
The Banning of a Book in British Columbia

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On the morning of Saturday, January 3, 1920, Dr. J. D. MacLean, minister of education and provincial secretary for British Columbia, quietly announced in Vancouver that W. L. Grant's *History of Canada* would no longer be used in the schools of the province. "In adding the subject of Canadian history to the High School curriculum," he explained, "this book had been selected for a trial as a text book. After a year, owing to unfavorable comment and as the best results can not be obtained from the study of a text that is the subject of criticism, the department has decided to discontinue its use as a school book. For the remainder of the year teachers will be asked to stress the teaching of Canadian civics."¹

The announcement provoked little initial public comment; two days later, in an editorial, the Vancouver *World* stood squarely behind the Minister and hinted at some of the reasons for his decision:

... The Minister of Education ... will find general support amongst teachers and others familiar with the publication.

The Council of Public Instruction which is the authority in control of education in the province, it appears, never authorized the textbook. It has, however, been in restricted use in high schools for some time past; but criticism of some forms of expression and its somewhat anti-British tone has made it unpopular.

It is possible, surely, to obtain a book on Canadian history not open to such objections. At any rate the decision to abolish the use of this book is wise. History for school purposes is inadequate enough as it is without permitting the suspicion of bias to attach to it.²

After that expression of opinion, there was public silence on the matter for almost a week, and then a modest debate began in the columns of Vancouver's newspapers, which gradually made clear the substance of the criticism that had caused the book's removal. If it took time for the public to become aware of the causes of trouble, such was not the case for W. L. Grant, the author of the text.

¹*Province* (Vancouver), January 3, 1920, p. 1.

²*World* (Vancouver), January 5, 1920, p. 4.

In 1920 William Lawson Grant occupied the office of principal of Upper Canada College in Toronto, a position he was to hold until his death in 1935. Prior to this appointment he had lectured at Oxford University and at Queen's in Kingston; during the first world war, he had served overseas as a major in the Canadian Expeditionary Force and had been wounded in the battle of the Somme. The book in question had first been published in Toronto in 1914 by the T. Eaton Company. A revised edition had been published in 1916 by William Heinemann in England and by the Renouf Publishing Company in Montreal. It was the latter edition which became the subject of dispute.

Grant had been aware of criticisms of the book for about a year before it was banned in British Columbia. In December 1918 the *Sentinel*, a publication of the Orange Order, had accused him of displaying disloyalty in the expressions which he used in the book.³ By June 1919 such criticism was being received by the Department of Education in Victoria, and the Superintendent of Education for British Columbia wrote to Grant:

I . . . beg to enquire from you whether it would not be possible for you to modify your Canadian History in such a way as to render it acceptable to people of all classes and creeds in this Province. Personally I see nothing objectionable in your book whatever and I need not add that I think it the best Canadian History on the market, but we have in British Columbia some people more loyal than King George V, and others more ultra-Protestant than Calvin and the views of these people must of course be respected by any department depending on its existence on popular suffrage. . . .⁴

Grant did nothing in the face of these attacks, but they apparently continued with sufficient strength for the next six months to prompt J. D. MacLean to remove the publication from British Columbia's schools.

Before its banishment from British Columbia's classrooms, there had only been hints as to what was wrong with Grant's book. This vagueness disappeared, however, when Mack Eastman and W. N. Sage of the University of British Columbia History Department and fourteen school teachers moved to defend Grant and his book in a letter sent to the *Sun*, the *Province*, and the *World*. These defenders sketched out Grant's background as proof of his pro-British stance and his reliability as a scholar.⁵ This was an approach not without its flaws, as one critic noted:

³Public Archives of Canada (PAC), W. L. Grant Papers, W. L. Grant to the Minister of Education (Victoria, BC), January 14, 1919.

⁴Public Archives of British Columbia (PABC), British Columbia Department of Education Files, Letterbook 185, p. 4598, Alexander Robinson to W. L. Grant, June 20, 1919. See also the Grant Papers for the same letter.

⁵*Sun* (Vancouver), January 10, 1920, p. 6; *Province*, January 10, 1920, p. 7; *World*, January 10, 1920, p. 4. Grant was also defended by "Lucian" in a column called "The Week-end" in the *Province*, January 10, 1920, pp. 12-13. "Lucian" was Dr. S. D. Scott (Grant Papers, W. L. Grant to C. F. Hamilton, January 16, 1920). M. Ross, a retired school teacher also spoke up on Grant's behalf (*Sun*, January 13, 1920, p. 6).

