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Abstract: Raymond Brutinel remains one of the Canadian Corps' most intriguing and little understood senior officers. A fair amount has been written about his service with the Canadian Corps, which generally portrays him as a significant commander and military innovator. But his life before he joined the Canadian military largely remains a mystery, which Brutinel himself did little to clear up. He had emigrated from France to Edmonton, Alberta in 1905 and lived there until the outbreak of war. Yet little is known in detail about this formative period of his life. Based largely upon Edmonton-based sources, the following aims to bring greater clarity to these crucial formative years than has been available before now. There is, in fact, little here of a specific military nature, which may itself be significant. But for the first time we have significant detail about what this background was. This in turn helps us to understand exactly the kind of experience, the personality, and the intellectual qualities that Brutinel brought to the job of Canadian Corps machine gun commander.

RAYMOND BRUTINEL WAS one of the more into interesting senior officers to serve with the Canadian Corps in the First World War. A native of France and a veteran of three years conscripted service with the French army, he did not fit the stereotypical image of a military commander. Of a moderate stature, he possessed a sharp, somewhat elongated nose perched above a pencil moustache. The nose supported a pair of rimless spectacles, through which his

short-sighted, dark eyes peered intently. The image fitted more the stereotype of a school master, or perhaps an accountant, than that of a soldier. Yet this this unlikely figure was to become known for his mastery in the use of one of the deadliest weapons of the First World War: the machine gun. Notable for creating in the first month of the war an innovative unit of eight armoured trucks equipped with two machine guns each, by July 1916 he had become the Canadian Corps' senior machine gun officer. In April 1917 he was made the commander of a newly created Canadian Machine Gun Corps. Under his tutelage Canadian machine gunners became some of the most adept and practiced on the Western Front and perfected new tactical methods and forms of use for the weapon. He also saw his armoured machine gun vehicles make important contributions as a mobile machine gun reserve as well as essay an early form of armoured mobile warfare.

Respected and trusted by lieutenant generals Sir Julian Byng and Sir Arthur Currie, successively commanders of the Canadian Corps from June 1916 to the end of the war, this perhaps improbable figure became a voice of considerable authority within the corps' command councils. Indeed, in an appraisal of Brutinel completed in March 1918, Currie, commander of the corps from June 1917 on, and certainly no dispenser of easy praise, wrote: "I know of no General Officer in the Military Forces of Canada, whether he is serving in Canada, England, or France, who has done more in this war."[1]

A fair amount has been written about Brutinel's career as a machine gun commander, although no 'definitive' study has yet emerged. His life before he joined the Canadian Expeditionary Force, in August 1914, has not been treated in any depth, however. Some information has come by way of Brutinel himself, in interviews he gave to A.E. Powley, producer of the CBC radio documentary series "In Flanders Fields," which aired in the 1960s. The tapes of these programs are part of the Powley Fonds at Library and Archives Canada. They are the recollections of an old and seriously ill man, however, whose memory of the events he was describing was fading and who was more given to recounting anecdotes than providing a considered historical account of his or is units' activities during the war. Most of the really verifiable information we have on Brutinel in

[1] Canadian War Museum (CWM), 58A 1 16.3 19801226-280, Sir Arthur Currie Papers, Currie to Headquarters, Overseas Military Forces of Canada, 29 March 1918.

Canadian Motor Machine Gun Brigade waiting alongside Arras-Cambrai Road, September 1918. [Library and Archives Canada, PA-3398]

these years comes to us by way of two main published sources. The first are the writings of National Defence historian Yves Tremblay, who has so far carried out the most intensive, scholarly consideration of Brutinel, focusing primarily on his mobile machine gun brigades and his role as an early theorist of armoured warfare. The second is a biography of Brutinel recently released by Dominique and Jacques Baylaucq, distant relatives and close family friends of Brutinel, to whom the former machine gun commander willed his archives, and upon which their book is based. The latter, in particular, is most useful for some fresh information they provide concerning Brutinel's life before and after the war.[2]

Both these accounts, however, remain at best sketchy about the early decades of Brutinel's life, as they are mainly concerned with Brutinel's First World War accomplishments. The three authors say what they can about his service with the French army, although

[2] Library and Archives Canada (LAC), MG 30, E333, Powley Papers; Yves Tremblay, "Brutinel: A Unique Kind of Leadership," in Bernd Horn and Stephen Harris, *Warrior Chiefs: Perspectives on Senior Canadian Military Leaders* (Toronto: Dundurn Press, 2001), 57–70; and "Brutinel et la guerre de movement," in Roch legault and Jean Lamarre eds., *La Première Guerre Mondiale et la Canada: contributions sociomilitaires québébecois* (Montréal: Méridien, 1999), 195–224; Dominique and Jacques Baylaucq, *Brutinel: The Extraordinary Story of a French Citizen Brigadier-General in the Canadian Army* (Privately Published, France, 2010).

Brutinel with Canadian Machine Gun Brigade Staff ca. 1919. From left to right: Captain J.K. Lawson, Major J.D. Foster, Captain M.R. Levy (Marshall), and Lieutenant P.M. Hume. [Musée Héritage Museum CA MHM 2014.22.02]

apparently the documentary information about this stage of his life is limited.[3] As for the years between 1905 and 1913, which he spent in Alberta, highlights are noted such as his editorship of the French language newspaper *Le Courrier de l'Ouest*, and his work as a minerals explorer and agent for a group of prominent Montreal businessmen who had extensive investments in the area. No real attempt has been made, however, to undertake the necessary research that would allow for an in depth examination of this formative period of his life, for what it might reveal about the experiences he had that helped to shape him, and what they reveal about his developing personality and character. So far, for example, we have known very little about what he brought with him from France in terms of attitudes, social-political orientation, and what led him to decide to immigrate to Canada. We know little about the challenges he faced in these years in Alberta, the manner that he dealt with them, and the nature of his interaction with peers and superiors. Such considerations have so far been largely absent from any appraisal of this significant, and some would say formative, military commander. The aim of the following is to bring to light this important yet hitherto largely unexamined period in Brutinel's life.

[3] Tremblay goes into this, apparently in the most depth that one can, in his "Raymond et la guerre de mouvement," 198.

Certainly sources exist that allow this to be undertaken. Unfortunately, no private letters or diaries survive from these years (or for that matter, any other part of Brutinel's life). However, the ambitious Brutinel quickly sought out opportunities in Edmonton, and soon rose to positions of prominence in his adopted city. As a result, a great deal of information can be gleaned simply through an examination of Edmonton's newspapers for the years that he lived there. Indeed, as Brutinel was the editor for a number of years of the French language weekly *Le Courrier de l'Ouest*, this is an especially fruitful source, hitherto largely untapped by historians. Indeed, these sources, together with a number of useful local histories, allow us to assemble a fairly rich account of Brutinel's activities in these years, played out within the context of the dynamic and flourishing life of the city of Edmonton. With apologies to James Joyce, what follows can well be termed a 'portrait of the future machine gun commander as a young man.'

Brutinel was editor of the *Courrier* from January 1906 to August 1908. During these years he wrote frequently and quite expansively for it on a number of matters. The subjects covered were by no means insular or parochial. Rather they included commentaries on world politics and, most frequently, the state of affairs in his native France. These writings do not tell us much about what Brutinel actually *did* during the twenty-three years he lived in France before he came to Canada. They do, however, provide insight into his *attitudes* towards developments in his former homeland, and indications of where he stood with regards to the tumult of issues that riled French society and politics at the time.

