

**Towards the ‘Federated States of North America’:
The Advocacy for Political Union between
Canada and the United States, 1885-1896**

Aaron W. Boyes

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Department of History
Faculty of Arts
University of Ottawa

Abstract

This dissertation examines the movement for political union that existed in Canada and the United States between 1885 and 1896. During this period the Dominion was plagued by economic malaise, “racial” tension, and regionalism, all of which hindered national growth and the creation of a distinct Canadian nationality. The Republic, meanwhile, experienced substantial economic growth thanks to increasing industrialization, and many Americans sought to expand the territory of their nation. It was in this atmosphere of Canadian political and economic uncertainty and American expansionism that the idea of forming one grand continental republic re-emerged.

To provide a more complete understanding of the movement for political union this study examines its emergence, development, and ultimate failure. Although at no time did it become a mass or popular movement, political unionism became an important element in the public discourse in both Canada and the United States. Furthermore, this dissertation shows that political unionism was not only an English-speaking phenomenon, as several of the core group of advocates identified herein were French Canadian, and there was a serious debate about French Canada’s future in North America.

Many previous studies that have explored this era in Canadian-American relations have overlooked the significance of the movement for political union, largely by focusing on the tense economic relationship and the debate over free trade. However, as this dissertation argues, economic considerations for political union were secondary amongst its proponents. They did not support political union for personal gain. Rather, supporters of the movement shared a conviction in the need to unite the continent due to a sense of shared racialism and the belief in the superiority of republicanism. This dissertation also

offers a new perspective on the core group of advocates of political union. They were not “traitors” who had turned their back on Canada and wished to “sell out” the Dominion to the United States. These figures did not want “annexation”; they desired a true political union.

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This dissertation is dedicated to my father, Dann.
With love, respect, and admiration.

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Introduction

“The movement in favour of continental union,” reflected Goldwin Smith in 1894, “was as spontaneous and as natural as any popular movement could be.”¹ The movement may have been spontaneous but at no point was it popular, and it certainly was not unexpected. All of the necessary prerequisites were present at the end of the nineteenth century, which enabled the movement for political union between Canada and the United States to emerge. Both the Dominion and the Republic were undergoing significant political, economic, cultural, and ideological change, which, when combined, bred an ideal atmosphere in which to discuss the future of the two nations. In the 1880s and 1890s the movement for political union, which at times occupied a significant amount of attention in both countries, did not emerge in a vacuum. Rather, it must be seen as the final moment during the nineteenth century when a number of Canadians and Americans seriously considered eliminating the international border and creating a single continental nation.²

The movement for political union may have been spontaneous and natural, as Goldwin Smith outlined, but certainly was not a new idea in the 1880s and 1890s. Since 1775 there have been several attempts to unite under one government what would later become the United States and Canada, both peacefully and through the use of force. During the American War for Independence (1775-1783) and the War of 1812 (1812-1814), armed invasions of British North America occurred with the goals of conquering the disparate colonies and adding them to the American Union. In the years that followed

¹*Interview with Goldwin Smith*, *London Advertiser*, 23 May 1894, W.D. Gregory Fonds, MF 135, Queen’s University Archives, Box 13, folder G.

²Although part of North America, Newfoundland was omitted from this study because it was not part of either Canada or the United States during the period under examination.

the War of 1812, dissension grew in some of the British colonies, ultimately producing the Rebellions in Upper and Lower Canada in 1837-38. The leaders of the rebellions, William Lyon Mackenzie and Louis-Joseph Papineau, respectively, greatly admired the United States, particularly its republican institutions, and sought to cast off the British connection and establish a republic in their province. The rebellions ultimately failed, but the yearning for republicanism, and the rejection of the British tie, remained strong amongst a select group in the Canadas, which had a profound impact later in the century. In Lower Canada in particular the admiration of republicanism by the *Patriotes*, and subsequently the *Rouges*, left a lasting legacy.³

Arguably the most well known movement for political union began when the Montreal Annexation Association issued its “Annexation Manifesto” in October 1849. The Association was composed of a group of influential English-speaking Montreal businessmen and a handful of French Canadians. The Tory businessmen, dismayed by the British elimination of preferential trade in 1846, feared economic collapse if they did not join with their southern neighbours. They also believed that the granting of responsible government would lead to French domination in their province, especially in the aftermath of the passing of the Rebellion Losses Bill. Somewhat surprisingly was the cooperation between the Tories and the French-Canadian *Rouges*. These radical French-Canadian liberals opposed the Act of Union of 1840, desired the benefits of American republicanism, and believed that union with the United States would best ensure their future. Although the Association initially received considerable encouragement, its popularity soon waned and support for annexation all but dissipated. This was largely due

³For a more complete examination of *Rougeisme*, see Jean-Paul Bernard, *Les Rouges. Libéralisme, nationalisme et anticléricalisme au milieu du XIXe siècle* (Montréal: Les Presses de l’Université du Québec, 1971).

to the dichotomy between the British-Canadian Tories and the French-Canadian *Rouges* for what they believed annexation would accomplish as well as the recovery of the British North American economy. There was also a measure of support for annexation in Upper Canada and New Brunswick, but not to the same degree as was found in Montreal. Furthermore, Britain and the United States signed a reciprocity treaty in 1854 that boosted trade between the British North American colonies and the US. This event greatly reduced support for political union, although the idea never truly disappeared.⁴

Under the Reciprocity Treaty of 1854 much of the economic impetus for political union was removed, but the outbreak of the American Civil War (1861-1865) helped to breathe new life into this old idea. During the war the Confederate commerce raider CSS *Alabama* was constructed in Britain, wreaking havoc on American shipping until it was finally sunk in 1864.⁵ Following the war, some Americans demanded reparations for the damages caused by the *Alabama* and that Britain cede its North American colonies to the United States. At the same time the US continued to expand westward, eventually acquiring Alaska in 1867. In 1865, the United States gave the required one-year notification of intent to abrogate the reciprocity treaty of 1854 as many Americans felt that the Canadians had unfairly benefitted from the agreement. It was also repealed to punish Canada and Great Britain for British support of the Confederacy during the Civil War. Moreover, anti-British sentiment in the US, which dated back to the 1770s, remained strong for most of the century.

⁴For a more detailed account of the 1849 annexation movement, see C.D Allin and George M. Jones, *Annexation, Preferential Trade and Reciprocity* (Toronto: The Musson Book Co., Limited, 1912); Donald Warner, *The Idea of Continental Union: The Agitation for the Annexation of Canada to the United States, 1849-1893* (Lexington: University of Kentucky Press, 1960); and D.C. Masters, *Reciprocity: 1846-1911* (Ottawa: The Canadian Historical Association Booklets, 1969).

⁵Spencer C. Tucker, *Blue & Gray Navies: The Civil War Afloat* (Annapolis: Naval Institute Press, 2006), 279-293.

Significant political changes were also ongoing in British North America in the 1860s. During the Charlottetown and Quebec Conferences and the subsequent Confederation debates, some presented annexation to the United States as an alternative to the confederation scheme; this option did not, however, receive much support, save for amongst the *Rouges*, and was largely lost amongst the confederation fanfare. Rather, the annexation bugbear was used to ensure the union of British North America and the maintenance of the British connection, a tactic that was repeated by the Conservatives several times later.⁶

Not everyone, however, supported Confederation. The anti-Confederates of Nova Scotia lamented the British North America Act and on several occasions brash statements appeared in the defence of Nova Scotia leaving Canada and joining the United States. Some French Canadians, such as Médéric Lanctot, an outspoken “crusading journalist” who helped establish the influential Montreal newspaper *La Presse*, also rejected Confederation and called for its repeal.⁷ During the 1870s, regionalism and linguistic animosities, coupled with the sluggish Canadian economy, once again had Canadians discussing their political future not only in North America but also within the British Empire. In the United States, Reconstruction after the devastation of the Civil War was a top priority; yet at the same time the Republic continued to expand, continuing the expansionist trend that had in been in place since the 1840s. However, as John Herd Thompson and Stephen A. Randall have accurately surmised, “active annexationism was

⁶For more information about this era in Canadian-American relations, see: Robin Winks, *The Civil War Years: Canada and the United States* (Montreal and Kingston: McGill-Queen’s University Press, 1960); Jean Charles Bonenfant, *The French Canadians and the Birth of Confederation* (Ottawa: The Canadian Historical Association Booklets, 1996); Christopher Pennington, *The Continentalist Movement in the Politics of Canada and the United States, 1887-1894* (Unpublished PhD Dissertation, University of Toronto, 2007); and Warner, *The Idea of Continental Union*.

⁷Médéric Lanctot, *Programme indépendant* (1871); Jean Hamelin, “Lanctot, Médéric,” *Dictionary of Canadian Biography*, <http://www.biographi.ca/en/bio/lanctot_mederic_10E.html>.

passé, replaced by the assurance that the continental fulfillment of America's Manifest destiny would not require recourse to arms."⁸ Active annexationism may have dissipated in the US, but the idea of uniting the continent nevertheless remained.

II

This dissertation examines the movement for political union that existed in Canada and the United States between 1885 and 1896. It was the third moment during the nineteenth century when union between the two countries was considered, although it was distinct from its predecessors for several important reasons. The previous moments, which have been subject to more historical scholarship, occurred in 1849 and in the 1860s, periods considered crucial for Canada's socio-economic and political development. Shortly after Confederation, however, the young Dominion experienced economic despair, as well as linguistic and regional strife, which, by the mid-1880s, caused many Canadians to once again reconsider their political future, not only within North America but also as a member of the British Empire. Therefore, the movement for political union was significant in Canadian-American relations in the late nineteenth century. It challenged how Canadians viewed their country and future relations with their much larger continental neighbour. It also forced Canadians to seriously consider whether or not their nation could be an economically and politically viable state, capable of forging and maintaining a separate and distinct identity in North America from that of the American Republic.

To provide a more complete understanding of this topic, this dissertation explores the emergence, development, and ultimate failure of the movement for political union. It

⁸John Herd Thompson and Stephen A. Randall, *Canada and the United States: Ambivalent Allies* (Athens: The University of Georgia Press, 2002), 42.

examines the arguments and debates in favour and against political union, as well as public opinion in both Canada and the United States. Moreover, it reveals the dichotomy in how the movement for political union was perceived in English and French Canada, as both had significantly different reasons to support or oppose union with the neighbouring republic. This dissertation also goes deeper than previous studies by providing a prosopography of the leading figures of the movement for political union as well as the core ideas upon which they based their support. Overall, it offers an in depth account of an important and fascinating era in Canadian-American relations.

Support for political union was uneven, which also explains why the movement failed. It was strongest in Ontario, particularly the southwestern portion of the province, and in southern Quebec, especially in Montreal and to a limited degree in the Eastern Townships. There was also some level of support in the rest of Canada, with expressions of support emanating from the Maritime Provinces, but not to the same extent as in Central Canada. In the United States, most support was localized to the northeast, specifically in New York City, although there existed favourable sentiment across the Republic. The further away from the border, however, support for political union diminished considerably.

It will become evident that support for political union developed at different times in the two countries. It was most intense in the United States between 1887 and 1891, while in Canada it peaked between 1891 and 1894. Although there was some interaction between supporters in the two countries, a true continental-wide campaign did not coalesce until 1892 with the formation of the Continental Union Association of Ontario

in Toronto and the National Continental Union League in New York.⁹ Of course, support for political union existed before 1887 and after 1894, which is why this dissertation focuses on the decade between 1885 and 1896. By doing so it includes the often-overlooked Venezuela Crisis and how the Crisis might be seen as having sparked the last true gasp for political unionism in nineteenth century North America.

III

Of the ongoing socio-cultural changes that shaped the Dominion during the nineteenth century, Americanization and loyalty were two of the most important elements, and both significantly influenced the movement for political union in the 1880s and 1890s. The former was predicated on a strong attachment to the North American continent, specifically the importance placed on liberty and republicanism, while the latter stressed the attachment to the British Crown and a deeper conservatism. Due to the influence of these ideas Canadian elites of the late nineteenth century were constantly re-evaluating their political future.