A perusal of the letter is all that is necessary to show that there are a good many teachers and some professors plying their trade in the schools and University of British Columbia whose services should be dispensed with at the end of the year, if not sooner. Any class of individuals who would seek to defend a textbook because of the personality of the man who wrote it is employing a system of reasoning which no teacher who is worth a salary should employ.⁶

In the somewhat disjointed debate which then ensued, the chief complaints against Grant's *History* were strongly enunciated. The book was, in sum, anti-British and anti-Protestant or, to turn it around, pro-German, pro-Roman Catholic, and – worst of all – pro-French-Canadian.

On the count of being disloyal to Great Britain, the critics cited several passages which they found particularly useful in sustaining their argument. A few of the keen-eyed started, quite literally, on the first page, noting that Heinemann was the English publisher. "Heinemann," Grant commented in his own defence, "is undoubtedly of German descent, and has about as much German blood in his veins as has His Majesty King George V. He is himself above military age, but more than one of his nephews, one of whom I knew at Balliol, died in the war fighting for the Empire about which these people are shrieking."⁷

But the text, more than the publisher, provided the critics with their ammunition for the attack. Grant, it was argued, was favourably disposed to the concept of hatred as an essential component of patriotism, a most Germanic idea.⁸ In his discussion of Canada in the immediate post-Conquest period, Grant had written:

Great Britain had thus taken over a people who differed from herself, and from her other colonists in North America in race, religion, language and customs. England and France had been at war for generations; Englishmen and Frenchmen considered hatred of each other to be a patriotic duty; nowhere had the fires of hatred blazed so high as between Canadian and English colonists. The religious history of the two countries ever since the Reformation had given Roman Catholic and Protestant loathing of each other.⁹

In providing the background to the War of 1812 battle of Beaver Dam, Grant had stated: "At Queenston, Sergeant James Secord was lying helpless from his wounds. Both he and his wife, Laura, were children of Loyalists, and hated the Americans for the wrongs done to their parents. . . ."¹⁰ And when evaluating the consequences of the War of 1812 he had remarked:

⁶*World*, January 12, 1920, p. 4, letter from J. H. Ingram. Identical letter in *Sun*, January 12, 1920, p. 6.

⁷Grant Papers, W. L. Grant to C. F. Hamilton, January 16, 1920.

⁸*World*, January 10, 1920, p. 4, letter from E. F. Sykes. Identical letter in *Sun*, January 10, 1920, p. 6.

⁹W. L. Grant, *History of Canada* (London: William Heinemann [Montreal: Renouf Publishing Company], 1916), p. 119.

¹⁰*Ibid.*, p. 149.

To Canada the war gave an heroic tradition. Men of French, Scotch, Irish, English descent had stood side by side with the regulars of Great Britain and had fought as gallantly as they. It was our baptism of blood, and so far in this world that has been the only real baptism of a nation. It is less pleasing to think of the long years of hatred of the United States which date from this war; but to many men patriotism is impossible without a little hatred, and memories of the war did much to steady Canadians in the lean years which were to come.¹¹

These were the chief examples cited as proof of Grant's view of the close relationship between hatred and patriotism. "This," stated one critic, "is exactly what Germany taught in her schools prior to the war, and we are following her example" He went on:

This is the very way the enemy works with propaganda and under our present lax system it appears there is no trouble for any stranger to publish whatever they [*sic*] may see fit and introduce it into our schools, and poison the minds of children as they [*sic*] see fit. This is a British country and if we are to maintain it as such, and raise British subjects we must instil nothing but British ideas and British principles into the minds of the children and have a more loyal and national spirit exhibited in our schools¹²

Further evidence of Grant's disloyalty was culled from his statements about various British personages. His description of Charles Bailey, "the English official at the Bay" who quarrelled with Radisson and Grosseilliers, as "a red-faced and choleric John Bull, who hated Frenchmen,"¹³ upset at least one critic. There was annoyance with his descriptions of Pitt as "overbearing" and proud,¹⁴ George III as "narrow-minded," and Edward Grenville as "obstinate" and "tactless,"¹⁵ and unhappiness over his decision to quote from Tecumseh, the War of 1812 Indian chieftain who compared General Henry Procter to "a fat dog with its tail between its legs."¹⁶

