Globe's* policy on the trade question and related issues. [22] When his celebrated pamphlet, containing advice to an American friend on how the United States could effectively exert economic pressure on Canada was exposed by Sir John A. Macdonald during the 1891 election campaign, it was not the last time Farrer compromised the *Globe*'s normally nationalist image. [23] There was also the curious editorial response to the political unionist agitation in 1891 and 1892. In September 1891 the *Globe* referred to Canada as a country which could be kept together "only by the use of lubricants in the form of bribes and boodle." [24] It dismissed the propagandists of national greatness with the reminder that "every ten years we receive a shock through

[18] *Ibid.*, Nov. 26, 1888, "Observations."
[19] *Ibid.*, Jan. 15, 1889, report of Y.M.L.C. meeting.
[20] Laurier Papers, Cartwright to Laurier, Aug. 9, 1886 and Aug. 8, 1889; *Reminiscences*, pp. 204-206.
[21] *Reminiscences*, p. 206.
[22] Laurier Papers, Willison to Laurier, Sept. 2, 1892.
[23] *Reminiscences*, p. 209; R. C. Brown, *Canada's National Policy, 1883-1900* (Toronto, 1964), pp. 206-208.
[24] *Globe*, Sept. 26, 1891.

being brought in contact with the stern prose of the census." It wondered "when the beatific vision is to be realized, and whether we can borrow enough money to keep us going until the prophets have been justified by the event." [25] Premier Mowat of Ontario complained to Laurier that Farrer "seems to have made lively annexationists of the whole Globe staff and directorate..." [26]

According to W. D. Gregory, at this time a leading political unionist, Robert Jaffray, the president of the *Globe* directorate, was "in full sympathy with the movement." Gregory even recorded that he believed Willison "thought much the same as I did" on the inevitability of political union. [27] If so, it was a fleeting thought, and there is no direct evidence that Willison did in fact surrender his nationalist beliefs. At any rate, Farrer left the *Globe* in July 1892, probably as a consequence of Premier Mowat's hostility and the indications in several federal by-elections in Ontario that the annexationist taint the *Globe* was bringing the Liberal party was not to its political advantage. [28] Willison was now editor in fact as well as name. The discouraging emigration and trade statistics which had provided Farrer material for his pessimistic conclusions on the national future were as yet little better; but the *Globe* now reacted to them differently, as in this comment in early August of that year:

> Things have happened which might excuse a temporary feeling of despondency, but it is a feeling which it is our duty to resist. The truth must be told about the country, no matter how unwelcome it may be; but it ought to be told as an incentive to action, not as an argument for despair. [29]

It even added that "in all the Provinces the British sentiment prevails and dominates"; but Willison's private advice to Laurier that autumn was to "go pretty far in the way of Canadian independence" as a counter to such political union sentiment as remained. [30] Yet he agreed that, politically, the Liberals could not possibly stand for discrimination against British goods as a price for a continental trading arrangement; and, when the Liberal national convention of 1893 replaced the Unrestricted Reciprocity policy with a call for "freer trade with the whole world, more particularly with Great Britain and the United States," he did not object. [31] The policy choice

[25] *Ibid.*, Dec. 14, 1891.
[26] Laurier Papers, Mowat to Laurier, Dec. 31, 1891.
[27] Douglas Library, Queen's University, *W. D. Gregory Ms. Autobiography*, p. 105.
[28] Brown, *Canada's National Policy*, pp. 249-262; P. D. Stevens, *Laurier and the Liberal Party in Ontario, 1887-1911* (unpublished Ph.D. dissertation, University of Toronto, 1966), pp. 70-83.
[29] *Globe*, Aug. 10, 1892.
[30] *Ibid.*; Laurier Papers, Willison to Laurier, Nov. 26, 1892.
[31] Laurier Papers, Willison to Laurier, Aug. 4, 1892; Brown, *op. cit.*, pp. 257-262.

and the chairing of the meeting by that champion of British connection, Premier Mowat of Ontario, seemed to confirm that the Liberals were once more properly "loyal"; but the *Globe* still saw fit to comment that one delegate "voiced the heart and mind of the assemblage when he declared that he owed his first duty to the land in which he and his children were born." [32]

Willison's views on the kind of nation he wanted Canada to be were significantly affected or, at least, considerably revealed and defined, during the many sectarian and ethnic crises which plagued Canada in the early 1890's. Until this time there has been little trace in his nationalism of a concern for linguistic, cultural or religious homogeneity. Now his newspaper began to reveal a rather pronounced "One Canada" philosophy. "This is an English-speaking country," commented the *Globe* in March, 1892, "and that it will remain. There is no marked movement of French-Canadians toward the Northwest." Thus, it argued, there was no need for bilingualism or separate schools in the area. This was more than a mere recognition of realities on its part, because it also concluded :