The United States has played an important role on the world's stage. Indeed, the very idea of America, a nation of liberty and democracy and the antithesis of the Old World, has had a profound impact on the global community, particularly American values and culture. Yet, as Allan Smith outlines, "No country was more fully aware of the United States, both as a symbol and an intractable reality than Canada. Canadians had noticed for some time the impact that America was having on their society.

Commentators pointed regularly to cultural invasion, close economic links, and what to

⁹Donald Warner erroneously stated that these two groups were one in the same with offices in Toronto and New York. This is not quite accurate. The Continental Union Association formed in 1892, while the National Continental Union League formed the following year in 1893. They were also organized by separate individuals who only later become somewhat connected. Warner, *The Idea of Continental Union*, 234.

them seemed the indisputable facts of geography as circumstances would insure a large and effective American influence in Canada.”¹⁰ As such, Americanization was not always presented negatively. During a speech delivered in 1896, for example, Liberal MP George Ross (Middlesex, Ontario) effectively outlined this Americanization of Canada, saying, “there is another side to our relations with the republic much more pleasant to Canada. [...] Through her social life we have become less reserved, through her inventiveness we have become more productive industrially, and through her politics we have become more – American.”¹¹ W.H.H. Murray, a leading American observer of Canada and an avid promoter of the American wilderness, made a similar case in 1888, arguing that “Canadians are such by accident, but to me and to all scholars they are Americans by right of birth, born in the same great land with us of the States; standing not as foreigners, but brothers born with us, who would share with them the glorious destiny of coming centuries.”¹²

An important aspect of the Americanization of Canada was the free flow of people and ideas across the international border. Due to the great appeal of the Republic, throughout the nineteenth century the United States annually welcomed thousands of Canadian immigrants. By 1900, according to the US Census Records, 1,389,470 residents in America listed Canada as their birth nation, or 1.8% of the total population of

¹⁰Allan Smith, “Samuel Moffett and the Americanization of Canada,” in *Canada – An American Nation? Essays on Continentalism, Identity, and the Canadian Frame of Mind* (Montreal and Kingston: McGill-Queen’s University Press, 1994), 68.

¹¹Quoted in the *Toronto Globe*, 7 February 1896.

¹²W.H.H. Murray, *Continental Unity: An Address by W.H.H. Murray* (1888), 12. See also Christine Jerome, *An Adirondack Passage: The Cruise of the Canoe Sairy Gamp* (Halcottsville, NY: Breakaway Books, 2013), 94-97.

76,212,168.¹³ While Canada's poor economy was a central reason for this mass emigration it does not entirely explain the phenomenon. As Canadian immigrants, especially Anglophones, found life in the Republic to be quite similar to that in the Dominion it was relatively easy for them to adapt to their adoptive country. An 1890 report in the Toronto *Globe* explained why many Canadians found it beneficial and easy to move to the United States:

The free movement of capital and labor, of men and resources, is usually impeded by three obstacles, namely geographical distance, by difference in political institutions, and by difference in language, religion, and social customs. None of these obstacles stand in the way of the transfer of capital and labor from the English-speaking Provinces of Canada to the United States.¹⁴

Based on observations such as this, supporters of political union presented English Canadians and Americans as a kindred people whose differences were of degree and not of kind.

By the 1890s the exodus from Canada became a cause for concern for some politicians, and it was a focal point during discussions within Parliament. For example, on 10 February 1890 Liberal MP John Charlton (North Norfolk, Ontario), a strong supporter of closer trade relations with the United States, rose to address the issue of Canadian emigration. "That there is a considerable exodus from this country to the United States," he said, "is not, I suppose, disputed. [...] [It] constitutes a direct loss [...] composed of the best portion of our population – the young, energetic and enterprising, those whose services, energy, and productive capacity we can ill afford to spare."¹⁵

¹³United States Department of Commerce, *Historical Statistics of the United States, Colonial Times to 1970* (Washington, D.C., 1975), 116-117. Unfortunately, much of the 1890 US census records were destroyed by a fire, which is why the year 1900 was used here.

¹⁴Toronto *Globe*, 4 August 1890.

¹⁵Canada, Parliament, *House of Commons Debates*, 6th Parl, 4th Sess, Vol 29 (10 Feb 1890).

Charlton's concern was about the impact that the annual emigration of Canadian youth had on the Dominion's economy and national development. Others, however, were not as worried. As Conservative MP Peter White (Renfrew North, Ontario) indicated, "I know, as a matter of fact, that many of our people do go to the United States. It is characteristic of Anglo-Saxons that they have a tendency to move about, to seek to improve their fortunes, and I do not see that there is anything improper in our young men seeking wider fields for their talents than they can find in Canada, if they can find them in a foreign country."¹⁶ According to White, it was perfectly natural for Canadians to seek a better life in the United States on account of the "Anglo-Saxon" characteristic of self-improvement. It is interesting to note White's opinions on immigration to the United States considering he was a member of the Conservative Party, which stressed the importance of the British connection and British values.

Another essential aspect to the Americanization of Canada was how Canadians viewed their place in the New World. English-speaking Canadians, much like Americans, believed that they were tasked with a special mission to create a better civilization in the New World. As Allan Smith argues, "English Canadians, like others in the New World, developed a conviction that they had a special mission to fulfill. Like that of their neighbours, their sense of mission owed much to the fact that those who framed it were acutely conscious of their location in space." Unlike their American counterparts, however, English-speaking Canadians desired to retain and build upon the best aspects of British society and British constitutional politics. Yet by the mid-nineteenth century English Canadians had been heavily Americanized, which led them "to view themselves not as the agent of an Old World culture charged with civilizing the New, but as beings

¹⁶Ibid.

uplifted and restored by their New World environment whose duty it was to regenerate the Old.” This change in perspective was in large part due to the continued importation of American publications and ideas throughout the nineteenth century.¹⁷ With this new perspective a continentalist nationalism slowly started to grow in Canada that was relatively strong by the end of the century, which also altered how some Canadians viewed their southern neighbours. The American influence was felt in many facets of Canadian life, so much so that a small group of Canadians advocated for political union with the United States, which was the extreme end of Americanization.

Yet while Americanization was a prominent force in Canada, so too were expressions of loyalty. Both English-Canadian imperialists and French-Canadian *nationalistes* utilized expressions of loyalty to combat the growing influence of the United States on Canadian society. Amongst English Canadians, loyalty was expressed by the strong attachment to the British Empire and British institutions, while in French Canada loyalty was best demonstrated to the Catholic Church and *nos institutions*. In both cases, the imperialists and *nationalistes* viewed their societies as inherently different from that of the Republic, and, as Damien-Claude Bélanger has highlighted, they “shared a number of overarching conservative values. These included a firm belief in communitarianism, elitism, and a transcendent order; an appreciation of organic, evolutionary change; a profound devotion to tradition, continuity, and order; and a deep conviction that freedom, order, and private property were closely linked.”¹⁸ It is

¹⁷Allan Smith, “American Culture and the Concept of Mission in Nineteenth Century English Canada,” in *Canada – An American Nation?*, 29-31.

¹⁸Damien-Claude Bélanger, *Prejudice and Pride: Canadian Intellectuals Confront the United States, 1891-1945* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2011), 22-23. The English-Canadian imperialists and French-Canadian *nationalistes* had much more in common than has previous been considered. On this topic see Sylvie Lacombe, *La rencontre de deux peuples élus: comparaisons des ambitions nationale et impérial au Canada entre 1896 et 1920* (Québec: Les Presses de l’Université Laval, 2002).

important to note that these expressions of loyalty were not solely reserved for conservative circles, as many liberals of the era also revered the British connection. As the United States represented the opposite of these cherished values, it was for these reasons that both imperialists and *nationalistes* largely opposed not only political union but also closer relations of any kind with the neighbouring Republic.

Canada may have been influenced by Americanization over the course of the nineteenth century due to the influx of American ideas, values, and culture, but it very much remained a British country as represented by its population. Throughout the nineteenth century thousands of British subjects immigrated to the Dominion, which helped maintain a direct link with the Empire. Table 1 shows the population of British- and American-born residents in Canada for the census year 1891.

Table 1: Place of birth, 1891¹⁹

Place of birth	Canada	BC	MB	NB	NS	ON	PE	QC
British Isles	477,725	20,165	28,036	16,139	17,387	326,049	5,104	52,298
% of pop.	9.8	20.5	18.3	5.02	3.86	15.4	4.67	3.51
USA	80,195	6,567	3,063	4,278	3,238	42,702	582	18,524
% of pop.	1.67	6.68	2.00	1.33	0.71	2.01	0.53	1.24

As this table clearly outlines, far more people living in Canada in 1891 were born in the British Isles than the United States. The lower number of British-born residents in Quebec is easy to explain, as 93.3% were French Canadian.²⁰

¹⁹*Census of Canada, 1890-1891*, volume 1 (Ottawa: S.E. Dawson, Printer to the Queen's Most Excellent Majesty, 1893), 332-363. In this case the British Isles includes England, Scotland, Wales, Ireland, and the Channel Islands.

²⁰Jean Hamelin et Yves Roby, *Histoire économique du Québec* (Montréal: Fides, 1971), 53.

The importance of Canada's British character at the end of the nineteenth century cannot be understated. The attachment to Britain for both English and French Canadians was an essential part of their national identity, albeit to very different degrees. Phillip Buckner has written extensively on the British connection and its influence on Canada's development. Buckner has emphasized that although a majority of English-speaking Canadians did not desire an Imperial Federation, instead preferring the Empire to remain decentralized, they were still very proud of their place and the role they played in the Empire. Some Canadians, however, actively campaigned to create an Imperial Federation at the end of the nineteenth century; there was a similar movement afoot in Britain.²¹ Moreover, rather than choosing to be one or the other, English Canadians viewed themselves as both British and Canadian concurrently.²² The British connection was also important for French Canadians, particularly amongst the political elite and Catholic clergy.²³ This was because French-Canadian rights and freedoms, especially the use of the French language and the practice of Catholicism, were to some degree constitutionally protected in Canada. Conservative MP Josiah Wood (Westmorland, New Brunswick) best expressed the cherished British connection in the House of Commons while debating reciprocity with the United States. "The people of Canada, Sir," he declared,

²¹For an in depth examination of Canadian imperialism, see Carl Berger, *The Sense of Power: Studies in the Ideas of Canadian Imperialism, 1867-1914* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1970). For the idea of a more united British Empire, see Duncan Bell, *The Idea of Greater Britain: Empire and the Future of World Order, 1860-1900* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2007).

²²Phillip Buckner, "The Long Goodbye: English Canadians and the British World," in *Rediscovering the British World*, Phillip Buckner and R. Douglas Francis, eds. (Calgary: University of Calgary Press, 2005), 184, 187; Phillip Buckner, "Introduction," *Canada and the British World*, Phillip Buckner, ed. (Vancouver: UBC Press, 2005), 3; Phillip Buckner, "Introduction," in *Canada and the British Empire*, Phillip Buckner, ed. (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2010), 4-7, 20.

²³Phillip Buckner, "The Creation of the Dominion of Canada, 1860-1901," in *Canada and the British Empire*, 71.

are loyal British subjects. We belong to different races and different creeds, for we have sprung from different nationalities; but whether it is Norman or Anglo-Saxon blood that flows through our veins [...] we have chosen Canada for our home largely because we have a preference for British institutions, because we desire to enjoy the protection of the British flag, and because we are willing to do our part to maintain a united British Empire. This feeling, I believe, is universal in this country, with but a few exceptions.²⁴

Wood's assessment was quite accurate. The vast majority of Canadians, both English- and French-speaking, were proud of their place in the British Empire and desired to maintain the British connection and the continued use of British institutions. Due to this strong attachment, and with historical hindsight, the movement for political union had little chance of success. Certainly some Canadians were dispirited with their place in the Empire and preferred union with the United States, but they were at best a small minority. It was immensely difficult to persuade the Canadian people to sever the British connection and join the American Republic. As such, the movement for political union was bound to fail.

