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SOME ASPECTS OF UPPER CANADIAN RADICAL OPINION IN THE DECADE BEFORE CONFEDERATION

BY PROFESSOR FRANK H. UNDERHILL

Present day popular knowledge of the Confederation movement seems to be largely confined to biographical details about the leading actors in the drama. The story of the political matchmakings and breaches of promise, of the party marriages and divorces of the time, has been narrated to us ad nauseam; and it is the general familiarity with it which has led, no doubt, to the general acceptance of the dictum that "our Canadian History is as dull as ditchwater and our politics is full of it." What is needed for the Confederation period—as indeed for all periods of our history—is a series of studies of the atmosphere, social, economic and intellectual, in which the political movement took place. If we were more familiar with the ideas which were floating in the air at the time and with the underlying conditions which made these ideas prevalent, the 1927 jubilee celebrations on which we are about to embark would probably display much less rhetorical hero-worship and much more real understanding of ourselves as a people.

This paper is an attempt to discuss some of the ideas which were prevalent among one section of the community, the Upper Canada Reformers, during the ten or fifteen years before 1867. It is based largely on the pages of George Brown's *Globe*, which, as everyone knows, stood out in the 1850's and 1860's not merely as the exponent but also as the maker of the radical opinion of its constituency. The long agitation conducted by Brown in the *Globe* and on the floor of the Legislative Assembly eventually produced the political situation in Canada from which Confederation resulted. It is worth while, therefore, to examine what it was for which or against which he was agitating, especially as his *Globe* has by this time become one of those classics that everyone has read about but very few have read.

To-day the main thing that is remembered about the *Globe* of those times is its attacks upon the Catholic Church; and in view of its reputation for religious intolerance one is rather surprised to find how small a part religious controversies play in its editorials. Of course, attacks on the supposed superstitions of the Roman faith and on the pretensions of the Vatican or of the local hierarchy to be the repositories of final truth can easily be quoted. But from about 1857 on these become less and less frequent. It was the *political* activities of the hierarchy which roused the *Globe's* ire; their interference in elections; their refusal to accept the complete separation of Church and State which the Upper Canada Reformers thought the only possible policy in a country of such diverse faiths as Canada; and especially their working alliance with the big business interests of Montreal which regularly delivered some fifty odd French-Canadian "Moutons" in the Assembly under Cartier's leadership to vote for every job of the Grand Trunk, for tariffs that compelled Upper Canada to buy from Montreal instead of from the United States, or for the mere lack of action that prevented Canada from challenging the monopoly of the Hudson's Bay Company in the Northwest. It is true, of course, that Brown was hypersensitive on religious questions; and one suspects that a little skilful baiting

by his opponents was not infrequently resorted to in order to lead him to make an exhibition of himself on the subject. Certainly they found his vociferous Protestantism a very useful red herring to drag across the trail whenever he grew particularly hot in the pursuit of some unsavoury job perpetrated by the government or its friends. But I think that an attentive reading of the *Globe* itself will lead one to the conclusion that it was gradually dawning on Brown as the years went by that the real enemy was not the Catholic Church but big business.

For the essential thing about the *Globe* and the movement it led is that it represented the aspirations and the general outlook on life of the pioneer Upper Canadian farmer. The "Clear Grit" party in Upper Canada was an expression of the "frontier" in our Canadian politics just as Jacksonian Democracy or Lincoln Republicanism was in the politics of the United States. It was to "the intelligent yeomanry of Upper Canada"[1] that the *Globe* consciously made its appeal. Though Brown himself sat for one of the Toronto seats from 1857 to 1861, the Grits never succeeded in capturing the main urban centres. Toronto, London, Hamilton and Kingston pretty steadily elected supporters of the Macdonald-Cartier coalition. The *Globe* was never tired of contrasting the higher level of politics in the country districts with the corruption of the cities where campaign money from the Grand Trunk, the breweries and government contractors flowed like water. "It has always been the boast of the Reform party," it remarked on August 1, 1867, "that it was greatly made up of the sturdy yeomanry of the land and of by far the most intelligent and incorruptible of that." When the London *Times* in one of its frequent jeremiads on the subject of Canada attributed the low level of Canadian public life to universal suffrage, the *Globe* rejoined[2] "There may be many people who believe that the franchise is too low... but the fact is beyond dispute that the higher classes, to whom the *Times* alludes in terms of approval, are the authors of the greatest mischief in Canada. They have formed a bureaucracy and by boundless corruption carried on in alliance with London bankers have retained the control of affairs for many years....Our farmers and mechanics whom the *Times* would consider too low in the social scale to be entrusted with the franchise, are our best politicians." When English papers were predicting as the result of the American Civil War a militarized democracy which would proceed, à la Napoleon, to gobble up the rest of North America, the *Globe* repeatedly reminded them that the basis of North America democracy was not a city mob as in Europe but an intelligent, independent agricultural class.[3] It constantly agitated for reforms in the Crown Lands Department so that the interests of the settler rather than those of the land speculator might be advanced;[4] it made fun of city men in charge of agriculture in the Cabinet, men like "Philip Van Weevil"[5] and D'Arcy McGee "a poetical lawyer who never raised a cabbage in his life except perhaps in a scrimmage of Young Irelanders."[6] From its office for

[1] The phrase occurs in an article of April 23, 1867, and similar phrases occur frequently.

[2] Nov. 8, 1861.

[3] e.g. in an article of Aug. 15, 1861: "It is the rural population, the reading population who rule in the United States and no military dictator could conquer them . . . . The greatest standing army that ever was raised would not keep down twenty millions of reading men inhabiting a country thousands of miles in extent."

[4] See articles of June 7, Sept. 7, Oct. 19, Dec. 28, 1859; May 30, 1860; Dec. 3, 1861.