> One language and a system of national schools are the true conditions for the development of a national sentiment, and while it is not proposed to violate the compromise which is the very basis of the confederation, and thereby endanger the whole fabric, it is the common hope that outside the two old Provinces, one language and national schools shall prevail. [33]

Admittedly, Farrer was still with the *Globe* at this point, but such questions did tend to be Willison's province. Certainly he was in full control of editorial policy in the summer of 1894 when the *Globe*, discussing institutions and attitudes in Quebec, asked readers to be "tolerant of the eccentricities and patient with the prejudices of the minority." It remarked that a non-denominational school system was "the ideal one for a confederated country, composed of different creeds and races," and it counted upon Quebecers in their "ripening conviction" to see that. It also hoped that they would see that "English must come." [34]

This kind of Canadianism was part of a broader Anglo-Saxonism, for late in 1892 the *Globe* remarked :

> The future of the Anglo-Saxon race opens up a subject so large and so comprehensive that it dwarfs all others into insignificance. . . . At the rate we are going, the question of what race will control the world will soon be settled . . . and there will be no rival with the English-speaking race at the end of the next century, even in respect

[32] *Globe*, June 24, 1893.
[33] *Ibid.*, March 21, 1892.
[34] *Ibid.*, Aug. 20, 1894.

> to mere numbers. In every other respect it has long outstripped other nations. [35]

This was in comment on an article in the *Globe* by Archibald Blue on "Our Race and its Destiny." The *Globe's* Anglo-Saxonism of this time was not imperialist in nature, as was clear when it dealt two days later with a lecture given in Toronto by a leading member of the Imperial Federation League, George R. Parkin :

> Why remain blind to all but the mistakes and failings of the United States ? Mr. Parkin was full of passionate eulogy for the mother English nation, but had not a kind word for the great sister English nation.... All the federationists the other evening were agreed that for Canada to unite with the States would be an act of national suicide. Yet their alternative leaves us little better off....
>
> In what lies greater hope for the world at large than the absolute certainty of the upgrowth of great English nations in every corner of the world ? And why should any of them mar the destiny of a part or of the whole by striving to effect an impossible combination of interests and an unnatural unity of sentiment ? Let us devote ourselves to making Canada a land for the Canadians, and not to creating in our people a hunger after military glory, naval renown and imperial grandeur altogether incompatible with the upbuilding of a democratic country. [36]

How may we explain the shift in the mid-1890's of the *Globe* and its editor from the above attitude to one essentially imperialist ? Willison himself probably touched on a good part of the answer when he told the National Club in 1896 of how he and many other Liberals had been shocked the year before out of their illusions about Canada's prospects for peaceful progress towards separate Anglo-Saxon nationhood by the events of the Venezuela crisis. "With the issue of President Cleveland's menacing message," he affirmed, "we felt the solid ground beneath our feet, and knew that we too were born into the splendid privileges of British citizenship." [37] Britain and the United States did not go to war in December 1895 and early 1896 over the boundary dispute between Venezuela and British Guiana. But for several weeks tension was high indeed in the British world, not least in Canada, America's neighbour. Cleveland threatened, if Britain would not agree to arbitration with Venezuela, to "arbitrate" the question himself, by force if necessary. There was also Secretary of State Olney's comment that "any permanent political union between an European and an American state" was "unnatural and inexpedient." [38] It seemed to Willison that in the face of a new

[35] *Ibid.*, Dec. 1, 1892.
[36] *Ibid.*, Dec. 3, 1892.
[37] *Ibid.*, Dec. 8, 1896, p. 2.
[38] On this, see: A. E. Campbell, *Great Britain and the United States, 1895-1903* (London, 1960), pp. 11-47; N. Penlington, *Canada and Imperialism, 1896-1899* (Toronto, 1965), pp. 28-29.

aggressive Americanism Canada could best secure her future by renewing and strengthening her British ties. The *Globe* made this clear during the Venezuela crisis with its comment that Canada

> will not complain that she may be involved in the consequences of a dispute with which she has no concern; because it is of her own free choice that she remains a member of a world-wide empire, with world-wide responsibilities. [39]

The paper called for peace and was sure that war would not come because of British statesmen, whom it described as "thoroughly deserving of confidence, ... men who appreciate the gravity of their responsibilities." It regarded the war fever and Anglophobia of the American press as "one of the most disheartening developments of the whole affair" and sounded positively Tory when it observed :

> The moral of the present outbreak and all that has led up to it lies in the danger of encouraging that bragging, insolent, offensive type of patriotism ..., and furthermore it illustrates the danger of putting the worst elements of the country in the forefront.... If democracy means an abdication by the best elements of the community of their right to lead, it will not be long before the system will suffer its final overthrow. [40]

This from a newspaper whose editor in 1892 had attended the convention at which Cleveland received his third presidential nomination and had later written the American leader that "I simply admire your political principles and regard you as the best type of statesmen this generation has produced." [41] For Willison a time of disillusionment with America and things American had begun. Henceforth, when he looked beyond Canada for idols and ideals, it was usually to Britain, not the United States.

