



FEBRUARY 2017

George-Étienne Cartier, SPEECH IN THE CONFEDERATION DEBATES

–February 7, 1865

George-Étienne Cartier's famous speech on Confederation articulated a new idea of Canadian political nationality—one capable of bridging the ethnic, religious and linguistic divides among our fractured population. The scattered colonies of British North America were divided by geography, language, ethnic origin, and religion, making Cartier's speech both an act of statesmanship and an act of imagination. While securing a new provincial government for Quebec, ringed round by the federal division of powers, Cartier envisioned Canada as a "great nation." He made clear the value and strength of diversity in our common country—a Canadian nationality based not on national origin or religion, but instead upon an ideal of equal justice to all. This idea was Cartier's greatest contribution to Confederation, and one that still resonates today.

OUR POLITICAL NATIONALITY

ATTY. Gen. CARTIER rose to continue the debate on Confederation.

He said that he approached this subject with a certain amount of diffidence, knowing it was not the first time he had had the honor of speaking upon it in the Lower Provinces and elsewhere. He felt that this was a momentous occasion, as for anything that he said on this grave question, he was responsible to his constituents and the country. Respecting this grave question, it had been said that the TACHÉ-MACDONALD Government had taken upon themselves the solution of a problem which was not at the time of its formation before the country, and had not even been mooted. Those saying so were ignorant of the parliamentary history of the past few years. He would briefly refer to the history of this great question, as far as it had been brought before the Parliament and country. When the CARTIER-MACDONALD Government was constructed, after the downfall of the BROWN-DORION Administration, a programme of the policy of the former was laid

before Parliament. Among the subjects contained in this programme of 7th August, 1858, was one referred to in the following terms:

The late Government felt themselves bound to carry out the law of the land respecting the seat of Government, but, in the face of the recent vote on that subject, the Administration did not consider themselves warranted in incurring any expenditure for the public buildings, until Parliament has had an opportunity of considering the whole question in all its bearings; and the expediency of a Federal Union of the British North American Provinces will be anxiously considered, and communication with the Home Government and the Lower Provinces entered into forthwith on the subject; and the result of this communication will be submitted to Parliament at its next session. The Government will, during the recess, examine into the organization and working of the public departments, and carry out such administrative reforms as will be conducive to economy and efficiency.

Here was this scheme of a union of the provinces mentioned in the programme of the Cartier-Macdonald Government, in 1858. He merely quoted this passage to show that neither Parliament nor the country was now taken by surprise with regard to this scheme. (Hear, hear.) We had had general and special elections since 1858, and to pretend that this subject, which had been so often canvassed, was new to the country, was to assert an untruth. At the close of that session, Sir Edmund Head, in his Speech proroguing Parliament, made use of the following language:—"I propose, in the course of the recess, to communicate with Her Majesty's Government, and with the Governments of the sister colonies, on another matter of very great importance. I am desirous of inviting them to discuss with us the principles on which a bond of a federal character, uniting the Provinces of British North America, may perhaps hereafter be practicable."

In accordance with that announcement of policy, a deputation was sent to England, composed of his then colleagues, Hons. Messrs. Galt and Ross and himself. We pressed the matter before the Imperial Government, whom we asked to authorize a meeting of delegates from the British North American Governments, to consider this subject and report upon it, said report to be communicated to the Colonial Secretary. Of course we wanted, at that time, to act with the sanction and approval of the Imperial Government. We pressed the matter as strongly as we could before it.

“ *Everyone who knew anything of his past public course was aware that he was opposed to the principle of representation by population while Upper and Lower Canada were under one Government.* ”

Of all the provinces that responded to the call of the Imperial Government, Newfoundland, he thought, was the only one which professed her readiness to appoint delegates when the opportune moment arrived. (Hear, hear.) Although the other provinces were not opposed to Confederation, still, as the question had not been brought conspicuously before their people, they did not like then to join in the measure and in the proceedings which the Canadian delegates had urged upon the Imperial Government in 1858. At this time the Canadian Delegates had a duty to perform towards the illustrious Administrator of the Government, Sir E. Head, to fulfil the promise he had made, on proroguing Parliament, by pressing the measure upon the attention of the Imperial Administration. The Canadian Government also kept its promise to report to the House the result of the mission to England, at the next session of Parliament.

The hon. gentleman here read the despatch dated October, 1858, which was transmitted to the Imperial Government, setting forth the sectional difficulties which had arisen between Upper and Lower Canada, principally on account of the former's demand for increased representation in Parliament, on the ground of its much larger population.

Everyone who knew anything of his past public course was aware that he was opposed to the principle of representation by population while Upper and Lower Canada were under one Government. He did not regret his opposition. If such a measure had been passed, what would have been the consequence? There would have been constant political warfare between Upper and Lower Canada. True it was that the members from Upper Canada, being in the majority, it might have been imagined they would have carried everything before them; but as far as justice to Lower Canada was concerned, such might not have been the case. The consequence of representation by population would have been that one territory would have governed another, and this fact would have presented itself session after session in the House, and day after day in the public prints. (Hear, hear.) The moment this principle had been conceded as the governing element, it would have initiated between the two provinces a warfare which would have been unremitting. (Hear, hear.)