[5] "Van Weevil" was the Globe's nickname for Philip Van Koughnet who was taken into the Cabinet in 1857 and given charge of agriculture. He had announced a campaign for the destruction of weevils.

[6] March 24, 1864.

several years was published a special agricultural journal, "The Canada Farmer."[1] Always its first care was for the "intelligent yeomanry of Upper Canada."

This essential connection between the Clear Grit movement and the Western farmer is shown also by the nature of the opposition to it. The Brown Reformers never succeeded in making very deep inroads into the eastern corner of Upper Canada—the St. Lawrence below Kingston and the Ottawa valley. These districts were economically connected with Montreal and the St. Lawrence route and naturally supported a Montreal Government. It was in the West, in the Peninsula, that the centre of Grit influence lay; and "eternal restlessness of the Peninsula" of which the Toronto *Leader* once[2] complained was a temper of mind which Brown found congenial. Eastern Protestants, under the guidance of the *Montreal Gazette,* seldom allowed religious sympathies to draw them towards the dangerous radicals of the West. The *Gazette* steadily preached to them that their community of economic interest with their fellow Easterners, the French Catholics was of far more importance than any religious difference or than the memory of old feuds in the pre-Responsible Government days. "The ties of race and religion" it declared[3] "have been ineffectual to bind our merchants, manufacturers and mechanics to the chariot wheels of Western Gritism. But why is it? Simply because the Western Grits always ignored the interests of the merchants, manufacturers and mechanics of Lower Canada; because they showed a disposition to treat us as a mere appendage of the Western Province, to be used against the French Canadians when we consented to be these men's tools and to be repaid for our aid by having the commerce of the St. Lawrence destroyed and the manufacturing interests of the country broken down." And again in a review of the Rep. by Pop. struggle[4] "While the French Canadians have feared a preponderant Western representation as dangerous to their nationality and peculiar institutions, the English-speaking commercial classes have feared, not without reason, that more political power given to the Far West meant a policy calculated to divert trade from the great highway of the St. Lawrence into other foreign channels. They had therefore to guard material interests and had clung to the English doctrine that interests in the body politic and not mere numbers required representation."

This calm conviction of the Montreal organ of the 1860's that whatever threatened the dominance of Montreal was ipso facto contrary to the true interests of Canada inevitably reminds a modern reader of more recent Canadian politics. In fact, one is constantly being struck in reading the papers of those days by the many points of similarity between the Clear Grit movement among the farmers of Upper Canada and the Progressive movement among the prairie farmers to-day. Both are protests against much the same factors in Canadian life; and both have been defended or denounced by the contemporary press in much the same terms. The essence of the struggle which produced the political deadlock of the 1860's was not that it was primarily a fight of Protestant against Catholic or of English against French, though both these elements entered into it and embittered it. It was primarily a struggle of West against East; the then West being, like the modern West, in its social structure largely

[1] First issued in January, 1864.
[2] Jan. 22, 1857.
[3] March 29, 1864.
[4] Nov. 16, 1864.

agricultural and its geographical position a long way from its markets; and the East, then as now, being dominated by the transportation, banking and manufacturing interests which centered in Montreal.

I propose to deal specially with the attitude of the *Globe* towards three questions which bulked very largely in the discussions of the pre-Confederation years—the Grand Trunk, the Northwest, and Confederation itself.

I. The Grand Trunk

The modern period of our Canadian history is usually taken to begin with the achievement of Responsible Government. But it is the coming of the railways which really makes it modern; and one often wonders in studying the 1850's whether we shouldn't fix the beginning with the introduction of the Grand Trunk rather than with the introduction of Responsible Government. The famous remark of one prominent party leader that his politics were railway politics is the watchword of the new era in which a Baldwin or a Lafontaine was out of place as Rip Van Winkle; and the problem of how railway development should be carried on in a new country and what should be the relation of the government to it is one that has overshadowed our existence ever since and is not yet completely solved. Undoubtedly the particular solution which was attempted in the 1850's by Hinck's bargain with Messrs. Peto Brassey, Jackson and Betts, while it eventually produced a great trunk railroad line, had an enormously evil influence in demoralising Canadian public life and in saddling the country with an almost ruinous public debt.

The *Globe* fought the Grand Trunk from the beginning as a sinister force of corruption and extravagance.[1] It believed it was a political railroad built for the benefit of promoters and contractors and politicians at the expense of the English shareholders and the Canadian public. The original contract and the successive, almost annual, revisions of it at the demand of the Company as it sank deeper and deeper into the financial mire, were opposed strenuously by Brown both in editorials and in speeches. Every year when a fresh demand from the Company was presented in the House and at every general election the *Globe* teemed with articles giving a detailed review of all the sordid and expensive transactions to date; and on each occasion Brown was beaten. Sadly he had to admit that opposition members were open to Grand Trunk influence as well as the "corruptionists" on the Government side.[2] Fiercely he denounced the Cabinet Ministers who served two masters at once—Cartier who was solicitor for the Company in Lower Canada, Macdonald who was involved with Grand Trunk men in dubious land deals at Kingston and Sarnia, Galt who had unloaded the Montreal-Portland line on to the Grand Trunk at a handsome profit to himself and his friends while serving as a director of the Grand Trunk, Ross whose only function in the Cabinet was to look after Grand Trunk interests, etc., etc.[3]; while the smaller fry who got

[1] See article of May 14, 1858: "We are now witnessing the full results of the evil principles introduced by Mr. Francis Hincks. The railway era which he inaugurated has brought with it reckless extravagance in the finances of the Province and an utter disregard of every consideration of public duty."

[2] See e.g. article of May 2, 1857.