At the fount of them all, in important respects, was the Dreyfus Affair. But where Brutinel stood with regards to this hugely divisive issue we so far have not known. Was he a Dreyfusard or an anti-Dreyfusard? He was a strong Catholic, but we have had no indication of how he viewed the disruptions to which the church was being subjected by a leftist government bent on secularisation. He served in the French army during one of the most turbulent times in its history, but we do not know where he stood with regard to this unrest. Did he support the more progressive, liberalising forces, or the conservative groups which tended to believe that preserving the prestige of the army took precedence over everything including matters of truth and falsehood? His writings for the *Courrier* provide answers to these questions and thereby furnish invaluable insight

into the young man's character, intellect, and moral qualities. As significant, his writings for the *Courrier* tell us the real reasons why he left France to immigrate to Canada, a subject upon which until now there has been considerable misunderstanding.

The future Canadian Corps machine gun commander was born in 1882 in the village of Alets-les-Bains, department de l'Aude in the south of France. He was the son of the village barber, but despite what appear to be quite humble origins, he completed at least the better part of a good secondary education at a Jesuit-run school in Carcassonne. At the age of sixteen, however, he left school to go to sea on a merchant ship. To Powley he recounted that he "sailed in long voyages in three-masted barques and square riggers of the period" mostly in South American and Caribbean waters.[4] In 1901, however, he returned home to complete a compulsory period of service in the French army, specifically with the regiment based in his area, the 53rd *Régiment d'infanterie de Tarbes*. It is nowhere recorded what the exact dates of Brutinel's service were. But he was enlisted under a conscription law passed in 1889, updated in 1892, which decreed that conscripts were to serve three years' with the active army and then as a member of the reserves for twenty-two years thereafter.[5] Brutinel served firstly as ordinary ranker and eventually achieved the position of a high ranking non-commissioned officer or possibly officer cadet.[6] He left the army in 1903 and in the same year married Marie Calamun, another native of the south of France. Marie was related to the then Colonel Ferdinand Foch, who later, in March 1918, was to be appointed generalissimo of all the Allied armies on the Western Front. There is no indication that this association had any particular effect upon Brutinel's own military career, however.

The Brutinels had two children early on in their marriage: a son, Roger, born in New York on their way to Alberta in 1904 and a daughter, Raymonde, born just outside Edmonton at Fort Saskatchewan in 1905. The Baylaucqs bring to light the interesting information that, in August 1907, Raymond and Marie Brutinel were granted a divorce by the court of Tarbes. Yet, despite the fact that

[4] Powley Papers. Brutinel to Powley, 6 August 1963.

[5] On this, see Douglas Porch, *The March to the Marne: The French Army, 1871–1914* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1981), 25–26.

[6] Tremblay, in "Raymond Brutinel et la guerre de movement," 198, concludes from his own investigations that Brutinel never achieved the status of officer in the French army.

they remained divorced under French law, they resumed living with one another the next year in Edmonton, and indeed went on to produce another child, Pierre, born there in 1909.[7]

The choice of the Brutinels to leave France and relocate to Alberta had much to do with the political, social, and religious situation in France at the time which was in a state of considerable upheaval. The ramifications of the Dreyfus Affair continued to provoke agitation and disruption in many areas of French life. This great storm of political, military, and social controversy had been roiling French society for nearly a decade when Brutinel left the army. Very briefly, Alfred Dreyfus was an artillery officer in the French army who, in 1894, was taken into custody for allegedly selling top secret information to the Germans. The right-wing press, led by the demagogic and fiercely anti-Semitic editor Édouard Drumont, seized upon the case, emphasising that, as he was a Jew, Dreyfus represented a special threat to France's security. He should receive the severest form of punishment, these papers insisted. A secret court martial duly convicted Dreyfus, sentencing him to life imprisonment and solitary confinement under the harshest conditions on Devil's Island, off the coast of French Guiana. Beginning in 1896, however, reports began appearing in some of the non-right-wing French newspapers that questioned not only whether Dreyfus was guilty, but suggested that members of the general staff had deliberately fabricated the evidence used to convict him.

The result was a huge rupture in the French body politic. One side, termed Dreyfusards, which included such prominent figures as Émile Zola, Marcel Proust, and Georges Clémenceau, believed ardently in the condemned officer's innocence and demanded that his name be cleared. They accused the army not only of deceit and falsifying evidence, but of being full of officers who espoused the same anti-Semitic attitudes that were so much in evidence in the right-wing press. The other, 'anti-Dreyfusard,' faction, which included such intellectuals as Charles Maurras, Jules Lemaître, and Arthur Rimbaud, believed equally fervently in Dreyfus's guilt, and stood firmly behind the reputation of one of France's most esteemed institutions, the army. Convinced that Dreyfus should continue to languish on Devil's Island, their rhetoric was indeed suffused with a

[7] D. and J. Baylaucq, *Brutinel*, 13.

substantial element of the anti-Semitism that marked the diatribes of the right-wing press.[8]

By 1899, however, the increasing amount of evidence casting doubt on Dreyfus's guilt convinced the French Supreme Court of Appeals to look into the matter. It concluded that there was sufficient evidence of weaknesses in the original case against Dreyfus that he should be brought back from Devil's Island to be tried in a second, open, court martial. This tribunal met at Rennes in August 1899. Composed of officers who saw it solely as an occasion for upholding the reputation of the army against its detractors, it ignored all the exculpatory evidence and again found Dreyfus guilty. A month later, having become completely fed up with military 'justice,' the French premier remitted the sentence and allowed Dreyfus to return to his family. At the war office, a team of investigators took up the task of systematically reviewing all the evidence bearing upon the case and found indisputable proof not only of Dreyfus's innocence, but of the identity of the real guilty party. As a result, on 12 July 1906, the Supreme Court of Appeals granted Dreyfus complete exoneration. Ten days later a ceremony was held at the *École Militaire*, where he was readmitted to the army, promoted to the rank of major, and awarded the *Légion d'honneur*.[9]

In the wake of this by now infamous scandal came a political backlash that had a direct impact upon two institutions that were close to the heart of Raymond Brutinel—the church and the army. Governments of the Third Republic, which had come into being following France's defeat in the Franco-Prussian War of 1870–71, were hostile towards the influence wielded by the Roman Catholic Church. They viewed it as a carryover from the *ancien regime* and a purveyor of notions that were out of step with the underlying principles of a republican system of government. Over the years,

[8] The positions of the Dreyfusards and anti-Dreyfusards, and the anti-Semitism associated with the latter, are outlined in such standard sources as Alfred Cobban, *A History of Modern France, III: 1871–1962* (London: Penguin Pelican, 1974), 48–57; Denis Brogan, *France Under the Republic: The Development of Modern France, 1870–1939* (London: Greenwood Press, 1967), 329–356; Jean Marie Mayeur and Madeleine Rebérioux, *The Third Republic from its Origins to the Great War, 1871–1914* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1984), 179–208.

