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Laurier is elected

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- Sir Wilfrid Laurier was elected as Canada's 1st French Canadian Prime Minister in 1896 where his Liberal Party ended more than 20 years of Conservative rule.
- This was a time when Canada struggled to find its place on the world stage.
 - Canada was looking for greater independence from Britain, especially in foreign affairs.
 - Canada was afraid of economic and political takeover from the United States.
- Laurier is often considered one of the country's greatest statesmen. He is well known for his policies of conciliation, expanding Confederation, and compromise between French and English Canada.
- Most Quebec voters supported Laurier because: they wanted the federal government to protect French language and Roman Catholic rights.
- The Manitoba school language crisis of 1890 helped Laurier and the Liberals win the 1896 election.

Imperialism

- Most English Canadians were loyal and proud to be part of the British Empire.
- French Canadians were a minority and felt less pride in being part of the Empire.
- From 1867 – 1899 Canada was unconcerned with building a large army or navy, they relied on Britain to provide military support.

South African War (aka Boer War) – 1899

- Boer's in South Africa declared war on Britain in attempt to stop British expansion into their lands which included gold and diamond mines.
- English Canadians supported the war and wanted to help Britain.
- French Canadians sympathized with the Boers and didn't want to support British imperialism.
- Laurier compromised and decided to equip and transport volunteers to South Africa.

Naval Issue

- The growing German navy was challenging Britain for control of the seas. English Canadians wanted to contribute directly to Britain while French Canadians wanted Canada to build a navy of its own.
- Laurier introduced the Naval Service Act of 1910. The act allowed for a navy to be built which would be turned over to Britain in times of conflict.
- Both English and French Canadian opposed this act for different reasons.
 - English – Imperialists ridiculed the "Tin Pot" navy.
 - French – Seemed to tie Canada too closely to British imperial policies.
- By the start of World War 1 Canada had only two war ships.

The Giant Next Door

- In 1867 the USA purchases Alaska from Russia. The exact border between Alaska and British Columbia is not defined.
- After gold was discovered in the Klondike, a surge of miners travelled there and a border needed to be set. The disputed area is known as the Alaska Panhandle.
- In 1903 Laurier agreed to an international tribunal of six that would rule on the boundary; three from the USA, two from Canada and one from Britain.
- Britain was also involved in negotiations with the USA over a border dispute between Venezuela & British Guyana.
- The British didn't want to anger the USA so their judge ignored Canadian protests and voted in favour of the American boundary.
- Canada was trapped – it couldn't make its own international treaties and couldn't count on British protection either.
- Canadians across the nation were outraged by Britain and greater calls for independence were being heard.