Grant was charged with deliberate overmagnification of British military defeats. The fact that he had included a picture of a medal struck to commemorate Frontenac's defence of Quebec in 1690 was put forward in evidence, although no one seemed to be alarmed by the fact that on the reverse side of the medal was a Latin inscription reading *Kebeca Liberata*.¹⁷ And it was argued that he detailed all too vividly General Braddock's defeat at Fort Duquesne in 1755.¹⁸

Naturally enough, the material to sustain the accusation that Grant was anti-Protestant and pro-Catholic was found in the initial pages of his *History*, pages dealing with the era of New France. "Grant's so-called history," de-

¹¹*Ibid.*, p. 155.

¹²See n. 8.

¹³Grant, *History*, p. 74.

¹⁴*Ibid.*, p. 100.

¹⁵*Ibid.*, p. 130.

¹⁶*Ibid.*, p. 151.

¹⁷*Ibid.*, p. 82-3.

¹⁸*Ibid.*, p. 93.

clared one sharp-eyed reader, "is nothing more than a commentary on Canadian history borrowed from the early writings of the Jesuits who, under the guiding hand of Champlain in Canada, and the master mind of Cardinal Richelieu in France were out to bring this North American continent down to the level of Mexico and Peru."¹⁹ Grant's generous appraisal of the work and motives of the Jesuits,²⁰ his inclusion of a picture of the arrival of the Ursuline nuns in 1639,²¹ and his quotation from Frontenac to the effect that ending the brandy trade would simply drive the Indians to "rum and Protestantism"²² were all cited as proof of his ultramontane and Jesuitical position.

The other side of the charge that Grant was pro-Catholic was that he was pro-French-Canadian, a trait – whether real or imagined – which his accusers found most distressing. It was pointed out that, in dealing with the battle of the Plains of Abraham, Grant had devoted most of a page to a discussion of Montcalm, his tactics, his wounding, and his death²³ – an obvious sign of his basic softness on the subject of French Canada. No one apparently noticed that Benjamin West's quite inaccurate but famous *The Death of Wolfe* occupied another page. His treatment of Riel proved to be another sore point. Statements that Riel "was no coward, and met his fate with something of the high constancy of the martyr"²⁴ and that "the French in Quebec had sympathized with the endeavour of Riel to win justice for their compatriots"²⁵ seemed to drive Grant's opponents into a frenzy.

But it was his words on Henri Bourassa – referred to as "that traitor" by one commentator²⁶ – that incensed all. In Quebec, Grant had written that "there is still a 'nationalist' party with, however, a more moderate programme than that of Mercier, and its leader, Mr. Henri Bourassa, has always stood manfully for honest and progressive administration."²⁷ Even Grant considered this phrasing unwise. "I am willing," he told a correspondent, "to expunge or modify the reference on page 302 to Bourassa, which, though correct, is inadequate in the light of his war record."²⁸ Most of Grant's critics, however, would have been willing to expunge Bourassa himself because of the latter's sharp criticism of conscription and Canada's participation in the first world war.

These, then, were the chief trouble spots in Grant's *History*, but, once begun, his opponents did not rest and lifting statements out of context read

¹⁹*World*, March 19, 1920, p. 4, letter from W. O. Black.

²⁰Grant, *History*, p. 50.

²¹*Ibid.*, p. 59.

²²*Ibid.*, p. 61.

²³*Ibid.*, p. 114.

²⁴*Ibid.*, p. 283.

²⁵*Ibid.*, p. 285.

²⁶See n. 19.

²⁷Grant, *History*, p. 302.

²⁸See n. 7.

a variety of meanings into them. He was accused of stating that, in the Red River affair of 1869-70, Riel "did nothing more than fight for his rights."²⁹ What Grant had actually said was this:

... So far, Riel had done little more than fight for his rights, but in March 1870, he put himself for ever in the wrong by the execution on a charge of treason of Thomas Scott, an Ontario Orangeman. Scott seems to have had a great contempt for all French Catholics, and for Riel in particular, and had undoubtedly made himself disagreeable, but for the charge of treason there was no evidence whatever, and the so-called execution was a barbarous murder.³⁰

In his discussion of the English-American traders who arrived in Quebec after the Conquest, it was said that Grant had called them the "most immoral collection of men I ever knew."³¹ The author had, in fact, written:

Quarrels soon broke out between the English settlers and Governor Murray, who called them on one occasion "the licentious fanatics trading here," on another "four hundred and fifty contemptible suttlers and traders," and on another "the most immoral collection of men I ever knew." His anger was probably due to the dislike of the soldier for the business man. By "licentious" the Governor only meant disobedient to his authority, and by "fanatics" that they were not members of the Church of England, but New England Independents. As for immorality, they were certainly much more sober than the average British officer of the day, and they made trade and commerce thrive as never before.³²

While denouncing the supposed tendencies of Grant as displayed in his writing, his opponents chose to ignore passages such as the following which gave the lie to most of their comments: "Thus every Canadian is at once a citizen of a municipality, of a province, of a Dominion, and of an Empire. We must all love the municipality in which we live. . . . But we must love our municipality as part of a province. . . . We must love the province as part of our native land. . . . And beyond even Canada we must love the world-wide Empire. . . ."³³ Most present day critics would argue that such an admonition has no place in a Canadian history textbook. But on the whole, they would probably also agree that, if his book had flaws, they were minor and that in some ways it presented a fresh and lively interpretation of Canadian history.

Grant had his defenders in 1920, but they could not win the battle against an assault which, an "old boy" of Upper Canada College who worked for the *Province* told Grant, "was being engineered by some of the baser members of the Orange Order."³⁴ His book had been banned and it remained in that condition. Grant commented to a friend: "It is great fun, save for a

²⁹See n. 19.

³⁰Grant, *History*, p. 260.

³¹See n. 19.

³²Grant, *History*, pp. 120-1.

³³*Ibid.*, pp. 377-8.

³⁴See n. 7; also Grant Papers, Mack Eastman to W. L. Grant, January 23, 1920.

dislike of seeing any section of Canadian public opinion behave so idiotically."³⁵

The only note of the event which the Department of Education took in its annual report for 1919-20 was a stray remark contained in the submission of the Free Text-book Branch:

In conclusion, it is desired to express an appreciation of the very valuable assistance rendered by principals in large centres in helping to meet a very trying situation which occurred in January, 1920, when owing to the wholly unexpected demands made for supplies at that time, the Free Text-book Branch was unable to furnish some of the items asked for on all requisitions presented.³⁶

Obviously, there must have been some scrambling by teachers in January to find something to replace Grant's *History of Canada*.

In an effort to restore his book to the good graces of the British Columbia Department of Education, Grant offered to remove the pictures of the arrival of the Ursulines – although he stated that it no more implied "approval of the Ursulines or of the Roman Catholic Church than a picture of 'The Temptation' would imply approval of the proceedings of the serpent" – and of the commemorative medal of 1690. He would treat Bourassa "in the light of his war record" and would omit "the sentence on page 155 to the effect that to many men 'patriotism is impossible without a little hatred.'" "But," he added, "I am certainly not willing either to make a book so colourless that it can give no possible offence to anybody, or so partisan that its chief use would be as a club to belabour the priesthood."³⁷ Grant was also prepared "to add four or five pages, either in bulk or in various parts, with special reference to the West."³⁸ But the Department simply countered that it would wait and take a look at any revised edition, a statement which scarcely provided Grant with the grounds for confidently proceeding with the revision. By February 1 the book was out of all the schools and there was no Canadian history being taught.³⁹

Mack Eastman took a strong interest in the case and continued to press for a new authorization of Grant's book – presumably in some satisfactorily revised form – from the Department of Education, but he could not report that the future looked very promising: "My impression is that with them [the Minister of Education and the Superintendent of Education] it is a political rather than an academic or historical question, and that they really cannot say just how much revision they would require. If the revised edition raised another howl, they would want it revised once more. . . . They merely

³⁵PAC, C. F. Hamilton Papers, W. L. Grant to C. F. Hamilton, January 21, 1920.

³⁶*Forty-ninth annual report of the public schools of the province of British Columbia, 1919-1920* (Victoria: King's Printer, 1921), p. C90.

³⁷See n. 7.

³⁸Grant Papers, W. L. Grant to Mack Eastman, January 30, 1920.