“*The consequence of representation by population would have been that one territory would have governed another.*”

He wished that Upper Canada should understand him in this matter. He was accused of being opposed to Upper Canada's rights, because during fifteen or twenty years he had to oppose his honorable friend the President of the Council (Hon. Mr. Brown). His honorable colleague took the ground that representation should be arranged according to population in each section of the province. He (Hon. Mr. Cartier) had resisted that position, believing that the moment such a principle was applied, his honorable friend, who, no doubt, wanted to maintain the peaceful government of the country, would have been disappointed in his wish. It would have given rise to one of the bitterest struggles between the two provinces that ever took place between two nations. He did not mean to say that the majority from Upper Canada would have tyrannized over Lower Canada; but the idea that Upper Canada, as a territory, had the preponderance in the Government by a large number of representatives, would have been sufficient to generate that sectional strife to which he had alluded.

In 1858 he first saw that representation by population, though unsuited for application as a governing principle as between the two provinces, would not involve the same objection if other partners were drawn in by a federation. In a struggle between two—one a weak, and the other a strong party—the weaker could not but be overcome; but if three parties were concerned, the stronger would not have the same advantage; as when it was seen by the third that there was too much strength on one side, the third would club with the weaker combatant to resist the big fighter. (Cheers and laughter.) He did not oppose the principle of representation by population from an unwillingness to do justice to Upper Canada. He took this ground, however, that when justice was done to Upper Canada, it was his duty to see that no injustice was done to Lower Canada.

He did not entertain the slightest apprehension that Lower Canada's rights were in the least jeopardized by the provision that in the General Legislature the French Canadians of Lower Canada would have a smaller number of representatives than all the other origins combined. It would be seen by the resolutions that in the questions which would be submitted to the General Parliament there could be no danger to the rights

and privileges of either French Canadians, Scotchmen, Englishmen or Irishmen. Questions of commerce, of international communication, and all matters of general interest, would be discussed and determined in the General Legislature; but in the exercise of the functions of the General Government, no one could apprehend that anything could be enacted which would harm or do injustice to persons of any nationality.

He did not intend to go into the details of the question of Confederation, but merely to bring before the House the most conspicuous arguments in order to induce members to accept the resolutions submitted by the Government.

Confederation was, as it were, at this moment almost forced upon us. We could not shut our eyes to what was going on beyond the lines, where a great struggle was going on between two Confederacies, at one time forming but one Confederacy. We saw that a government, established not more than 80 years ago, had not been able to keep together the family of states which had broke up four or five years since. We could not deny that the struggle now in progress must necessarily influence our political existence. We did not know what would be the result of that great war—whether it would end in the establishment of two Confederacies or in one as before. However, we had to do with five colonies, inhabited by men of the same sympathies and interests, and in order to become a great nation they required only to be brought together under one General Government.

“ *Either we must obtain British North American Confederation or be absorbed in an American Confederation.*”

The matter resolved itself into this, either we must obtain British North American Confederation or be absorbed in an American Confederation. (Hear, hear, and dissent.) Some entertained the opinion that it was unnecessary to have British North American Confederation to prevent absorption into the vortex of American Confederation. Such parties were mistaken. We knew the policy of England towards us—that she was determined to help and support us in any struggle with our neighbors. The British Provinces, separated as at present, could not defend themselves alone, and the question resolved itself into this: shall the whole strength of the empire be concentrated into Prince Edward Island, or Canada, as the case may be, in case of a war with the United States—or shall the provinces be left to fight single-handed, disunited?

We were not sufficiently united. We had our duties, with regard to England, to perform. In order to secure the exercise of her power in our defence we must help her ourselves. We could not do this satisfactorily or efficiently unless we had a Confederation. When all united, the enemy would know that, if he attacked any part of those provinces—Prince Edward Island or Canada—he would have to encounter the combined strength of the empire. Canada, separate, would be, although comparatively strong in population and wealth, in a dangerous position should a war ensue. When we had organized our good defensive force, and united for mutual protection, England would send freely here both men and treasure for our defence. (Cheers.)

He had stated before audiences in the Lower Provinces that, as far as territory, population and wealth were concerned, Canada was stronger than any of the other provinces, but at the same time was wanting in one element necessary to national greatness—the maritime one; and that, owing to the large trade and commerce of Canada, extensive communication with Great Britain at all seasons was absolutely necessary. Twenty years ago our commerce for the year could be managed by communication with Great Britain in the

summer months only. At present, however, this system was insufficient, and for winter communication with the sea-board we were left to the caprice of our American neighbors, through whose territory we must pass. He had also alluded to the bonding system, which if the Americans were to withdraw, Canada would be left in winter without any winter harbors. Canada, having two or three elements of national greatness—territory and population—wanted the maritime element; and as he had said,—the Lower Provinces had this element and a sea-board, but not a back country or large population, which Canada possessed,—and for the mutual benefit and prosperity of all the provinces, all these elements ought to be united together. Those who pretended that the British North American Provinces would be in as safe a position, remaining separate, while they belonged to the British Crown, as under Confederation, were under great misapprehension.

“Canada was stronger than any of the other provinces, but at the same time was wanting in one element necessary to national greatness—the maritime one.”