[9] As noted, the Dreyfus Affair has been much discussed in numerous historical accounts. One that was used extensively here was Guy Chapman's *The Dreyfus Trials* (London: Batsford, 1972). See also, Ruth Harris, *Dreyfus: Politics, Emotion and the Scandal of the Century* (New York: Picador, 2010).

various ministries had taken limited steps to curtail the church's influence, but the institution's privileged position within the French state was not tampered with. Now, however, its overt support of the anti-Dreyfus cause stiffened the government's resolve to take firm action. Some early steps included the banning from France of some of the more zealous Catholic religious orders, such as the Carthusians and the Assumptionists, and the closing of a large numbers of church-run schools. Much remained to be done, however, when in 1902 elections brought to power a regime termed the *Bloc des Gauches*, which, with Émile Combes as premier, was committed to fully secularising the French state.

They proposed to begin by doing away with an historic Concordat, completed between the church and Napoleon Bonaparte in 1801, which had governed church-state relations in France for over a century. This accord had allowed the church to keep its properties (which had been seized by the earlier revolutionary regime), and guaranteed government funding in return for its clergy agreeing to swear an oath of allegiance to the state. The government's annulment of the Concordat in December 1905, finally brought about the formal separation of the church from the state. Along with all others, the Roman Catholic Church would henceforth be on its own, responsible for its own funding. It would, moreover, lose direct control over church properties.[10]

The officer corps of the army was also affected by the post-Dreyfus Affair backlash. The governments that took power in the wake of the Dreyfus Affair believed it to have revealed that this group was dominated by overly zealous Roman Catholics. Convinced that these officers tended to favour non-republican forms of government and were permeated by the anti-Semitic views that had helped convict Dreyfus, they resolved on taking action. In June 1900, the strongly pro-republican and anti-aristocratic General Louis André was appointed minister of war. He immediately took the process of deciding promotions away from the control of the army's general staff and placed it in his own hands. He then began promoting officers whom he saw as politically reliable and moving suspect ones to the retirement

[10] Michael Burleigh, *Earthly Powers: the Clash of Religion and Politics in Europe from the French Revolution to the Great War* (London: Harper, 2005), 336–364. Also, Mayeur and Rebérioux, *The Third Republic*, 209–240; Cobban, *A History of Modern France, III*, 58–65.

list or to obscure posts. For example, in 1901, Marie Brutinel's relative, the staunchly Catholic Ferdinand Foch, was removed from his teaching position at the *École de Guerre* in Paris and sent to cool his heels in a provincial military appointment.[11] Although André's overzealous actions in the so-called *Affaire des Fiches* of 1904 was to lead to his being discredited and to the fall of his government, its immediate successors remained largely committed to the same goals. Morale within the officer corps plummeted. A disturbingly large number of officers simply left the army, many of these, in the words of one distressed officer at the time, being among "the best."[12]

A seldom remarked upon offshoot of these developments was the emigration of a number of groups of discontented French army officers to Alberta, Canada. The laying down of Canadian Pacific Railway (CPR) through the prairies in the early 1880s was accompanied by a massive advertising campaign on the part of the CPR and the Canadian government intended to attract settlers. The picture conveyed was very much that of virtual "promised land" as historians R. Douglas Francis and Chris Kitzen have emphasised in their recent book on the subject.[13] One of the results was the arrival of groups of various sorts, discontented with affairs in their home community and seeking escape or some kind of solace in this much idealised landscape.[14]

Certainly motives of disaffection with their home environment—specifically the measures taken against the church and the position of Catholic officers in the army—motivated the immigration, starting in 1904, of about twenty French army cavalry officers and their families to a pastoral valley to the southeast of Red Deer, Alberta.[15] They had been persuaded to do so by a fellow countryman, Armand Trochu, who in 1902 had moved into the valley which would eventually be named after him. Although apparently non-military himself, Armand was the nephew of General Jules Trochu, who had commanded the Paris garrison during the Prussian siege in 1871. On a visit to France

[11] See B.H. Liddell Hart, *Foch, the Man of Orleans*, (London: Penguin, 1931), 35.
[12] Porch, *March to the Marne*, 112.
[13] Douglas Francis and Chris Kitzan, *The Prairie West as Promised Land* (Calgary: University of Calgary Press, 2007).
[14] Ibid., especially A.W. Rasporich, "Utopian Ideals and Community Settlements in Western Canada, 1880–1914," 352–377.
[15] D. and J. Baylaucq, *Brutinel*, 14; Tremblay, "Brutinel et la guerre de mouveement," 199.

in 1904, Armand Trochu encountered a number of officers severely upset with the way matters were unfolding in the army. He responded by persuading a number of them to leave the army and the country to take up a new life with him in his Alberta valley. Like the groups mentioned above, these men saw this as their chance to establish a community in this promising environment that was free of what they deemed to be the corrupting influences they found so abhorrent at home. As one of their number wrote to his parents in France: he was "disgusted with the morale of the army and could see no future in this, nor would he obey the government's edicts"—as he saw it, to shut down churches.[16]

At Trochu, they concluded, they could live in accordance with the principles they held as cavalry officers and in accordance with the tenets of their strong Catholic faith. The men established a hard-working and productive community that was well regarded by other residents in the area. Over time their settlement grew and became more diversified, with some returning to France and others arriving. All, however, remained firm French patriots and were, in any event, obligated to rejoin the colours in the event of a national emergency. With the outbreak of war between France and Germany in August 1914, these officers returned *en masse* to France to fight with the French army. Many were killed and only one or two returned afterwards.[17]

At least two other groups of French military personnel immigrated to Alberta at the same time. One located in Calgary west and the other in Edmonton.[18] Not much is known about either, although one certainly runs across references to some former members of the French army in Edmonton when trolling though the city's press of the period. Indeed, one local chronicler reports that one member of these French military immigrants to Edmonton loaned Brutinel the money with which to come over.[19] Nevertheless, the view holds sway that Brutinel's motives for relocating to Alberta were the same as those of the officers who settled in the Trochu Valley. Nor is this unduly

[16] Sheilagh S. Jameson. "Early Settlement: the St. Ann Ranch and Trochu Valley," in Edward Dodd ed., *Remember When: the History of Trochu and District*, (Calgary: Trochu History Book Committee, 1976), 24.
[17] Ibid., Jameson, 7–49; "Trochu," *Notre Dame de la Bonne Mor*t, August–September 1924, Translation, 146–149.
[18] D. and J. Baylaucq, *Brutinel*, 14.
[19] A.W. Cashman, *More Edmonton Stories: the Life and Times of Edmonton, Alberta* (Edmonton: Institute of Applied Art, 1958), 122.

surprising, given the fact that Brutinel himself said as much later in life in a letter to Larry Worthington, the wife and biographer of his one-time subordinate officer, Major General F.F. Worthington.[20] Indeed, Brutinel was, at the time, a strong Catholic and unhappy with the state of affairs in the army.

But there were important issues that distinguished Brutinel from the Trochu officers. He was of comparatively humble origins compared to their generally exalted backgrounds. Furthermore, he had served in the infantry while they had been members of the cavalry, a notoriously rarefied breed, with special interests. The kinds of pastoral, agricultural, and horse-related concerns that dominated their lives do not really seem to be the kinds of pursuits that would have interested the restless and energetic Brutinel. In addition, there would have been critical differences over the major issue that was dividing French society at the time—the Dreyfus Affair. This will be discussed further below.

