

563. The alleged mistreatment of Colonel Hughes was converting public opinion to oppose Hutton. The major obstacle that remained was the Governor General. Lord Minto was anxious to delay and Laurier, still a little anxious about public opinion and reluctant to push matters to a constitutional crisis, was **trying** to be patient. On 20 February, Minto gave the Prime Minister a memorandum of his views, stressing the important role which Hutton had played and suggesting, in strong terms, that the trouble stemmed basically from political interference in the Militia Department. He had not intended that this memorandum be shown to the whole cabinet but Laurier either was not told of the restriction or forgot it. The document was not designed to win support from the ministers with its blunt observations on Borden's actions, largely as seen through Hutton's eyes. Minto had written that the executive command of the Militia had been placed in the hands of the General and that the Minister was only to exercise a general administrative control and to retain the initiative in expenditure of money. While the supreme authority rested, by statute, with the Government of the day, it was never intended by the statute that there should be ceaseless interference with the General.

Unfortunately, it is universally admitted that political influence has done much to impair the efficiency of the Militia force, but His Excellency is quite aware that it would be impossible to eradicate this baneful influence root and branch, and that if it is to be done away with, it will have to be dealt with gradually.

However, to remove it, the wish had to start at the top and so long as the Minister looked upon the Militia as a political machine, subordinates would take their cue from him. As for Hutton, he was "by reputation the most able and distinguished officer" ever to command the Militia. His position had been made impossible, Minto insisted, and he quoted the horse

purchase quarrel in proof. He acknowledged that there might be some justice in the accusations of want of tact laid against the General and he had personally always opposed public speaking by soldiers, but he could recall no speech by Hutton which could arouse objection. Finally, he suggested that there were two points of principle involved: Were there conditions which made it impossible for an Imperial officer of distinction to command the Militia and was it advisable, at such a moment of crisis, to urge the recall of such an excellent officer?¹¹⁸⁷

564. When unbeknownst to Minto, this document was shown to the whole cabinet, there was considerable indignation.¹¹⁸⁸ A twenty one page reply was prepared by David Mills, the Minister of Justice. In tone it was heated and extremely constitutional. It began with the assertion that the Ministers "respectfully dissent from the doctrines set out in almost every paragraph of Your Excellency's Memorandum," and went on to say why. The basic thesis was that no executive officer was exempt from control from some member of the Cabinet and that the statute establishing the appointment of General Officer Commanding gave him no exclusive jurisdiction. While the respective responsibilities might be clearly delineated, nothing could relieve the Minister from responsibility for and therefore from authority over every aspect of his department. The problem with Hutton, as with all the preceding British General Officers Commanding, was that they had not understood their position and had demanded powers quite incompatible with Parliamentary authority. If no high minded British officer could take such a position, as Minto had suggested, they might have to change the law. The Cabinet memorandum also gave the Government side of the Beith affair. Borden had sent Beith to Toronto, the memorandum stated, because he had heard that unfit horses were being purchased Beith should have

received far better treatment from Hutton as befitted a public spirited citizen.

Your Excellency's advisers do not for a moment admit that the position of General Hutton is unassailable. It has been marked by a contempt for the authority of the Minister, and by a course of action, which, if acquiesced in, would lead to the destruction of all chance of efficiency in the Canadian Militia service. 1189

565. While the Government reply was being drafted, there was a further series of rather unsatisfactory interviews between Laurier and the Governor General. On 27 January 1900, Minto discovered what had become of his memorandum when Laurier reported that Borden's feelings had been hurt by it. Minto also discussed the difficulties of getting a suitable general to replace Hutton at such a critical moment. Laurier recalled that they had wished to have Colonel Lake as a replacement for Gascoigne but the War Office had insisted that he was too junior. Both Lake and Lieutenant Colonel Kitson had done well in Canada, which showed that Imperial officers could succeed there. He also defended Borden as "a highly honourable and amiable man" to which Minto rejoined that he had treated Hutton with scant courtesy and given him few thanks for his efforts. Minto hoped that after such a frank and full discussion, Laurier would return to the cabinet to make peace.¹¹⁹⁰ Instead, two days later, he was back with a draft despatch to the Colonial Secretary, calling for Hutton's recall. The General's usefulness was at an end and the position in the Militia Department had become impossible, Minto refused to pass the telegram and insisted that the order for recall be embodied in an Order in Council, a form which would give him a chance to add his own comments in a submission to Chamberlain. Once again the matter of Minto's memorandum was raised and the Governor General repeated that he had never intended that it be revealed to the cabinet and, if he had, he would have toned down certain statements. Once again, Minto