Two conflicting ideas were actively discussed in Canada during the years 1885 and 1896: union with the United States, which was the ultimate outcome of Americanization, and the maintenance of the British connection, which was rooted in traditional expressions of loyalty. This ideologically charged atmosphere at the end of the nineteenth century heightened the debate about the Dominion's political future and how Canadians viewed their society.

²⁴Canada, Parliament, *House of Commons Debates*, 6th Parl, 2nd Sess, Vol. 26 (20 March 1888).

IV

Both English- and French-Canadian historians have afforded particular attention to the earlier movements for political union, rather than that of the 1880s and 1890s, largely because they occurred at times that are considered crucial to Canada's pre-Confederation development. Within much of the existing historiography, these previous moments have been presented as part of the necessary growing pains that enabled the creation and development of the Dominion. This nationalistic interpretation has also been the standard approach to examining political unionism, albeit with important ideological distinctions. Most historians have also concluded that political union with the United States was not a serious political option and that it did not pose a real threat to Canada's development. This dissertation, however, challenges this conclusion by arguing that the movement for political union was a real movement and thus it maintained a degree of legitimacy as a political option.

The English-Canadian historical scholarship on political unionism of the 1880s and 1890s can be divided into two major currents: the conservative-nationalist and the liberal-continentalist approach. While not all works that have examined political unionism in the latter part of the nineteenth century fall into the confines of these ideological approaches, they are the most common and influential. The conservative-nationalist approach presents the movement for political union as a treasonous undertaking led by a group of pessimists that had given up on Confederation. Not only had the supporters of union with the United States turned their backs on Canada, but they also rejected the cherished British connection for the perceived morally bankrupt American Republic. The liberal-continentalist approach, on the other hand, although also

critical of political union, presents more intimate continental relations as beneficial for Canada's development as a North American nation. Both approaches, however, have tended to focus heavily on the economic aspects of political unionism, often overlooking other important ideas.

The conservative-nationalist approach and interpretation of political unionism is the most common and influential. In the 1950s, 1960s, and even into the 1970s, during the "golden age" of Canadian political history, several books were published and theses written that examined the early years of the young Dominion. When examining the 1880s and 1890s, these historians focused heavily on the commercial union movement, the election of 1891, and Sir John A. Macdonald's famous declaration, "A British subject I was born, a British subject I will die." Readers, therefore, are left with the impression that the Liberal Party, and liberal thinkers more generally, desired to sell out Canada to the United States in return for material gain, destroying the British connection in the process.²⁵ Thus, an innate anti-Americanism is present within these conservative-nationalist studies. Furthermore, the United States is presented as a nefarious nation continuously plotting to annex Canada. Many historians, notably Donald Creighton, P.B. Waite, Donald Swainson, and C.P. Stacey, amongst others, exemplify this conservative-nationalist perspective in their approach to political unionism.

²⁵For examples of this conservative-nationalist approach, see: Donald Creighton, *John A. Macdonald: The Old Chieftain* (Toronto: Macmillan, 1955); John P. Heisler, *Sir John Thompson, 1844-1894* (Unpublished PhD Dissertation, University of Toronto, 1955); Creighton, *Dominion of the North: A History of Canada* (Toronto: The Macmillan Company of Canada Limited, 1957); Lovell Crosby Clark, *A History of the Conservative Administrations, 1891-1896* (unpublished PhD Dissertation, University of Toronto, 1968); Creighton, *Canada's First Century, 1867-1967* (Toronto: Macmillan of Canada, 1970); Donald Swainson, *John A. Macdonald: The Man and the Politician* (Toronto: Oxford University Press, 1971); P.B. Waite, *Canada, 1874-1896: Arduous Destiny* (Toronto: McClelland and Stewart, 1971); Waite, *Macdonald: His Life and World* (Toronto: McGraw-Hill Ryerson Limited, 1975); C.P. Stacey, *Canada and the Age of Conflict: A History of Canadian External Policies*, vol. I: 1867-1921 (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1977); Waite, *The Man From Halifax: Sir John Thompson, Prime Minister* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1985).

P.B. Waite's *Canada, 1874-1896: Arduous Destiny* best presented the conservative-nationalist interpretation in the study of political unionism. Part of the Canadian Centenary Series – an influential and generally conservative reading of Canada's past – Waite's volume examined the 1880s and 1890s and Canada's struggle to develop into a strong and unified nation. He focused on the economic difficulties in Canada and the rise of the commercial union movement in the late 1880s and its potential political implications in the 1890s. As is common within conservative-nationalist studies, Waite argued that commercial union would have inevitably led to annexation. The most telling example of this is his argument, "unrestricted reciprocity, commercial union, or annexation, all labels that could cover the same thing, was back in Canadian politics."²⁶ This is an oversimplified conclusion. As this thesis shows there are important differences between unrestricted reciprocity and commercial union, while political union was its own distinct idea. Waite also concludes that despite the best efforts of some pessimistic Canadians the people of the Dominion rejected closer relations with the United States in favour of the continued connection with Britain, thus "saving" Canada from annexation.

Liberal-continentalist interpretations have also tended to focus heavily on the economic aspect of Canadian-American relations in the 1880s and 1890s, but where they differ from the conservative-nationalist perspective is how they present and approach the American Republic, as well as their ideas about Canadian identity and nationalism. Historians such as A.R.M. Lower, Frank Underhill, and later J.L. Granatstein, as well as O.D. Skelton, who was trained as a political economist, all approached political unionism from a liberal-continentalist perspective. In 1921, for example, in his *Life and Letters of Sir Wilfrid Laurier*, Skelton examined the different economic movements in Canada in

²⁶Waite, *Canada, 1874-1896: Arduous Destiny*, 221.

the latter decades of the nineteenth century and their impact on Canadian development. Throughout, Skelton's liberal-continentalist viewpoint is quite evident. Rather than presenting closer relations with the United States as a calamity, Skelton balanced it against another political movement of the era, Imperial Federation. "Imperial federation and annexation," he argued, "neutralized each other, each saved the country from the other, permitting all the while the growth of a national spirit which would not seek absorption in either greater branch of the English-speaking peoples."²⁷ According to Skelton and other liberal-continentalists, Canada should have embraced its New World spirit, including improved relations with the United States, all the while maintaining a separate political existence.

Similar themes are also present in other liberal-continentalist studies. Most notably are the critiques of the Conservative party and its use of the "loyalty cry" during the 1891 election. As Arthur Lower disdainfully concluded in his discussion of the 1911 election, which was also based on free trade with the US, just "as three times before, the party which had succeeded in identifying itself with 'the flag,' had ridden triumphantly to victory. When such fundamental passions are engaged, Canadians vote according to their ancestral urges."²⁸ Lower's reproach challenged the notion that free trade with the United States would have brought about annexation, and that the Conservatives had "saved" Canada from this fate. Much like Lower, Frank Underhill was also quite critical of John A. Macdonald's use of the "loyalty cry" in the 1890s, lamenting that Canadians had squandered an opportunity to create a unique Canadian nationality. As he stated with

²⁷O.D. Skelton, *Life and Letters of Sir Wilfrid Laurier* (Toronto: McClelland and Stewart, 1965), 113.

²⁸A.R.M. Lower, *Colony to Nation: A History of Canada* (Toronto: Longmans, Green & Company, 1946), 431. Lower's title, *Colony to Nation*, was an excellent indication of his liberal-continentalist perspective.

derision, “In Canada we have no revolutionary tradition; and our historians, political scientists, and philosophers have assiduously tried to educate us to be proud of this fact.” Underhill also defended Goldwin Smith, an Oxford-educated political commentator and essayist, and his somewhat controversial vision of Canada at the end of the nineteenth century.²⁹

Liberal-continentalist historians have also criticized the role of anti-Americanism and its use throughout Canadian history. In 1996, for example, J.L. Granatstein found that, “From the Loyalists through to the reciprocity elections of 1891 and 1911 and beyond, [...], anti-Americanism was almost always employed as a tool by Canadian political and economic elites bent on preserving or enhancing their power. It was largely the Tory way of keeping pro-British attitudes uppermost in the Canadian psyche.”³⁰ The critique of the use of anti-Americanism and loyalty as a political tool offers another way of looking at the 1891 election and the Conservative claim of having “saved” Canada from annexation. It presents the Tories as being more concerned with preserving their power in Canadian politics by exploiting the annexation bugbear rather than promoting Canada’s best interests.

Yet the English-Canadian conservative-nationalist and liberal-continentalist perspectives have both largely overlooked political unionism as a distinct issue, as it is generally presented as merely a small aspect within the wider economic disputes that dominated Canadian-American relations in the 1880s and 1890s. Another way that these approaches are similar is that they also tend to focus almost exclusively on political

²⁹For example, see Frank H. Underhill, *In Search of Canadian Liberalism* (Toronto: The Macmillan Company of Canada Limited, 1961), 12, 8-9.

³⁰J.L. Granatstein, *Yankee Go Home? Canadians and Anti-Americanism* (Toronto: Harper Collins Publishers Limited, 1996), ix-x.

unionism in English Canada. Most are Ontario-centric, although they do discuss the west and the long-lasting resentment to Confederation in Atlantic Canada. French Canada is largely left out of these studies. This dissertation, therefore, redresses the idea of political unionism by treating it as a distinct movement.

The study of political unionism in French Canada in the latter years of the nineteenth century has generally been ignored by the historiography. Most attention regarding “annexationism” in French Canadian historical writing has focused on the movement of 1849 in Montreal, which is somewhat understandable.³¹ During the movement of the mid-nineteenth century, the cooperation between English-speaking Tory businessmen and radical French Canadian *Rouges* was an anomaly, and thus historical scholarship has sought to explain this uneasy alliance between competing ideological groups. French-Canadian advocates, such as the fiery Louis-Joseph Papineau, were also much more vocal in their support for union with the United States than were those in the 1880s and 1890s, which partly explains why historians have provided more analysis to political unionism of 1849.

The movement for political union of the late 1880s and early 1890s was not as strong in Quebec and amongst French Canadians as it was in English Canada, but it was still an element of the political debate. It is clear, though, that French Canadian historians that have studied this era have approached it differently than their English-Canadian counterparts. Whereas economic considerations dominated English-Canadian historical writing, French-Canadian historians have focused more on political and ideological concerns. In his 1941 volume *Les Canadiens français et leurs voisins du sud*, Gustave

³¹For example, see: Lionel Groulx, *Notre maître, le passé* (Montréal: Bibliothèque de l'Action française, 1924) and Thomas Chapais, *Cours d'Histoire du Canada*, vol. VI, 1847-1851 (Québec: Librairie Garneau, 1933).

Lanctot showed that union with the United States was approached in terms of how it would impact *la survivance*.³² Robert Rumilly, who wrote several books that explored this era, indicated that during the 1880s and 1890s political union with the United States and Canadian independence went hand in hand when discussing the Dominion's future, and that it was these political considerations that mattered most to French Canadians.³³

Although the historiography on political unionism in French Canada is relatively limited, biographies of some of the leading advocates of continental union help to inform about the changing socio-political atmosphere in Quebec, which enabled the growth of a political union sentiment. Patrice Dutil's *Devil's Advocate: Godfroy Langlois and the Politics of Liberal Progressivism in Laurier's Quebec*, explored not only the life of Langlois but also the changing political landscape in Quebec during the latter-half of the nineteenth century.³⁴ Dutil's work highlighted the influence of *Rougeisme*, which was an influential ideology in mid-century French Canada, not only on the formation of Langlois' political outlook, but also in how it influenced the movement for political union in the 1880s and 1890s. Pierre Bance's doctoral dissertation *Beaugrand et son temps* also examined the changes to Quebec society in the late nineteenth century, and how Honoré Beaugrand promoted political union with the United States, which he believed to be in the best interest of French Canadians, as editor of the radical-liberal newspaper, *La Patrie*.³⁵

³²Gustave Lanctot, *Les Canadiens français et leurs voisins du sud* (Montréal: Éditions Bernard Valiquette, 1941).