³⁹*Ibid.*, W. N. Sage to W. L. Grant, February 1, 1920.

fear the fanatics and their voting power. . . ."⁴⁰ Over a year later, he could only hold out a small chance to Grant: "I believe that the general public, as well as the teaching profession, is friendly to your book. Only the wild Orangemen, the Fenian Raid Veterans and some other antiques who will soon die off, refuse to disarm."⁴¹

Eastman and W. N. Sage continued the quiet fight for Grant's book with the Department of Education, but they got nowhere despite periodic bursts of hope.⁴² And, late in October 1921, Sage wrote Grant a letter over which he agonized before sending it off in the mails:

This morning I received a letter marked "Private & Confidential" from Mr. [S. J.] Willis [superintendent of education]. I gathered from it that there is no chance of your History being again authorized

. . . Opposition to the book seems to have been much better organized & more wide-spread than we knew. You know, of course, my own opinion of the book & of its opponents.⁴³

Grant's book was never again put out on the desks of British Columbia's classrooms.

The militant opponents of the textbook, who certainly won the day, were generally described as Orangemen, and there seems to be no reason to doubt this. But to offer their opposition and intransigence as an explanation of what had occurred in British Columbia in 1920 is inadequate. The question still remains: why did they succeed in achieving their end?

The composition of the population of British Columbia must be considered. At the time 73.7 per cent of the population claimed either British origin or descent, while a mere 2.1 per cent could be classified as of French origin or descent.⁴⁴ To view it from another direction 50.5 per cent of the population claimed Canadian birth; 30.5 per cent claimed British birth; and

⁴⁰*Ibid.*, Mack Eastman to W. L. Grant, February 21, 1920.

⁴¹*Ibid.*, Mack Eastman to W. L. Grant, May 29, 1921. Among the letters which MacLean received approving of his action were one from the secretary of the Veterans' Association of the Fenian Raids and one from the county secretary of the Vancouver County L.O.L. No. 1 (PABC, British Columbia Provincial Secretary's Department Files, Letterbook 1, p. 620, J. D. MacLean to J. Pattison Thompson, February 12, 1920, and p. 698, J. D. MacLean to E. B. Langdale, February 18, 1920).

⁴²*Ibid.*, W. N. Sage to W. L. Grant, July 22 and October 16, 1921.

⁴³*Ibid.*, W. N. Sage to W. L. Grant, October 20, 1921. The opposition was "better organized." On January 13, 1920, a letter appeared in the *World* (p. 4) from W. O. Black which, although strongly anti-Catholic and anti-French-Canadian in tone, defended Grant and apparently viewed the banning as some dark Catholic plot. Then, on March 19 and March 30, 1920, letters appeared in the *World* (p. 4) from a W. O. Black – presumably the same man – and they were strongly anti-Grant as well as anti-Catholic and anti-French-Canadian in tone. If this was the same man, then someone had taken him aside during a two-month period and showed him the flaws in Grant's book.

⁴⁴*Sixth census of Canada, 1921. I: Population* (Ottawa: King's Printer, 1924), pp. 354–5. The total population of British Columbia in 1921 was 524,582. Of this number, 387,513 were of British origin or descent (English, 221,145; Scots, 104,965; Irish, 54,298; and others, 7,105) and only 11,246 were of French origin or descent.

19.0 per cent was of foreign birth. It seems safe to assume that a significant number of that 50.5 per cent would be children of parents of British birth.⁴⁵ Roman Catholics formed only 12.2 per cent of the population; they were handily outnumbered by Anglicans with 30.7 per cent and by Presbyterians with 23.5 per cent and were rivalled by Methodists with 12.4 per cent.⁴⁶

Both French-Canadians and Roman Catholics were even less significant in those urban centres of British Columbia which placed the greatest pressure on the government for the removal of Grant's book. In Vancouver, 79.9 per cent of the population was of British origin or descent, and only 1.9 per cent was of French origin or descent.⁴⁷ Victoria held a population which was 84.8 per cent British origin or descent and but 0.9 per cent French origin or descent.⁴⁸ And, in New Westminster, 80.8 per cent was in the former bracket and 1.8 per cent in the latter.⁴⁹

In Vancouver, 9.3 per cent of the population was Roman Catholic; 29.9 per cent Anglican; 26.9 per cent Presbyterian; and 12.7 per cent Methodist.⁵⁰ Victoria looked like this: 6.3 per cent Roman Catholic; 40.2 per cent Anglican; 20.3 per cent Presbyterian; and 13.0 per cent Methodist.⁵¹ And New Westminster divided in this fashion: 9.6 per cent Roman Catholic; 26.8 per cent Anglican; 26.3 per cent Presbyterian; and 17.6 per cent Methodist.⁵² In British Columbia, the ground was scarcely fertile for the growth of generous historical treatment of either French-Canadians or Roman Catholics.