thought that he had made sufficient impression on the Prime Minister that he would return to his colleagues to argue them out of their hostility to Hutton.¹¹⁹¹ Once again he was mistaken. The following day, 30 January 1899, Laurier was back, this time with a draft order in council. Once again, Minto threatened that he would not sign it at such an urgent moment in the history of the Empire. He even drew attention to rumours of revived Fenian activity. Moreover, the best military men were out of the country and there were no Canadians fit to take command of the force at short notice. Laurier agreed to have one more consultation with the Cabinet but he insisted that the only way out of the impasse was the removal of Hutton. There was no possibility of a cabinet shuffle since only he would agree to serve over Hutton. When Minto suggested that James Sutherland, the Minister without portfolio and a Militia major, might be a possible appointment, Laurier rejoined that no one was stronger against Hutton. If Hutton was not recalled by the Imperial authorities, there could be no alternative to his dismissal.¹¹⁹² On the following day, at the Governor General's request, Borden came to Rideau Hall. He was, Minto admitted, "extremely sore" and not even the optimistic Governor General believed that he had been successful in pacifying him.¹¹⁹³

566. In the course of the struggle between the Governor General and the Prime Minister, new material had been added to the Government case. It had been agreed that a second Militia Staff Course would be held in 1900 at the Royal Military College. The course was due to begin on 1 February and Hutton had selected the officers who were to attend. Their names were published in Militia Orders on 20 January¹¹⁹⁴ although they had been privately notified some time before. Hutton had never felt obliged to obtain ministerial approval

for what he published in Militia Orders and the ~~first~~ Borden knew of the officers chosen to attend the Staff Course was when he saw the published Militia Order. ~~Two~~ names caught his eye: Lieutenant Colonel W.W. White of the 30th Battalion and Lieutenant Colonel D.M. Vince of the Reserve of Officers. Both were promptly struck off the list and the amended order was returned to Colonel Foster, the Chief Staff Officer. Foster called on Borden, learned the reasons for the officers' removal and notified the cancellation of their selection in Militia Orders of 26 January 1900.¹¹⁹⁵ He also sent each of them a letter "by direction of the General Officer Commanding", stating that their appointments had been cancelled by reason of "having recently taken an active part in politics by public speaking."¹¹⁹⁶

567. In a sense, it was fair criticism. Both men were well known Conservatives. Vince had been postmaster of Woodstock for many years until he had been dismissed for political activity at a time of a change of government in New Brunswick. White was even better known. He had recently made a speech at the Fat Stock Show at Guelph in which he had compared the French Canadians to the Boers and had looked forward to the day when similar circumstances would produce a similar war.¹¹⁹⁷ It was White who was the first to protest and he sent a letter to Foster complaining that he had been removed only four days before he was due to depart, that he had received the congratulations of his friends and that he had arranged his business for a long absence. He wanted to know the real reason for his removal since his speech had actually been praised in the Globe. Foster replied in a second letter, more explicitly declaring that White had taken part in politics on the side of the Opposition.¹¹⁹⁶

568. Such an explanation could only be designed to embarrass the Government and it was taken up by the Conservative press. Borden, learning of the uproar on 3 February, hastily sent Vince and White another letter, explaining that their names had been dropped to make room for younger men.^x He then set out to find out how such letters could ever have been sent in the first place. He sent his private secretary, E. . Brown, to see Foster and to obtain a copy of the original letter to Colonel White. The secretary returned almost immediately to report that Foster had told him that he could neither send the Minister a copy of the letter nor visit him personally without the permission of the General Officer Commanding. Boiling with indignation, Borden set off for Foster's office. He met the Colonel in the corridor and brought him back to his own office. There Foster told him that a year before, Hutton had issued an order that he and the Adjutant General were not to go to the Minister even when called without Hutton's permission. The same applied to correspondence. If they went to the Minister with a approval or if they were accosted by him, they were to go to the General and report exactly what had transpired. Borden immediately sent for Colonel Aylmer and the information was confirmed. Aylmer added that they were not to sign any documents being sent to the Minister so long as the General