[3] Details of these charges against ministers and their connection with the railway, which occur frequently, may be found in an article of June 11, 1861. The charges against Galt are given with most particularity on Feb. 9, 1861. The Sarnia and Kingston cases with which Macdonald was connected are discussed on Nov. 24, 26, 28, 30; Dec. 1, 4, 19, 27, 28, 1860; and May 18, 25, 1861.

the pickings from the feast came in for the same castigation. Even the Governor General did not escape.[1]

"The Grand Trunk Railway" exclaims the *Globe* on April 22, 1857, "governs Canada at the present moment. Its power is paramount. The Ministry are mere puppets in its hands and dance whatever tune the Company pipes. We much fear the present Parliament is not better than the Ministry. It may require more careful handling, more skilful management of the wires and more oil for the wheels in order to make things run smoothly; but the Grand Trunk managers have learnt how to handle it . . . . The Grand Trunk moves by one of two modes or by a combination of both, by threatening to use its political power against the refractory member at the next election or by promising personal advantages, pecuniary or otherwise. In either case the result is more disgraceful to the individual and more degrading to the country than the forced acquiescence of the legislature like that of France or Prussia." In another article about the same time[2] dealing with the extension to Riviere du Loup, it explains the railway legislative methods with more particularity. "We are still ignorant of the capacity of the ministerial omnibus. At all events it is intended to embrace the Quebec members. Were it not for the need of their votes what ministry would think of compelling the Grand Trunk to build a line to Riviere du Loup, a line which never will and never could pay running expenses, which passes no town or even large village and ends nowhere? . . . . A million of Canadian pounds is to be paid that Mr. J. A. Macdonald and his precious company may secure the aid of Messrs. Baby, O'Farrell, Simard and Thibaudeau." And when the bill is finally through it bursts out, with a slight mixture of historical references, "Oh, for a Cromwell or a general election to cleanse the augean stable of this Parliament!"[3]

Three years later, on a report in the *Leader* which hinted at the taking over of the road by the Government, the *Globe* relieved its feelings in an editorial[4] which is worth quoting at some length as a good example of its general attitude: "If it has become bankrupt in the hands of private capitalists, working it for their own profit, what will be its condition in the hands of a Government working it as a political machine for the benefit of a party? . . . . We had no idea that anything so bold, so gigantic, so utterly ruinous as the scheme which the *Leader* has just announced would be proposed even by the desperadoes of the present Cabinet. It is time for the whole country to rouse itself to action, to appoint and instruct its leaders, to put on its armour, and prepare for the conflict. We have seen the previous Grand Trunk bills carried through Parliament under whip and spur; we have seen agents from England hovering about the lobbies of Parliament; we have seen members who denounced the Grand Trunk on the floor of the House taken into a committee room for a few minutes and returning mollified and converted and ready to vote for everything that was proposed; we have seen the lobby agents of the English speculators rushing off to Government House at one o'clock in the morning to announce to His Excellency the success of the measure to convert the loan of sixteen millions of dollars by the people of Canada into a gift to their principals. We have seen millions of dollars voted amidst derisive laughter and drunken uproar; amidst shouting, singing and cock-crowing for the benefit of certain classes in Lower Canada; we have seen the rules

[1] See articles on June 12, 1856; Nov. 7, 1860.
[2] April 16, 1857.
[3] May 14, 1857.
[4] Nov. 7, 1860.

of Parliament, the laws of the land, the obligations of the constitution, and the proprieties and even the decencies which ought to be preserved by a deliberative body trampled upon without hesitation and set aside without shame, in order that the corrupt bargains of corrupt men might be carried out."

After 1861 when the management of the company was reorganized with Watkin as President and Brydges as General Manager, the *Globe* hoped at first for better things, as the new directorate showed some promise of trying to run the railway as a commercial concern. But Watkin began immediately to pull strings for the building of the long discussed Halifax-Quebec railroad and the *Globe* was in arms once more against what seemed to it another scheme for plunder, for getting government subsidies that would all go into the pockets of the promoters. Down to 1864 it treated the whole Intercolonial idea as a Grand Trunk job and nothing more. The demand of the company for increased postal subsidies also led to a long controversy and soon the Globe was as suspicious of the new management as of the old. "Mr. Brydges is still here," its Quebec correspondent writes on March 23, 1864, at the time of the last crisis but one before the great coalition, "and it is commonly remarked that he is never absent when a political crisis is going on." And when finally Confederation and the Intercolonial were both assured the *Globe* returned to the charge. One of its chief arguments against putting Macdonald into power to inaugurate the government of the new Dominion was that to do so would be simply to re-establish a Grand Trunk Government. "Shall we surrender to Macdonald and Galt the control of that great work, the Intercolonial? Shall we permit them to construct another edifice of fraud similar to the Grand Trunk."[1]

This long fight against the railway octopus in Canadian politics deserves much more attention than it has usually been given in accounts of Upper Canada Reform. It was the chief fight which the *Globe* conducted against the undue influence of special interests; but it went hand in hand with a vigorous campaign against the efforts of Galt and the Bank of Montreal to monopolize credit facilities against the efforts of the manufacturers for a protective tariff, against the efforts of the Montreal wholesalers and importers to compel the West to deal exclusively with them. All these were attacks upon the interests of the common man as the *Globe* saw them, upon the interests of "the intelligent yeomanry of Upper Canada." So far as railway affairs went the Grand Trunk was too strong for the *Globe*, and Grit political purists could do little more than make unavailing protests. It is part of the irony of Brown's career that, after struggling all his life against the domination of Canadian politics by the Grand Trunk, he passed away just too soon to see the advent of the Canadian Pacific Railway. Perhaps he was happy in the time of his death.

