

The Making of a Province: Nova Scotia and Confederation

K. G. Pryke

Volume 3, Number 1, 1968

Calgary 1968

URI: <https://id.erudit.org/iderudit/030687ar>

DOI: <https://doi.org/10.7202/030687ar>

[See table of contents](#)

Publisher(s)

The Canadian Historical Association/La Société historique du Canada

ISSN

0068-8878 (print)

1712-9109 (digital)

[Explore this journal](#)

Cite this article

Pryke, K. G. (1968). The Making of a Province: Nova Scotia and Confederation. *Historical Papers / Communications historiques*, 3(1), 35–48.
<https://doi.org/10.7202/030687ar>

THE MAKING OF A PROVINCE : NOVA SCOTIA AND CONFEDERATION

K. G. PRYKE

University of Windsor

In September of 1867 the voters of Nova Scotia elected their representatives to the provincial assembly and to the recently formed federal parliament. Of the fifty-seven members elected to the two houses, only three were avowed supporters of confederation. The remaining fifty-four, all avowed opponents of union, were faced with the task of implementing the new system of government. Their hostility to confederation notwithstanding, the members-elect would have faced difficulties enough in devising some method of dealing with matters administered by both the federal and the provincial governments and in establishing a political organization which could embrace both federal and provincial politics. The Nova Scotians were already accustomed to the problems of sharing jurisdiction with Great Britain. But in confederation this division of function had the added complication of an inter-related political system. Any attempt to have the federal government play the old role of the imperial government towards Nova Scotia was to overlook the political aspects of the new federal system.¹

Prior to 1864 the province had been divided politically into the Liberal and the Conservative parties. The issue of union, however, disrupted these party lines and political divisions became polarized on the issue of confederation itself. The political lines were thus drawn on the issue of whether or not Nova Scotia should enter union. By 1867, however, this political division was irrelevant but the anti-confederates were somewhat slow to adjust to their new situation. During the election campaign of 1867 they did not present any clear policy for the future. Instead, Joseph Howe, the leader of the anti-confederate party, based his platform on punishing those responsible for bringing the province into union.² This policy of retribution, even if it were to be accepted by the anti-confederate party, could do little to solve the problems created by the new system of government.

One of the more immediate problems of the anti-confederate party was that of adjusting to a system which required a dual

¹ Saywell, John T., *The Office of Lieutenant Governor* (Toronto, 1957), p. 257.

² Waite, P. B., *The Life and Times of Confederation, 1864-1867* (Toronto, 1962), p. 294.

political party with one segment at the provincial level and one at the federal level. Howe assumed that he, as leader, could continue to speak for the anti-confederate party. However, in November 1867, the local members rebuffed his attempts to influence the formation of the new provincial ministry.³ His actions created some bitterness and his leadership was again challenged when the new attorney general, Martin I. Wilkins, stated that the local ministry would determine party policy in the future.⁴ Thus, even in 1867, objections were raised against a political party which did not take the new federal system into account.

The conflict between Howe, as leader of the anti-confederate party, and the provincial government increased during the fall of 1867. However much Howe disliked union, he realized that as long as confederation remained the policy of the British government, there was little hope for repeal. The local ministry, as the avowed protector of provincial interests, began a public agitation for the repeal of union. When this campaign began, Howe was attending the first session of parliament in Ottawa. One of the party newspapers soon suggested that Howe, in going to Ottawa, had accepted the fact of union and had thereby betrayed the province.⁵ Howe, much as he may have sympathized with the agitation against confederation, nevertheless did not agree with the policy being followed by the local ministry. And on his return to Halifax in December, he made public his doubts about the possibility of obtaining repeal.⁶ But his counsel of moderation was drowned out by the general outcry for freedom from the act of union. Yet, in an effort to preserve his influence, Howe consented to head a delegation to England that was authorized by the provincial house of assembly.⁷ The failure of this mission⁸ did nothing to resolve the basic question of exactly who would make policy for the anti-confederate party or whether there would be only one policy. The fact that the issue of repeal was presented by the local government as basic to the interests of the province increased Howe's difficulties. His scepticism of the policy of repeal placed him, a member of the federal parliament, in opposition to the provincial government. Yet if the dispute between the

³ Joseph Howe to Lieutenant Governor H. Doyle, 15 January 1868, Private, Howe Papers, XXXVII, Public Archives of Canada. Hereafter cited as P.A.C.

