

THE PROVINCE

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FEDERAL DESPOTISM

The newspaper organs of the Federal Government have developed the habit of crediting to want of patriotism all adverse criticism of the acts of Sir Wilfrid Laurier. Does the Premier of this province decline to be put off with a totally inadequate subsidy from the Dominion and refer the matter to the Imperial authorities, [Sic] he is guilty of seeking to make political capital at the expense of the whole country! Does Mr. R. L. Borden when he addresses the people of British Columbia condemn the manner in which Sir Wilfrid Laurier trifled with the wishes of the people of this province, and with his pledged word, in his dealing with Japanese immigration, he is playing the part of an irresponsible statesman who is attempting to unsettle the peaceful relations existing between Great Britain and Japan! And as in these cases so in all others, he who attacks Laurier is either disloyal or dishonest, and perhaps both. In view of this it is not surprising to learn that in placing the Natal Act on the statute book of British Columbia, Premier McBride was trying to make party capital "by actions deliberately calculated to be prejudicial to Canada's honor and dignity, as a nation and as one of the Dominions which comprise the British Empire." This is the view which the Winnipeg Free Press takes of Premier McBride's effort to limit the influx of low class Japanese. But Canada is not a nation, and there was absolutely no occasion for Sir Wilfrid Laurier to have made the Dominion a party to the treaty between Britain and Japan--there was no occasion, that is, from the standpoint of the interests of the country, whatever there may have appeared to be from the standpoint of the interests of the corporations. It was the signing of the treaty which has complicated the whole situation and given the Japanese people the whip handle over us. That was Sir Wilfrid Laurier's act and it was an act performed in defiance of the promise he had given the people here; in defiance, too, of the

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insistent plea of the province for protection against the influx of the Japanese, and in utter disregard of the counsel given his Government by the Commission appointed by his own administration in 1900 to take into consideration the whole problem of Oriental Immigration.

It is all very well for Liberal organs to talk of our provincial legislation "being in direct and glaring violations of the diplomatic obligations of the Dominion," but what we say in British Columbia is that Sir Wilfrid Laurier undertook those diplomatic obligations knowing that in doing so he was striking a blow at the welfare of this province, and that, accordingly, he had no moral right to enter into any such international arrangement; or that if he considered himself entitled to do so, then British Columbia is entitled to take what steps may suggest themselves to her for her own protection.

What are the facts in connection with the question? Sir Wilfrid Laurier in the matter of Japanese immigration undertook to carry out the wishes of the people of British Columbia. That was before he developed the despotic tendencies which have characterised him during the past three or four years. He later on appointed a commission on Asiatic immigration, and he was advised by his body, of his own appointing that the Japanese were a much greater menace to the Pacific coast than were the Chinese. Following the submission of the Commission's report the British Columbia Legislature began annually to pass an anti-Japanese influx act, which Sir Wilfrid Laurier annually disallowed. In 1903 he sent Hon. Sydney Fisher to Japan to ask the Government there to limit the number of its subjects, which would be allowed to come to Canada. The Japanese Government dined[Sic] Mr. Fisher, and in after-dinner addresses told him they would do as Sir Wilfrid had requested. Mr. Fisher brought this happy reply back to Canada. In 1906 Sir Wilfrid, for what reason we all understand now pretty well, forced Parliament to ratify his act in becoming a party to the Anglo-Japanese treaty. And with all the information at his disposal regarding the objection of British Columbia to Japanese immigration, he insisted on signing the treaty without any provisions restricting immigration. This he did, although the members of the British Government drew his attention to the fact that the treaty might be

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accepted in a modified form in that particular respect. But Sir Wilfrid declined to be small. He accepted the whole treaty, giving free admission to these people and affording them the same rights and protection as we enjoy ourselves.

Now considering the callous disregard of the wishes of the people of British Columbia, displayed in this act, are we to be blamed for showing little respect for his "diplomatic obligations? Sir Wilfred's whole course in the matter has been a wilful and deliberate disregard of the interests of the people of this province and British Columbia is quite justified in taking what measures she can to protect herself against a pressing evil which is thus encouraged by the federal power.