II. The North West.

In another direction the *Globe* was able to make a more positive contribution. This was in regard to the North West. Speaking in the House after he had got the campaign for incorporating the West well under way in his paper, Brown recalled that he had made the topic of the North West a part of the very first speech he had delivered in the legislature.[2] Certainly, from 1856 on, the Globe took the lead in Canada in agitating for the removal of the company's monopoly on the Red and Saskatchewan

[1] June 26, 1867.
[2] See report of his speech in the *Globe* of March 2, 1857.

rivers and the opening of the territory to Canadian settlement. More than any other agency it deserves the credit for educating Canadian public opinion up to the conception that the future of Canada depended upon the country beyond lake Superior.

The Reform Convention of January, 1857, made the incorporation of the North West one of its planks; and from that time for the next ten years the *Globe* was full of news articles and editorials on the subject. Conservative papers for a long time pooh-poohed the project as visionary, and the *Globe* characteristically charged them and the Government they supported with being in the pay of the Hudson's Bay Company. Cartier, it declared constantly, from his post of vantage inside the Cabinet, was thwarting any advance by Canada towards the Red river in his fear that it would upset the political balance of power to the detriment of Lower Canada.[1] When a group of leading Toronto business men formed the North West Transit Company to develop the route from Collingwood via Fort William to Fort Garry the *Globe* was loud in their praises.[2] In 1859 when two Toronto newspaper men, Messrs. Buckingham and Coldwell, went out to start a paper in the Red River settlement, Buckingham wrote special letters to the *Globe* about their trip, and after *The Nor-Wester* was started the *Globe* published extracts from almost every number it printed.[3] With an enterprise which was noteworthy in the journalism of the time the *Globe* brought out a special supplement on the North West containing one of the very few maps that appear in the newspapers of those days.[4] It watched with interest the struggles of the settlers against company rule; it published extracts from the reports of expeditions of Hind and Palliser and the others; it teemed with letters and articles from settlers and special correspondents; and when British Columbia began to go ahead it redoubled its enthusiasm because this increased the importance of the Red River settlement as a link in an all-British route across the continent.

The *Globe* also kept its readers well informed about the different phases of the question in the mother country. When the English House of Commons investigated the company's regime in 1857 the *Globe* received special correspondence from Mr. F. W. Chesson,[5] the secretary of the Aborigines Protection Society which was fighting the company on the ground that its rule was bad for the Indians. Chesson continued to supply anti-company news and arguments from London for more than two years, and in addition to his letters the *Globe* reproduced every item unfavourable to the company that appeared in any of the leading English papers. It watched the changes of government in Britain, criticized the Whigs in much the same terms as it used about Macdonald and Cartier in Canada for their undue friendliness to the company, even welcomed a Tory government as being more independent of Mr. Edward Ellice.[6] And it eagerly

[1] An article on Jan. 10, 1857, refers to "Sir George Simpson and his golden arguments." See also article of April 23, 1858 (Weekly edition): "Are we to be shut out from this territory because Mr. Rose, Mr. John Ross and Mr. J. A. Macdonald either by monetary inducements or by well-directed influence are more disposed to act in the interest of the Hudson's Bay Company than for the benefit of the people of Canada?" On the opposition of Cartier and the French to Western expansion see articles of Jan. 6, 1857, and Aug. 2, 1860.

[2] The company was formed in 1856. A review of its operations to date is given July 18, 1859.

[3] Buckingham's letters appear in October, 1859.

[4] May 18, 1857.

[5] Letters from "F.W.C." begin to appear in March, 1857.

[6] See articles of Feb. 25, 1857; March 26 and Aug. 6, 1858 (weekly edition); June 30, 1859; March 4, 1860.

gathered information about the financial deal of 1863 which put the company into the hands of the same group of interests as controlled the Grand Trunk.[1]

What the *Globe* especially insisted on was the great future which was in store for Canada if she would only rise to her opportunity. Here Brown was undoubtedly a magnificent prophet. He tried to stir the ambitions of his fellow-citizens and constantly lamented their lethargy as contrasted with the American energy in pushing westward. Commenting in 1862 on a news item from Belleville that the explorer Fraser was 86 years old, the *Globe* asks: "Is it not disgraceful to us as a people that in the year 1862 we should have advanced so little beyond the steps taken by the bold fur-trader in 1805, that the journey across the Rocky mountains should be nearly as arduous now as it was then? How long are we to bear this reproach upon the enterprise of our race? So long as Mr. Cartier rules but not one day longer, we trust." And a little later in the same year it declares: "The opening up of the country belongs not to Great Britain but to those who will benefit by it, to Canada . . . It is absurd for men to advocate our paying one or two million a year to support Imperial policy on foreign affairs and at the same time to allege that the Imperial Government should bear the expense of opening up our own territory."[2] Again, answering arguments of the *Leader* that Canada already had more territory than it could populate, the *Globe* replies "If the original thirteen States had been guilty of the narrow-minded policy now recommended to Canada; if they had isolated themselves from the rest of the continent and persistently refused to share in any way the burdens or to provide in any way for the wants of the Territories, where would be the greatness to which they have achieved?"[3] And it continues a little later: "The non-occupation of the North West territory is a blot upon our character for enterprise. We are content to play the drone while others are working. We settle down quietly within the petty limits of an insignificant province while a great empire is offered to our ambition."[4]

"A great empire is offered to our ambition." This was the constant clarion-call of the *Globe*. "When the territory belongs to Canada, when its navigable waters are traversed in a few years by vessels, and lines of land travel are permanently established, when settlements are formed in favorable localities throughout the territory, it would not be difficult by grants of land to secure the construction of a railway across the plains and through the mountains . . . We can beat the United States if we start at once. It is an empire we have in view and its whole export and import trade will be concentrated in the hands of Canadian merchants and manufacturers if we strike for it now."[5]

In similar strain is an article of January 22, 1863. "The public mind has been carefully prepared; the time for argument and discussion is almost past; action is now demanded on all hands,. . . . If Canada acquires this territory it will rise in a few years from a position of a small and weak province to be the greatest colony any country has ever possessed, able to take its place among the empires of the earth. The wealth of 400,000 square miles of territory will flow through our waters and be gathered by our merchants, manufacturers and agriculturists. Our sons will occupy the chief places of this vast territory, we will form its institutions, supply

[1] See articles of July 10, 17, 24, 31, 1863 (weekly edition).
[2] April 23, 1862.
[3] June 30, 1862.
[4] July 15, 1862.
[5] March 6, 1862.

its rulers, teach its schools, fill its stores, run its mills, navigate its streams. Every article of European manufacture, every pound of tropical produce will pass through our stores. Our seminaries of learning will be filled by its people. Our cities will be the centres of its business and education, its health and refinement. It will afford fields of enterprise for our youth. It is a bright prospect and its realization would be worthy of some sacrifice."