⁴ Speech of Martin I. Wilkins, 5 December 1867, *Pictou Colonial Standard*, 10 December, 1867.

⁵ *Acadian Recorder* (Halifax), 18 November, 1867.

⁶ J. McCully to John A. Macdonald, 28 December, 1867, Macdonald Papers, CXVI, 91-94, P.A.C.

⁷ Archbishop T. L. Connolly of Halifax to Macdonald, 19 February, 1868, Macdonald Papers, CXVI, 143-152, P.A.C.

⁸ Morton, W. L., *The Critical Years* (Toronto, 1964), pp. 225-227.

federal and provincial wings of the anti-confederate party had not taken place over this issue, it might well have occurred over some such issue as patronage. In any dispute of this type, the federal wing, which had influence but no power, was at a marked disadvantage in relation to the provincial government.

The only body which could assert any degree of power over the local ministry was the federal government. Through its officer, the lieutenant governor, and because of its powers of reservation and disallowance, the prime minister, John A. Macdonald, could restrict the actions of the local ministry. Furthermore, federal control over such subjects as public works and the post office gave the federal government a great deal of influence in the province. Thus, from a political, as well as from an administrative view, the ministry was bound to have to come to terms with the federal government sooner or later. The constitutional division of power between the two governments ensured that the local ministry would have to come to terms with the more powerful federal government. This was particularly difficult because of Macdonald's intention to subordinate provincial ministries to the level of quasi-municipal bodies.⁹ His policies clashed with those of the local ministry that the cabinet system would continue to operate the province in much the same way as it had functioned before.

In 1867 Macdonald did not take the anti-confederates very seriously,¹⁰ but by the spring of 1868 he was prepared to make some gesture of conciliation toward the province, although he continued to discount the sincerity of those who advocated repeal.¹¹ The easiest form of concession to make was a monetary one. Yet regardless of the amount of money which Macdonald might be willing to grant to the province, he still had to establish some sort of political following in Nova Scotia. His solution was to negotiate with Howe. This manoeuvre would weaken Howe's position with the provincial wing of the anti-confederate party and drive him into the arms of Tupper and the confederates. In August of 1868, when he was on a visit to Halifax, Macdonald dealt directly with Howe, as leader of the federal anti-confederates, and refused to meet privately with any member of the local government.¹² Howe, frustrated and angered

⁹ Creighton, Donald C., *The Road to Confederation* (Toronto, 1964), pp. 163-178.

¹⁰ Macdonald to J. McCully, 2 January, 1868, Macdonald Papers, CXI, 331-334, P.A.C.

¹¹ Macdonald to Governor General Monck, 4 September, 1868, Confidential, Macdonald Papers, CXV, 69-82, P.A.C.

¹² Macdonald to Howe, 26 December, 1868, Confidential, Macdonald Papers, DXV, 296-299, P.A.C.

by his transactions with the "locals", fell right in with Macdonald's plans. In defending his tactics, Macdonald told one Nova Scotian federal member: "...the Local Legislature cannot be considered as representing constitutionally in anyway the interest of Nova Scotia in its relation to the Dominion. You have been elected under the present constitution to represent Nova Scotia as to all those relations — the Local Government having no more converse with them than the Corporation of Halifax."¹³ Thus the local government, as a separate political entity, could not take any part in federal politics. But Macdonald was not averse to having some members of the local government act as an appendage to the federal party.¹⁴ Some members of the local government were willing to negotiate for "better terms" with Macdonald if they were formally invited to do so as members of the local government. Howe, however, insisted that the "locals" recognize his own leadership, and so negotiations for "better terms" did not include any provincial representatives.¹⁵

On entering the cabinet Howe had to resign his seat and run in a bye-election. If Howe were to be defeated, in Macdonald's opinion, the federal government would be forced to accept Annand's terms and surrender the local patronage.¹⁶ Macdonald was attempting to determine the revenue of a provincial government, as well as to intervene in political issues which affected its very existence, without any formal participation in these matters by that government. Macdonald was trying to use his executive powers to deny any effective political role to the local government. Howe did win the bye-election, but only at the cost of impairing his health and damaging his influence.