Edmonton, the city in which Brutinel opted to settle, was at this time in the midst of a period of unprecedented growth. The last years of the nineteenth century and first decade of the twentieth constituted a period of remarkable economic expansion across North America. For Canada it was the period of the "Laurier Boom," one of the more notable features of which was the huge numbers of people that moved into the comparatively underpopulated and underdeveloped territory of the Canadian west. Alberta, for example, experienced a period of unprecedented growth. The influx of people stemmed mostly from Europe, but also from eastern Canada and the United States. The mass movement was spurred by the introduction of faster growing types of wheat that were suited to the harsh climate. Also, as has been seen, the Canadian government actively promoted the west as a favourable place to locate. And, in comparison with the American west which had been largely settled by then, plenty of good land remained available. Also, particularly in Alberta, vast deposits of good bituminous coal were being discovered. The population of Alberta, which numbered 73,022 in 1901, had grown to 373,943 by 1911. Edmonton, which became the capital of the newly created province of Alberta on 1 September 1905, saw its own population grow from 2121 in 1901 to 50,433 in 1911. It was the natural urban

[20] See Tremblay, "Brutinel: A Unique Kind of Leadership," 58, who accepts this interpretation.

Jasper Avenue, Edmonton, ca. 1903-1914. [Library and Archives Canada, PA-021244]

hub of the area, with transcontinental railway links being established by the completion in 1891 of a branch line leading south to the main Canadian Pacific Railway line at Calgary. And in 1905, the main line of Canadian Northern Railway came right through the city as did that of the Grand Trunk Pacific in 1909.[21]

The first sign of the Brutinel family's arrival in the city appeared on 7 September 1905, when the following advertisement appeared in the prominent English-language newspaper, the *Edmonton Bulletin.*

> Wanted: Position for lady recently arrived from France in private family, either as instructor in French, embroidery, music, or as a companion. High wages not expected, as applicant wishes to learn English. For particulars write to Madame Brutinel, Box 22 Edmonton.[22]

This advertisement was repeated on 24 September, and then nothing was heard until 23 November, when another appeared in the French language *Courrier de l'Ouest*, stating that "M.R. Brutinelle [*sic*] is going to open a comfortable guest house at the corner of Jasper and

[21] For the surging economy the era and its impact upon the Canadian west, a standard source remains R. Craig Brown and Ramsay Cook, *Canada, 1896–1921: A Nation Transformed* (Toronto: McClelland and Stewart,1974), 49–107.

[22] *The Edmonton Bulletin* (henceforth the *Bulletin*), 7 September 1905, 4.

Portrait of Brutinel in Edmonton. [CMusée Héritage Museum CA MHM 2014.22.16]

the 6th line."[23] This advertisement continued to run in every issue of the paper until the third week of December, suggesting that during this period the new arrivals were hard pressed financially.

Presumably capitalising on skills he had learned in the French Army, Brutinel initially established himself as a fencing master, founding an institution called the Edmonton School of Fencing. On 28 December, the *Courrier* carried coverage of an event that involved Brutinel giving a fencing lesson to "one of his students" in the use of the fencing weapon, the foil (*fleuret* in French). As this was the eighth such lesson, Brutinel had obviously been practicing this activity for a period of time. "The impression left by the spectacle," pronounced the *Courrier*, "is that the foil is veritably the art of arts. It is a beautiful and noble sport, the foil being a terrible arm." After the lesson had finished, Brutinel gave a demonstration of his own expertise with the sabre. "He seduced us by his brilliance and his supple vigour," enthused the *Courrier*. "We left M. Brutinel thankful for his amiability and wishing the young people of Edmonton would take an interest in this remarkable and useful sport."[24]

[23] *Le Courrier de l'Ouest* (hereafter *Courrier*), 23 November 1905. Translated by the author.

[24] *Courrier*, 28 December 1905, 8.

The last recorded appearance of Brutinel as a fencer in Edmonton occurred in February 1906, which was covered by the English language, *Edmonton Bulletin*. Again sponsored by the Edmonton School of Fencing, the event's first half saw "Serjt. Major R.E. [*sic*] Brutinel of the 53rd Regiment Infantry, French Army," take on "Mr. A.E. Hopkins, late of the Royal Military School, Toronto and the R.N.W.M.P.," in a contest using the foil. Another saw Brutinel confront "Serjt. J. Darrigan of the 8th Chasseurs, French Army" in a duel with the rapier. (Darrigan, who was then running a livery stable in Edmonton, was another French military immigrant to the city). The second half saw Brutinel duel with Sergeant Darrigan using swords, and with A.E. Hopkins, using rapiers. Of special interest here may be the fact that Brutinel chose to give himself the rank of sergeant major. There has always been an element of mystery as to precisely what rank Brutinel had attained in the French army. Could this, perhaps, be his own estimation of what he had achieved, using the ranking system then prevalent in the British/Canadian system? [25]

In addition to covering Brutinel's fencing skills, the *Courrier* of 28 December, also carried coverage of another event that involved Brutinel: a Christmas Eve midnight mass celebrated at St. Joachim's, the main church frequented by the city's French speaking population. The author of the article was struck by the performance of the choir, made up of twenty male students from the church's convent, plus a number of male adults. Amongst the latter he identified an "Ed. Brutinel."[26] This was obviously Raymond Brutinel, as city directories for this period indicate that nobody else with that name was living in Edmonton at this time. As well as showing Brutinel's early involvement with the church in Edmonton, the article's use of the term "Ed.," is no doubt significant too. It is almost certainly the first reference to Brutinel having become the *Courrier*'s editor. It is interesting to note that the last appearance of the advertisement announcing that the Brutinels were operating a guest house appeared in this same issue.[27] The editorship would, one presumes, have improved their financial position, such that they would no longer have to take in house guests.

From the beginning of 1906, and for most of the next two years, Brutinel's energies were, in the main, devoted to the editorship and

[25] The event is described in the *Bulletin*, 20 February 1906, 8.
[26] *Courrier*, 28 December 1905, 8.
[27] *Courrier*, 21 December 1905, 7.

interests of the *Courrier de l'Ouest*. This newspaper, the first issue of which had appeared on 14 October 1905, had been founded by three of the most eminent members of the Edmonton French community, P.E. Lessard, Adéodat Boileau, and Dr. Philippe Roy, all three of whom had moved to Alberta from Quebec. Their purpose was to promote the interests of the French speaking citizens of the city and beyond. The recent creation of the province of Alberta, the naming of Edmonton as its capital, the expected arrival of new railways and the anticipated influx of more French immigrants made this seem to be a most propitious time to begin such a venture. As proclaimed in its first edition, the *Courrier* aimed "to keep its readers current with the principal points that arose in the political and economic worlds," so that they could be "judged and discussed from the point of view of French Canadians in the Edmonton area and beyond."[28]

A French speaking population had been present in the Edmonton area since eighteenth century fur-trading days. In 1904, it numbered approximately 500. This community also benefitted from the huge tide of immigration that struck Alberta in the following years. With French speaking settlers coming from Quebec, France, and the United States, by 1914 their population had swelled to 3,500. Representing some 4.6 percent of Edmonton's total population, they formed the second largest ethnic group in the city and the largest French speaking community west of St. Boniface, Manitoba.[29] "At no other time," writes Edward John Hart, the community's leading historian, "were they more active in the life of the city. Their presence was … felt in all spheres of social, religious, economic, educational, and political activity at the time."[30]