What lent additional fervour to the *Globe's* appeals was the fear that the West would fall into American hands if Canada delayed too long. This danger forms a frequent subject for editorials. The *Globe* watched anxiously every movement, commercial and political, that seemed to bring the Red river closer to St. Paul. "If we let the West go to the United States, if the rest of the continent outside of Canada and the Atlantic provinces acknowledges the sway of the Republic, we should be unable to contend with her. Our ultimate absorption would be inevitable."[1] "Cooped up as Canada is between lakes and rivers and the frozen North, should all the rest of the continent fall into the possession of the Americans, she would become of the smallest possible importance....So far as England is concerned, it matters little to her perhaps whether the North West continues to fly the British flag or not; but to us it is of vital concern....There is yet time to make up in great measure for that which has been lost. And if we are not the most supine of any people in existence, we shall prove equal to the occasion."[2]

One could go on indefinitely illustrating various aspects of the *Globe's* campaign. It dwelt upon the argument that with the West a part of Canada our adventurous spirts would go there instead of being lost to the United States; and that the Red and Saskatchewan valleys would make us a rival with the republic for European immigration.[3] It even appealed to the French Canadians to come out of their self-centered introspection on the lower St. Lawrence and renew the achievements of their great ancestors, the fur-traders and explorers of an earlier generation.[4] It pointed out to the manufacturers that a great market beyond lake Superior would do them far more good than anything protection could accomplish for them in the little settlements of Upper and Lower Canada.[5] And finally when the Quebec Conference included absorption of the North West in its resolutions, the *Globe* rejoiced at victory after a long campaign. Representation by Population and the absorption of the North West, it again and again repeated, are the two great boons which Confederation brings to the people of Upper Canada. To-day when citizens of the North West are looking about for suitable methods of commemorating Confederation, it would not be a bad idea if, somewhere in that vast Red and Saskatchewan territory towards which his eyes were ever turned, they erected a statue to George Brown.

III. Confederation

Suspicion of the Grand Trunk and enthusiasm for westward expansion caused the *Globe* down to 1864 generally to pooh-pooh proposals for closer union with the Lower Provinces down by the sea. It regarded union at some day as inevitable but thought that it must be a slow work

[1] April 2, 1862.
[2] Jan. 27, 1864.
[3] See articles of Feb. 5, 1857; Feb. 27, July 15, 1862; Feb. 5, 1863.
[4] See article of Feb. 3, 1863.
[5] See article of Feb. 5, 1863.

of time; and especially it was convinced that most of the closer-union proposals, in so far as they emanated from any Canadian source, were merely a blind to turn attention away from its agitation for the rights of Upper Canada. When finally, on the formation of the Coalition in 1864, Brown went in whole-heartedly for a general Confederation, the *Globe's* main arguments for it were that it gave Upper Canada what she had been struggling for—control of her own local affairs and a proper influence, based on her population, over general affairs, together with the great future which the empire of the West would bring. The arguments that union with the Maritimes would give Canada new markets in the East and an outlet to the ocean and would make her stronger defensively against the American Goths and Vandals who (according to British and Canadian Imperialists) were gazing with envy on her fair fields—these arguments never impressed the *Globe* very much.[1]

From his entry into public life Brown had been preaching Representation by Population, a sacred cause which the *Globe* always refused to slight by calling it Rep. by Pop. Simple Representation by Population in a legislative union would, of course, have tended to mean the domination of Lower by Upper Canada; though the *Globe* always put its argument in the form of a demand for the emancipation of Upper Canada from Lower Canadian domination. Every year Brown or one of his friends forced a debate and a division in the Assembly on the question; and they gradually made such headway that it became more and more difficult for an Upper Canada member of either party—at least for a member from west of Kingston—to vote against their demand. When in March, 1864, the last patched-up ministry before the great Coalition was got together, the *Globe* boasted that John A. had had to take into his Cabinet the only two representatives from West of Kingston left in the Assembly who still voted against Representation by Population—Simpson of Niagara and Isaac Buchanan of Hamilton.[2]

But the Brownites were able to make no inroads on the solid Lower Canadian phalanx opposed to their demand. In the 1856 debate A. A. Dorion, the leader of the Rouges, suggested some form of federalism as a solution of the difficulties between the two sections,[3] and so opened a new phase of the question. The suggestion apparently made little impression on the western Grits who continued to agitate for Representation by Population or dissolution of the Union. But when the Brown-Dorion ministry was formed in 1858 the two leaders made some sort of an agreement to work out a modus vivendi which would satisfy both Upper and Lower Canada and which would include guarantees—whether of a federal nature or otherwise was not specified—for the peculiar institutions of Lower Canada. What they might have accomplished in practice they were not given a chance to prove.

In the meantime Galt had come forward with his proposal for a wider federation to include all the British North American colonies; and the Cartier-Macdonald Government which followed the two-days' ministry of Brown and Dorion committed itself to Galt's scheme. The *Globe* refused to take this sudden conversion of the "corruptionists" seriously. It was a mere trick intended to divert public attention from the scandal of the

[1] See e.g. an article of Dec. 3, 1864. On June 21, 1862, the *Globe* declared: "We in Canada do not see in the Northern army a horde of Goths and Vandals who are likely to be attracted to this Province as were the hordes of Alaric to the rich plains of Italy."