In Halifax, Macdonald's pretensions about federal responsibility were thought to be highly provocative but there was little that the local ministry could do about them. Its obvious policy was to continue to demand repeal with an occasional threat of violence or of annexation to the United States. Gradually the repeal policy became a form of provincial rights movement with the local ministry proclaiming itself as the only true protector of the province. In accordance with this view it made some attempt to scrutinize the

¹³ Macdonald to A. W. McLellan, 26 December, 1868, Confidential, Macdonald Papers, CXVII, 206-299, P.A.C.

¹⁴ Macdonald to Howe, 4 September, 1868, Confidential, Howe Papers, IV, 457-460, P.A.C.

¹⁵ E. M. McDonald to W. Garvie, 11 March, 1869, Report of the Board of Trustees of the Public Archives of Nova Scotia, 1958 (Halifax, 1959), pp, 52-56. Hereafter cited as Report of the Board of Trustees.

¹⁶ Macdonald to C. Tupper, 15 February, 1869, Macdonald Papers, DXV, 566-568, P.A.C.

federal government's handling of the fisheries.¹⁷ The press of the local ministry also acted as if there was not, and could not be, any legitimate tie between provincial political parties and federal parties.¹⁸ Such a development was consistent with the anti-confederation movement in the province. It sprang quite logically, in 1868, from Macdonald's decision not to recognize the provincial government. Thus, deliberately cut off from federal politics, the local ministry was, to some extent, merely making a virtue of necessity when it extolled its own supremacy in the province. The possibility did exist that in trying to gain status, the local ministry would adopt some policy which, in the long run, really could disrupt the new system of government.

In seeking to gain recognition from the federal government, however, the local ministry was not much given to bold ventures. Although it began many provocative moves, it did not carry them through. The contest between the two governments boiled down to the question of whether the provincial government should receive credit on its debt allowance for a new post office building in Halifax. In the fall of 1869 the local ministry proposed that the matter be settled by a joint committee of the two governments.¹⁹ Macdonald, however, insisted that the matter be settled as an accounting problem with the department of finance. Finally the federal government declared that the procedure for settling the issue would be determined by the provincial general election of 1871.²⁰ The government of William Annand was returned to power in that election and the building issue was sent to arbitration. Following the settlement of this question, which was decided in favour of the province, the local ministry raised fewer questions as to its position in confederation. The easing off of the agitation in Halifax allowed attention to focus on the role of the federal members.

After Howe's entry into the federal cabinet in 1869 most of the federal members decided to accept his leadership. In return for supporting the government in the House of Commons, they were given control of patronage in their own counties. Some of those appointed to various positions in the counties had not only opposed union but had also continued to support the local government in

¹⁷ Speech of Attorney General Wilkins in Nova Scotia. House of Assembly, 1870, *Debates*, 21 February, 1870 (Halifax, 1870), pp. 8-9.

¹⁸ *Morning Chronicle* (Halifax), 6 May 1871.

¹⁹ Nova Scotia. Executive Council, Minutes, 15 October 1869, pp. 137-147, Public Archives of Nova Scotia. Hereafter cited as P.A.N.S.

²⁰ For a selection of documents pertaining to this issue see Nova Scotia. Legislative Council. 1871, *Journals* (Halifax, 1871), Appendix No. 1 "Provincial Building".

provincial politics. An anomalous situation developed in which the anti-confederate party, although split in two at the leadership level in 1868, often remained unified at the county level. It was also true that in several counties the confederates tended to remain separate from the "compromisers" of 1869.

The failure to integrate the two factions of the coalition of 1869 was particularly obvious in the provincial election of 1871. In several counties federal members who followed Howe gave their support to local members who supported the Annand ministry. In Howe's opinion, federal and provincial politics were completely separate. He wrote to a group of confederates in Nova Scotia that: "... patronage in the several Counties is given to the members of the House of Commons who support the Government of the Dominion, without reference to their political antecedents, or to their action in Local Counties."²¹ This policy was reasonable only as long as the federal party had no ambitions in local politics. The confederates, however, were determined to defeat the Annand ministry but they were obstructed by the federal members using federal patronage to help the supporters of the local government.