³³Robert Rumilly, *Histoire de la province de Québec*, vol. v & vi (Montréal: Éditions Bernard Valiquette, 1940); Rumilly, *Henri Bourassa: La vie publique d'un grand Canadien* (Montréal: Les Éditions Chantecler Ltée, 1953); Rumilly, *Honoré Mercier et son temps*, two volumes (Montréal: Fides, 1975).

³⁴Patrice Dutil, *Devil's Advocate: Godfroy Langlois and the Politics of Liberal Progressivism in Laurier's Quebec* (Montreal and Toronto: Robert Davies Publishing, 1994).

³⁵Pierre Bance, *Beaugrand et son temps* (Unpublished PhD Dissertation, University of Ottawa, 1964).

An important element in recent French-Canadian historical scholarship regarding the United States is the idea of *l'américanité*. In its simplest form, *l'américanité* is the idea that all American states – in both North and South America – share a common link because they are “New World” nations, and thus possess a common past and future. Historians such as Marcel Bellavance, Gérard Bouchard, Louis-Georges Harvey, and Yvan Lamonde have argued that French Canada was greatly influenced by its New World character and thus shared many similarities with other American states.³⁶ However, rather than adopting republican institutions and a republican spirit, as did other American nations during the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, these historians contend that French-Canadian elites, deeply rooted in traditional and conservative ideas, radically altered French Canada’s development which resulted in the maintenance of the British connection. As Bouchard has averred:

Il faut souligner en particulier l’existence, parmi les élites socio-culturelles, d’un courant très important qui, du milieu du XIXe siècle au milieu du siècle suivant, a opposé une sorte de refus à l’expérience continentale, en particulier aux figures qui prenaient chez les populations voisines: chez ces élites, la fidélité à un passé largement imaginaire servait alors de programme pour les générations futures, la mémoire des origines se substituant à l’exaltation du rêve nord-américain.³⁷

The idea of *l'américanité* was strongest among the *Rouges* during the mid-nineteenth century. For French-Canadian advocates of political union, most of

³⁶See Marcel Bellavance, *Le Québec au siècle des nationalités. Essai d'histoire comparée* (Montréal: VLB éditeur, 2004); Gérard Bouchard, “Le Québec comme collectivité neuve. Le refus de l’américanité dans le discours de la survivance,” *Québécois et Américains: La culture Québécoise aux XIXe et XX siècles*, Gérard Bouchard et Yvan Lamonde, eds., (Montréal: Fides, 1995); Bouchard, *Genèse des nations et cultures du nouveau monde: essai d'histoire comparée* (Montréal: Boréal, 2001); *La pensée impuissante. Échecs et mythes nationaux canadiens-français (1850-1960)* (Montréal: Boréal, 2004); Louis-Georges Harvey, *Le Printemps de l'Amérique française. Américanité, anticolonialisme et républicanisme dans le discours politique québécois, 1805-1837* (Montréal: Boréal, 2005); Yvan Lamonde, *Ni avec eux ni sans eux: Le Québec et les États-Unis* (Montréal: Nuit blanche, 1996); Lamonde, *Histoire sociale des idées au Québec*, 2 vol. (Montréal: Éditions Fides, 2004).

³⁷Bouchard, *Le Québec comme collectivité neuve*, 16.

whom were influenced by *Rougeisme*, union with the United States represented the extreme form of *l'américanité*. The majority of French Canadians, however, rejected union with their southern neighbours, which demonstrates the limits of *l'américanité* in late nineteenth century Quebec. Instead, traditional expressions of loyalty, best exemplified by the Catholic clergy, were more dominant in French-Canadian society.

Although in-depth scholarship on political unionism in the 1880s and 1890s is somewhat lacking, Canadian historians have been studying this era since the 1920s and there has been at least one new work in every decade since. In the 1940s and 1950s, historians focused heavily on the economic development of Canada, which is also reflected in the wider examination of economics in Canadian-American relations. During the 1960s, however, a shift occurred in which historians focused on Canada's political development, especially because of the centennial of Confederation in 1967. Large-scale political texts, particularly those of the Centenary Series, were published that lauded the Dominion's growth and celebrated the survival of the young nation as it was faced with immense external pressures, largely emanating from the neighbouring Republic. Within these studies Canada was celebrated as a success story for rejecting union with the United States on several occasions during the nineteenth century. By the late 1970s, however, the historical landscape in Canada had once again shifted, and social history became dominant. This helps to explain why there was little attention afforded to the study of political unionism during the late 1970s, 1980s, and even 1990s. More recently,

specifically since the early 2000s, Canadian historians once again have begun to discuss the impact of political unionism in Canadian-American relations.³⁸

Compared to their Canadian counterparts, American historians have given relatively little attention to the movement for political union between Canada and the United States during the 1880s and 1890s. There is an understandable reason for this. This period is generally referred to as “The Gilded Age” in American history, an era in which the United States underwent immense economic and social changes thanks in large part to rapid industrialization. As Vincent DeSantis highlighted, “This tremendous industrial growth not only made the United States materially the most powerful country in the world, but transformed it from a rural and agrarian nation into an urban and industrial one.”³⁹ Because of the increased attention toward national growth and development, DeSantis informed that, “Foreign affairs from the end of Reconstruction to the Spanish-American War played a subordinate role to domestic matters. Americans in these years were preoccupied with internal developments such as Reconstruction, the Industrial Revolution, and the settlement of the last frontier.”⁴⁰

Americans may have been focused on domestic issues during this period, but the 1890s also saw a drastic rise in American interest in overseas expansionism and the need to safeguard its power in the Western Hemisphere through a reinvigorated use of the

³⁸See Bélanger, *Prejudice and Pride*; A.S. Eisenstadt, *Carnegie's Model Republic: Triumphant Democracy and the British-American Relationship* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 2007); Edward P. Kohn, *This Kindred People: Canadian-American Relations and the Anglo-Saxon Idea, 1895-1903* (Montreal and Kingston: McGill-Queen's University Press, 2004); Christopher Pennington, *The Destiny of Canada: Macdonald, Laurier, and the Election of 1891* (Toronto: The Penguin Group, 2011); Patricia K. Wood, “Defining ‘Canadian’: Anti-Americanism and Identity in Sir John A. Macdonald's Nationalism,” *Journal of Canadian Studies*, 36:2 (Summer 2001), 49-69; Michael Woodsworth, “Continental Drift: The Canadian Clubs of New York City and the Question of Canadian-American Relations,” *International Journal of Canadian Studies*, 44 (2011), 135-162.

³⁹Vincent P. DeSantis, *The Shaping of Modern America: 1877-1920* (Arlington Heights, IL: Forum Press, Inc., 1989), 1.

⁴⁰Ibid, 121.

Monroe Doctrine. In the last decade of the nineteenth century, the continental United States, stretching from the Atlantic to the Pacific Oceans and north to Alaska, was no longer able to expand further west to open new markets. Thus, American statesmen were focused on securing new international territory. And while some viewed Canada as an ideal location it was not as desirable as Pacific or Caribbean islands. As such, many historical works that examine this period focus almost entirely on American expansion in the Pacific and the Caribbean. Hawaii's annexation has received a great amount of historical scholarship as has the Spanish-American War (1898), which led to the acquisition of the Philippines, Puerto Rico, and the Guantanamo naval base in Cuba. Meanwhile, during the Venezuela Crisis of 1895-1896 the United States mediated a border dispute between Britain and Venezuela, citing the Monroe Doctrine as a precedent to do so. A survey of studies on this period, therefore, reveals that political union with Canada has not received much American historical attention.⁴¹

⁴¹See: Alice F. Tyler, *The Foreign Policy of James G. Blaine* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1927); Alfred K. Weinberg, *Manifest Destiny: A Study of Nationalist Expansionism in American History* (Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins Press, 1935); Charles C. Tansill, *The Foreign Policy of Thomas F. Bayard, 1885-1897* (New York: Fordham University Press, 1940); Harold U. Falkner, *Politics, Reform, and Expansion, 1800-1890* (New York: Harper & Brothers, Publishers, 1959); R.W. van Alstyne, *The Rising American Empire* (Chicago: Quadrangle Paperbacks, 1960); Walter LaFeber, *The New Empire: An Interpretation of American Expansion, 1860-1898* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1963); William Appleman Williams, *The Roots of the Modern American Empire: A Study of the Growth and Shaping of Social Consciousness in a Marketplace Society* (London: Anthony Blond Ltd., 1970); Fon W. Boardman, Jr., *America and the Gilded Age, 1876-1900* (New York: Henry Z. Walck, Inc., 1972); Tom E. Terrill, *The Tariff, Politics, and American Foreign Policy, 1874-1901* (Westport, CT: Greenwood Press, 1973); Charles S. Campbell, *From Revolution to Rapprochement: The United States and Great Britain, 1783-1900* (New York: John Wiley & Sons, Inc., 1974); Robert L. Beisner, *From the Old Diplomacy to the New, 1865-1900* (New York: Thomas Y. Crowell Company, 1975); Charles S. Campbell, *The Transformation of American Foreign Relations, 1865-1900* (New York: Harper & Row Publishers, 1976); Sean Dennis Cashman, *America in the Gilded Age: From the Death of Lincoln to the Rise of Theodore Roosevelt* (New York: New York University Press, 1984); Reginald Stuart, *United States Expansionism and British North America, 1775-1871* (Chapel Hill: The University of North Carolina Press, 1988); Richard E. Welch, Jr., *The Presidencies of Grover Cleveland* (Lawrence: University of Kansas Press, 1988); Vincent DeSantis, *The Shaping of Modern America*; Gordon T. Stewart, *The American Response to Canada Since 1776* (East Lansing: Michigan State University, 1992); Howard Zinn, *A People's History of the United States, 1492-Present* (New York: HarperCollins, 1999); H. Paul Jeffers, *An Honest President: The Life and Presidencies of Grover Cleveland* (New York: William Morris, 2000); Rebecca Edwards, *New Spirits: Americans in*

American historians likewise have placed a greater emphasis on the economic relations between Canada and the United States. The best example of this is Charles C. Tansill's, *Canadian-American Relations, 1875-1911*. Tansill's volume offered two chapters on the economic continentalism of the 1880s and 1890s. Within these chapters he touched upon political unionism as it relates to the wider economic discussions of the era but it is not focal. Like the conservative-nationalist English-Canadian historians, Tansill outlined that commercial union, unrestricted reciprocity, and annexation were all inexorably linked, and that although there were distinctions they were sometimes difficult to discern.⁴² Many of these themes were re-evaluated and expanded upon in R.C. Brown's, *Canada's National Policy, 1883-1900: A Study in Canadian-American Relations*, which offered a more in-depth examination of the Canadian approach to the economic relations with the United States during this era.⁴³

Within the historiography there remains one essential study, Donald Warner's *The Idea of Continental Union: The Agitation for the Annexation of Canada to the United States, 1849-1893*. To date, Warner's work remains the only monograph on the political union movements in North America during the nineteenth century. Unlike other historians, Warner examined the movement of the 1880s and 1890s from an economic, political, and intellectual perspective, making the book unique in the historiography. In so doing he showed that political unionism was not simply about improving the trade relations between the Dominion and the Republic. Warner also approached it from a

the Gilded Age, 1865-1905 (New York: Oxford University Press, 2006); Richard Immerman, *Empire for Liberty: A History of American Imperialism from Benjamin Franklin to Paul Wolfowitz* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2010).

⁴²Charles C. Tansill, *Canadian-American Relations, 1875-1911* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1943), 412.