Of the three owners, Brutinel was closest to Roy. The latter had received his medical degree from Laval and had settled in Edmonton 1898. Besides practicing medicine, he worked intensively in the community, becoming in particular a champion of its French Canadian component. One of his major causes was attracting French speaking immigrants so as to ensure that community's continued vibrancy and influence. Immersing himself in politics, Roy became

[28] *Courrier*, 14 October 1905, 2. Translation by the author; Edward John Hart, *Ambition and Reality: The French Speaking Community of Edmonton 1795–1935* (Edmonton: Le Salon D'histoire De La Francaphonie Albertaine, 1980), 73.
[29] Ibid., 43.
[30] Ibid., 43.

a devoted member of the federal and provincial Liberal parties, which allegiances he believed constituted the best means of realising his goals. Indeed, writes Hart, he became "the dominant political personality of the period." His influence was recognised, and, no doubt, further enhanced when in 1905, Prime Minister Laurier named him as the representative for northern Alberta in the Canadian Senate. In 1911, the same prime minister appointed him commissioner general of Canada in Paris. He must have handled this position well, as he retained it until 1936, even though from 1911 to 1921 and 1930 to 1935, the Conservatives held power in Ottawa.[31] Indeed, in 1930, in an attempt to have Brutinel, then living in Paris, appointed to a non-paying advisory position at the Canadian embassy in that city, Roy declared Brutinel to be his "most intimate personal friend. We were associated in business long before the War, and since he has been living in Paris, I have supervised his financial affairs in Canada."[32]

It is not known precisely how Brutinel came to be hired by these men to edit their recently founded newspaper, which they undoubtedly meant to become an influential voice in the French community. As shown by his membership in St. Joachim's church choir, however, Brutinel had taken care to become involved in an important sphere of the French population's spiritual and community life. We have also seen how the *Courrier*, in its coverage of his earlier public demonstration of his skill with bladed weapons of various sorts, pronounced upon his "brilliance" and on being "seduced by his amiability." Possibly too, by the standards of Edmonton's French community at the time, the education he had received at a French Jesuit school would have been an advantage. Certainly the issues of the *Courrier* that came out under his editorship showed that he could write and articulately express views on a wide range of subjects. Personal qualities that were to be of advantage throughout his career probably helped as well, including self-confidence, quick intelligence, considerable charm, and a talent at plying with flattery those whom he wished to impress.

It was through Brutinel's editorship of the *Courrier* that we come to understand a major component of the motivations that led him to leave France and come to Canada. As noted above, the standard

[31] Ibid., 71–72.

[32] LAC, MG 20 K File F-20, 146264, R.B. Bennett Papers, W.H. Cahan, Sec'ty of State to Bennett, 31 October 1930. Letter from Roy to Cahan enclosed.

interpretation is that he came for the same reasons as the ones that motivated the officers who settled in the Trochu Valley. Certainly, Brutinel himself gave credence to this interpretation in statements he made later in life. However, writings that he made in the *Courrier*, soon after he took over the editorship, and hence, appeared much closer to the time of his arrival in Canada, compel us to revise this conclusion. These remarks were made during an animated exchange that occurred between Brutinel and another French immigrant to the west, which appeared in the *Courrier* during the months of July to September 1906. On 26 July, the front page of the paper carried an article, almost certainly written by Brutinel, entitled *L'Innocense de Dreyfus*. It recounted the sordid details of the case that had been confabulated against this much maligned officer, and clearly took pleasure in the fact that he had been at last cleared and reinstated in the army.[33]

It soon emerged, however, that an important figure within the Roman Catholic community in the Canadian west had different opinions. On 2 August, the newspaper published a letter written by a correspondent who signed himself "J.B. Surveillant." The writer subsequently revealed, however, that this was a *nom de plume* and that he was in reality the Roman Catholic bishop of St. Albert (a traditionally French community about twenty-five kilometres northwest of Edmonton). "Surveillant" was, in fact, the eminent churchman, Émile-Joseph Legal. Having been educated and ordained a priest in France, Legal had immigrated to Canada in 1880. Moving to the St. Albert area in 1881, he ministered to the Blackfoot people and went on to publish extensively on their rituals and language. He became bishop of St. Albert in June 1902, and eventually, in November 1912, would be named archbishop of Edmonton.[34] His exchange of letters with Brutinel reveal attitudes that are not so flattering to his reputation, but definitely reflected a significant portion of belief within the Catholic Church in France, and clearly, areas of Canada at this time.

In his letter of 2 August, Legal wanted to know where the *Courrier* had got its information that Dreyfus's innocence had been confirmed. On the contrary, he insisted, the accused officer had been "judged by

[33] *Courrier*, 26 July 1906, 1.

[34] Raymond Huel, "Legal, Émile-Joseph," *Dictionary of Canadian Biography*, vol. 14 (Toronto: University of Toronto, 2003) [accessed January 27 2014], available at: http://www. Biographica.ca/en/bio/legal_emile_joseph_14E-html.

his peers during a time of no political passions or excitement, and he was found guilty and condemned. This is the judgement which will live before posterity." Typical of much of the rhetoric heard in France, his summation was that "despite all the gold of the Jews and all the pressure exerted by a government at the mercy of the [Masonic] lodges, the original verdict had been upheld" (presumably referring to the Rennes court martial of 1899). Under these conditions, he averred, it was necessary to conclude that Dreyfus was "a thousand times guilty."[35]

Having left France much more recently and being much more familiar with the factual details of the Dreyfus case, Brutinel reacted with outrage to the bishop's statements. In a long letter he wrote under his own name to the newspaper's editor (himself) he passionately denounced "Surveillant's" presumption that he knew what really was transpiring in France. Indeed, wrote Brutinel, he had read the letter with "stupefaction," believing its contents to be "violently politically motivated." Recounting the findings of investigations carried out in France concerning the facts of the Dreyfus case—that he was innocent of the charges, that members of the army had known who the real culprit was, that they had hidden this to protect themselves and the honour of the army—Brutinel insisted that a colossal act of injustice had been committed. The "treason of one or more members of the army's general staff is an undeniable fact" he insisted.

Legal's claims about the judgements against Dreyfus having been made in a calm and reasonable atmosphere evoked an especially passionate denunciation from Brutinel. On the contrary, he wrote:

> two weeks after Dreyfus's arrest France was in the midst of a very violent anti-Semitic agitation accompanied by outrages against property and even persons, not only Jews, but also those who because the consonance of their names may seem more or less strange or [because] their physical appearance seems to be Jewish.
>
> It is not necessary to have seen the pillaged shops, or have read the placards: "This house is not Jewish" that many merchants had placed in their window. It is not necessary to have read the incendiary notices that checker the walls, preaching the massacre of Jews and setting fire to their homes, to speak with … candor of this period as one of fevered intolerance.

[35] *Courrier*, 2 August. 1906, 4. Translations by the author.

Indeed, wrote Brutinel, the antagonisms the affair had generated caused him to take the decision to move to Canada. This country, he asserted, "did not know the bitterness of political passions and the misdeeds of intolerance."[36]

Brutinel's intervention on this occasion is extremely important for what it says about the nature of his judgement and his stance *vis à vis* the politics of his home country. What we have understood to date has placed him in the same category as the intensely Roman Catholic officers who located in the Trochu Valley. We know that in this group's case, their leaving France was due to their strong Catholic faith, their consequent abhorrence of the government's secularisation policies, and the discriminatory campaign that was being waged against strongly Catholic officers in the army. The isolated rural circumstances of the Trochu Valley, they felt, would allow them to lead a quiet, pastoral life, drawing upon their skills as cavalry officers and allow them to practice the fundamentals of their strong Catholic faith. Such motives were much more in keeping with the beliefs system espoused by the anti-Dreyfus forces and by Bishop Legal than with that of the pro-Dreyfus stance.