The peculiar position of some of the federal members was again revealed during the general election of 1871. Dr. Charles Tupper, the acknowledged leader of the Conservatives in Nova Scotia, had no choice but to accept as government candidates all those who had voted with the government in the commons. He thus had to accept some men of rather dubious loyalty and to forego any attempt to replace them with more reliable supporters. By the same measure the freedom of the local ministry was also restricted. The support of some federal members, with federal patronage at their disposal, was useful in local politics, but this support also prevented the local ministry from taking an active role in federal politics. By 1872 the local government was supporting the federal Liberal party²² but the federal members continued to pledge some sort of allegiance to the Macdonald government. Any active campaign by the local ministry to force these members to join the federal Liberal party would probably fail and might bring dissension into county politics.

A faction in Halifax, which supported the local ministry, decided to concentrate its campaign in the counties of Pictou and Halifax.²³ Freed from a serious challenge in a number of counties, the Con-

²¹ Howe to John Campbell, J. Snow, et. als., 8 June 1871, Howe Papers, XXIX, 706-707, P.A.C.

²² *Morning Chronicle* (Halifax), 12 June 1872.

²³ P. S. Hamilton, *Diary*, Manuscript, pp. 217-221, P.A.N.S.

servatives concentrated on defeating the half-dozen avowed Liberal candidates. All the Liberals were defeated. But this was probably the last election in which A. G. Jones, who was accepted by Alexander Mackenzie as the Liberal leader in the province, would accept half-hearted support from the local ministry.²⁴

When Parliament opened in 1873 the Macdonald government was sustained by a majority of only sixteen votes on the first division. Of the twenty-one Nova Scotian members, four abstained and five voted with the Liberals. Alexander Mackenzie, leader of the federal Liberal party, urged the local government to put pressure on some of the federal members to bring them over to the Liberals.²⁵ If such pressure was forthcoming it was ineffectual. Rather than join the Liberals, all the Nova Scotians decided to remain independent; they resolved not to accept a Conservative party whip nor to attend any party caucuses.²⁶

The disaffection of the Nova Scotian members with the Macdonald government was really a belated reaction to their position in Ottawa. During the several years of agitation in Nova Scotia the federal members had had little opportunity to criticize the various procedures in parliament. The province was represented in the cabinet by two ministers, but it was not clear whom they were supposed to represent or to whom they were responsible. By 1871 it was evident that the two cabinet ministers, Howe and Tupper, did not usually consult with their colleagues from Nova Scotia prior to policy decisions by the cabinet.²⁷ The idea that the cabinet ministers should represent the views of the provincial members was particularly attractive to those members who objected to their cabinet ministers or to the policies of the cabinet itself. Some members undoubtedly objected to such policies as the building of the Pacific railway.²⁸ Others had never forgotten their distrust of Tupper.

The rebellion ended at the close of March when Howe and Macdonald met with the disaffected members. The Nova Scotians agreed to support the government in return for a promise from Macdonald that he would provide aid to Nova Scotian railways as

²⁴ *Morning Chronicle* (Halifax), 23 August 1872.

²⁵ Alexander Mackenzie to A. G. Jones, 11 March 1873, Confidential, Report of the Board of Trustees, 1952, p. 29.

²⁶ *Evening Express* (Halifax), 7 April 1873.

²⁷ I. LeVesconte to Howe, 30 August 1871, Howe Papers, IV, 787-789, P.A.C.

²⁸ See the notes (undated) from W. Ross to Tupper in Macdonald Papers, CXVIII, 27-34, P.A.C.

compensation for the railway to be built to British Columbia.²⁹ This agreement, as well as the exclusion of Tupper from the negotiations, constituted a challenge to the cabinet system. By ignoring Tupper, the members were in effect declaring that they would decide who their leader would be. The members felt that a cabinet minister's authority should not spring from the office he held, but rather that his influence should depend upon their consent.

Shortly after the Nova Scotians re-entered the government ranks, Lucius Huntingdon moved his motion of inquiry into the government's handling of the Pacific railway charter. Most of the Nova Scotians remained true to their agreement with Macdonald throughout the spring session.³⁰ The appointment of Howe as lieutenant governor of Nova Scotia and his subsequent death forced the selection of a cabinet replacement. It was not, however, one of the leaders of the spring rebellion who was chosen. The innocuous Hugh McDonald of Antigonish, who had been a close supporter of Howe, was selected, although he would be quite unable to control Tupper. Within weeks of his appointment, several Nova Scotian members had pledged their support to Alexander Mackenzie.³¹ When Parliament met in November, one-half of the Nova Scotian contingent deserted Macdonald and supported the new Mackenzie government.