⁴³R.C. Brown, *Canada's National Policy, 1883-1900: A Study in Canadian-American Relations* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1964).

continental-wide perspective, examining the movement in both Canada and the United States. He also explored the movement's development in French Canada, which has largely been overlooked. While Warner's study presented a more detailed analysis, it also leaves aspects of political unionism unexplored. For example, his examination of French Canada is limited to English-language sources and to the ideas expressed by former premier Honoré Mercier, a troublesome inclusion for Mercier was not an "annexationist." Warner also provides most attention to the movement for commercial union and how, as he argued, it was directly responsible for the outgrowth of a political union sentiment. This dissertation differs from Warner's as it provides a more thorough investigation into the idea of political unionism in Canada and the United States, particularly by focusing on the importance of the ideas of "race" and republicanism. It also utilizes more contemporary sources and addresses political unionism in French Canada.

This dissertation was greatly aided by two recent additions to the historiography. The first is Chris Pennington's doctoral dissertation *The Continentalist Movement in the Politics of Canada and the United States, 1887-1894*. Pennington's study focused on the wider continentalist movement with particular attention on the efforts of the commercial unionists, though the idea of political union is an important aspect and one that receives due consideration. He effectively demonstrated how the promoters of political union increased their efforts between 1891 and 1894, and that they, as well as other contemporaries, promoted a new continentalist nationalism. Pennington's thesis is that continentalism was a different expression of English-Canadian nationalism that coexisted with Imperialism. It is an excellent starting point to understand the broader Canadian-American relationship at the end of the nineteenth century. Like Warner and others,

Pennington's focus is very much Ontario-centric and does not address continentalism in French Canada.

The second is Damien-Claude Bélanger's *Prejudice and Pride: Canadian Intellectuals Confront the United States, 1891-1945*. Bélanger, who contributes to the *nouvelle sensibilité* in French-Canadian historical scholarship, showed that Canadian intellectual writing on the US was in fact about modernity, which in turn influenced how many Canadians approached political unionism. What also sets Bélanger's study apart is that both English and French Canadian intellectual writing were examined. As outlined previously, most works have looked at either English or French Canada, often with little overlap. Bélanger effectively highlighted the differences in ideas in English and French Canada, which allowed for a better understanding of how these linguistic groups viewed political union with the United States.

Until recently the majority of historians have tended to examine political unionism as part of the wider continentalist movement of the era, and not as a separate issue. In fact, political unionism is often lost within the much broader examination of the tense relations that dominated Canadian-American relations at the end of the nineteenth century, such as the fisheries controversy, the desire for the establishment of free trade, and the Alaskan Boundary dispute. Most previous works focus on the movement for commercial union, which many historians, both Canadian and American, have concluded would have inevitably led the Dominion down the path to annexation by its southern neighbour. Another broader aspect of this era is the 1891 Canadian general election and the use of the annexation bugbear. During this election the Conservatives told the people of Canada that they were voting for the maintenance of the British connection or for

annexation to the United States, a masterful political move by the Conservatives.⁴⁴ Both commercial unionism and the 1891 election are essential events in the history of Canadian-American relations, but by heavily focusing on these two aspects historians have somewhat overlooked the importance and the overall impact of political unionism in the 1880s and 1890s.

One of the more important aspects that has been overlooked within the historiography is the importance of racial thought as a motivation for political union. Many nineteenth century white Americans and Canadians, as Rebecca Edwards explained, “defined themselves as ‘Anglo-Saxon’ or sometimes ‘Teutonic’ and claimed superiority to such ‘lesser’ whites as the Irish, Italians, and French Canadians.”⁴⁵ “Racial” thinking was an essential part of North American society at the end of the nineteenth century, and it certainly influenced the arguments in favour of political union. It was not, however, only an English-speaking phenomenon. As this thesis shows, French-Canadian advocates supported political union because they believed that it would best ensure *la survivance de la race française en Amérique*. Although French Canadians enjoyed a measure of protection for their language and culture within the province of Quebec as part of the Dominion, advocates of political union argued they could have more freedoms – especially educational and religious freedom – in the United States because of its republican ethos.

This dissertation, therefore, is unique within the historiography for several significant reasons. Firstly, it offers a more detailed history of the emergence, growth,

⁴⁴For an excellent overview of the use of annexationism as a political weapon, see Patricia K. Wood, “*Under Which Flag, Canadians?*” *Anti-Americanism and the Election of 1891* (Unpublished MA Thesis, Queen’s University, 1991).

⁴⁵Edwards, *New Spirits: Americans in the Gilded Age*, 32.

and decline of the movement for political union in both Canada and the United States, and how it was received in both countries. Secondly, it studies the movement's growth and reception in both English and French Canada, an element that is largely missing within the wider historiography. Finally, by focusing on the movement for political union and the ideas used therein it offers a new perspective on the wider continentalism that dominated this era.

Contrary to previous studies this dissertation argues that there existed a true movement for political union in the 1880s and 1890s, although it was small and was limited to a handful of ardent supporters. It may not have been a grassroots movement, nor was it the popular movement envisioned by Goldwin Smith, but there was a concerted effort to convince the people of Canada and the United States that creating a continental republic was in the best interest of North Americans. Numerous speeches were delivered, essays written, pamphlets disseminated, newspaper articles printed, and scores of letters sent across the continent, which reveals that political union was not a localized or regional concept.

The positive and negative attention afforded to political unionism, especially in newspapers across the continent, made it appear as though it was a legitimate option for the future of North America. At no point, however, was political union between the two countries considered imminent, nor did it receive broad support. But the fact that it became a prominent part of the public discourse, especially in Canada, provided it with a degree of legitimacy. Ironically, the torrent of scorn heaped upon political unionism by its critics actually granted it further legitimacy. This was especially true in Canada where more conservative-minded individuals actively rejected joining the neighbouring

Republic by using broad rhetoric in hopes of debasing political unionism and slandering those affiliated with it. As this dissertation avers, the use of the “loyalty cry,” which was expected to kill the movement outright, actually breathed new life into it. What is sure is that Canadians actively debated the issue and there was little room for indifference.

There was some degree of support for union with Canada in the United States, but significant opposition also existed. Despite what some Canadians claimed, Americans were not secretly plotting to annex Canada to the United States. Rather, many Americans came out squarely against forming a continental union with Canada. They viewed the Dominion as plagued with too many internal issues, especially the English-French strife, which made it unappealing. Unlike in Canada, the majority of Americans were simply indifferent to political union; Americans had other more pressing concerns to address. Opposition in Canada and indifference in the United States ultimately ensured that the movement for political union failed.

As noted, previous studies have tended to focus on the importance of economics when discussing political unionism. “Annexationism” was essentially a reactive doctrine as it expressed the state of Canada’s economy. This dissertation, on the other hand, challenges the existing historiography and argues that the movement for political union was first and foremost about ideas, the two most prominent being “race” and republicanism, and that economic considerations played a secondary role.

As this dissertation makes clear, the movement for political union ultimately failed for several reasons. For all that was said and written on the topic, and despite its advocate’s best efforts, it did not become a mass movement. Its supporters also had limited contact with one another and they were unable to turn their message into concrete

results. This was most evident in the lack of cooperation amongst English- and French-Canadian advocates. Both groups sought to form one continental republic, but their reasons differed greatly, differences that their opponents exploited. Moreover, the economic malaise that prompted the renewed discussion of political unionism in the late 1880s had disappeared in the early 1890s. By 1893, the Canadian economy showed signs of improvement after more than a decade of depression, while the United States entered into a recession that lasted for several years. Thus, one of the main impetuses for political union had been removed. Although it failed, the movement for political union had several important short-term and long-term impacts on Canadian-American relations.

V

The term “political union,” rather than “annexation,” was selected for this thesis because it accurately describes what the majority of supporters of the movement desired: a peaceful and mutually beneficial union between Canada and the United States. “Annexation” was a term widely used in the late nineteenth century and by historians thereafter, but the term carries with it several negative connotations and it was not, in essence, what the movement was about. Annexation implies the forceful absorption of a smaller unit by a larger one, often without consent. Canadian opponents deliberately used the term annexation, complete with its pejorative implications, in an attempt to undermine political unionism and its supporters. Labelling someone as an “annexationist” in Canada was deliberate because it inferred that that person had given up on the Dominion and all that it represented, including its attachment to the British Empire. The same negative connotations did not exist in the United States, however, because as the larger state the US would have annexed Canada and not vice versa.

Consequently, this dissertation provides a different perspective on political unionism and its supporters by rejecting the term “annexation”. The leading figures as identified herein desired a political union between the Dominion and the Republic, one that would have the full consent of the people and governments of Canada, the United States, and Great Britain for the betterment of all parties involved. They eschewed the word “annexation” because it did not accurately reflect what they sought. As one biographer of Goldwin Smith noted, “Annexation was a term [Smith] never used, since it implied forcible absorption by the States against the wishes of Canadians and without the consent of the mother country.”⁴⁶ Annexation was a bugbear; political union was a positive idea. Supporters spoke carefully on the subject and purposefully avoided calling it an “annexationist movement.” To do so would have seriously impaired their position. Former US Army General Benjamin Butler was an exception because he purposefully spoke of the “annexation of Canada” in an attempt to garner broad American support.⁴⁷ Unlike other historical studies the terms annexation and political union are not used interchangeably in this thesis because there is a significant difference between them. Furthermore, this dissertation presents the advocates of political union in a new light, arguing that they were convinced that forming a continental republic was the best option for Canadians and Americans alike. They were not, as previous historians have contended, “sell outs” who were motivated by material gain.

⁴⁶Elisabeth Wallace, *Goldwin Smith: Victorian Liberal* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1957), 253. Another advocate of political union, Elgin Myers, sought to clarify the movement to the Canadian people in 1892, stating, “It is because I am opposed to annexation that I am in favour of political union. I am opposed to the annexation that has been going on for the last quarter of a century and is increasing as time progresses – the annexation to the States of the most promising of our citizens.” Quoted in the *New York Sun*, 31 July 1892.

⁴⁷For an example of this, see Benjamin Butler, “Defenseless Canada,” *North American Review*, 147:4 (1888, Oct.): 441-452.

In 1888, W.H.H. Murray best summarized the distinction between “annexation” and “political union” in an article in the Boston *Herald* that reflected the sentiments on both sides of the border. “Annexation,” he wrote, “is not the word to use, because it does not describe the existing sentiment on either side of the line, or the process which will terminate ultimately in political union of the two nations.” As he continued:

There is no patriotic Canadian that wishes his country to be annexed, and no sensible American who wishes to annex Canada to the United States. Such a word is unapt [*sic*] and offensive, because it implies inferiority or dependence of the one party and superiority and aggressiveness of the other. The words to use are affiliation and unification of the two countries, and these words should be used because they are not offensive, and because they describe the sentiment which is in a state of active growth [on] each side of the line, and progress which is actually rapidly going on.⁴⁸

Most Canadian and American supporters of political union rejected prospect of annexation. Annexation and political union may have been used as synonyms in the past, but it is an inaccurate portrayal and it further demonizes those who so ardently defended and advocated a peaceful amalgamation of the two North American countries.

VI

For this dissertation, I have used Charles Tilley’s definition of a social movement in order to explain why political unionism must be considered a real and legitimate movement. Tilley wrote that in Western nations “after 1750, the social movement emerged from an innovative, consequential synthesis of three elements:

1. a sustained, organized public effort making collective claims on target authorities (let us call it a campaign);
2. employment of combinations from among the following forms of political action: creation of special-purpose associations and coalitions, public meetings, solemn processions, vigils, rallies, demonstrations, petition drives, statements to and in

⁴⁸Boston *Herald*, 20 August 1888. Found in the George Foster Fonds MG 27-IID7, vol. 82 Scrapbook, LAC.