Now was the time for us to form a great nation of the several provinces. Now was the time to look the matter in the face and adopt the only safe and prudent course open to us in the shape of Confederation. He maintained it was necessary for our own commercial interests, prosperity and efficient defence. That was what we had now to discuss, and not the manner in which Confederation was to be brought about, which would be discussed when the details of the scheme came up for consideration. At present the question was: was Confederation of the British North American Provinces necessary in order to increase our strength and power and secure to us the continuance of the benefits of British connection? He had no doubt that the measure was necessary for those objects.

“Now was the time for us to form a great nation of the several provinces.”

It would be observed that the English speaking opponents of the scheme, in Lower Canada, pretended a fear of this element being absorbed by the French Canadian; while the opponents, composed of the latter origin—of men who might be called the old Papineau Tail—whose sole idea was annexation to the United States—said they were afraid of the extinction of French Canadian nationality in the great Confederation. The annexation party in Montreal, including the followers of Mr. JOHN DOUGALL, the proprietor of the *Witness*, opposed the scheme on the ground of supposed danger to the British of Lower Canada. The annexation party could not, however, be supposed to be sincere in their opposition to the scheme—except in so far as they desired to carry Canada into the American Union.

The absorption of this province into the United States had long been contemplated, as would be seen from the 7th article in the original draft of the American Constitution, which he would read. It was as follows: “Art. 7. Canada, according to this Confederation and joining in the measures of the United States, shall be admitted into, and entitled to all the advantages of this union; and shall be equally with any other of the United States, solemnly bound to a strict observance of, and obedience to, these articles; as shall be also any other colony which shall be admitted into this Confederacy. The eleven votes in Congress shall be increased in proportion

as the Confederacy is extended. But, except Canada, no other colony shall be admitted into the Confederacy without the assent of eleven or more votes, as the case may require, by the Confederation being extended.”

By that article, no new state could go into the union except by the vote of the number of states required to admit a new partner. But, as regarded Canada, no such assent was required; on knocking at the door of the union, she would, an a matter of course, be admitted. (Hear, hear.)

The honorable gentleman went on to say that the papers lately contained a report of a meeting at the *Institut Canadien* of Montreal, where it was resolved that it was for the interests of Lower Canada—in the interests of the French Canadians, were the province to become a part of the American Union.

Hon. Mr. DORION said that was not the case. The honorable gentleman had misquoted what had passed there.

Hon. Mr. CARTIER said he was right. If resolutions were not passed, sentiments were expressed to that effect. Then the organ of the Institute—*L'Ordre*, he thought—had set forth that the interests of Lower Canada would be better secured by annexation to the United States than entering into a Confederation with the British American Provinces. It was no wonder, then, that the French Canadian annexationists betrayed their purpose in opposition to British North American Confederation, and that their English-speaking colleagues pretended a fear of the rights of their class being jeopardized under Confederation. We knew their object in this—that they were aware that as soon as this project was adopted, there would be no avail in any cry of separation to form a part of the American Union. (Hear, hear.)

There had been a good deal of fault-finding and complaint as to the proceedings of the delegates having been conducted with closed doors. Such a course was an absolute necessity. Everyone could understand that if all the difficulties arising among the representatives of the five colonies, during the Conference, had gone every morning to the public, it would have been impossible for the delegates to continue to meet, or compromise any of the difficulties that might be expected to spring up. Besides, the proceedings of the American Congress of 1782 was held with closed doors, and their proceedings were not published while matters were progressing. With regard to this, he would quote from a letter of Col. Mason, a member of the Convention:—“All communications of the proceedings are forbidden during the sitting of this Convention; this, I think, was a necessary precaution to prevent misrepresentations or mistakes; there being a material difference between the appearance of a subject in its first crude and indigested shape and after it shall have been properly matured and arranged.” On the same principle the Conference at Quebec very properly sat with closed doors. (Hear, hear.)

We wished, however, that the British Canadian public should know the result of our labors when concluded, and that result the Parliament and people of Canada had before their consideration, and it was for them to discuss its merits. We, on this side of the House—the members of the Government and their supporters—had come to the conclusion that Federation was desirable and necessary; and we were ready to hear the honorable gentlemen on the other side who necessarily, from their standing, were supposed to have devoted their attention to it and appreciated their position, stating what in their opinion would be sufficient in order to maintain ourselves as a British colony on this side of the Atlantic, and to increase in wealth and power.

He was aware that some members of the House, and a number of people in Upper Canada, in Lower Canada and in the Lower Provinces, were of opinion that a Legislative Union ought to have taken place instead of a Federal Union. He would say, however, at the outset, that it was impossible to have one Government to deal with all the private and local interests of the several sections of the several provinces forming the combined whole. (Hear, hear.)

The next question to be considered, therefore, by those who had set to work to discover a solution of the difficulties under which we had labored, was—what was the best and most practicable mode of bringing

the provinces together, so that particular rights and interests should be properly guarded and protected? No other scheme presented itself but the Federation system, and that was the project which now recommended itself to the Parliament of Canada. Some parties—through the press and by other modes—pretended that it was impossible to carry out Federation, on account of the differences of races and religions. Those who took this view of the question were in error. It was just the reverse. It was precisely on account of the variety of races, local interests, &c., that the Federation system ought to be resorted to, and would be found to work well. (Hear, hear.)