The defecting members from Nova Scotia took advantage of Mackenzie's need for haste in forming a government to demand that they be allowed to pick their two cabinet representatives. They selected two members with the longest legislative experience, and Mackenzie duly appointed them to his cabinet, although he would have preferred to have chosen two others.³² By selecting their ministers they laid the basis for claiming that the members had to consent to future changes in the personnel of the cabinet. Such a contention was bound to cause trouble because the two men selected were both inept and neither represented the influential Halifax clique led by Jones. The demand for the right of selection of cabinet ministers was, however, only one sign of the general restiveness of the Nova Scotian members. It was quite possible that the members would not be satisfied with the act of selecting their cabinet members.

²⁹ *Morning Freeman*. (St. John), 12 April 1873.

³⁰ Canada. Parliament House of Commons, Debates, 3 November 1873, Scrapbook Debates, p. 38. Microfilm.

³¹ Mackenzie to Jones, 31 July 1873, Report of the Board of Trustees, 1952, p. 31.

³² Mackenzie to Jones, 10 November 1873, Private and Confidential, Report of the Board of Trustees, 1952, pp. 33-34.

Any sense of dissatisfaction felt by these federal members was soon swept aside by the federal general election. The Conservatives obviously anticipated defeat because they only presented candidates for half the seats. Party labels were at a discount as even well known Conservatives emphasized that they could work with a Liberal government.³³ The actual election results provided an interesting parallel with those of the 1872 election. In both cases almost all the successful candidates were pledged to support the government of the day.³⁴ The election results of 1874 were, in part, a tribute to the strong belief that politics were concerned with the power of the state and the role of the government. Although there was disagreement as to how the state should exercise its powers, the first requirement for the politician was to be in step with the government. The orientation toward the role of government was indicated by the preoccupation with patronage. Patronage was the most obvious contact between the citizen and the government, but it also limited the responsibility of the government to the citizen. The commitment of all elected members, save Tupper, to the government was thus a confirmation of a particular political orientation.

The election results of 1874 were actually in keeping with the position adopted by the Conservatives during debate on the Pacific scandal of 1873. Time and again the Conservative press in Halifax had identified the government with the state and had insisted that it was the function of government to provide the dynamic force in parliament.³⁵ Government, they insisted, had to lay the foundations of the state in truth, honesty, and integrity.³⁶ The structures of morality, they continued, pertained solely to the actions of the individual in his private capacity and did not extend to the public acts of statesmen.³⁷ Several of the arguments used by the Conservatives relied on the notion of necessity of state to justify and condone the actions of Macdonald. The Liberals denied this argument, but they did not really come to grips with the issue.³⁸ Their inability to do so suggested that they shared with their opponents the premise that the integrity of the state demanded that the government be judged by standards different from those applied to an individual.

³³ *British Colonist* (Halifax), 17 January 1874; *Halifax Citizen*, 17 January 1874; 20 January 1874; 22 January 1874.

³⁴ Mackenzie to Jones, 5 February 1874, Private, Report of the Board of Trustees, 1952, pp. 41-42.

³⁵ *Halifax Evening Reporter*, 3 September 1873; 3 November 1873; 5 November 1873.

³⁶ *British Colonist* (Halifax), 21 October 1873.

³⁷ *Evening Express* (Halifax), 13 August 1873; 20 September 1873; 30 September 1873.

³⁸ *Morning Chronicle* (Halifax), 15 September 1873; 22 September, 1873.