But there was more to it than that. The critics really did not discuss Canadian history; they were talking about the proper handling and dissemination of British history. A sense of Canadian history did not permeate their ranks. They were agitated about the anti-British spirit of the text and they felt that, as one of their number expressed it, "These are days when it becomes everybody to show their British loyalty if they have any."⁵³ Canada was not their concern; Britain was.

Such feelings, of course, had been heightened by the first world war,

⁴⁵*Ibid.*, p. 337. Canadian born, 264,046; British born, 160,752; and foreign born, 99,784.

⁴⁶*Ibid.*, p. 752-3. Roman Catholics, 63,980; Anglicans, 160,978; Presbyterians, 123,022; and Methodists 64,810.

⁴⁷*Ibid.*, p. 542. The population of Vancouver in 1921, exclusive of Point Grey and South Vancouver, was 117,217. British origin or descent, 93,609; French origin or descent, 2,252.

⁴⁸The population of Victoria was 38,727. British origin or descent, 32,821; French origin or descent, 359.

⁴⁹*Ibid.*, p. 545. Population of New Westminster was 14,495. British origin or descent, 11,706; French origin or descent, 259.

⁵⁰*Ibid.*, p. 756. Roman Catholics, 10,842; Anglicans, 35,137; Presbyterians, 31,595; Methodists, 14,968.

⁵¹*Ibid.*, p. 757. Roman Catholics, 2,448; Anglicans, 15,562; Presbyterians, 7,877; Methodists, 5,045.

⁵²*Ibid.*, p. 760. Roman Catholics, 1,388; Anglicans, 3,886; Presbyterians, 3,809; Methodists, 2,551.

⁵³See n. 6.

and out of this combination came the extremism to which Grant's book fell victim. The Orange Order in British Columbia, which claimed growing strength in the province after the conclusion of the conflict, was proud of the fact that "over 35 per cent of the total membership in British Columbia had enlisted for overseas, a sign that Orangemen had not forgotten the basic force and loyal principles of their order."⁵⁴ These people were not going to remain silent when the accusation of being anti-British was levelled against Grant.

In his *Memoirs*, Robert Borden noted, in another context, that at the war's end "the state of mind of the people in general" was "abnormal." He continued: "There was a distinctive lack of the usual balance; the agitator, sometimes sincere, sometimes merely malevolent, self-seeking and designing, found quick response to insidious propaganda."⁵⁵ Emotions roused by the war – particularly bitterness and hatred towards French-Canadians because of their attitude about conscription – were sustained in strength long after November 11, 1918. In fact, among the extremists, hatred of French-Canadians was an essential part of their patriotism towards Great Britain; they proved what they had denounced in Grant's *History*. And the Minister of Education was not going to challenge such feelings if they appeared to have any strength.

J. D. MacLean was not the man to stand fast in the face of an approaching storm; in fact, his behaviour during the affair was marked by singular weakness. After he had ordered the book's removal, the Minister of Education conceded that the agitation had been conducted by "extremists" and that he had "decided to eliminate their criticism by removing Grant's *History* from the list of authorised Text Books."⁵⁶ This he did despite the fact that he could write: "Personally I see nothing wrong with the *History*, but Grant has been injudicious in several paragraphs."⁵⁷ MacLean was easily unnerved by any sign of postwar discontent in British Columbia; he referred to the "prevailing unrest" which he felt had been heightened by the book, and he argued that the period was one in which it was "a most difficult matter to keep a true balance under the circumstances."⁵⁸ "There is one thing that the people of this Province should be eternally thankful for," he wrote to another correspondent, "and that is that our Government has kept peace and harmony in the Province during a most troublesome time. You will agree with

⁵⁴*Sun*, July 13, 1919, p. 24.

⁵⁵Henry Borden, ed., *Robert Laird Borden: His memoirs*, II (Toronto: Macmillan, 1938), p. 972.

⁵⁶British Columbia Provincial Secretary's Department Files, Letterbook 1, p. 387, J. D. MacLean to R. S. Thornton, January 13, 1920. These files commence with this letterbook which starts on November 17, 1919; there are no files of incoming correspondence in the Public Archives of British Columbia. Thus there is no material that reveals the extent of the campaign against Grant's book, except for acknowledgements by MacLean of letters approving of his action with respect to the book.