“*What was the best and most practicable mode of bringing the provinces together, so that particular rights and interests should be properly guarded and protected?*”

We were in the habit of seeing in some public journals, and hearing from some public men, that it was a great misfortune indeed there should be a difference of races in this colony—that there should be the distinction of French Canadian from British Canadian. Now, he (Hon. Mr. Cartier) desired on this point to vindicate the rights, the merits, the usefulness, so to speak, of those belonging to the French Canadian race. (Hear, hear.) In order to bring these merits and this usefulness more prominently before his hearers, it would be only necessary to allude to the efforts made by them to sustain British power on this continent, and to point out their adherence to British supremacy in trying times.

We were all conversant with the history of the circumstances which had brought about the difficulties between England and her former American colonies in 1775. Lower Canada,—or rather he should say, the Province of Quebec, for the colony was not then known by the name of Canada, but was called the Province of Quebec,—contained the most dense population of any British colony in North America at that time. The accession of Lower Canada was of course an object of envy to the other American colonies, and strenuous efforts were made by those who had resolved to overthrow British power on this continent to induce Canada to ally herself to their cause.

As early as 1775, the French Canadians were solemnly addressed in a proclamation by General Washington, who called upon them to abandon the flag of their new masters, inasmuch as they could not expect anything from those who differed from them in language, in religion, in race, and in sympathies. But what was the conduct of the French Canadian people under these circumstances—what was the attitude of the clergy and the seigniors? It was right in treating this chapter of our history, to render justice to whom justice was due, and it was truth to say that the seigniors, forming, as they did, the educated class of our population at that early epoch, had fully understood that the object and aim of those who appealed to them was the downfall of the monarchical system in America. (Hear, hear.)

A few years only had elapsed at that time since the transfer of the country and its population from the Crown of France to the Crown of Great Britain; but even within that brief interval of time, they were enabled to appreciate the advantages of their new position, notwithstanding the fact that they were still struggling and complaining. The people, as well as the clergy and aristocracy, had understood that it was better for them to remain under the English and Protestant Crown of England, rather than to become republicans. (Hear, hear.) They were proof against the insidious offers of GEORGE WASHINGTON; and not only so, but when the Americans came as invaders, they fought against the armed forces of Arnold, Montgomery and others. (Cheers.)

Attempts were made to excite hostility to Federation on the ground that, under the regime of a local legislature, the English Protestant minority would not be fairly dealt with. He thought the way in which the French Canadians had stood by British connection, when there were but few British in the province, was a proof that they would not attempt to deal unjustly now by the British minority, when their numbers were so much greater. On this point, appealing to the evidence of history, he would quote from the work which he had already quoted. At a time when there were, perhaps, hardly a few hundred English Protestant residents in Lower Canada, the address in the name of Washington, to which he had already briefly referred, was circulated throughout the country by Arnold's invading army.

The hon. gentleman here read a number of extracts from General Washington's proclamation, addressed to the inhabitants of Canada. It made the most earnest appeals to the Lower Canadians to join the other colonies. "We rejoice," said General Washington,

*that our enemies have been deceived with regard to you; they have persuaded themselves—they have even dared to say—that the Canadians were not capable of distinguishing between the blessings of liberty and the wretchedness of slavery; that gratifying the vanity of a little circle of nobility would blind the people of Canada. By such artifices they hoped to bend you to their views, but they have been deceived. * * * Come then, my brethren, unite with us in an indissoluble union; let us run together to the same goal. * * * Incited by these motives, and encouraged by the advice of many friends of liberty among you, the grand American Congress have sent an army into your province, under the command of General Schuyler—not to plunder but to protect you—to animate and bring forth into action those sentiments of freedom you have disclosed, and which the tools of despotism would extinguish through the whole creation. To co-operate with this design, and to frustrate those cruel and perfidious schemes, which would deluge our frontiers with the blood of women and children, I have despatched Colonel Arnold into your country, with a part of the army under my command. I have enjoined upon him, and I am certain that he will consider himself, and act as in the country of his patrons and best friends. Necessaries and accommodations of every kind which you may furnish he will thankfully receive and render the full value. I invite you, therefore, as friends and brethren, to provide him with such supplies as your country affords; and I pledge myself not only for your safety and security, but for an ample compensation. Let no man desert his habitation—let no one flee as before an enemy. The cause of America and of liberty is the cause of every virtuous American citizen, whatever may be his religion or descent. The united colonies know no distinction but such as slavery, corruption and arbitrary dominion may create. Come then, ye generous citizens, range yourselves under the standard of general liberty—against which all the force of artifice and tyranny will never be able to prevail.*

It appeared by this address that the most tempting offers and promises had been made by the republican general; but they had failed, nevertheless, to accomplish the desired effect. This, however, was not the only trait of this nature in the history of the French Canadian people. There was another despatch, or rather proclamation, issued in 1778, by Baron D'ESTAING, commander of the French fleet, which was acting in aid of the American revolutionary party. The honorable gentleman read some extracts from this proclamation, as follows:

I shall not ask the military companions of the Marquis of LÉVIS, those who shared his glory, who admired his talents and genius for war, who loved his cordiality and frankness, the principal characteristics of our nobility, whether there be other names in other nations among which they would be better pleased to place their own. Can the Canadians, who saw the brave Montcalm fall in their defence—can they become the enemies of his nephews? Can they fight against their former leaders, and arm themselves against their kinsmen? At the bare mention of their names, the weapons would fall out of their hands. I shall not observe to the ministers

of the altars, that their evangelic efforts will require the special protection of Providence, to prevent faith being diminished by example, by worldly interest, and by sovereigns whom force has imposed upon them, and whose political indulgence will be lessened proportionably (sic) as those sovereigns shall have less to fear. I shall not observe that it is necessary for religion that those who preach it should form a body in the state; and that in Canada no other body would be more considered, or have more power to do good than that of the priests, taking a part in the Government, since their respectable conduct has merited the confidence of the people. I shall not represent to that people, nor to all my countrymen in general, that a vast monarchy, having the same religion, the same manners, the same language, where they find kinsmen, old friends and brethren, must be an inexhaustible source of commerce and wealth, more easily acquired and better secured by their union with powerful neighbors, than with strangers of another hemisphere, among whom everything is different, and who, jealous and despotic sovereigns would, sooner or later, treat them as a conquered people, and doubtless much worse than their late countrymen, the Americans, who made them victorious. I shall not urge to a whole people that to join with the United States is to secure their own happiness, since a whole people, when they acquire the right of thinking and acting for themselves, must know their own interest. But I will declare, and I now formally declare in the name of His Majesty, who has authorized and commanded me to do it, that all his former subjects in North America, who shall no more acknowledge the supremacy of Great Britain, may depend upon his protection and support.

D'ESTAING had appealed to their ancestry and their prejudices; he had invoked the names of LÉVIS and MONTCALM, and endeavored to influence their clergy; but the French Canadians understood their position too well. If they had their institutions, their language and their religion intact to-day, it was precisely because of their adherence to the British Crown. Had they yielded to the appeals of WASHINGTON and Baron D'ESTAING, it is probable that there would not have been now a vestige of British power on this continent. But, with the disappearance of British power, they too would have disappeared as French Canadians. (Hear, hear.)

These historical facts taught that there should be a mutual feeling of gratitude from the French Canadians towards the British, and from the British towards the French Canadians, for our present position, that Canada is still a British colony. (Hear, hear.) He had had occasion, a moment ago, to refer to the French Canadian clergy in connection with D'Estaing's address, and he would say this, to their honor and credit, that, if to-day Canada was a portion of the British Empire, it was due to the conservatism of the French Canadian clergy. (Cheers.) It was a pleasure to him thus to be able to quote from these old documents proofs of the honor, loyalty, and liberality of the French Canadian people.

He (Hon. Mr. CARTIER) was as devoid of prejudice as any honorable gentleman in this House; but when he heard or read the statements occasionally made, that there was some danger that, under the Federation system, the French Canadians would have too much power, and that the power thus obtained would be used to the prejudice of the British and Protestant minority—the history of the past, in many instances, was the best reply to such attacks. (Hear, hear.) Baron D'ESTAING issued his tempting proclamation in 1778, and it was sent into Canada frequently afterwards, and circulated at the instigation of ROCHAMBEAU and LAFAYETTE; but our clergy and our aristocracy, the leaders of our people in these days, saw that it was not their interest to cast their lot with the democratic element—they knew the hollowness of democracy. (Hear, hear.)

We found ourselves at the present day discussing the question of the Federation of the British North American Provinces, while the great Federation of the United States of America was broken up and divided against itself. There was, however, this important difference to be observed in considering the action of the two peoples. They had founded Federation for the purpose of carrying out and perpetuating democracy on this continent; but we, who had the benefit of being able to contemplate republicanism in action during a

period of eighty years, saw its defects, and felt convinced that purely democratic institutions could not be conducive to the peace and prosperity of nations.

“*We found ourselves at the present day discussing the question of the Federation of the British North American Provinces, while the great Federation of the United States of America was broken up and divided against itself.*”

We were not now discussing the great problem presented to our consideration, in order to propagate democratic principles. Our attempt was for the purpose of forming a Federation with a view of perpetuating the monarchical element. The distinction, therefore, between ourselves and our neighbors was just this:—In our Federation the monarchical principle would form the leading feature, while on the other side of the lines, judging by the past history and present condition of the country, the ruling power was the will of the mob, the rule of the populace. Every person who had conversed with the most intelligent American statesmen and writers must have learned that they all admitted that the governmental powers had become too extended, owing to the introduction of universal suffrage, and mob rule had consequently supplanted legitimate authority; and we now saw the sad spectacle of a country torn by civil war, and brethren fighting against brethren.

The question for us to ask ourselves was this: Shall we be content to remain separate—shall we be content to maintain a mere provincial existence, when, by combining together, we could become a great nation? It had never yet been the good fortune of any group of communities to secure national greatness with such facility. In past ages, warriors had struggled for years for the addition to their country of a single province. We had too, for instance, in our own days, the case of Napoleon III, who, after great expenditure of blood and treasure in the Italian difficulty, had acquired Savoy and Nice, by which he had obtained an addition of nearly one million inhabitants to France—only one million souls, and if any person were for a moment to make a calculation of the value of the provinces acquired on one side, and the great cost on the other, he would at once see the great disproportion between the one and the other, and so ascertain the fact that the territory acquired did not compensate the outlay.