* The Minister's grounds remain unclear. Colonel Vince was certainly retired although he had been the commanding officer of the Brighton Engineers, a unit which was probably more highly and consistently praised by successive General Officers Commanding than any other unit of the Militia. In 1900, he was 55 years old. Colonel White was 57 and, as Borden continually pointed out, maimed as well. However White's maiming consisted of the loss of two finger in 1871, since which time he had served in the Militia, become a champion shot and a well known rider. The 30th Battalion, which he commanded for seven years, was one of the best Ontario rural battalions. There were also two older officers on the list of candidates. [D. Hist 500.009 (D 9) "Note on Hutton's Resignation".]

was at Headquarters. Borden ordered both officers to confirm their statements in writing.¹¹⁹⁹ For his own part, he prepared a lengthy report of the whole affair for the Prime Minister:

I need scarcely say that such conduct on the part of the General Officer Commanding the Militia of Canada is unprecedented in our history, is unsupported by the rules and practices of the English War Office, and is opposed to both the letter and spirit of the Militia and Queen's Regulations. It certainly is opposed to common sense and the efficient working of the department.

That was not all. After his steady opposition to Hughes since the beginning of October, even going to the extent of recommending his retirement on the grounds of insubordination and later of saying that he was not in his right mind, on 2 February he had received a memorandum from the General recommending that Hughes be appointed a captain in Strathcona's Horse. Further comment on Hutton's conduct with regard to Hughes is needless.¹²⁰⁰

569. 3 February proved to be the crucial day of the Hutton crisis. The night before, he had submitted a twenty page paper to the Governor General telling of his disputes with the Minister.¹²⁰¹ On the afternoon of 3 February, he received a memorandum from the Deputy Minister stating that the reasons he had given White for having his name struck off were "entirely erroneous and misleading" and demanding to know why he had done it.¹²⁰² That afternoon, Minto had a visit from Lieutenant Colonel Fred White, the Comptroller of the Northwest Mounted Police, who warned him that Hutton was going too far and that he would be foolish to rely on press support. That evening, he had another letter from Hutton announcing: "I have made up my mind to fight, & to fight a l'outrance." The issue was party political interference with every aspect of the force. Unless it was eliminated, there could be no efficient Militia. "The whole of

the discourtesy & interference to which I am & have been subjected for the last 15 months is entirely due to the party-political interference with the functions of my military command.¹²⁰³ It was on 3 February as well that the official draft of Minto's originally private memorandum was submitted to the Cabinet. On the following day, he received the cabinet's reply, which he described as "a very long and extraordinary document."¹²⁰⁴ Hutton, having decided to fight, found that there was no very suitable battleground. Instead, he took to his bed with a bad cold during the week-end.

570. On Wednesday morning, 7 February 1900, Laurier called on the Governor General, bringing with him the order in council for Hutton's recall and the confidential memorandum which had been such a source of embarrassment to Lord Minto. After a graceful speech of apology, Laurier tore it up in his presence "as never having been sent". Then they turned to Hutton. The Prime Minister was still anxious that Hutton should resign but Minto stood still anxious that Hutton should resign but Minto stood firm for recall so that there would be an opportunity to place the reasons on record.¹²⁰⁵ In the afternoon, Hutton called. He was sadly dispirited and disappointed. The country had not rallied to him and he spoke of resignation. Minto insisted that he wait until the country and Parliament, which had just assembled, should have a real opportunity to express an opinion.¹²⁰⁶ In fact the opinion was already expressed. The information about the state of the Militia Department was sufficient to persuade the cabinet that there could be no further temporising about Hutton's departure and they felt that it revealed a situation which would furnish an adequate defence of its action before Parliament. On the following day, Hutton discovered that he had escaped bronchitis. With reviving spirits, he announced to the Governor General that he was planning a parting shot

at the Canadian Government before he left the country.¹²⁰⁷ Meanwhile, Minto as sending his Government's order in council to Chamberlain with his own covering despatch. In it, he told of the long course of friction which he had hoped would blow over when the cabinet discovered the need for a good general. The accusations against Hutton boiled down to a want of tact. It was also true that he had taken perhaps too pronounced a stand against the recognized evil of political influence. However the force urgently needed a strong Imperial officer for "the social and official surroundings besetting the force would render to quite impossible for one of its own officers to undertake its reorganization with any hope of success." Minto was clearly worried that a Canadian appointment would be made and he urged the Colonial Secretary to make his own view clear on the subject.¹²⁰⁸ The order in council itself pointed out that it had originally been intended merely to tell the Colonial Office that the situation was unsatisfactory and that Hutton should not be retained but that it was decided that he must be recalled since his retention would seriously embarrass military affairs.¹²⁰⁹