This change in Willison's sympathy for the British connection was foreshadowed and also made easier by the Liberal party's shift on trade policy from 1892. Previously, the Conservatives had contrived to associate defence of the National Policy tariff with loyalty to Britain in a manner infuriating to Liberals. As Willison later remarked.

> At times we could not know whether we were required to be loyal to a tariff, a party leader or a great free-trading empire.... In a British country loyalty had become a party cry, and the flag a party emblem. [42]

However, in the House of Commons in 1892 Louis Davies, a Liberal M.P., suggested that Canada reduce her duties on goods mainly im-

[39] *Globe,* Dec. 21, 1895.
[40] *Ibid.,* Dec. 23 and 24, 1895.
[41] Willison Papers, Willison to Cleveland, n.d. (but, by the context, sometime after June in 1892).
[42] *Globe,* Dec. 8, 1896, p. 2.

ported from Britain. [43] The *Globe* described this as a means to give to Britain "the better treatment which so large a number of our people are willing to extend." [44] Not until 1897 did the Liberals move officially in this direction. [45] However, the *Globe* did find it pleasant in the intervening years to contrast the Liberal attitude favourably to what Willison himself described as the "England-cursing" protectionism of the Conservatives. [46] No longer need a good Liberal newspaper be particularly defensive about its party's degree of "Britishness" in trade matters.

Willison established some new personal associations in the mid-1890's which were probably quite influential in the introduction of an imperialist element into his nationalism. In particular, he came into the orbit of that eminent cleric, educator and imperialist, Principal George Monro Grant of Queen's University. He later wrote that in his early years as editor "no one gave me wiser counsel than Principal Grant." [47] The two men first became acquainted at the time of the numerous revelations of scandal in public life in the early '90's. [48] Both were disgusted, and Willison made space in the *Globe* for Grant's series of letters on "A Policy for Canada" in which an eloquent appeal was made to political purity and honesty. [49] Grant stood with the Mowat Liberals and the *Globe* in the Ontario elections of 1894 against the Conservatives and the Protestant Protective Association. [50] Then, in 1895, Willison asked Grant to report to the *Globe* on the "facts" of the Manitoba Schools question. [51] Grant's call for conciliation between the parties in Manitoba rather than a federally-imposed solution certainly met with the paper's approval. [52] Willison found Grant's idealism and what he later described as the man's "simple and resolute patriotism" quite irresistible : shortly before the federal election of 1896 he advised Laurier to make Grant his Ontario lieutenant and thus, in Willison's words, "make a combination that could not be resisted." [53] Grant preferred to remain an independent, but that he guided and stimulated Willison to a marked degree seems clear from the editor's obituary of his friend in 1902 :

[43] *Reminiscences,* p. 296.
[44] *Globe,* March 27, 1893.
[45] Brown, *op. cit.,* pp. 257-262, 274-277.
[46] J. S. W., "A Survey: Position of Affairs at the Capital," *Globe,* June 11, 1895, pp. 1-2.
[47] *Reminiscences,* pp. 338-339.
[48] W. L. Grant and C. F. Hamilton, *Principal Grant* (Toronto, 1904), pp. 353-354.
[49] *Ibid.*
[50] *Ibid.,* pp. 365-367.
[51] Willison Papers, Grant to Willison, July 26, 1895.
[52] *Globe,* Sept. 5, 12, 18, 21, 25 and 28, 1895.
[53] *Reminiscences,* pp. 338-339; Laurier Papers, Willison to Laurier, Dec. 29, 1895.

> The Canadian point of view has changed with the years, and our national outlook today is, on the whole, that which was Dr. Grant's principle through life. With the full force of a most effective personality, a personality which was persuasive as well as compelling, he strove to promote that habit of thought which would conceive of the individual as a part of the whole, of the Province as a member of the Dominion, of Canada as a factor in the affairs of the British race, and of the British race as related to humanity. [54]

Willison most likely had a good deal less to do personally with the colourful Lt. Col. George Taylor Denison III, perpetual light dragoon and president of the British Empire League in Canada. Yet Denison's drift towards amicable relations with the federal Liberals by 1896 illustrated the degree to which Liberals in Ontario were appearing increasingly pro-British. Although he denounced the federal Liberals for their "treason" in 1891 and 1892, in that latter year he backed a Liberal candidate in a provincial by-election, in order to reward Premier Mowat for his staunch British loyalty and, hopefully, to show Liberals the proper road to success. [55] He found the Liberal convention of 1893 "most significant" for its policy changes. [56] By early in 1895, according to a Conservative friend, Denison was dropping in at the *Globe* office "in a friendly way." [57] In May 1896 he assured Lord Salisbury that the federal Liberals were "now very careful not to squint towards the United States. In fact they remind one of the Indian's tree that was so upright that it leaned a little the other way." [58] He commended Laurier for what he described as his "loyal" support of increased militia expenditures following the Venezuela crisis. [59] He took part in efforts to convince Mowat and another suitably imperialist provincial cabinet minister, G. W. Ross, to move to the federal sphere at Laurier's side in 1896. Mowat did so and with Robert Jaffray, the president of the *Globe*, and others, he tried to get Denison to join him. [60] Willison explained to Clifford Sifton after the election that he believed it important to keep Denison "in sympathy with the new government, and because he represents an element that has been hostile to us in the past." [61] Denison and Willison subsequently became very close friends.