“*Shall we be content to remain separate—shall we be content to maintain a mere provincial existence, when, by combining together, we could become a great nation?*”

Here, in British North America, we had five different communities inhabiting five separate colonies. We had the same sympathies, and we all desired to live under the British Crown. We had our commercial interests besides. It was of no use whatever that New Brunswick, Nova Scotia and Newfoundland should have their several custom houses against our trade, or that we should have custom houses against the trade of those provinces.

In ancient times, the manner in which a nation grew up was different from that of the present day. Then the first weak settlement increased into a village, which, by turns, became a town and a city, and the nucleus

of a nation. It was not so in modern times. Nations were now formed by the agglomeration of communities having kindred interests and sympathies. Such was our case at the present moment.

Objection had been taken to the scheme now under consideration, because of the words “new nationality.” Now, when we were united together, if union were attained, we would form a political nationality with which neither the national origin, nor the religion of any individual, would interfere. It was lamented by some that we had this diversity of races, and hopes were expressed that this distinctive feature would cease. The idea of unity of races was Utopian—it was impossible. Distinctions of this kind would always exist. Dissimilarity, in fact, appeared to be the order of the physical world and of the moral world, as well as in the political world.

“*When we were united together, if union were attained, we would form a political nationality with which neither the national origin, nor the religion of any individual, would interfere.*”

But with regard to the objection based on this fact, to the effect that a great nation could not be formed because Lower Canada was in great part French and Catholic, and Upper Canada was British and Protestant, and the Lower Provinces were mixed, it was futile and worthless in the extreme. Look, for instance, at the United Kingdom, inhabited as it was by three great races. (Hear, hear.) Had the diversity of race impeded the glory, the progress, the wealth of England? Had they not rather each contributed their share to the greatness of the Empire? Of the glories of the senate, the field, and the ocean, of the successes of trade and commerce, how much was contributed by the combined talents, energy and courage of the three races together? (Cheers.)

In our own Federation we should have Catholic and Protestant, English, French, Irish and Scotch, and each by his efforts and his success would increase the prosperity and glory of the new Confederacy. (Hear, hear.) He viewed the diversity of races in British North America in this way: we were of different races, not for the purpose of warring against each other, but in order to compete and emulate for the general welfare. (Cheers.) We could not do away with the distinctions of race. We could not legislate for the disappearance of the French Canadians from American soil, but British and French Canadians alike could appreciate and understand their position relative to each other. They were placed like great families beside each other, and their contact produced a healthy spirit of emulation. It was a benefit rather than otherwise that we had a diversity of races.

Of course, the difficulty, it would be said, would be to deal fairly by the minority. In Upper Canada the Catholics would find themselves in a minority; in Lower Canada the Protestants would be in a minority, while the Lower Provinces were divided. Under such circumstances, would any one pretend that either the local or general governments would sanction any injustice. What would be the consequence, even supposing any such thing were attempted by any one of the local governments? It would be censured everywhere. Whether it came from Upper Canada or from Lower Canada, any attempt to deprive the minority of their rights would be at once thwarted.

Under the Federation system, granting to the control of the General Government these large questions of general interest in which the differences of race or religion had no place, it could not be pretended that the rights of either race or religion could be invaded at all. We were to have a General Parliament to deal with

the matters of defence, tariff, excise, public works, and these matters absorbed all individual interest. Now, he would ask these self-styled nationalists who accused him of bartering fifty-eight counties in Lower Canada to John Bull, and his honorable colleague beside him (Hon. Mr. Brown)—he would ask them, under what supposition could they think it possible for any injustice to be done to the French Canadians by the General Government? (Hear, hear.)

He came now to the subject of Local Governments. We could easily understand how a feeling against the Federation project was raised in the minds of a few of the British residents of Lower Canada by fear of such difficulties as those which occurred in the days of Mr. PAPINEAU, relative to the passing of laws relating to commercial matters. (Hear, hear.) These difficulties had been of a very inconvenient nature, Mr. PAPINEAU not being a commercial man, and not understanding the importance of these measures. He considered Mr. PAPINEAU was right in the struggle he maintained against the oligarchy at that time in power; but he had never approved of the course he took with reference to commercial matters, and in opposition to measures for the improvement of the country.

But this precedent could not be urged as an objection to Federation, inasmuch as it would be for the General Government to deal with our commercial matters. There could be no reason for well-grounded fear that the minority could be made to suffer by means of any laws affecting the rights of property. If any such enactments were passed, they would fall upon the whole community. But even supposing such a thing did occur, there was a remedy provided under the proposed Constitution.

The magnitude of the scheme now submitted was, perhaps, the reason why those who had not made themselves conversant with the question felt some apprehension in contemplating it; but, when we came to discuss it clause by clause, he would be ready to state that no interest would be harmed in any way if Federation took place.