Brutinel's response to the bishop, with its denunciation of the general staff and an anathematisation of the anti-Semitism that had formed such an integral component of the anti-Dreyfus stance, leaves no doubt as to where he stood. Made less than a year after his immigration to Canada, he had nothing to gain by taking on the admired bishop of St. Albert, and enunciating so clearly the basic tenants of the pro-Dreyfus position. He was, in fact, an out and out Dreyfusard. He felt none of the anti-Semitic prejudice that contemporaries identified with the army's more conservative and ultra-Catholic officers. Indeed, the rather tortured tone in which he described the prejudice that was directed against those who, because of the sound of their name or their looks, were presumed to be Jewish, leads one to wonder whether he may have personally experienced some of this prejudice. Although he was himself a strong Catholic, it is clear that, for him, hard evidence took priority over the faith-based and irrational conclusions reached by some elements within the church (witness Bishop Legal) and by other adherents of the anti-Dreyfus cause.

[36] *Courrie*r, 9 August. 1906, 4. Translations by the author.

In the meantime, however, he had applied himself to editing the *Courrier* and advancing its causes. To the founders' desire to have the major economic and political issues of the day addressed, Brutinel responded by printing, usually on the paper's first page, lengthy accounts of major issues in world, particularly European geopolitics, written by himself. In the first issue that came out under his editorship on 4 January 1906, the entire contents of the first page and nearly half of another were devoted to what was entitled "A Survey of World Politics." Here the new editor assessed the political and economic situation of most of the world's major countries, including six in Europe, as well as the Americas, China, Japan, and Africa, concentrating in particular on their capacities to wield power. Russia he declared, was in a sad state, having been defeated in a costly war with Japan and facing revolution at home. Germany he reported, was a strong country. However, under its unpredictable emperor, it was, in his estimation, making a huge mistake in proceeding with the building of a strong navy, which he noted was provoking great consternation in Great Britain. He was, though, delighted with the *entente cordiale* that had recently been completed between Britain and France. By strengthening France's hand in dealing with Germany, he believed it would be "a serious guarantor of peace." The *entente* would, he hoped, "translate into the same degree of confidence and amity between Britain and France as exists so strongly in the Dominion between French Canadians and English Canadians."[37]

From then until 23 May 1907, practically every issue of the *Courrier* carried on its front page a column entitled "*A Travers le Monde*." This was essentially a venue for Brutinel to express his views on international affairs, through an in depth discussions of developments in various countries, and their significance for world politics. If there was a major continuing theme, it was a concern—becoming increasingly widespread at the time—that a bellicose Germany constituted a major threat to European, if not world, peace. What they perhaps show as much as anything, however, is that Brutinel, who was only twenty-three when he joined the *Courrier*, felt quite competent to produce almost on a weekly basis these quite sweeping assessments of the goings on in particular countries and then tying them into convincing considerations as to how they

[37] *Courrier,* 4 January 1906, 1. Translations by the author.

Brigadier-General Raymond Brutinel by William Logsdail. [Canadian War Museum CN 8387]

might affect world politics. It was an interest that he was to sustain throughout his life.

Although his columns make frequent reference to the Russo-Japanese War, at no point, unfortunately, do they ever comment upon the weapons that were used in the conflict; in particular, the machine gun. This weapon had figured more prominently in that war than in any that had been fought previously. Moreover, Brutinel was later to claim his studies of its use by both sides in Manchuria had had a major influence upon his own ideas concerning the weapon's employment during his service with the Canadian Corps. There is no evidence of his having developed such thoughts during this time in the sources used for this study, however, although it must be said these are mostly public in nature and reveal little about what thoughts he pursued in the privacy of his own study. The columns ceased on 23 May 1907, with Brutinel's departure on a trip to Europe. Although Brutinel did return for a while afterwards as editor, "*A Travers le Monde*" never reappeared.[38]

[38] As noted, these columns appeared in the *Courrier* with only occasional interruptions, from 4 January 1906 to 23 May 1907. Some were signed "R.B;" most were not. However, that they ended on the day that Brutinel left on his trip to Europe is good evidence that they were the product of his pen.

Despite his decided pro-Dreyfus stance, Brutinel was a committed Roman Catholic and did not approve of the reforms being instituted by the French governments of the time, or at least the way that they were being implemented. Numerous editorials that he wrote for the *Courrier* dealt extensively with this subject and testify to the personal anguish he felt over the direction that the government was taking. In acting as they did, he declared on 18 January 1906, "the republican government has not only lacked wisdom, but has also committed a grave injustice. … The nation that was once called the eldest daughter of the church (*la fille ainé de l'Église*) is now for us an object of solicitude and very grave anxiety."[39] Nonetheless, he does seem to have concluded that, under the present circumstances, the status quo could not continue. Indeed, he expressed his hope that, in time, the French clergy would "find themselves in a situation analogous to that of the clergy in Canada, that is to say entirely independent *vis à vis* the government."[40] This would seem to indicate that he believed separation of church and state in France was inevitable, perhaps even desirable. His worst fear was that the tensions generated by this clash of ideals in France would lead to civil war, an outcome that, in his mind, had to be prevented at almost all costs. His major hope throughout the crisis was for both sides to remain calm and for neither to do anything that would unduly provoke the other, in hopes that a mutually acceptable solution would be attained.

In March, rioting broke out in some French churches in reaction to inventories that government officials decreed should be made of their properties and possessions.[41] The army had intervened and there were casualties. Brutinel's response to these incidents is telling. In an editorial of 13 March, he chose to emphasise the fact that at some churches calm had prevailed, with the congregations reacting simply by reciting prayers and singing hymns. Brutinel preference was clearly for this latter type of response. Whether confronted by good or by evil, he proclaimed, it was best "to apply the precepts of the Gospel. … With faith and ardent prayers you pardon those who strike you and by these arms you conquer."[42]

[39] *Courrier*, 18 January 1906, 1. Translations by the author.
[40] *Courrier*, 18 January 1906, 1
[41] See Burleigh, *Earthly Powers*, 362.
[42] *Courrier*, 13 March 1906, 1.

Furthermore, he was also prepared to criticise the pope when he deemed the pontiff to be overly provocative. Pope Pius X published three encyclicals dealing with the problems faced by the French church. Brutinel saw the first two, issued in February and August 1906, respectively, as conciliatory and approved their content. [43] Indeed, he believed the second to have influenced the republican government to delay by a year the implementation of their law to separate the church from the state.[44] The third, however, issued in January 1907 demanded, in Brutinel's view, a return to the status quo that had existed before the government embarked upon its reform program. Brutinel saw this as dangerously incendiary. The problems that it engendered were, he insisted, "of capital importance and surpassed in gravity" those of the previous two years. Frenchmen, he declared, should pray that God would help them avoid "a fratricidal struggle."[45]

The various commentaries that Brutinel made about the French church-state crisis cast significant light on his position as a Catholic and his attitudes towards French politics. We certainly can see that he cared deeply about the church. We can also see, however, that, even if he disagreed with it, he believed the enactment of the law providing for the separation of church and state to be inevitable. His major complaint now was with the unduly harsh methods by which the policy was being implemented. He was especially concerned about the continued wellbeing of the mother country and feared that the hostility felt by Catholics over the government's actions would result in a civil war. His response was to call for moderation on both sides. His position was, in the end, characterised by balance, restraint, and even by a certain element of Christian quietism. He cannot, in other words, be perceived in any way to have been a supporter of the kind of militant Catholicism that had played such a prominent role in the anti-Dreyfus cause.