Although the Liberals did very well in Nova Scotia in the federal election of 1874 there was still no representative of the influential Halifax clique in the cabinet. A. G. Jones had regained his seat in Halifax but he was not prepared to join the government. Prior to the election he had tried to have W. B. Vail resign his post as provincial secretary and enter federal politics. Mackenzie, however, would not promise Vail a cabinet position³⁹ and Vail decided to remain in local politics, at least temporarily. By the end of the 1874 session of the provincial legislature he was determined to resign his position and perhaps leave politics altogether. Jones again pressed Mackenzie to take Vail into the cabinet, but Mackenzie was afraid of antagonizing the county members for the sake of the Halifax clique.⁴⁰ In September, Mackenzie finally yielded to the pressure, and, to make room for Vail, he dismissed the ineffectual William Ross. Mackenzie's earlier fears that some county members would resent such a change were well founded. Supported by some of the federal members, Ross insisted that he could only be removed by the caucus which had selected him in the first instance.⁴¹ However, Ross was not the man to head a cabinet revolt and he subsequently resigned his position.

If Mackenzie had chosen to work through the Nova Scotian caucus he might well have had little difficulty in replacing Ross with some other member of the provincial contingent. Mackenzie, however, had to satisfy Jones, who wanted Vail in the cabinet because, according to Jones, he was the only one with the experience and ability to "keep the party together in the house." Jones was representing those "friends of the party" in Halifax who were looking for a strong man to curb the independence of the county members.⁴² They were thus not interested in continuing the experiment of having the federal members represented by their cabinet members. Despite a certain resentment of the "Halifax Schemers" that some federal members felt,⁴³ they were unable to use the caucus to block the appointment of Vail. Thus, the Halifax faction, which was particularly influential with the provincial government, was forcing a return to more accepted political forms.

³⁹ Mackenzie to Jones, 15 January, 1874, Report of the Board of Trustees, 1952, p. 39.

⁴⁰ Mackenzie to Jones, 6 June, 1874, Report of the Board of Trustees, 1952, p. 43.

⁴¹ W. Ross to Mackenzie, 25 September, 1874, Mackenzie Papers, 633-634, P.A.C. Microfilm.

⁴² Jones to Mackenzie, 17 June, 1874, Private, Mackenzie Papers, 655-656, P.A.C. Microfilm.

⁴³ Ross to Mackenzie, 19 September, 1874, Mackenzie Papers, 625-629, P.A.C. Microfilm.

The active participation by the local ministry in federal politics in 1874 created some difficulties in local politics. Several times during the session of the provincial legislature the Conservatives tried to debate matters under federal control. They also proposed that the assembly send instructions to the federal members on matters before the federal parliament. This suggestion would have materially reduced the role of the federal members. If it had not been opposed by Vail, who was still provincial secretary, it would probably have created trouble with the federal members. In denouncing the Conservatives' resolution Vail came down solidly in support of the exclusive right of each level of government to handle matters under its own jurisdiction.⁴⁴ By separating federal from provincial policies Vail was obviously trying to avoid becoming entangled in the unpopular policies of the federal government. The Conservative proposal, however, was not merely that the local ministry should take some action, but that the assembly itself should determine policy and take the appropriate steps to implement it. They were really proposing that the initiative be wrested from the cabinet in matters affecting the federal government. The very importance of the ties with the federal government, both of an executive and of a political nature, made it necessary for the ministry to maintain all relations with the federal government as its own preserve. In beating back the Conservatives, Vail was asserting the force of the cabinet system of government.

Following Vail's departure for Ottawa in October 1874, the local government was reorganized. The Jones-Vail faction retained its influence in the local ministry and its nominee, P. C. Hill, who had briefly headed a confederate government in 1867, became provincial secretary of the provincial Liberal government. A provincial general election was originally scheduled for the spring of 1875, but the proposed changes in the local ministry were so extensive that it was decided to hold the election in December of 1874.

With several important government positions vacant, or about to become vacant, it was somewhat difficult to declare what policy the new government would follow. The easiest course to take was to state that the new government would maintain the policy of the outgoing ministers. One of the more important aspects of that policy was the tie with the Mackenzie ministry. The Liberal press was quick to stress the advantages to the province of having the local ministry support the same party as did the federal government.⁴⁵

⁴⁴ Nova Scotia. House of Assembly, 1874, *Debates*, 15 April, 1874 (Halifax, 1874), pp. 137-139.

⁴⁵ *Morning Chronicle* (Halifax), 2 December, 1874.

The Conservatives promptly advanced the contrary view that in order to protect provincial interests the local ministry would have to be in political opposition to the federal government.⁴⁶ Thus both parties agreed that provincial politics should be determined by relations with the federal government. The affirmation of a political tie with federal politics, however, served to restrict local policies in terms or range of political subjects and also in the manner of treatment.