- public media, and pamphleteering (call the variable ensemble of performances the *social movement repertoire*; and
3. participants' concerted public representations of WUNC: worthiness, unity, numbers, and commitment on the part of themselves and/or their constituencies [...].⁴⁹

The movement for political union of the 1880s and 1890s had all of these elements: there was a sustained discussion of uniting the continent; two special-purpose associations were created, one in Canada and one in the United States; public meetings were held; public statements were expressed in newspapers in favour of continental union; and there was a genuine commitment amongst a select group of advocates. Importantly, however, at no time was it a mass movement nor did it mobilize a significant number of supporters in either country. There were pockets of support – mostly in Ontario, southern Quebec, and the northeast United States – but for the most part Canadians were opposed to political union and Americans were largely indifferent.

Although it was never popular, political unionism was not simply an ephemeral event. As Tilley made clear, “Unlike a one-time petition, declaration, or mass meeting, a *campaign* extends beyond any single event – although social movements often include petitions, declarations, and mass meetings. A campaign always links at least three parties: a group of self-designated claimants, some object(s) of claims, and a public of some kind.”⁵⁰ The movement for political union developed slowly, and a sustained campaign did not materialize until late in 1888. This campaign lasted for the better part of six years, yet by 1894 it had failed to attract a significant following and was all but moribund.

While the Venezuela Crisis of 1895-96 revitalized the idea of uniting the continent once more, it failed to reinvigorate the campaign for political union. The movement for

⁴⁹Charles Tilley, *Social Movements, 1768-2004* (Boulder, CO: Paradigm Publishers, LLC, 2004), 3-4.

⁵⁰Ibid, 4.

political union was very much decentralized, and the inability by the core advocates to combine their efforts led to its failure. There was little coordination amongst supporters in Canada and the United States, and even less so amongst English- and French-speaking Canadians. Despite this significant failure, there existed a concerted, albeit plural, effort to convince the people of both countries that forming one large continental republic was the best option for the future.

The movement was not inconsequential, consisting solely of pessimists and traitors. There was an active and vocal opposition campaign in Canada that consistently warned of the dangers of union with the United States. Opponents emphasized that Canada's British character and British connection was at stake, a tactic that proved successful as the majority of Canadians cherished their place as part of the British Empire. Certainly, as this dissertation shows, the opposition campaign actually helped to provide the movement for political union with more of a sense of legitimacy.

VII

In order to complete the research for this dissertation a myriad of sources were consulted, most of which originate from the period under examination. The most important of these were the speeches, essays, pamphlets, and books published between 1885 and 1896, which enabled a detailed analysis of the ideas surrounding political unionism. The leading figures of the movement for political union made their ideas well known through such media, and it was from these that a good sense was obtained of why political union was not only deemed desirable but also necessary for the benefit of both Canadians and Americans. These sources, therefore, were the first to be analyzed. A considerable number of these publications concerning political union, including books,

essays, and speeches, have been preserved on microfiche by the Canadian Institute for Historical Microreproductions (CIHM).

To fully understand the impact of the movement for political union it was necessary to explore public reactions to the idea in both countries. Gauging public opinion from the nineteenth century can at times be a challenge; newspapers, however, are an excellent source in order to get a sense of how Canadians and Americans reacted to the revival of political unionism in the 1880s and 1890s. News stories, letters to the editor, and editorials revealed the essential events, debates, and controversies of this period with respect to continental union. Therefore, I continued my research by examining a range of newspapers from the various regions of the Dominion and the Republic. From this research I was also able to compile a roster of individuals associated with the movement for political union. It must be noted that while the list of newspapers in the bibliography is comprehensive it is not exhaustive. Nevertheless, it provides insight into the various regional viewpoints, which were important in both Canada and the United States.

An assortment of newspapers from the four US Census Bureau regions were surveyed. While similar ideas were expressed throughout the country, certain geographical trends became apparent. In particular, the further away from the Canadian-American border interest for political union waned. Major city centres, such as New York, Los Angeles, Washington, and Boston were specifically selected to gain insight into urban opinions. Both the New York *Sun* and the *New York Times* consistently reported on the development of the movement for political union and how it was received across the United States. The *Sun*, edited by Charles Dana, which printed numerous

articles favouring continental union, can be considered the *de facto* mouthpiece of the National Continental Union League. Both of these newspapers were consulted extensively. Many other newspapers were accessed through the Library of Congress's digital collection *Chronicling America*.⁵¹ Using the search function, the date range of 1885-1896 was selected, along with key word searches, such as "annexation Canada," "political union Canada," and "National Continental Union League." These search parameters uncovered dozens of articles that in some way addressed the movement for political union from across the Republic. Other specific dates, for example when important speeches were delivered, were also examined to see how Americans reacted to the promotion of political union. This research methodology provided a broader understanding of how the idea of political union was presented, discussed, and received across the United States, which enabled me to draw conclusions about why the movement ultimately failed.

The Canadian newspapers were also selected for their political, regional, and linguistic perspective. Newspapers in the nineteenth century were heavily politicized and many of the more prominent presses were aligned with a specific political party, while some remained politically independent. Yet they provide an excellent insight into historical events. In order to fully examine how Canadians reacted to the idea of continental union a mixture of newspapers were consulted to understand both political perspectives. At least one newspaper was also reviewed from every province of the Dominion between 1885 and 1896 to ensure a broad regional analysis. Because support for political union was strongest in Ontario, the Toronto *Globe* proved to be the most

⁵¹Library of Congress, *Chronicling America: Historic American Newspapers*, <<http://chroniclingamerica.loc.gov/>>. This collection contains hundreds of newspapers from across the United States between the years 1836 and 1922.

useful Canadian newspaper for the scope and breadth of news presented therein. Much like the newspapers accessed through the Library of Congress, and using similar search parameters, an electronic version of the *Globe* is keyword and date searchable. Other English-language newspapers were accessed on microfilm at Library and Archives Canada (LAC). For those not digitized, key dates were selected between 1885 and 1896 in which major events occurred. For the French-language newspapers, most were accessed through the Collection numérique, *Revue et journaux québécois* through the Bibliothèque et Archives nationales du Québec website.⁵² Those from outside Quebec were accessed through the *French-Canadian Newspapers: An Essential Historical Source (1808-1919)* database, which has been digitized by LAC, and are also keyword searchable.⁵³

Once an understanding of public opinion regarding political union was established, I next investigated into the personal archives of several of the leading figures associated with the movement. In the United States this included the papers of John Sherman, Benjamin Butler, Andrew Carnegie, and James H. Wilson at the Library of Congress in Washington, D.C. Within these collections were numerous letters, newspaper clippings, and other documents that revealed their thoughts on uniting the continent under one flag. In Canada, the Walter D. Gregory Fonds at the Queen's University Archives holds invaluable information about political unionism in the 1880s and 1890s. Most importantly, as a founding member of the Continental Union Association of Ontario, Gregory retained a number of important documents, especially correspondence,

⁵²Bibliothèque et Archives nationales du Québec, Collection numérique, *Revue et journaux québécois* <https://www.banq.qc.ca/collections/collection_numerique/journaux-revues/index.html>.

⁵³Library and Archives Canada (hereafter LAC), *French-Canadian Newspapers: An Essential Historical Source (1808-1919)*, <<https://www.collectionscanada.gc.ca/canadian-newspapers-french/index-e.html?PHPSESSID=ghi47kcmnpg4udd004u6eq0s73>>.

pertaining to that organization. Secondly, the Secret Justice File on American Annexationists at LAC is the most comprehensive source on the movement for political union for the years 1893 and 1894. This file comprises a thoroughly documented report on the National Continental Union League in New York, and even contains letters sent by Francis Wayland Glen, the most outspoken advocate for political union in the United States. Thirdly, the Goldwin Smith fonds at LAC is an essential source. Smith maintained an extensive list of contacts from Canada, the United States, and Great Britain, and in some way dozens of these letters address political unionism.

Other Canadian archives that were visited include Bibliothèque et Archives nationales du Québec, the Archives of Ontario, and the Thomas Fisher Rare Book Library at the University of Toronto. All of these archives provided a wealth of information regarding different perspectives about the movement for political union, especially from the politicians of the era, such as John A. Macdonald, Wilfrid Laurier, John Thompson, Oliver Mowat, Joseph Pope and Honoré Mercier. The Governor General's papers at LAC were also examined, although they, somewhat unsurprisingly, did not contain any useful information. This is likely because the Governor Generals and the British Foreign Office did not view political union as a threat to Britain's connection with Canada.

Since several of the leading American supporters of political union were either Representatives or Senators in the US Congress, the *Congressional Record* for the years 1885-1896 was then examined. Within the Capitol some of the most candid speeches in favour of union with Canada could be found. This also provided evidence about how the American government responded to the rise of political unionism. Interestingly, though,

there was little debate surrounding union with Canada within Congress, demonstrating the general American indifference to the idea of political union. In contrast, some of the most determined speeches against political union appeared in the House of Commons of Canada, as recorded in *Hansard*. Unsurprisingly, the official Canadian response to the movement for political union was outright hostility.

VIII

This dissertation is divided into four chapters. Chapters one, two, and three provide a chronological examination of the movement for political union in Canada and the United States between 1885 and 1896. They detail its emergence, development, and failure, the major arguments and debates presented both for and against it, as well as public opinion and reactions. Combined, they prove that the movement for political union was a significant episode in Canadian-American relations in the latter part of the nineteenth century and that the idea of forming a continental union acquired a degree of legitimacy despite its lack of support. Chapter four begins with a prosopography of the leading figures in the movement for political union. The prosopography shows that these men were similar in several important ways, beyond their shared conception for the political future of North America, and that the Canadian advocates were political and religious outsiders, while their American counterparts were political and cultural insiders. It also helps to clarify who were the main advocates of political union, as there is some confusion within the existing historiography. It then explores the two key ideas upon which advocates supported political union: racialism and republicanism. Often overlooked by previous studies, these two ideas helped to form the intellectual architecture for the movement of political union in Canada and the United States.

Chapter One: The Emergence of the Movement for Political Union, 1885-1889

Unlike other movements that burst suddenly onto the scene in the nineteenth century, the movement for political union between Canada and the United States developed gradually. No singular event caused it to emerge, just as there was no singular event caused its eventual demise. In 1890s Canada, as outlined by Damien-Claude Bélanger, “The enthusiasm generated by Confederation had been battered by economic depression and washed away by a torrent of ethnic, religious, and sectional strife. To make matters worse, emigration to the United States was undermining Canada’s population growth, and annexationism, that unmistakable sign of national despair, reared its ugly head for one final encore.”¹ Certainly some Canadians looked to political union with the United States out of despair; others, however, favoured it because political union was a positive step forward for the future of both the Dominion and the Republic. This chapter begins with an overview of the changing economic, political, and social conditions in both Canada and the United States which enabled the re-emergence of political unionism in the 1880s and 1890s.

After the fanfare of Confederation in 1867 there was little discussion of political union with the United States for more than a decade. However, during the 1870s the Canadian economy encountered several difficulties which resulted in a prolonged recession. As Table 2 outlines, Canadians imported much more than they exported during the first decade after Confederation. By 1879 the economic malaise necessitated the introduction of the National Policy in an attempt to promote national and east-west economic growth by increasing tariffs.

¹Damien-Claude Bélanger, *Prejudice and Pride: Canadian Intellectuals Confront the United States, 1891-1945* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2011), 9.