In June 1896 Arthur Colquhoun, a mutual friend of Denison and Willison, wrote Denison concerning the rising popularity of the im-

[54] *Globe*, May 17, 1902.

[55] G. T. Denison, *The Struggle for Imperial Unity* (Toronto, 1909), pp. 156-193; P.A.C., G. T. Denison Papers, Denison to Lord Salisbury, May 7, 1892 (copy).

[56] Denison Papers, Denison to Salisbury, Aug. 12, 1893 (copy).

[57] *Ibid.*, A.H.U. Colquhoun to Denison, June 16, 1896.

[58] *Ibid.*, Denison to Salisbury, May 2, 1896 (copy).

[59] *Ibid.*, Denison to Laurier, Feb. 1, 1896 (copy).

[60] Denison, *op. cit.*, p. 219; Denison Papers, Mowat to Denison, May 22, 1896; Denison Papers, *Diary*, May 25, 1896.

[61] Laurier Papers, Willison to Sifton, Aug. 17, 1896 (copy).

perial idea in Ontario. He contended that "some of its best friends are Liberals who control newspapers. They should be enlisted on our side." [62] The trend of American policy affecting Canada in the first few months of the Laurier government certainly furthered that enlistment in Willison's case. The high protectionist Dingley Tariff was in the works in Washington and stringent American alien labor legislation was annoying Canadians. [63] To return to that address Willison gave to the National Club in Toronto in December 1896 :

> Some of us who have an aversion to jingoism in all its motives and phases feel humiliated when we see fellow-Canadians flung back across the border like criminals, and we are told that we must surrender our national integrity for human trade relationships. . . . There seems to be nothing for us but to emulate British forbearance, to be patient and not peevish, neighbourly but not servile, to take care that it is not by us that the offence cometh, to lean upon our Imperial relationships and to remember that
>
> "This is the law of the jungle, as old and as true as the sky,
> And the wolf that shall keep it may prosper,
> but the wolf that shall break it must die,
> As the creeper that girdles the tree trunk,
> the law runneth forward and back.
> For the pack is the strength of the wolf and
> the wolf is the strength of the pack." [64]

Denison gleefully wrote Salisbury of the "striking speech" of Willison whom he described as "a man in the utmost confidence of the Liberal party." It was, he claimed, an illustration of the "vast change" in Liberal opinion on the Empire tie. [65]

The Liberal government did indeed "lean upon our Imperial relationships." After the Fielding tariff of April 1897, with its preference for British products, came Queen Victoria's Diamond Jubilee in London, with Sir Wilfrid Laurier as one of the great stars of the extravaganza. [66] The *Globe* enthused :

> It matters not whether one is friendly or hostile or indifferent to Imperial unity. He cannot close his eyes to the fact that events are steadily marching in that direction. [67]

Of course, it was Laurier who drafted the resolution adopted by the Colonial Conference of 1897 that "the present political relations between the United Kingdom and the self-governing colonies are generally satisfactory under the existing condition of things." [68] The

62 Denison Papers, Colquhoun to Denison, June 16, 1896.
63 Brown, p. 271; Penlington, pp. 44-45.
64 *Globe*, Dec. 8, 1896, p. 2. The quotation is from Kipling.
65 Denison Papers, Denison to Salisbury, Dec. 15, 1896 (copy).
66 Brown, pp. 275-280.
67 *Globe*, Aug. 9, 1897.
68 Laurier Papers, Laurier to Ernest Pacaud, April 12, 1900 (copy).

Globe was quick to agree: "The strongest bond of union is the mutual good will and admiration that never was stronger than it is now." [69]

Willison was so intrigued by the "new Imperialism" that he went to Britain in August and September of 1897 and sent back ten long articles to the *Globe*. He began by citing the British contribution to "the sacred cause of human freedom" which, he felt, properly had given "the sceptre of leadership to the British peoples." He cited Britain's diplomatic isolation and the economic challenge to her from protectionist countries, especially Germany and the United States, as reasons why the British, really for the first time, were regarding the colonies as "integral parts of Britain." [70] In his view, it was Canada's British preference that had made Laurier "the hero of the great home-coming of the British communities." As a believer in the principle of free trade he was opposed to a protectionist Imperial zollverein but he felt that Britain would use protection as a lever for world free trade. [71] On Laurier's role at the Jubilee he remarked, with the pardonable pride of both a nationalist and a disciple:

> He put Canada before the British people not as a sucking infant clinging to the mother country, but as a free, self-governing kingdom, and Canadians not as an inferior order of half-caste Britons, but as fellow subjects of Englishmen at home, seeking neither gift nor favor, and asserting full sovereignty within their own domain. [72]

He went on to urge Canadians to engage more energetically in settlement and investment propaganda in Britain. "We are at last," he contended, "the favourite child of the Empire." [73]

For all this enthusiasm about the Empire, he still hoped for, if he did not quite expect, progress towards a wider Anglo-Saxonism. In his last article he wrote of the American: "If he learns to know England thoroughly his voice can never again be raised in any jingo chorus against the British people, and in proportion as these two communities come together civilization advances and Christianity gains." [74] Not surprisingly, therefore, Willison and the *Globe* voiced support for America when she went to war with Spain in April 1898. The *Globe* contended that "the real impulse which caused the war, the impulse upon which the reckless, the sordid and the demagogic elements played, was disinterested pity. Canadians are a unit in wishing God-speed to a war so prompted." [75] Britain's

69 *Globe*, Aug. 25, 1897.
70 J. S. W., "The New Imperialism," *Globe*, Oct. 4, 1897, p. 4.
71 J. S. W., "Imperialism and Liberalism," *Globe*, Oct. 5, 1897, p. 4.
72 J. S. W., "Canada and Laurier," *Globe*, Oct. 13, 1897, p. 4.
73 J. S. W., "Canadian Affairs in London," *Globe*, Oct. 18, 1897, p. 4.
74 J. S. W., "Lessons from the Old World," *Globe*, Oct. 30, 1897, p. 18.
75 *Globe*, May 7, 1898.

diplomatic assistance to the United States during the war was welcomed. Willison told the Canadian Club of Toronto, according to the *Globe's* report :

> Nothing promises more for humanity at large and for the race than the rapprochment which now promises between Great Britain and the United States. He expected before long to see his friend, Colonel Denison, burning fire crackers on the fourth of July — (Laughter) — and that his friends, Prof. Goldwin Smith and Mr. Castell Hopkins, can meet under the folds of St. George and the Dragon without putting the community to the expense of an official referee (Renewed laughter). [76]

Yet the *Globe* did caution during these hopeful days for Anglo-Saxon amity that, concerning American attitudes to Britain and Canada :

> If, when the crisis is past, the old animosity reappears in all its virulence, one's faith in the gratitude, the good-feeling, nay the common sense, of our neighbours would be shaken. [77]

During 1899 Willison did believe that the animosity was reappearing, if not quite in all its virulence. He convalesced in the States early in the year and reported to *Globe* readers that in spite of a good deal of sincere reciprocation of British friendship in certain official, commercial, religious and university quarters in the United States it seemed that "many of the undersized politicians" who were "unquestionably supported by a great body of public opinion" were as Anglophobe as ever. "As for Canada," he wrote, "to the mass of Americans we are not on the map." He believed that the American politicians who did know something of Canada desired political union, although few favoured using direct coercion to achieve it. However, he thought, "some of them are very determined not to violate the glorious American system of protection in order to fatten an 'alien' community on this continent." [78]

This last point related to the American position on Canadian-American trade relations adopted during the meetings of the Joint High Commission between August 1898 and February 1899. When the sessions began the *Globe* conceded that the benefit for Canada of freer admission to the American market would be "undeniable"; but it pointed out that even against existing restrictive American tariffs, prosperity had come :

> Business is good, factories are running full time and unable to keep up with orders; immigration is better than for many years. We are doing very well, and while we may expect fluctuations in prosperity, time is on our side in considering the commercial relations

[76] *Ibid.*, June 2, 1898.
[77] *Ibid.*, May 7, 1898.
[78] J. S. W., "Relations Between Britain and America," *Globe*, Feb. 24, 1899, pp. 1-2.

> between Canada and the United States. Canada was never more hopeful, never less dependent on the favor of any other nation. Treaty or no treaty, a brilliant and honourable prospect awaits her if she will maintain her advantages. [79]

When, before the negotiations collapsed, Willison was visiting Washington, Clifford Sifton jokingly warned him not to let the environment "sap your patriotism." Willison replied :

> My attitude toward the United States is determined wholly by the attitude of the United States toward us. If they would give us a good generous treaty – one on which we can confidently appeal to the Canadian people, then I want to cultivate the best possible relations with the States. If they will not do this, the present [trade] policy or even a development of it in the direction of national protection is the only course that we can take. [80]

The *Globe* observed the Americans in control of Cuba and battling Filipino insurrectionists and commented in February 1899 :

> They see national life only in forcible aggression against poorly armed tribes, and think they are in the "van of the race" only when conquering with arms. The sooner they turn from such hallucinations and take a rational view of national life and national destiny the better for the American people.