[2] April 1, 1864.

[3] Reported in the *Globe* of April 25.

Double Shuffle and from the past iniquities of the Coalition "desperadoes." On October 15, writing about the Cartier-Galt-Ross mission to England, the *Globe* declared: "Doubtless the Canadian delegates will endeavour to impress upon the English ministers that the only means of relieving Canada from the political evils under which she suffers is the federation of the provinces. But we fancy that Sir Bulwer Lytton has already seen and heard enough of Messrs. Galt and Ross to induce him to receive with caution anything which they may tell him. They are notoriously connected with the Grand Trunk Railway and more especially with its contractors who will be chiefly benefited by the extension of that work to the Lower Provinces; and he must be blind indeed if he cannot see that this sudden love of confederation is far more the result of the necessities of the railway than of a desire to promote the welfare of British America. The question of Representation by Population is an awkward one for the Cartier Government and they seek to engage the Imperial Government in a rash scheme of federation in order to avoid the difficulty which they have not the manliness to face. If Sir Bulwer Lytton will inquire he will discover that there is no desire on the part of the people of Canada for immediate union with the Lower Provinces. He will discover that there is no communication at present between the various sections sufficient to justify a political union; and let him beware how he endeavours to hasten an event which can only be accomplished by the cordial co-operation of all parties interested. We have every confidence that some time or other the whole of the British North American provinces will be united in one gigantic Confederation; but no one can believe that the moment has arrived for the fulfilment of that scheme. And if the Colonial Minister, to help the condemned administration of Mr. Cartier, endeavours to force such a thing upon the Canadian people, the whole effect will be to delay its accomplishment for an indefinite period. . . . The eyes of the Canadian people should be turned not to the east but to the west. The commercial advantages to be derived from a union with the Lower Provinces are hardly appreciable, while in the boundless West there lies open to us a field of enterprise which might cause wealth to flow into every city and village of our land. If the Imperial Government is willing to grant assistance for the development of British power in North America, let her grant it in aid of a Pacific railway or the founding of a great colony on lake Winnipeg and the Saskatchewan. That will be a work ten times more beneficial to all these provinces than a railway through the wilderness which divides Canada from New Brunswick. If we must go begging for Imperial assistance let us ask it for the opening of this magnificent country. This is an enterprise worthy of a statesman's thought; but instead of attending to it our ministers have thrown every obstacle in the way of its accomplishment. They have pandered to the monopoly which has been and is still a barrier in its path. They have done nothing to urge on the Imperial Government the necessity of action, and now they are bending their whole thoughts to the construction of a work which will benefit Messrs. Peto Brassey and Betts, but nobody else."

Again on November 5, 1858: "The shape in which the project of a Federal Union has been taken up by Sir Edmund Head's advisers does not permit of misinterpretation. The most superficial of observers cannot be tempted to accord them credit for broad statesmanlike views in connection with the subject. But the other day all of them save Mr. Galt poohpoohed it as, for the present, an impracticability. . . . Even Mr. Galt

had so little faith in his own proposition that he allowed it to fall to the ground after the faintest possible imitation of a fight. It was evident that his action in the matter was not the offspring of strong earnest conviction but was merely undertaken with the view of bettering his political position.[1] . . . It is impossible to doubt that even now these men regard a Federal Union as nought else than a scape-goat. An Intercolonial railway is the primary object to be obtained. Messrs. Ross and Galt have studied in the school of the Grand Trunk and they approach the Intercolonial with the keenness and cunning of practised spoilsmen. . . . So the three Ministers have gone to England brimful of speculative loyalty and business-like patriotism."

To this attitude the *Globe* remained firm practically until the Coalition of 1864. Again and again in the two or three years after the Cartier-Galt-Ross Mission it pointed out that the ministry had made no further effort to develop or explain its federal scheme, a fact which was proof enough that it was not sincere in taking the scheme up in the first place.[2] Nor had the proposition been welcomed by the mother country or by the other colonies; the Maritime people were afraid to trust themselves to politicians who had the reputation of the railway speculators of Canada. "They decline the offer of our hand when they see the dowry we shall bring them."[3]

In the meantime the Upper Canada Reformers had made an advance in their own political thinking. After the passion aroused by the events of the summer of 1858 had cooled down, the *Globe* began in 1859 to publish a series of very able editorials on the political situation which are remarkable in its pages for their cool philosophical tone.[4] In its analysis it discovered two main evils: (1) the complete failure of the Union to produce an amalgamation of the two races, and the intense bitterness of feeling which had grown up in consequence; (2) the excessive influence of the executive over the legislature which freed unscrupulous ministers with money to spend on railways and public works from all the checks supposed to be provided by Responsible Government. Neither of these evils could be cured by Representation by Population alone; and so the *Globe* began to suggest that a federal system be applied to the two Canadas with a written constitution containing definite checks on the power of the executive over the people's taxes. As the year went on it warmed to the subject; and in the autumn, in November, a great Reform Convention was held in Toronto with nearly 600 delegates present from all parts of Upper Canada —though, according to Sandfield Macdonald, only 19 of these came from east of Kingston, and Sanfield himself did not attend.[5] The Convention lasted for three days, and after long discussion and considerable opposition, Brown succeeded in inducing them to accept the proposals which the *Globe* had been advocating since the previous May. The resolutions adopted decided against a general federation of all the provinces as not practicable for the present, against simple dissolution of the Union, and for "the formation of two or more local governments, to which shall be committed the control of all matters of a local or sectional character, and some

[1] The reference is to Galt's motion for a general federation of British North America which was discussed in July, 1858, before the crisis at the end of the month developed

[2] See e.g. articles of Feb. 7 and 11, Sept. 21, Nov. 30, 1859; April 19, 1860.