In justifying its tie with the Mackenzie government, the government press emphasized such matters as patronage, freight rates and railway contracts. The federal relationship was thus defined in terms compatible with the established patterns of cabinet government in Nova Scotia. The best proof which the ministerial press could advance on behalf of its argument was that the tie with Ottawa did in fact produce results.⁴⁷ In making any arrangements with Annand, the premier of the province, Mackenzie had to consider the reaction of the federal members from Nova Scotia. Some federal members were already irritated at the "Halifax Schemers" but during the election campaign Annand made no attempt to pacify them. Annand wanted Mackenzie to help arrange for railway construction from Pictou to the Gut of Canso but the Cape Breton federal members opposed the scheme. As far as Annand was concerned, Mackenzie should do what the local ministry wanted, and Annand made no attempt to conciliate the federal members. Mackenzie had already antagonized the Cape Breton members by the dismissal of William Ross from the cabinet, and he could not afford to provoke them any farther. As a result Annand did not get his railway contract prior to the election.⁴⁸ In this case much of Annand's difficulties were of his own making, but the very emphasis on the political tie between the federal and provincial governments did tend to discount the role of the federal members. The local ministry might not think it worth its while to emphasize the tie with Ottawa, if it were constantly having to take the federal members into account.

The public support of the federal government by the provincial government did not necessarily mean the denial of resentment against confederation. The rapidity with which the local ministry dropped its platform advocating separation of the two political systems suggested that the local ministry was trying to ignore the changes brought by union. The ministry was trying to protect, and, if

⁴⁶ *Evening Express* (Halifax), 7 December, 1874.

⁴⁷ *Halifax Citizen*, 3 December, 1874.

⁴⁸ For a selection of documents dealing with the railway issue see Nova Scotia. House of Assembly, 1875, *Journals* (Halifax, 1875), Appendix No. 16.

possible, enhance its position in the province. The acceptance of some type of dichotomy between federal and provincial governments would place a limitation upon the ambitions of the local ministry which they were not prepared to accept. Further, such a political separation would mean that in all those contacts of an administrative nature between the two governments, the local ministry would have to become a mere appendage to the federal members, or seek to assume a wider range of powers. Any direct attempt to change the division of powers would be a challenge to the law, and this was contrary to the character of the local ministry. Although antagonism to union might lead to a separation between federal and local politics, the ambitions of the cabinet would lead it into political ties with the federal government.

When John A. Macdonald in 1868 discounted the powers of the local ministry and ignored it politically, he set himself in opposition to twenty years of cabinet government. The peculiar relationship between the federal and provincial members, which existed from 1869 to 1872, hindered the adjustment of the provincial ministry to its new position. Once the local ministry had received a measure of recognition from Macdonald in 1871 it ceased to challenge the new constitution directly. The fall of the Macdonald government brought with it the question of the proper relationship of the local ministry to federal politics. The policy of complete integration brought its own problems, but the proposed policies fell within the new political system.

Macdonald's fear of the provincial government in 1868 was somewhat ironic in view of that government's attempt to re-establish familiar practices within the new system. The local government could have adopted policies which might really have caused trouble. It might have encouraged the local assembly to take a more prominent role in federal affairs and would thereby have sharpened conflicts with Ottawa. It could also have tried to turn the federal members into the tool of the provincial legislature instead of identifying itself with the federal government. The stand of the local ministry in federal politics actually undermined the attempt of the federal members to make their cabinet ministers responsible to them. Its intervention in federal politics did complicate those politics but it also acted as a stabilizing element. As the familiar political practices and customary attitudes towards government began to be channeled into the new political system, Nova Scotia began to function as a province. The very attempt to preserve the political traditions of Nova Scotia no doubt helped to deepen their appeal in the province. While there was utility in a tradition which helped

ease the adjustment to the new political system, it could be questioned whether in the long run this tradition did not fail Nova Scotia. Although this system inhibited the adjustment of the province to changing conditions, it did not prevent the development of repeal movements which helped distract attention from the real problems of Nova Scotia. The anti-confederates struggled to preserve their cabinet system, but the province might have been better off if they had not succeeded so well.