It was true that opposition was being offered in Montreal, by Mr. JOHN DOUGALL, of the *Witness*. (Hear, hear.) And, while referring to the opponents of Federation, he could not help advert to the strange manner in which extremes met and worked in unison to oppose Federation. (Laughter.) For instance, we had the party who formerly composed what might be styled Mr. PAPINEAU'S Tail—the extreme democratic party—joined with Mr. DOUGALL'S Tail. (Hear, hear, cheers, and laughter.)

Mr. PERRAULT—And members of the clergy oppose it. (Hear, hear.)

Hon. Mr. CARTIER said the honorable gentleman was mistaken. The clergy were for it. But the honorable gentleman would have an opportunity of speaking afterwards.

“ This scheme, he repeated, met with the approval of all moderate men. The extreme men, the socialists, democrats and annexationists were opposed to it.”

This scheme, he repeated, met with the approval of all moderate men. The extreme men, the socialists, democrats and annexationists were opposed to it. The French Canadian opponents of the project were, it appeared, afraid that their religious rights would suffer under the new arrangement. Fancy the celebrated *Institut Canadien*, of Montreal, under the lead of citizen BLANCHET, taking religion under their protection!

(Laughter.) Mr. DOUGALL loudly proclaimed that the British Protestant minority would be entirely placed at the mercy of the French Canadians. He (Hon. Mr. CARTIER) thought the arguments of the young French gentlemen belonging to the national democratic party who cried out that their religion and nationality would be destroyed, ought in all reason to be sufficient to satisfy the scruples and calm the fears of Mr. DOUGALL. The *True Witness*, which was also one of the enemies of the scheme, said that if it were adopted the French Canadians were doomed; while his brother in violence, the *Witness*, said that the Protestants were doomed. (Hear, hear, and laughter.)

At a meeting recently held in Montreal on the subject, he (Hon. Mr. CARTIER) observed that Mr. CHERRIER had enrolled himself among the enemies of the project. Well, this fine, quiet, old gentleman announced that he had come out of his political retirement for the purpose of opposing Federation. All he (Hon. Mr. CARTIER) could say was that he never knew Mr. CHERRIER was a strong politician. However, it appeared that he had come out once more on the political stage for the purpose of opposing this villainous scheme, which was intended to destroy the nationality and religion of the French Canadians—all brought about by that confounded CARTIER! (Laughter and cheers.)

Allusion had been made to the opinion of the clergy. Well, he would say that the opinion of the clergy was for Confederation. (Hear, hear.) Those who were high in authority, as well as those who occupied more humble positions, were in favour of Federation, not only because they saw in it so much security for all they held dear, but because it was just to their Protestant fellow-subjects as well, because they were opposed to political bickering and strife. This opposition to a state of political dissension and trouble was the general feeling of the clergy, and because they saw in Confederation a solution of those difficulties which had existed for some time, due regard being had to just rights, they were favorable to the project.

“Those who were high in authority, as well as those who occupied more humble positions, were in favour of Federation.”

The fact, however, was that when we saw such extreme opponents as Mr. CLERK, of the *True Witness*, Mr. Dougall, of the *Witness*, and the young gentlemen of the *Institut Canadien* combined to resist Confederation, because each party argued it would produce the most widely different results—we might look upon this fact, he repeated, as one of the strongest arguments in favor of Confederation. (Hear.) We had, on the other hand, all the moderate men, all that was respectable and intelligent, including the clergy, favorable to Federation. (Hear, hear, and oh, oh.) He did not, of course, mean to say that there were not respectable opponents to the project—what he did mean, however, was that it met general approval from the classes referred to.

He was opposed, he might as well state most distinctly, to the democratic system which obtained in the United States. In this country of British North America we should have a distinct form of government, the characteristic of which would be to possess the monarchical element. When we had Confederation secured, there was not the least doubt but that our Government would be more respectable—that it would have more prestige, and command more respect from our neighbours. (Hear, hear.)

The great want under the American form—the point which they all admitted formed the great defect—was the absence of some respectable executive element. How was the head of the United States Government chosen? Candidates came forward, and of course each one was abused and vilified as cor-

rupt, ignorant, incapable and unworthy by the opposite party. One of them attained the presidential chair; but even while in that position he was not respected by those who had opposed his election, and who tried to make him appear the most corrupt and contemptible being in creation. Such a system could not produce an executive head who would command respect. Under the British system, ministers might be abused and assailed; but that abuse never reached the Sovereign. Whether we were made a kingdom or a vice-royalty—whatever name or grade was assigned to us—we would undoubtedly have additional prestige.

He would now conclude his remarks by asking honorable gentlemen to consider well this scheme. It was his hope, his cherished hope, that it would be adopted by the House. The time was opportune, as his honourable colleague (Atty. Gen. MACDONALD) had so ably stated last evening; the opportunity might never offer itself again in such a facile and propitious manner. We knew we had, in all our proceedings, the approbation of the Imperial Government. So if these resolutions were adopted by Canada, as he had no doubt they would, and by the other Colonial Legislatures, the Imperial Government would be called upon to pass a measure which would have for its effect to give a strong central or general government and local governments, which would at once secure and guard the persons, the properties and the civil and religious rights belonging to the population of each section. (Loud cheers.)