[3] Dec. 7, 1860.

[4] See articles of May 10, 11, 12, 13, 14, 18, 23. The discussion continues through the summer in the pages of the *Globe* and there are many quotations from the Reform press of the province.

[5] See his speech in the Assembly reported in the *Globe* of June 1, 1861.

joint authority charged with such matters as are necessarily common to both sections of the Province," with the addition that representation in the new federal system should be based on population.[1]

It is worth noting that in pleading against the alternative of dissolution of the Union which found much support among some of the Grits from the Peninsula, Brown stressed the national argument. "I do place the question on the ground of nationality. I do hope that there is not one Canadian in this Assembly who does not look forward with high hope to the day when these northern colonies shall stand out among the nations of the world as one great Confederation. What true Canadian can witness the tide of immigration now commencing to flow into the vast territories of the North West without longing to have a share in the first settlement of that great fertile country? Who does not feel that to us rightfully belong the right and duty of carrying the blessings of civilization throughout those boundless regions and of making our country the highway of traffic to the Pacific? And how can there be the slightest question with one who longs for such nationality between complete dissolution and the scheme of the Committee?" (i.e. the federal scheme of the resolutions, which would make it easy for the West to be taken in as a partner in the federation).[2]

Federalism, however, proved no more acceptable to Lower Canada than Representation by Population had done, and the French leaders continued to impose an absolute veto on any change whatsoever. One result of this was that many of the Reformers drifted back into advocating simple Representation by Population instead of the 1859 federal scheme. And in 1862 when a chance came at last to escape from their long wandering in the wilderness of opposition, most of them were persuaded fairly easily by Sandfield Macdonald to drop for the moment both Rep. by Pop. and the 1859 platform in order to form a coalition with a group of the French led by Sicotte. The *Globe* was never more brilliant and devastating than in the editorials in which it tore Sandfield's Double Majority ideas to pieces; but it supported the new government generally because of its platform of economy and because two of its leading members, McDougall and Howland, were known to be enthusiasts for action about the North West.

By this time Mr. Watkin's diplomacy had so successfully revived the Intercolonial project that in September, 1862, a conference of the three governments concerned was held at Quebec followed by the sending of delegates to London to treat with the Colonial Office.

The *Globe* viewed all these transitions with open hostility and poured heavy sarcasm on the negotiators. "The Halifax-Quebec railway is a large work . . . and it is rather a reputable thing to be connected with it, even while it is in the distant future. No one has any objections to say a word for it and it is quite a pleasant thing to be appointed to go to England to look after its affairs. A visit to the Colonial Office, a dinner at the Secretary's, perhaps a card to Lady Palmerston's Ball, possibly a presentation at Court for Mrs. Bluenose and the Misses Bluenose—Therefore it is that in spite of frequent snubbings there is still another deputation about to visit England. The Grand Trunk and Mr. Watkin have fanned the flame which is always kept burning on the railway altars in Halifax and St. John, and the conflagration has spread through three provinces. That is to say, deputations are found to travel for the scheme

[1] Reports of the proceedings of the Convention run in the *Globe* from Nov. 10 to Nov. 16.

[2] The speech is reported on Nov. 16.

and newspapers to write about it. As to the public, they do not care a button about it, either in Nova Scotia, New Brunswick or Canada. We in Upper Canada look westward for communications, not eastward; we have plenty of avenues to the ocean; we have none to the ocean-like prairies of the North West. . . . The only Canadians who care a straw for the road are a few hermits in the wilderness which lies between Trois Pistoles and the New Brunswick line and the members of the Cabinet who desire to keep Mr. Watkin, the Grand Trunk agent, amused and occupied during his sojourn in this country, and hope that if the home authorities should be fools enough to grant money to the road, the Grand Trunk and themselves will make something in the scramble for the spoils which will follow."[1]

When the Canadian delegates, Howland and Sicotte, by very tortuous methods, succeeded in bringing all negotiations to an end, the *Globe* exulted: "All's well that ends well. The country may congratulate itself on its escape from a railway job of even worse character than the Grand Trunk."[2] "The affair will be adjourned sine dine. . . . The delay is good for Upper Canada. With the railway is connected the federation scheme which at present would be carried out for the benefit of Lower Canada. Before entering into new alliances it should be the effort of Upper Canadians to regulate the affairs of their own province, to obtain Representation by Population, to open the North-West territory so that when the federation of all the British North American provinces does come it may be formed with Upper Canada as the central figure of the group of states, with western adjuncts as well as eastern."[3]

It is unnecessary to enter into the troublous politics of 1863 and the first half of 1864 when ministries clung to office by two or three votes and all sorts of combinations of public men were discussed officially and unofficially in the effort to devise a stable government. The *Globe* was able to survey these events with a certain unwonted detachment since Brown himself was not a member nor a candidate for membership in any of the actual or paper cabinets that were set up. Brown had been defeated in the election of 1861 and retired temporarily from politics, going on a visit to Scotland where he was married. After his return to Canada he re-entered the legislature as a member for South Oxford, and from this time his speeches and many of the articles in the *Globe* take on a new note of moderation. The note of pleading with both parties to drop partisan quarrels and face the difficulties between Upper and Lower Canada becomes increasingly frequent. One can see from the Globe of 1863 that Brown's willingness in June, 1864, to bury the hatchet was no sudden impulsive resolve. Whatever the reason for this new moderation, there is no doubt that it begins to be in evidence after his return with his bride in December, 1862. Perhaps the real father of Confederation was Mrs. Brown.[1]

From the formation of the Coalition in June, 1864, the *Globe* is of course full of the subject of Confederation, and it would be impossible here to refer to all the points it raises in its discussions. What it is most insistent on, however, is that the scheme worked out at Charlottetown and Quebec embodies the full accomplishment of all that the Reformers of Upper Canada have been seeking for the last fifteen years.