Table 2: Foreign Trade, domestic exports, total exports, total imports, and the balance of trade of Canada, 1868-1884 (thousands of dollars)²

Year	Domestic Exports	Total Exports	Total Imports	Balance of Trade
1868	48,505	52,702	67,090	-14,388
1869	52,401	56,257	63,155	-6,898
1870	59,043	65,571	66,902	-1,331
1871	57,630	67,483	84,214	-16,731
1872	65,831	78,629	104,955	-26,326
1873	76,538	85,944	124,509	-38,565
1874	76,742	87,356	123,181	-35,825
1875	69,710	76,847	117,408	-40,561
1876	72,491	79,726	92,513	-12,787
1877	68,030	75,142	94,126	-18,984
1878	67,990	79,155	90,396	-11,241
1879	62,431	70,787	78,702	-7,915
1880	72,900	86,140	69,900	+16,240
1881	83,945	97,320	90,488	+6,832
1882	94,138	101,766	111,145	-9,379
1883	87,702	97,454	121,861	-24,407
1884	79,833	89,222	105,973	-16,751

After the National Policy was initiated exports soon outnumbered imports, which led to trade surpluses, especially during the years 1880 and 1881. But by 1882 Canada once again faced trade deficits, which continued to worsen as the 1880s progressed. Many critics of the National Policy, and members of the Liberal Party more specifically, pointed to the failure of Prime Minister Macdonald's plan and the need to reconsider its trade relations with the United States. Some took this one step further and the idea of political union was revived once again.

By the mid-1880s, Canada was a young nation that struggled to live up to the potential that the Fathers of Confederation had envisioned in 1867. Sectionalism and linguistic tensions remained strong, a rebellion broke out in 1885, and Nova Scotia continued to threaten to secede. Combined these issues seriously hindered the ability to

²M.C. Urquhart, ed. *Historical Statistics of Canada* (Toronto: The Macmillan Company of Canada, 1965), 173.

create a new and distinct Canadian nationality. Canada was also a new federal state that struggled to define itself not only as a singular entity, but also to find its proper place within the British Empire. While some wanted to form an Imperial Federation, the majority of Canadians preferred a more decentralized Empire. It also remained unclear whether Canada would mature and seek complete independence or remain a semi-autonomous colony indefinitely.

In the United States the 1880s and 1890s marked the end of an era in American history. Although westward expansion had ceased as the US stretched from sea to sea, the Republic continued to grow economically. This era, categorized as “The Gilded Age” by historians, witnessed immense industrialization that further propelled the United States toward becoming an economic powerhouse. Reconstruction following the Civil War had also ended in 1877, enabling American statesmen to focus on other pressing concerns such as international affairs although domestic issues remained at the forefront.

Considering the massive economic and cultural growth of the United States there were many reasons why union with Canada was presented as a good idea, specifically continental security, increased access to natural resources, Manifest Destiny, and a “racial” reunion. Like their Canadian counterparts, supporters of political union believed that forming a continental republic would secure safety and prosperity in North America.

As Vincent DeSantis summarized the period of 1870-1900, “Americans in these years were preoccupied with internal developments such as Reconstruction, the Industrial Revolution, and the settlement of the last frontier. Controversies over the national debt, taxation, the currency, and the new South [however] precluded a vigorous foreign

policy.”³ Spurred along by industrialization, the economy of the United States boomed during the period of 1885-1889, which is sharply contrasted with the economic situation in Canada. Yet nagging social problems also plagued the Republic. While the issue of slavery had finally been settled, racial tensions remained. The 1880s and 1890s was an era of intense racism in the United States, both in the North and the South, as white Americans looked down on anyone not of the “Anglo-Saxon race.”⁴ A desire to unite the continent for the betterment of the “Anglo-Saxons” became a strong motivating factor for some advocates of political union in the US.

The roots of the final movement for political union in Canada can be found in the year 1885. That year a second Métis rebellion broke out in the Canadian Northwest, an event that had a dramatic impact on English-French relations. Although French Canadians initially were somewhat ambiguous in their approach to the Métis, the rebellion and the subsequent hanging of Louis Riel greatly changed their opinions.⁵ Confederation, which was sold to the French Canadians by the clergy and Conservatives as an agreement that would ensure *la survivance*, now faced serious scrutiny. A report from Quebec in November 1885 presented one response to the situation in the North West: “Since Riel’s execution yesterday the annexation feeling here is running very strongly, and many who would not listen to such a thing before now openly favour annexation to the United States [...]”⁶ Four years later during a speech in Toronto,

³Vincent DeSantis, *The Shaping of Modern America, 1877-1920* (Arlington Heights, IL: Forum Press Inc., 1989), 121.

⁴Howard Zinn, *A People’s History of the United States, 1492-Present* (New York: HarperCollins, 1999), 315; Rebecca Edwards, *New Spirits: Americans in the Gilded Age, 1865-1905* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2006), 32.

⁵For an excellent overview of the French-Canadian opinion toward the Métis and the impact of the 1885 Riel Rebellion, see A.I. Silver, *The French-Canadian Idea of Confederation 1864-1900* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1983), chapter VIII, pgs. 150-179.

⁶Reported in the Toronto *Globe*, 18 November 1885.

Charles S. Hill observed that “Nowhere in the world is a more conspicuous hatred manifested between factions of one people under one government on account of race and religion than is witnessed today in Canada.”⁷ Prosper Bender, an author and surgeon from Quebec, agreed with this analysis, writing in 1890: “Division, mutual suspicion and dislike are rife throughout several of the provinces. French and English show toward one another a spirit more hostile than friendly, despite all those smoothing and reconciling influences predicted of confederation and so necessary to the upbuilding of a strong, prosperous community.”⁸ Bender well understood the “racial” tensions in Canada. He was born in Quebec City in 1844 to a French-Canadian father and an English-Canadian mother. He studied medicine in Montreal and served in the Union Army during the American Civil War. Following the war he lived in Boston between 1884 and 1908, during which time he wrote several articles about Canada’s political and social issues.⁹

Talk of “annexation” was a natural by-product of a Canadian socio-political crisis as had been the case in 1849. During difficult times, such as between 1878 and 1893, union with the United States was viewed by some as a solution to all of Canada’s problems. Some Americans saw the socio-political discord brewing in Canada as the necessary first step toward continental union. But for all the potential that the linguistic trouble provided, many Americans opposed the prospect of political union with the Dominion. As Americans were not altogether ignorant of Canada’s troubles, in light of Riel’s execution and the subsequent English-French strife, some came out squarely

⁷Charles S. Hill, *Economic and Social Relations of the Canadian States and the United States: Prospectively Considered* (Toronto, 1889), 23.

⁸Prosper Bender, “Our Northern Neighbors; difficulties to union; race and creed troubles; uncertain future,” *American Magazine of History*, 1890 (June), 460.

⁹“Bender, Louis-Prosper,” *Répertoire du patrimoine culturel du Québec*, accessed 30 March 2016, <<http://www.patrimoine-culturel.gouv.qc.ca/rpcq/detail.do?methode=consulter&id=16192&type=pge#.VvvVZ2QrLow>>.

against the idea of forming a continental union. As one report from Buffalo, New York, stated, “So Canada has a ‘bloody shirt’ party, too, has it? Then we wish to go on record as decidedly, emphatically, and unilaterally against annexation.”¹⁰ *The San Marcos Free Press* (San Marcos, Texas) worried that “The annexation of Canada presents an entirely different set of questions. [...] the Canadian population has many undesirable elements, not the least of which is the Roman Catholics [...].”¹¹ The distrust of Catholics, which remained prominent in American society at the end of the nineteenth century, was an important reason why many Americans viewed French Canadians as an impediment to continental union.

Other Americans, on the other hand, saw a “racial” harmony with English-speaking Canadians, one which they believed would lead to union. In Vermont, for example, *The Burlington Weekly Free Press* stated that Canada was an ideal nation to annex given the “racial” similarities between English-speaking Canadians and Americans. On 8 October 1886 it informed its readers that “if our domain is to be extended, there certainly would be an advantage in annexing such territory as is inhabited by citizens of our own race, almost equally advanced as ourselves in material prosperity and mental culture.”¹² A similar sentiment was expressed in *The Worthington Advance* (Worthington, Minnesota) a few years later in 1888, arguing: “The interests of the people of the States and the Dominion are identical. In race history their blood has run in the same rill through the centuries of modern civilization. They use the same language, and have been developed by similar religious, political, and educational institutions.” Because of these essential elements, “One flag [i.e. the Stars and Stripes] is sufficient for the

¹⁰Cited in the *Toronto Globe*, 12 December 1885.

¹¹*The San Marcos Free Press* (San Marcos, Texas), 1 November 1888.

¹²*The Burlington Weekly Free Press* (Burlington, Vermont), 8 October 1886.

people of this continent [...].”¹³ The issue of “race” proved to be a significant subject when discussing and debating political union.

Despite growing discontent in Canada, political union with the United States was scarcely viewed as a viable option, and this was quite obvious for many contemporary observers. Newspaper editors in the border states were particularly interested in Canadian affairs, especially in how they influenced relations with the United States. Of significant importance was whether or not the troubles in Canada would lead to a rise in support for political union. As the Milwaukee *Sentinel* commented in 1886, “The annexation sentiment in Canada is not very strong, and there is no reason to expect an early application for admission into this glorious union of states [...].” It, however, hinted that talk of “annexation” was ongoing in Canada due to the social and political troubles. The English-French strife, combined with the realization of the “commercial and industrial advantages that would follow,” gave a good indication that “the time is bound to come when a movement will carry Canada over to the United States.”¹⁴

Discontent, however, was not limited to Quebec. Nova Scotians had for many years been disheartened by Confederation, especially after the failure of the anti-Confederates to repeal the British North America Act. By 1886, although still somewhat unhappy, the Maritime province began seeking “better terms” with the Dominion government. A report from the Toronto *Globe* dated 17 July 1886 clearly outlined the issue in Nova Scotia: “The question, we think, will ultimately be, nakedly, whether Nova Scotia shall get reciprocal trade with the States as members of the Canadian Confederation or as a member of the American Union.” However, as the report

¹³*The Worthington Advance* (Worthington, Minnesota), 29 November 1888.

¹⁴Milwaukee *Sentinel*, 3 February 1886.

continued, “If Canada could arrange for reciprocal free trade with the States, Nova Scotia would cheerfully stay with the Dominion and the flag.”¹⁵ Like the other provinces, Nova Scotia desired increased access to the American market, as Nova Scotians believed that only free trade with the United States would help to solve the province’s economic difficulties that had been ongoing since the mid-1870s. A radical segment of the population even went as far as to threaten to secede from the Dominion if the Canadian government did not address their grievances. Such a threat caught the attention of some Americans who kept a close eye on the developing unrest in the Maritimes. As *The New York Times* reported on 8 November 1886, “there is a strong and growing movement in the Maritime provinces in favor of withdrawal from the confederation [...]”¹⁶ Whether or not this meant that Nova Scotia and the other Atlantic provinces sought union with the United States was not readily addressed, but the implications of this sectional angst further strained the young Dominion. Both the Halifax *Morning Herald*, a Conservative organ, and the Halifax *Chronicle*, a Liberal paper, ran articles about discontent and dismay in Nova Scotia throughout 1886. Somewhat surprisingly, no overt declaration of a desire for political union with the United States was expressed. This does not mean that there was no support for political union; rather, it had not yet become a significant issue. Instead, securing better financial terms with the Dominion government and the desire for free trade with the United States were most prominent.¹⁷

Attachment to the British Empire was an essential reason why support for political union remained weak in English Canada. At the end of the nineteenth century the Dominion was a fervently loyal British colony, one that was proud of its place in the

¹⁵Toronto *Globe*, 17 July 1886.

¹⁶*The New York Times*, 8 November 1886.

¹⁷See the *Halifax Morning Herald* and the *Halifax Chronicle*, January-December 1886.