There followed this advice to Canadians : "It is in effecting domestic reforms that the highest heroism is displayed, and we must recognize our real heroes." [81]

His sentiment that Canada's future growth to greatness should be based essentially on peaceful internal development proved unstable. Beginning in October 1899, Canada sent volunteer contingents to fight for Queen and Empire in South Africa. Until hostilities actually commenced the *Globe* professed to see nothing irreconcilable between the national rights of the Boers and the civil rights of the English-speaking Uitlanders. [82] In early September Laurier was "decidedly adverse" to the sending of Canadian troops in the event of war. [83] On October 4, in an interview in the *Globe,* he dismissed as "pure invention" the *Canadian Military Gazette's* story of the previous day concerning details of a planned contingent and declared that the government had no authority from Parliament to send men overseas. Laurier also warned Willison directly in a letter the next day that an effort "systematically planned and carried by some military men" was being launched before public opinion in order to force the sending of a contigent and that he did not think it a

[79] *Globe,* July 30, 1898.
[80] P.A.C., Sir Clifford Sifton Papers, Willison to Sifton, Feb. 14, 1899.
[81] *Globe,* Feb. 7, 1899.
[82] *Ibid.,* Sept. 14, 1899.
[83] Laurier Papers, Laurier to F. W. Borden, Sept. 5, 1899 (copy).

"wise policy... to take a share in all the secondary wars in which England is always engaged." [84] As early as September 29, however, the *Globe* had declared flatly that the sending of a contingent was "probable"; and on October 3 it had commented at length on how the force should be organized – "Canadian from Colonel to drummerboy" – and that its despatch would be "a national declaration of Canada's stake in the British Empire." For several days thereafter Willison held the *Globe* back from further comment, but he was only too conscious of the rising feeling in Toronto and Ontario for a contingent. "I told Laurier," he later wrote, "that he would either send troops or go out of office." [85] At last, on October 13, with war under way in South Africa, the government authorized the raising of one thousand volunteers, to be outfitted and transported by Canada but paid and sustained in service by Britain. [86] The *Globe* expressed its gratification at the move and contended that Canada

> has made a new departure, and has taken a new position in the councils of the [British] nation.... It has been pointed out that participation in Britain's war does not establish a precedent; but a precedent established in the hearts of the people is more binding than if its force depended upon legal interpretations.... [87]

Still, when Willison looked at the intense bitterness being caused in Canada between French and English on the issue he was moved to remark to the poet Wilfrid Campbell: "Are we quite sure where we are going? Is it Canada First, or Second [?]" [88] Concerning lack of enthusiasm for the war in Quebec and criticism of this "disloyalty" by not a few English Canadians, the *Globe* announced: "We are for a united empire, but we are also for a united Canada. We will not yield one inch to any movement inspired by race or religious prejudice; we will not stand by and see any body of our fellow-citizens bullied, insulted or held under suspicion because they do not hold the views or speak the language of the majority." [89] It described as "mistaken" Henri Bourassa's resignation as an M.P. in protest against the sending of troops without the approval of Parliament but judged that he was "acting with the best of motives and from a high sense of duty." [90] It argued that Canadians "must not allow our enthusiasm, natural as it is, to betray us into a contempt for the wholesome safeguards of our own free institutions." [91] Bourassa wrote Willison that

84 Willison Papers, Laurier to Willison, Oct. 5, 1899.
85 *Reminiscences,* p. 303.
86 Penlington, *op. cit.,* p. 258.
87 *Globe,* Oct. 26, 1899.
88 Douglas Library, Queen's University, William Wilfrid Campbell Papers, Willison to Campbell, Nov. 6, 1899.
89 *Globe,* Oct. 16, 1899.
90 *Ibid.,* Oct. 21, 1899.
91 *Ibid.,* Nov. 3, 1899.

the *Globe's* approach was "most proper, both in tone and expression" and added: "You have contributed largely in placing myself right before the people of Ontario." [92]

In spite of Willison's tolerance for the views of those opposed to participation in the war by Canada and his concern for national unity, he himself felt strongly that that participation did not go far enough. In January 1900 the organization of a second contingent prompted the *Globe* to call for "full payment by Canada of the contingents of Canadian troops sent to South Africa, and some more direct determination of the measure of our responsibility for the defence of the empire." [93] Laurier's position was that his policy was in line with British requests – "nothing less, nothing more" – and that the moderate expenditures required suited a country divided in opinion on the whole venture and necessarily more properly concerned with internal development. [94] Willison thought that this approach was "a tremendous political mistake" and championed the concept of strong national assistance to Britain. He explained:

> It will be argued that you have done the least possible when you should have done the most possible, and that, of course, Great Britain could not ask for troops and that we should pay them as well. Such a proposition must necessarily go from Canada and a strong and effective argument can be made that we owe that much to Britain and should lead the colonies in sympathy and in aid. [95]

Laurier did announce in the 1900 session of Parliament that Canada would give her volunteers in South Africa the difference between British and Canadian rates of pay. In addition, Canada ultimately sent over seven thousand men to the conflict. [96] At any rate, Willison ceased to insist on his point.