As far as French politics were concerned, he was certainly not favourably disposed towards some of the fiercer republican politicians. Emil Combes, the leader of the *Bloc des Gauches*, especially raised his ire. Combes was forced to resign as premier over the *Affair des Affiches* scandal in early 1905. Rumours surfaced at the end of 1906,

[43] They are discussed in Burleigh, *Earthly Powers*, 363.

[44] *Courrier*, 20 December 1906, 1.

[45] Ibid, 1. As the encyclical was not formally published until January, there must have been advance word of its contents.

however, that he would be reinstated in the position. Such an act, fumed Brutinel, would be "demented." Combes, he insisted, was "intransigent, sectarian and brutal [and] would transform France before long into a battlefield."[46] But a measure of how far he was now prepared to compromise was that the politician whom he was prepared to support becoming premier was none other than the fiery leftist and committed secularist, Georges Clémenceau, then serving as minister of the interior.

Clémenceau had been moving to the right recently, particularly in matters relating to the country's militant unions. But his reputation as one of the more aggressive and vituperative members of the republican left was still largely intact. He remained firmly committed to the secularisation of the French state, but expressed a willingness, in order to help ease tensions, to bring to an end the inventories being carried out of church properties.[47] Brutinel quoted him as declaring "with energy" that under his premiership "not a single church would be closed." He was, Brutinel pronounced, the politician "who responded best to religious sentiments in the Chamber of Deputies."[48] Clémenceau becoming premier, as indeed he did in October 1906, was, in Brutinel's opinion, the best that could be hoped for. If church-state separation was to be implemented, it was, in Brutinel's view, best that it be done under a premier who, although determined to carry it out, was inclined to at least some degree of moderation. In other words, even when it was taking actions that were inimical to the interests of his beloved church, Brutinel believed that the solutions to the church state issues that were shaking French society were in the end best worked out by a republican government. This was true even if it was led by a figure who, historically, had been one of the leading advocates of secularisation. He did not, as many in France did at the time, support the return to some monarchist, or even Bonapartist form of government, wherein the interest of the church might be better protected.

As for the local scene in Edmonton, one of Brutinel's leading causes as a member of the city's French community was the promotion of immigration to the city from France. By March 1907, following the

[46] *Courrier*, 1 November 1906, 1. Translations by the author.
[47] See Edgar Holt, *The Tiger: The Life of Georges Clemenceau 1841–1929* (London, 1976), 130–137.
[48] *Courrier*, 1 November 1906, 1.

lead of his employers, he had become involved in an organisation that actively promoted the cause of French immigration, the *Société de Colinisation d'Alberta*. It was a high-profile position, as Brutinel's old epistolary foe, Bishop Legal, was listed as the patron, and the then Senator Roy as the honourary president. Brutinel, along with P.E. Lessard and Adéodat Boileau, was among those elected to serve on the governing committee, while he was also listed as belonging to a special "study committee."[49]

Canadian efforts to obtain immigrants from France had been a thorn in the side of relations between the two countries for some time. France had a declining population and had laws against promoting emigration from the country except to French colonies. Since the 1880s Canada had continued with low key efforts to obtain French emigrants, and France allowed these to proceed, so long as they remained relatively discreet. The results of these efforts were not great. In the decade 1891 to 1900, a total of only 1754 immigrants came to Canada from France. In 1907, however, with pressure being exerted from Quebec to increase the number of French speakers coming to Canada, the Canadian government stepped up efforts. Canadian agents began talking to French schools and chambers of commerce and issuing promotional brochures. The French government reacted with outrage, the result being that Prime Minister Laurier had to promise to bring these intensified efforts to a halt. These efforts did, however, have some effect. The numbers of French immigrants coming to Canada substantially increased, with a total of 17,960 arriving between 1907 and 1914.[50]

At the same time, the French community of Edmonton stepped up its own efforts to persuade France citizens to relocate to their city. One method they adopted was for French-born residents of the city to travel back to their homeland to preach the virtues of Edmonton as a

[49] *Courrier*, 7 March 1907, 7; see also the *Bulletin*, 21 March 1907, 7.

[50] On this see, Sylvain Simard and Denis Vaugeois, "Fabre, Hector" in *Dictionary of Canadian Biography*, vol. 13, University of Toronto Press/Université Laval, 2003, available at: http:www.biograph:-ca/en/bio/fabre_Hector_13E.html, [accessed 4 April 2014.]; Paul Magosci, ed., *Encyclopedia of Canadian Peoples* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1999), 529; Philippe Garneau, "Les relations entre le France et le Canada à fin du XIXe siècle: La Paris Canada (1884–1909)," Unpublished MA Thesis, (Université du Québec à Montréal 2008), 47–49; Bernard Pénisson, *L'Emigration française au Canada, 1882–1929*, *passim*, in *L'émigration française:* études *de cas Algérie—Canada—Etats Unis* (Paris: Université du Sorbonne, 1985). The statistics are derived from this latter work, 85.

place to settle. One of those who went to France for this purpose was Raymond Brutinel. On 23 May 1907, the *Courrier* announced that its editor was leaving on a voyage of several months to France, "for the purpose of promoting the interests of immigration."[51] This was at a time when tensions between France and Canada over immigration were at their height. Brutinel must have been aware of this, which may suggest that by this point his primary loyalties lay with his adopted homeland.

Whether Brutinel had any success in persuading fellow citizens of France to move to Alberta is not recorded. There was at least one noteworthy result of his visit, however. Much to the delight of the *Courrier*, while in Paris he managed to secure an interview with the prime minister of Canada, Sir Wilfrid Laurier, who was in the French capital on Canadian government business. The two met at Laurier's hotel room on 18 July. Brutinel's report of the interview does not record a great deal about Laurier's views. It does, however, cast an interesting light on the personality of Raymond Brutinel. The two touched upon numerous subjects, including the *Courrier*, which, Brutinel quoted Laurier as proclaiming, "should be found in any household that a French Canadian inhabits." Laurier then asked his interviewer for his own views on affairs in the Canadian west. His "enthusiastic" response, records Brutinel, prompted Laurier to pronounce: "Although you are of French birth you are more Canadian than a Canadian." Brutinel also recounted proudly that when he stood to take his leave, Laurier extended his right hand and in a "very friendly manner" placed his left hand on his shoulder. Escorting him to the door, according to Brutinel, the prime minister made him promise to visit him whenever he was in Ottawa.[52]

In Brutinel's account of this interview another aspect of his character emerges to which attention must be drawn. The unabashed self-congratulatory pleasure that he obviously felt at being in the presence of such a powerful and influential a person as Laurier and, to his mind at least, having favourably impressed him, is plain to see. The author does not tell us much about Laurier's views on matters but a great deal that implies that the prime minister thought very highly of him. Such reactions would be encountered frequently in his accounts of his dealings with senior personnel during the years he

[51] *Courrier*, 23 May 1907, 8.
[52] *Courrier*, 25 July 1907, 4. Translations by the author.

served as a commander with the Canadian Corps (even sometimes using the same phraseology). Brutinel indeed had a tendency at times towards self-glorification or preaching his own merit that, as Tremblay notes, made his relations with peers and "officers of a similar rank … often tense and sometimes even insufferable."[53] Evident here at the relatively early age of twenty-five, these traits must have been a fairly deeply engrained predilection. Such foibles must be taken into account for an appreciation of the quirks alongside the strengths of this undoubtedly able but complex man.