True North in
Canadian public policy

MACDONALD-LAURIER INSTITUTE

Critically Acclaimed, Award-Winning Institute

The Macdonald-Laurier Institute fills a gap in Canada's democratic infrastructure by focusing our work on the full range of issues that fall under Ottawa's jurisdiction.

- The Macdonald-Laurier Institute fills a gap in Canada's democratic infrastructure by focusing our work on the full range of issues that fall under Ottawa's jurisdiction.
- One of the top three new think tanks in the world according to the University of Pennsylvania.
- Cited by five present and former Canadian Prime Ministers, as well as by David Cameron, the British Prime Minister.
- First book, *The Canadian Century: Moving out of America's Shadow*, won the Sir Antony Fisher International Memorial Award in 2011.
- *Hill Times* says Brian Lee Crowley is one of the 100 most influential people in Ottawa.
- *The Wall Street Journal*, *the Economist*, *the Globe and Mail*, *the National Post* and many other leading national and international publications have quoted the Institute's work.



"The study by Brian Lee Crowley and Ken Coates is a 'home run'. The analysis by Douglas Bland will make many uncomfortable but it is a wake up call that must be read."

FORMER CANADIAN PRIME MINISTER PAUL MARTIN ON MLI'S PROJECT ON ABORIGINAL PEOPLE AND THE NATURAL RESOURCE ECONOMY.

Ideas Change the World

Independent and non-partisan, the Macdonald-Laurier Institute is increasingly recognized as the thought leader on national issues in Canada, prodding governments, opinion leaders and the general public to accept nothing but the very best public policy solutions for the challenges Canada faces.



About the Macdonald-Laurier Institute

What Do We Do?

When you change how people think, you change what they want and how they act. That is why thought leadership is essential in every field. At MLI, we strip away the complexity that makes policy issues unintelligible and present them in a way that leads to action, to better quality policy decisions, to more effective government, and to a more focused pursuit of the national interest of all Canadians. MLI is the only non-partisan, independent national public policy think tank based in Ottawa that focuses on the full range of issues that fall under the jurisdiction of the federal government.

What Is in a Name?

The Macdonald-Laurier Institute exists not merely to burnish the splendid legacy of two towering figures in Canadian history – Sir John A. Macdonald and Sir Wilfrid Laurier – but to renew that legacy. A Tory and a Grit, an English speaker and a French speaker – these two men represent the very best of Canada’s fine political tradition. As prime minister, each championed the values that led to Canada assuming her place as one of the world’s leading democracies. We will continue to vigorously uphold these values, the cornerstones of our nation.



Working for a Better Canada

Good policy doesn’t just happen; it requires good ideas, hard work, and being in the right place at the right time. In other words, it requires MLI. We pride ourselves on independence, and accept no funding from the government for our research. If you value our work and if you believe in the possibility of a better Canada, consider making a tax-deductible donation. The Macdonald-Laurier Institute is a registered charity.

Our Issues

The Institute undertakes an impressive programme of thought leadership on public policy. Some of the issues we have tackled recently include:

- Aboriginal people and the management of our natural resources;
- Getting the most out of our petroleum resources;
- Ensuring students have the skills employers need;
- Controlling government debt at all levels;
- The vulnerability of Canada’s critical infrastructure;
- Ottawa’s regulation of foreign investment; and
- How to fix Canadian health care.



True North in
Canadian public policy

CONTACT US: Macdonald-Laurier Institute
8 York Street, Suite 200
Ottawa, Ontario, Canada K1N 5S6

TELEPHONE: (613) 482-8327

WEBSITE: www.MacdonaldLaurier.ca

**CONNECT
WITH US:**



Scan this QR code to
get your copy of our
iphone app or to visit
our mobile website



@MLInstitute



[www.facebook.com/
MacdonaldLaurierInstitute](http://www.facebook.com/MacdonaldLaurierInstitute)



[www.youtube.com/
MLInstitute](http://www.youtube.com/MLInstitute)

What people are saying about the Macdonald- Laurier Institute

In five short years, the institute has established itself as a steady source of high-quality research and thoughtful policy analysis here in our nation's capital. Inspired by Canada's deep-rooted intellectual tradition of ordered liberty – as exemplified by Macdonald and Laurier – the institute is making unique contributions to federal public policy and discourse. Please accept my best wishes for a memorable anniversary celebration and continued success.

THE RIGHT HONOURABLE STEPHEN HARPER

The Macdonald-Laurier Institute is an important source of fact and opinion for so many, including me. Everything they tackle is accomplished in great depth and furthers the public policy debate in Canada. Happy Anniversary, this is but the beginning.

THE RIGHT HONOURABLE PAUL MARTIN

In its mere five years of existence, the Macdonald-Laurier Institute, under the erudite Brian Lee Crowley's vibrant leadership, has, through its various publications and public events, forged a reputation for brilliance and originality in areas of vital concern to Canadians: from all aspects of the economy to health care reform, aboriginal affairs, justice, and national security.

BARBARA KAY, NATIONAL POST COLUMNIST

Intelligent and informed debate contributes to a stronger, healthier and more competitive Canadian society. In five short years the Macdonald-Laurier Institute has emerged as a significant and respected voice in the shaping of public policy. On a wide range of issues important to our country's future, Brian Lee Crowley and his team are making a difference.

JOHN MANLEY, CEO COUNCIL