571. Hutton spent 8 February drafting a letter to the Governor General to demand a Royal Commission to investigate the Militia on the basis of his charges.¹²¹⁰ However the next day, he received notice by telegram from England that he had been selected for special service in South Africa and his concern for vindication waned for the moment. He advised Minto on 10 February that he was writing to Borden to resign his appointment. Once his future service in South Africa became publicly known, there was a small revival of interest in his departure. In the House of Commons, Colonel E.G. Prior, one of the Conservative members for Victoria, moved the adjournment of the House because of

Hutton's departure. The attitude of the Government was to allow the General to go as quietly as possible and it refused, at that stage, to raise any of the issues connected with the resignation. So did Sir Charles Tupper, who suspected that there was considerable material hidden in the papers and refused to be drawn. Only Colonel Donville chose to attack the departing General with his customary immoderate vehemence. His attitude evoked little sympathy in the House.¹²¹¹ Hutton, himself, was not so cautious. At a farewell banquet at the Rideau Club on 13 February, addressed by several Conservative members, the General declared:

I should have felt more confident of the ultimate success of this national effort if the Government had ever indicated its approval of my schemes or had shown interest in their evolution.

On the following evening, there was a dinner at the Russell House, given by the officers of the Ottawa Brigade. Hutton repeated most of the themes which he had made familiar during his eighteen months in Canada. Once again, he insisted that the Militia must be placed on a plane above party-political interference. These two speeches Hutton grandly described as the "account of my stewardship" in Canada.¹²¹² Two days later, he was seen off at the station by a large crowd. Mrs. Hutton received a bouquet of roses from the Soldiers' Wives League and a silver tea service from a number of friends.¹²¹³ That evening, they were in New York. Hutton evaded the reporters who waited for him and made his way safely to a hotel. That evening, he wrote to Minto of his conviction that the Government had been trying systematically to get rid of him for the past seven months.¹²¹⁴ The following day, he sailed for England in the Etruria.

A MOMENT OF TRANSITION

572. The departure of Hutton for South Africa put an end to the first period of determined Militia reform. The force, however, was never to be the same again. The difference was that, between Hutton's publicity, the military participation in South Africa and the connection of the Militia with the general atmosphere of imperialism, Canada's military force had come to matter. It had become an institution of consequence both to politicians and to a growing number of people on the street. When this happened, the old weaknesses of inefficiency, waste and pervasive political influence were no longer tolerable.

573. At his departure, it was chiefly the Conservative newspapers that regretted his going. The Montreal Star described his departure at such a time as nothing short of a crime, for which the Government was entirely responsible.¹²¹⁵ "Vanguard" in the Mail and Empire said that he was the best officer to command the Militia¹²¹⁶ and the Quebec Telegraph said that, while he had made unwelcome decisions, no one had ever put as much snap into the Militia.¹²¹⁷ The Hamilton Spectator shared this regret and pointed out that now that large sums were being spent on the Militia, there would be real waste unless the people in charge knew their business.¹²¹⁸ The Toronto Star, however, warned of Government by Colonel, and reminded readers of the nature of responsible government. Another even more valid point was to recall who was doing the complaining:

The champions of Colonel Hutton profess to be very much concerned lest politics shall be introduced into the management of the Militia and the Ottawa Citizen, which is one of the most active Conservative papers in the country shows that it is Liberal politics only that is objected to. ¹²¹⁹

However serious the problem of political influence might be, there was a certain hypocrisy in at least some of the Opposition members who were so anxious to condemn it.

574. The reaction in British Government circles was far more critical of the Canadian authorities. Chamberlain complained to Strathecona about the Canadian failure to wait while he tried to settle the matter for them. He was unaware that Laurier, too, had not wanted the recall placed on an official basis for neither man sought to have the whole affair dragged out in official correspondence. Chamberlain was also disappointed that Borden and Hutton had failed to get along. Strathecona warned the Prime Minister that "It may be impossible to find an officer in every way qualified to be his successor."²⁰¹⁰ It was 17 April 1900 before Chamberlain could reply to Minto's despatch of 8 February and to the Canadian order in council that had accompanied it. It was a stern rebuke to the Canadian politicians. Her Majesty's Government was "deeply disappointed that the Minister had been unable to allow Hutton to complete the work of reform, the more so because his two predecessors had also been obliged to return before their time.

The Officers who have been sent out from this Country have been experts in Military Administration and of course absolutely removed from any political influence. They have been solely actuated by a desire to make the Canadian Militia thoroughly efficient and worthy of the Dominion.