By the time that Brutinel returned to Edmonton from France in August 1907, his priorities had definitely shifted. Possibly it was the influence of his trip to France, where one of his duties was to preach the great business opportunities that lay waiting to be seized in Edmonton. Now more than ever, he seemed determined to take advantage of these opportunities himself. On 7 December 1907, the *Courrier* reported the creation of yet another French community group called the *Société Française*. Made up exclusively of those who were natives of France, it had been initiated by Raymond Brutinel and a man the paper identified as G. Lebreton, whose profession was listed as electrician. The well attended meeting began, according to the *Courrier*, with a "very strong and interesting speech" by Brutinel, the subject of which, unfortunately, the paper did not reveal. Some remarks followed from Lebreton, and two other prominent French immigrants, E. Délavaut, a lawyer and the French consul in Edmonton, and Armand De Bernis, the proprietor of a ranch outside the city, who would in due course become involved in a number of business ventures alongside Brutinel. The new group pronounced that its main concern would be with immigrants from France, helping them get established, and facilitating their interaction.[54]

The ambitions of this group were to become considerably broader, however, going much beyond the usual emphases of French community associations in Edmonton. The aims of such societies had traditionally been the promotion of the French fact in Edmonton's civic life and the celebration of French culture. The prominence within the new *Société Française* of such members as Délavaut, Bernis, and Brutinel, all of whom had strong interests in developing business opportunities in the Alberta capital, meant that a major thrust of the

[53] Tremblay, "Brutinel: A Unique Kind of Leadership," 59.
[54] *Courrier*, 19 December 1907, 8.

new society was to be the promotion of business opportunities for its members, and specifically, tapping into French capital resources to get these off the ground.

Such aims become more apparent at the group's next major gathering, which occurred a year later on 23 January 1908. By then its name had changed to *Amical Française*. Lebreton and Délavaut were still on the executive as president and secretary, respectively. Brutinel remained a member of its "committee," along with such prominent French Edmontonians as Henri Dumas and René Lamarchand. The former had recently established a firm in Edmonton specialising in horse and automobile purchase and rentals and had won the contract for providing daily transport in the city.[55] The company had also recently purchased a coal mine from which it planned to export coal to the east by means of the Canadian Northern Railway.[56] Lamarchand was a department store owner, a prosperous speculator in land, and a frequent voyager to France to promote Edmonton's, and doubtless his own, interests. The *Courrier* of 30 July 1908 reported on his return from one of these trips that he had "interested many capitalists and others in the causes of the new province and Edmonton in particular."[57]

By the next meeting on 21 January 1909, the society's "Honourary Committee" included, besides Délavaut, a Monsieur Léon Bureau from Paris and a Monsieur Bouillon, an engineer with the Grand Trunk Pacific Railway. The "active" committee included Lebreton and Dumas, while Brutinel still sat on a "general" committee. Lamarchand was no longer listed, his place having been taken by a Paul Bidouze. It is not recorded what Bidouze did in Edmonton, but a report in the *Courrier* of 22 June 1911 indicates that he was another who was interested in attracting French capital to the region. Greeting his return after a year's absence in France, the paper recorded that he had been "actively employed in interesting numerous French capitalists in western Canadian enterprises."[58] That he was on good terms with Brutinel is shown by the fact that on a trip to France in May 1910, Bidouze and his wife were accompanied by Madam Marie

[55] *Courrier*, 28 March 1907, 8
[56] *Courrier*, 12 November 1908, 6.
[57] *Courrier*, 30 July 1908, 6.
[58] *Courrier*, 22 June 1911, 6.

Brutinel, wife of Raymond.[59] Clearly the leadership of the *Amical Française* consisted of a sizable number of business-oriented French immigrants who hoped, preferably with the assistance of French capital, to take advantage of the economic opportunities presented by the boom conditions prevailing in the Canadian west at the time. Many were already actively involved in most of the areas that were either spurring or else benefitting from these conditions, including railways, real estate, resource exploitation, and urban transport. In his newly-assumed role as business entrepreneur, Brutinel was to become involved in most of these.

On 20 February 1908, the *Courrier* announced that Brutinel was leaving his position as editor "for reasons of too much other work."[60] The paper did not report what this work was, but in truth, in keeping with his activities in the *Amicale Française* Brutinel was moving into completely different fields of endeavour, all connected with business ventures of one sort or another. Being a newspaper editor no doubt gave him prestige and influence in the community, but the earning opportunities would have been limited. On the other hand, the prospects of personal enrichment within the booming local economy seemed to be proliferating. As with many ambitious men at the time, Brutinel determined that he must attempt to take advantage of such opportunities as were presented.

In his case, however, the route he took diverged significantly from the ambitions of the *Amicale Française*, which aimed to gain prosperity by attracting French capital to Alberta. Instead, he came to see his future as lying within the Anglo-Canadian business world. Specifically, he became allied with a group of wealthy investors from Montreal, among whom were such leading figures within Canadian business and finance as E.B. Greenshields, Robert Mackay, William Molson Macpherson, and, eventually, J.B. McConnell. These men had invested a good deal of money in the Grand Trunk Pacific Railway (GTP). This second major transcontinental railway line was, in 1909, to push through the Edmonton area and from there pass through the Yellowhead Pass in the Rockies to Prince Rupert on the Pacific. This group of investors in the line were anxious to realise as much from the money they had put into it as possible. Firstly, they hoped to exploit local coal deposits to provide the railway with the fuel it

[59] *Courrier*, 5 May 1910, 8.
[60] *Courrier*, 20 February 1908, 5.

needed to run its locomotives; secondly, they intended to capitalise as much as possible upon increased land prices and enhanced business development that they believed would inevitably occur along the railway's route. Somehow, by means that remain unclear, Brutinel succeeded in getting himself hired as this group's agent in Edmonton.

On their behalf, certainly by the time he had returned to Edmonton from France, he was increasingly devoting himself to searching for coal and other mineral deposits in the eastern foothills of the Rocky Mountains, some 200 kilometres west of Edmonton. Before long, he was to play a key role in the opening up and development of an area that became known as the Alberta Coal Branch. From here coal could be shipped by means of a branch line to the main line of the GTP, whose route lay about ninety kilometres to the north. Brutinel's drive and resourcefulness were on full display while engaged in these activities. But clearly he had moved away from concerns of the Edmonton French community to a preoccupation with business and specifically with the interests of the Anglo-Canadian investors who employed him. He was, before long, to make himself a fortune. This important component of Brutinel's prewar life in Canada will be dealt with in the next issue.

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ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Cameron Pulsifer worked as an historian at the Canadian War Museum (CWM) from 1991 to 2007. During much of this period his responsibilities included editing CWM contributions to this journal. He made many contributions of his own and has also published extensively elsewhere. He remains a Curator Emeritus at the CWM.