Where did he think Canada should now proceed in her Empire relationship? The idea of free trade within the Empire was quickly scouted by the *Globe* in April 1900 on the grounds that Britain was unready for protection and Canadian industry should not be threatened by the free entry of British manufactures. [97] The paper saw the practical difficulties in the way of even a limited federation of the Empire to be "formidable"; for the time being, at least, it favoured a "league in which, when common action is called for, the Parliaments of the various communities will deal with the matter." A forward step in this area, it thought, might be "an Imperial Senate or Coun-

92 Willison Papers, Bourassa to Willison, Nov. 3, 1899.
93 *Globe,* Jan. 9, 1900.
94 Willison Papers, Laurier to Willison, Jan. 15 and 19, 1900; P.A.C., G.M. Grant Papers, Laurier to Grant, December, 1900.
95 Laurier Papers, Willison to Laurier, Jan. 25 and 20, 1900.
96 J. Schull, *Laurier* (Toronto, 1965), p. 387.
97 *Globe,* April 9, 1900.

cil," composed of representatives of the various governments, meeting regularly to review foreign and defence matters and recommend policies to the various Parliaments. [98]

In the face, however, of Laurier's unwillingness to countenance closer Canadian involvement in the making and executing of high Empire policy the *Globe* stressed through 1901 that Canada's primary duty was to make herself economically sound. "That will give us the strength for war if war should be forced upon us," it argued. Yet the *Globe* did conceive of Canada's security needs as bound up with those of the Empire :

> From that empire we enjoy a protection which at least gives us a complete immunity from the burden of maintaining a navy. When, therefore, Great Britain is engaged in a war in some part of the world in which we are not directly interested we cannot take the ground that we have no responsibility. That seems to us as clear as noonday. [99]

It argued, in July 1901, that some scheme for more equitably sharing the burdens of Empire defence was "the first, or among the first" of the steps to be taken towards Imperial unity. "Once this all-important step is taken," it added, "we shall approach the parent country on more equal terms in all subsequent negotiations for closer union." [100]

In the spring of the next year, however, Laurier told Willison in no uncertain terms, that he was "not disposed to go into military expenditure any more than we have done in the past." [101] That summer a Colonial Conference was to be held in London, in conjunction with the coronation of King Edward VII, and leading imperialists in Canada were looking to it, in the words of Principal George R. Parkin of Upper Canada College, as "the turning point in the history of the nation." [102] Parkin claimed that Canada did not know real self-government because she had no voice in the councils of the Empire and paid nothing to help maintain the British army and navy, which yet protected her. He called for the bringing of maximum pressure to bear on Laurier to raise the question of imperial defence at the Conference. [103] Colonel Denison suggested that Britain and the colonies place a duty of between five and ten per cent upon imports from foreign countries; the fund would be expended on defence

98 *Ibid.*, Jan. 27, 1900.
99 *Ibid.*, March 14, 1901.
100 *Ibid.*, July 20, 1901.
101 Willison Papers, Laurier to Willison, April 14, 1902.
102 *Globe*, May 3, 1902.
103 *Ibid.*, April 24, 1902.

according to the decisions of a council on which the colonies would be represented. [104]

When Denison spelled out what he saw as the vulnerable economic and military positions of the various British nations and urged the virtues of unity and co-operation in both areas Willison remarked: "The facts presented certainly call for a very serious consideration." [105] Yet he told the St. George's Society in Hamilton in April 1902 that "we should proceed slowly and cautiously in any project for the imposition of new duties on the colonies or new obligations on the mother country...." He reminded his audience that "Imperial consolidation went hand in hand with colonial self-government." [106] He told Denison that he thought Parkin was acting "unwisely" in contending that Laurier was not moving Canada towards Imperial unity because he was the prisoner of the Quebec vote. [107] "It is only a united Canada that can contribute effectually to the maintenance of a united empire," remarked the *Globe*. [108] Arthur Colquhoun, a friend of both Willison and Denison, observed to Denison that "Laurier inspires the *Globe's* course... and he is, rightly or wrongly, afraid of both preferential trade (as involving a quarrel with Canadian manufacturers) and defence (as repugnant to Quebec)." [109] Yet Willison did tell Denison in June 1902, that he had come to believe that Canadian public opinion "seems to be pretty clearly against grants of money for defence which will not be disbursed by the Canadian Parliament...." He said that if Britain were to propose to the colonies the kind of joint tariff for defence which Denison suggested, "I, for my part, would not object. But I doubt if the proposition is likely to come from the Colonial premiers." [110] He was only too well aware that it would not come from Laurier. With that situation he seemed prepared, at least for a time, to live.