⁵⁷*Ibid.*, p. 390, J. D. MacLean to L. Robertson, January 13, 1920.

⁵⁸*Ibid.*, p. 664, J. D. MacLean to H. S. Simmons, February 17, 1920.

me that there is no Province so liable to industrial chaos as B.C., yet industrially we have been comparatively free from trouble such as existed in Winnipeg and in the Eastern Provinces."⁵⁹

It was a nervous J. D. MacLean who overreacted to the criticism of Grant's *History* and who went to extraordinary lengths in this matter in an effort to keep the province quiet. He made his views clear in replying to a defender of the book:

... I appreciate the frankness and fairness with which you have stated your defence of this book, of which I have received many adverse criticisms. I have submitted it to a number of people privately to obtain their opinion with reference to the points at issue, and I have gradually been forced to the conclusion that in the state of the public mind at the present time there might very well be a rather general clamour against several of the expressions used in the text, particularly on the part of those who are destructive critics by nature.

Holding a position of responsibility and realizing the general feeling of unrest that prevails at the present time, I did not wish to add to this feeling by retaining this text-book upon the course of study.

The above is briefly the reason for the official action that was taken, and I think you will agree that notwithstanding the excellence of Grant's *History* in many respects, the wisest course was pursued.⁶⁰

One factor which might have slowed, or reversed, MacLean's action – a civil service offering strong advice – was missing. The Superintendent of Education when the protest began was Alexander Robinson, and he offered this explanation for his position:

You will remember that I was commissioned at one of our recent meetings [of western Canadian Ministers of Education] to report to your committee at our next meeting how Grant's "History of Canada[]" is suiting our high school teachers and pupils. I beg to report, therefore, that I have not had a single complaint from either teacher or pupil regarding this history since I began to make trial of it in our high schools in September, 1918. There seems, however, to be an organized attempt made on the part of some organisation[s] in this Province to discredit the book. This department has been bombarded virtually with letters from certain parties, particularly from Vancouver, claiming that the book is pro-German and pro-Catholic, their ground for the former being that it is printed by William Heinemann, and for the latter that there is a picture on one of the pages showing the coming to Canada under the French rule of some Ursuline nuns. In my opinion and in the opinion of the high school teachers of this Province whom I have interviewed the book is the best history of Canada now on the market, but I am growing old and am not desirous of passing through any more official scraps having had in my life-time a plethora of those nerve destroying experiences. I am worried, however, as to what action to take in connection with a Canadian History for our high schools for the year beginning September, 1919. I do not wish to discard Grant if there is any likelihood that it might be adopted by the three Prairie Provinces. Perhaps it might be possible to have the book revised and anything objectionable to ultra-Protestants suppressed. What

⁵⁹*Ibid.*, Letterbook 2, p. 1044, J. D. MacLean to H. McCutcheon, April 20, 1920.

⁶⁰*Ibid.*, Letterbook 1, p. 416, J. D. MacLean to Miss A. E. Fraser, January 16, 1920.

is your advice in the matter? I am in real distress. Please heed my Macedonian cry.⁶¹

Robinson, concerned but too old for a fight, departed his position for retirement in November 1919; his successor, S. J. Willis, was new to the post and simply went along quietly with the decision of the Minister of Education. No battle-line was ever drawn in the Department over the book and that fact simply hastened its removal.

In a statement to the *Ubyyssey* on another matter in 1921, Mack Eastman took the opportunity to defend Grant once more, and he sourly observed: "The war has sorely disturbed the minds of many non-combatants!"⁶² And, in one sense he was right: W. L. Grant's *History of Canada* had become another casualty of the first world war.

⁶¹British Columbia Department of Education Files, Letterbook 185, pp. 4592-4593, Alexander Robinson to John T. Ross, June 20, 1919. Ross was deputy minister of education for Alberta. Robinson sent identical letters to Robert Fletcher, deputy minister of education for Manitoba, and D. P. McColl, superintendent of education for Saskatchewan (*Ibid.*, pp. 4594-7). These files end with Letterbook 191 which concludes on December 31, 1919; there are no files of incoming correspondence in the Public Archives of British Columbia.

⁶²*Ubyyssey* (Vancouver), April 7, 1921, p. 2.