The Canadians must understand that a military commander had to be given a freer hand than a civil servant.²⁰²¹

575. The Canadian cabinet did not let this rebuke go unanswered. In a further Privy Council report of 9 June 1900, drafted by a sub-committee of the Cabinet, the Colonial Secretary was reminded that the principle was not the concession of a very free hand to Hutton but yielding to claims which

would have made him the real controller of the policy of his department. There was a firm denial that the spirit which had actuated the offer of contingents for South Africa had been in any way due to Hutton and also that the difficulties had arisen because of political difficulties. The real problem was that Hutton had not understood his position in Canada. The Cabinet's reply was supported by a lengthy memorandum.¹²²¹ from Borden in which he recalled his difficulties with the General. "He seemed to regard himself as entitled not merely to advise but to dictate to the Minister, and to act as though he were occupying the position wholly apart from and independent of the Chief of the Department." His arrogance increased to the stage where he was threatening the Minister with a Royal Commission. It became increasingly impossible to run the Department. Borden recalled that "the Major General's manner to him was very often exceedingly discourteous and at times offensive. On more than one occasion, after receiving and apparently agreeing to carry out instructions given him by the Minister, Major General Hutton did not scruple to disobey the instructions and to do so in violation of the plain regulations of the service." The conclusive evidence against the General was his attempt to restrict the Minister's freedom of access to information. This had made his continuance impossible.¹²²³

576. There were other loose ends of Hutton's career in Canada. On the same day, 19 February, that Colonel Prior made use of Hutton's farewell speech to the Ottawa Brigade to draw out the Prime Minister on political interference, Domville gained his motion for the papers relation to Colonel Hughes.¹²²⁴ When they appeared, they had something of the effect that Hutton had anticipated and the Toronto Telegram ruefully observed: "How General Hutton must have

laughed at his esteemed contemporaries, not excluding this journal, which rose up in defence of Canadian nationality as embodied in the cruel wrongs of Col. Sam Hughes M.P....

The journals which imagined that Col. Sam Hughes was a victim to General Hutton's prejudice against colonial officers must feel like asking the earth to open and swallow them when they read those awful letters...¹²²⁵

577. When he reached England, Hutton was pleased to find that he was something of an exiled hero to the senior officials at the War Office. He was received by Lord Lansdowne and Lord Wolseley. He found that it was Chamberlain who had ordered his recall. They had considered leaving him there to fight but then it was agreed that it would be better to have Laurier as the Prime Minister than in Opposition where he could "pander to disloyal elements in Canada."¹²²⁶ He found that both Chamberlain and Lansdowne were fully conversant with Canadian politics and all the prominent people he spoke with agreed on the necessity of getting the militia above party politics. He found that a low view of colonial politicians was widely shared.¹²²⁷

578. By the beginning of April, Hutton was in South Africa and in command of the Colonial brigade of the Mounted Infantry Division. This placed the two battalions of Canadian Mounted Rifles under his command. It was while he was in South Africa that he received a copy of the 1899 Militia Report which infuriated him since Part III, dealing with reforms, had been left out. It was, he said, a "distinctly dishonourable act" on Borden's part.¹²²⁸

579. Hutton's removal was only ~~an~~ episode in the history of the Canadian Militia. It was neither an ~~end~~ nor a beginning but a moment of transition. Four years later, another general was to be removed in similar circumstances and with greater ease. It proved easier to remove Lord Dundonald in 1904 than Hutton in 1900. By then, the Laurier government had discovered that a military enthusiasm ostensibly aroused on behalf of the British Empire was actually fostering Canadian nationalism. This was the paradox which has recurred so regularly in Canadian military history. In later years, Hutton mistakenly blamed Laurier and French Canada for his ¹²²⁹ discomfiture and failure. In fact, it was the most Anglo-Saxon members of the Cabinet like Borden and Sutherland, and the most Imperialist of the private members, Hughes and Domville, who were his bitterest enemies. It is a paradox of great importance for the understanding of Canadian military policy.

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Abbreviations

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PAC - Public Archives of Canada.
PRO - Public Record Office.
RG - Record Group in the Public Archives of Canada.
Report - Report of the Department of Militia and Defence
(after 1904, of the Militia Council of the
Dominion of Canada).
D Hist - Files maintained by D Hist.
Debates - Debates of the Canadian House of Commons.
WO 32 - Microfilm in possession of D Hist.
MGO - Militia General Orders.

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