On economic questions, Willison complained to Parkin that imperialists knew full well that only on the basis of absolute free trade within the Empire could preferential trade even possibly be touched by Britain. He continued:

> Yet all these men who know the facts conceal and evade, and allow Sir Wilfrid Laurier to be denounced for rejecting something that Canada could not accept.... Canadian protectionists and Imperialists ought to be frank with the public and let us know whether they are ready to accept preferential trade on these terms. For my

104 Denison, *The Struggle for Imperial Unity*, pp. 289-291.
105 *Globe*, Feb. 21, 1902; Denison Papers, Willison to Denison, Feb. 21, 1902.
106 *Globe*, April 24, 1902.
107 Denison Papers, Willison to Denison, May 16, 1902.
108 *Globe*, May 3, 1902.
109 Denison Papers, Colquhoun to Denison, June 9, 1902.
110 Denison Papers, Willison to Denison, June 8, 1902.

> part I am not, although I would, perhaps, be willing to still further Canadian duties in return for a preference in the British market. [111]

The *Globe* suggested in May that the "line of least resistance" in the area of Imperial co-operation was the improvement of transportation, both trans-Atlantic and trans-Canadian. [112]

Willison's intense loyalty to Laurier also served to hold him back from any break with his leader on Imperial questions in 1902. "I think I have done something to lead the Government in the direction of the Imperial ideal," he told Parkin that summer. "My only reward was to fight in Ontario the most disastrous battle that the Liberal party ever fought." [113] He was referring to the 1900 federal election in the province when Conservatives took 55 of the 92 seats, largely on the cry that Laurier was "not British enough." [114] Willison felt that Laurier had done "great things" for Imperial unity – the British preference and the sending of the contingents in particular – which had endangered his position in Quebec. Yet, he told Parkin, most of the Ontario imperialists had in 1900 "climbed on Conservative platforms and denounced Sir Wilfrid Laurier for not having moved fast enough." Now, he believed, these same Conservative imperialists "will rejoice greatly if they kill Laurier in Quebec as an Imperialist and at the same time kill him in Ontario as an anti-Imperialist. He concluded : "I am more than willing to work with the Imperialists; I am not willing to be dragged at the wheels of their chariot as a spectacle for my political opponents." [115]

For reasons unrelated to the Imperial issue Willison left the *Globe* in 1902 for independent journalism. To a friend he observed years later : "You may say that for many years I was a Liberal. So I was. If you will think back, however, you will find that I left the *Globe* an Imperial and Protectionist paper . . . ." [116] His protectionism remained very strong : even in 1919, while calling for political federation and defence co-operation in the Empire, he could see "no vital reason why Canada should not maintain protection for national and industrial reasons . . . ." [117] It was in the defence field where he was most ready to see Canada assume a more active Imperial role. The *Globe* in March 1902 said that what it called the "defence problem" arose from the fact that

111 Willison Papers, Willison to Parkin, June 2, 1902 (copy).
112 *Globe,* May 19, 1902.
113 Willison Papers, Willison to Parkin, June 2, 1902 (copy).
114 J. M. Beck, *Pendulum of Power: Canada's Federal Elections,* (Scarborough, 1968), pp. 87-96.
115 Willison Papers, Willison to Parkin, June 2, 1902 (copy).
116 Willison Papers, Willison to W. F. Cockshutt, April 27, 1921 (copy).
117 *Reminiscences,* p. 310.

> this country is growing wealthier and more populous, and ought not to depend on any other country for defence.... It recognizes... that even a just and peace-loving country may have unscrupulous enemies, and that it ought to be prepared to defend itself, or, if it belongs to an empire like ours, to do its fair share in the work of defence. Canada wants to pay its way. [118]

Thus the paper welcomed the Laurier government's action that year in raising militia strength. [119] Concerning naval defence, it contended that "The ground is now merely being broken for discussion." [120] Yet Willison's Toronto *News* a year later, after analysing how best Canada could contribute to "the Navy on which our national existence depends," opted for a direct money contribution to the Admiralty as "Canada's next step forward in Empire building." [121] Canada in 1902, according to the *Globe,* was "one of the great outposts" of the Empire, which, as it grew, would fit itself for "more effectual service" to that empire "in days of stress and storm." [122] Willison told a Hamilton audience in April of that year, according to the press report, that Canadians "could not set themselves apart as a separate community, ignoring the spirit of the times and rejecting the responsibilities which fell upon other nations and peoples.... The best guarantee of the world's peace rested in the predominance of the British Empire...." He also remarked that "the colonies understood, as they never did before, that in the empire they had freedom, independence and Imperial citizenship, and that their best guarantee for freedom and independence was in Imperial connection." [123] As the "days of stress and storm" came closer in the next dozen years this aspect of a nationalist's imperialism was increasingly prominent.

118 *Globe,* March 14, 1902.
119 *Ibid.,* April 14, 1902.
120 *Ibid.,* April 2, 1902.
121 *News,* Sept. 21, 1903.
122 *Globe,* May 3, 1902.
123 *Ibid.,* April 24, 1902.