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[1] Oct. 1, 1861. This was written before the Macdonald-Sicotte ministry came into power.

[2] Jan 19, 1863.

[3] Jan. 6, 1863.

A long article on July 6. 1864, comparing the scheme of 1864 with the platform of 1859 concludes: "The most casual reader can scarcely fail to perceive that the policy of the Administration is substantially that enunciated in the last two of the above quoted resolutions (of 1859). The remedy for existing constitutional evils is, according to the ministerial program, to be sought in the federative principle. So it was sought in 1859. Then, as now, it was deemed advisable to give local matters to local control, while reserving for general authority matters necessarily common to both sections of the Province. In the same way, both in 1859 and 1864, the same declaration is made, that under the new system representation according to numbers must be conceded. . . . But, says an objector, the convention of 1859 declared that the formation of the larger federation was too remote a contingency to serve as an immediate remedy for the grave difficulties for which that body was seeking a remedy. The best evidence that that was a sound of opinion lies in the fact that no progress since has been made towards the realization of such a federation."

And again on October 13, 1864:

"The public will pay small attention to arguments against us based upon what we said years ago in reference to the question of confederation, when presented as a thing of the future rather than as a scheme immediately practicable, and as a means of defeating our principles rather than causing them to prevail. We never assumed the position of extreme opponents of the confederation of all the provinces. On the contrary we have always believed that the union would some day be realized. But we did refuse to be diverted from the advocacy of parliamentary reform and the opening of the North West by proposals that we should, at some future time, get confederation; and the more clear did we feel that it was our duty not to join in the premature advocacy of the measure for the reason that the offer of it was never coupled with any promise or hope that we should get along with it that justice to Upper Canada which we were advocating.

"The scheme which we declined to advocate was the intercolonial railway first; the confederation next, but at some indefinite time; and justice to Upper Canada last of all, or more likely not at all. The policy which we are now supporting reverses all this. We are getting as first and most important, justice to Upper Canada; next, confederation; and last, if at all, the railway."

Finally when at last the British North America Act was passed, what was to be the political attitude of the Upper Canada Reformers in the Dominion? Was there not some plausibility in John A. Macdonald's plea that the slate of the past should be wiped clean and that Canada and Ontario should start on their new career with non-partisan, or rather bi-partisan governments? The *Globe* would have none of it. The no-party cry was simply a device to get the old Macdonald-Cartier-Galt gang back in power again. "The intelligent yeomanry of Upper Canada who can look back on the political events of the last twenty years need no instruction as to the meaning of the no-party cry. . . . Can the men

[1] The Quebec correspondent of the Montreal Gazette on June 25, 1864, remarks: "Remember that since his return to parliamentary life Mr. Brown has repeatedly professed a belief in the need for greater moderation." Brown moved in Aug., 1863, for a Committee to consider the constitutional difficulties between Upper and Lower Canada but withdrew his motion later in the session owing to the unsettled state of parties. See Globe of Aug. 21 and 28, 1863 (weekly edition). He renewed the motion in the 1864 session and got his Committee which reported in favour of some kind of federalism on the very day that the Tache-Macdonald ministry was defeated.

fancy that the Reformers of Upper Canada do not comprehend that the main boon secured by the accomplishment of Confederation is the power to bring to an end the outrageous misgovernment of the last dozen years?"[1] And in the midst of the election campaign on August 10, it came out with a characteristic editorial on Galt's banking scheme, headed "The Danger of the Hour," which is a good summing up of the whole radical position. "With the Grand Trunk and the Bank of Montreal at his back there is no saying how far the reckless financier of the present government may carry his schemes. These institutions are the enemies of the people and of popular rights. They have special interests to advance in Parliament. It is time that Upper Canadians were united together in resisting these monopolies and the Government which has created and supported them. It is time that we had a government above being the servant of railway or banking institutions. It is time that we had a government which would consider the interest of the whole people and not of a few wily money-makers who can bring influence to bear upon Parliament. It is above all a necessity that the people of the West should elect men who will be able to prevent the mischief which Mr. Galt is still anxious to do to the interests of the western country."

And so the *Globe* plunged once more into the fray. Alas for its high hopes of reaping the fruits of victory with at least sixty good Reformers in Parliament from Upper Canada! The "corruptionists" came back to power again, and from 1867 till very recent years radicalism has been at a discount in Canada. Confederation did not bring Upper Canada into the Grit land of promise. It was again and again necessary to fight for provincial rights. Railway and other special interests were as rampant as before. The North West was an unconscionably long time in developing. And in the meantime Ontario itself changed slowly from the pioneer agricultural settlement which had produced the radical Grits of the 1850's and 1860's into the industrialized community of to-day with its fat and prosperous capital. No good Torontonian of the present generation could possibly read Brown's Globe without shuddering. But out in the territory of the Red and Saskatchewan the Clear Grit movement has come to life again in a fresh incarnation; and the farmers of the prairies are unconsciously reviving many of the ideas for which the farmers of what was then Western Canada strove two generations ago. With that Upper Canada which read the *Globe* and voted Grit we of the modern West have a natural affinity. It is our spiritual home.

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[1] April 23, 1867. A similar article of Feb. 11 runs: "We are about to reap the fruits of a long protracted struggle . . . . Constitutional changes are but the means to an end; they are but provisions to secure better government and more equitable legislation Having triumphed in the struggle for constitutional reform, the Liberal party are of all men the most fitted to be trusted with the practical working out of the great reform they have spent so many years in accomplishing. It were worse than folly to commit that duty to those who were so long the bitter enemies of reform."