Empire. One of the best examples of this attachment to the past was the history, traditions, and myth of the United Empire Loyalists (UEL), which remained influential up to the 1880s. In 1884, the Centennial Committee sponsored a series of three public celebrations in Ontario to commemorate the centennial of the settlement of Upper Canada by the UEL. Numerous speakers took to the stage at Adulphustown (south of Napanee), Toronto, and Niagara to reflect on the devotion shown to the Crown by the Loyalists. Several orators also took the opportunity to express their opposition to the idea of union with the United States. Reverend D.V. Lucas, for example, rejected the revived discussion of political union. “Talk of annexation to the United States,” he said, “that is impossible. The institutions of the two peoples are too diverse to admit of a political amalgamation. [...] Our loyalty is too strong, and we trust our children’s loyalty will be equally so, to admit of any action which implies and involves dismemberment of that mighty empire which we are justly proud.”¹⁸

While Reverend Lucas extolled the loyalty of Canadians to the Crown, another speaker used his opportunity to debase the United States in an overt showcase of anti-Americanism. George T. Denison, a devoted Loyalist, was a severe critic of political unionism. His own loyalty was centred on a considerable degree of anti-Americanism. In his speech at Niagara, Denison attacked the Republic for the “lawlessness and crimes of violence [that] have been rampant for one hundred years back, and life is now more unsafe in the United States than in any civilized or semi-civilized country in the world.” Denison believed that it was republicanism that “attract[ed] all those who love license rather than liberty; while those who desire to see liberty given only to do what is right,

¹⁸The Centennial Committee, *The Centennial Celebrations of the Settlement of Upper Canada by the United Empire Loyalists, 1784-1884. The Celebrations at Adulphustown, Toronto, and Niagara* (Toronto: Rose Publishing Company, 1885), 32-33.

are much more likely to seek a monarchical government.” Therefore, as Denison alleged, union with the United States would be a disaster for the Canadian people. Despite the Dominion’s slow development and the lack of a truly “Canadian” identity, Denison maintained “[T]here is no doubt that we Canadians have a national sentiment. We have a pride in our country and a confidence in its future.”¹⁹ This speech reflected what many English Canadians of the era feared, that removal from the Empire would lead to annexation by the United States and a loss of all that the UEL had sacrificed in the preceding century. The importance of the British connection cannot be understated, which Carl Berger has made clear in his 1970 study *The Sense of Power: Studies in the Ideas of Canadian Imperialism, 1867-1914*.²⁰

Yet the anti-Americanism as expressed in Ontario by Denison was not shared across the country with regards to the UEL myth. In Saint John, New Brunswick, for example, during the centennial celebrations of 1887 the Stars and Stripes was seen floating above the crowd along with the Union Jack. As Lieutenant-Governor W.D. Wilmot declared, “no feeling of hostility now exists between ourselves and our American cousins.”²¹ As Berger observed, there were stark regional differences across Canada with respect to the United States, especially amongst the Imperialists.²² The same conclusion can also be made regarding the opponents of political union. The general sentiment across the Dominion in the mid-1880s was opposition to union with the Republic, yet the rhetoric and ideas used had a distinct regional flavour.

¹⁹Ibid, 96-7, 99.

²⁰Carl Berger, *The Sense of Power: Studies in the Ideas of Canadian Imperialism, 1867-1914* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1970),

²¹Ibid, 154.

²²Ibid, 154.

By the mid-1880s there were rumblings about Canada's future and some American statesmen took an interest in the Dominion, but it was not until 1887 that the idea of promoting political union came to be seriously debated in both countries. The rising continentalist movement that emerged due to a desire for some sort of North American free trade, mostly in the form of a commercial union, sped the development of the movement for political union.

While reciprocity, unrestricted reciprocity, or commercial union would have produced closer economic relations between Canada and the United States, important distinctions must be made. A reciprocity agreement, like the Treaty of 1854, contained a well-defined list of manufactured and natural goods that were exempt from tariffs and other governmental regulations. Unrestricted reciprocity, i.e. free trade, on the other hand, would have provided unlimited free trade on all products although both governments would have retained their individual tariff laws. Commercial union was, by far, the most comprehensive trade concept, which also explains the significant opposition to it. Under a commercial union the trade barriers between the Dominion and the Republic would have been eliminated, enabling complete free trade. Simultaneously, the two countries would establish a customs union, thereby adopting the same tariffs against other nations. Since the US economy was much larger and stronger than that of Canada, the Dominion would have adopted the tariff regulations of its neighbour. Many Canadians objected to this plan because it would have meant discrimination against British goods, and others also feared that by entering into a commercial union it would inexorably set Canada down the path to annexation. Although at times subtle, the

differences between these three economic policies were important in the late nineteenth century, especially for their potential political ramifications.

It is important to note that after the abrogation of the 1854 Reciprocity Treaty both Canadian political parties – Conservatives and Liberals – attempted to renegotiate a new reciprocity agreement with their American counterparts. By 1887, a renewed push for North American free trade emerged with a degree of support in both countries. In the United States support was reserved for a small group of like-minded individuals who hoped that commercial union would ultimately produce political union. It was due to this renewed interest in continental affairs that the political unionists began to promote their cause. The movement for commercial union, which in turn helped to develop support for political union, however, dominated the discourse on continental relations in the mid-1880s.²³

An examination of the economic conditions in Canada between 1885 and 1889 helps in part to explain the renewed drive to secure free trade with the United States. The Canadian economy continued to struggle in the 1880s despite the high tariffs and other protectionist tactics that were put in place by the National Policy. During this period the main source of revenue was from tariffs, yet those established by the National Policy had

²³As numerous studies have examined the commercial union movement in great detail it is not necessary to go in-depth into its development and the history behind it. For more information on this topic, however, Christopher Pennington's, *The Continentalist Movement in the Politics of Canada and the United States, 1887-1894* (Unpublished PhD Dissertation, University of Toronto, 2007), is a must read, as it covers every aspect of the commercial union movement from its development to its demise. Other sources that provided insight into this movement include: Charles Tansill, *Canadian-American Relations, 1875-1911* (Toronto: The Ryerson Press, 1943); Donald Warner, *The Idea of Continental Union: The Agitation for the Annexation of Canada to the United States, 1849-1893* (Lexington: University of Kentucky Press, 1960); D.C. Masters, *Reciprocity, 1846-1911* (Ottawa: The Canadian Historical Association Booklets, 1969); P.B. Waite, *Canada, 1874-1896: Arduous Destiny* (Toronto: McClelland and Stewart, 1971); Gary Pennanen, "Goldwin Smith, Wharton Barker, and Erastus Wiman: Architects of Commercial Union," *Journal of Canadian Studies*, 14:3 (Fall 1979): 50-62; J.L. Granatstein, *Yankee Go Home?* (Toronto: Harper Collins Publishers Limited, 1996); Christopher Pennington, *The Destiny of Canada: Macdonald, Laurier, and the Election of 1891* (Toronto: Allen Lane Canada, 2011).

failed to create wealth for the Dominion government. Table 3 outlines the federal government's revenue and expenditures between 1885 and 1889.

Table 3: Canadian Federal Government budget revenue expenditures, 1885-1889 (millions of dollars)²⁴

Year	Revenue	Expenditures	Difference
1885	33.2	60.2	-27
1886	35.8	39.9	-4.1
1887	35.9	43.1	-7.2
1888	38.8	41.8	-3
1889	39.9	39.9	0

During these years the government continually spent more than it took in, which led to deficit spending with the exception of 1889. After a decade of the National Policy the Canadian economy continued to struggle, which critics of Macdonald's policy regularly criticized. Supporters of the National Policy, however, rightly explained that reciprocity with the United States would remove much of the government's income from tariffs, which would mean continued deficit spending. Canadians therefore debated the merits of free trade with their continental neighbour, which, as the Conservatives never failed to highlight, might lead to political union.

Government deficits were not the only concern for the Canadian economy. Between 1885 and 1889 Canadians continually imported more goods than they exported, which further exacerbated the difficult economic situation. Table 4 reveals the imbalance of trade between 1885 and 1889 for trade with all nations.

²⁴Urquhart, 199-200.

Table 4: Foreign Trade, domestic exports, total exports, total imports, and the balance of trade of Canada, 1885-1889 (thousands of dollars)²⁵

Year	Domestic exports	Total exports	Total imports	Balance of trade
1885	79,132	87,211	99,756	-12,545
1886	77,757	85,195	95,992	-10,797
1887	80,961	89,510	105,107	-15,597
1888	81,382	90,185	100,672	-10,487
1889	80,272	87,211	109,098	-21,887

The United States, of course, was an important trading partner for Canada. As Table 5 shows, Canadians imported much more from the US than it exported in the decade between 1886 and 1896.

Table 5: Canadian Foreign trade imports and exports to the United States, excluding gold (thousands of dollars)²⁶

Year	Exports to US	Imports from US	Difference
1886	34,284	42,819	-8,535
1891	37,743	52,033	-14,290
1896	37,789	53,529	-15,740

The trade imbalance deepened as the century drew to a close, which was a significant reason why a growing number of Canadians, mainly rural dwellers, viewed reciprocity as an ideal solution. They believed that with some degree of reciprocity that the trade deficits would diminish, especially since they hoped that Americans would invest more in Canada, such as through American branch plants and business ventures. One such hopeful was Samuel J. Ritchie, an Ohio businessman with intimate connections in northern Ontario, who eventually revealed his support for political union.

The American economy on the other hand continued to grow in the 1880s, especially with the rapid industrialization that had begun in previous decades. During the years 1885 to 1889 the economy of the United States experienced normal ebbs and flows.

²⁵Ibid, 173.

²⁶Ibid, 181.

Although there was a recession in 1888, the American economy rebounded in 1889 and once again produced trade surpluses (see Table 6).²⁷

Table 6: US Imports and Exports, 1885-1889 (millions of dollars)²⁸

Year	Exports	Imports	Difference
1885	784	621	+164
1886	752	674	+78
1887	752	752	+/- 0
1888	742	783	-41
1889	839	774	+65

During these years the United States was also able to slowly pay off a large portion of its national debt, thanks in part to the trade surpluses. Table 7 outlines the decline in the public debt between 1885 and 1889.

Table 7: Public debt of the United States Federal Government, 1885-1889²⁹

Year	Total debt (thousands)	Per capita
1885	1,578,551	27.86
1886	1,555,660	26.85
1887	1,465,485	24.75
1888	1,384,632	22.89
1889	1,249,471	20.23

Clearly the economy of the United States fared much better than its Canadian counterpart, and its economic prospects looked much more positive for the future, a trend that continued into the 1890s.

If Canada and the United States had agreed to a new reciprocity treaty the economic benefits would have been substantial, especially for Canadians. Thus, beginning in the early part of 1887 a concerted push to attain commercial union emerged in both countries. As Chris Pennington outlined on the budding commercial movement, supporters “converted it into a live issue by capitalizing on pre-existing circumstances in

²⁷Gilbert C. Fite and Jim E. Reese, *An Economic History of the United States* (Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1965), 304.

²⁸United States Department of Commerce, *Historical Statistics of the United States, Colonial Times to 1970* (Washington, D.C., 1975), 884-885.

²⁹Ibid, 1118.

each country that fostered a climate of opinion sympathetic to continentalist proposals. First, there was the general sense, and keenly felt on both sides of the border, that something had to be done to improve the sad state of Canadian-American relations. [...] Second, there was an almost desperate desire on the Canadian side of the border to find a way out of an economic depression that had plagued the Dominion in the 1880s.”³⁰ However, as Pennington has observed, the movement for commercial union “did not start out in 1887 as any kind of a grassroots ‘movement’ at all. It really got underway as a promotional campaign by the same eclectic band of individuals that had been attracted to continentalist ideas in the past.”³¹ This same conclusion can be made regarding the movement for political union. In the United States commercial union was the *cause célèbre* of S.J. Ritchie and Wharton Barker, and they soon received support from Congressman Benjamin Butterworth and Senator John Sherman, both Republicans from Ohio. In Canada, Goldwin Smith was one of the leading advocates for commercial union, along with Liberal MPs John Charlton and Sir Richard Cartwright, as well as the newspaper editor Edward Farrer. Arguably the most prominent supporter and promoter of commercial union was Canadian-born New York businessman Erastus Wiman. During the spring and summer of 1887 a wave of support for commercial union emerged in both countries, particularly in Ontario, and numerous speeches were delivered and articles printed heralding the advantages to both countries if it was adopted.³²

Also in 1887 the Conservatives won yet another general election, which continued the party’s dominance in the Canadian Parliament. After his party’s defeat Liberal leader Edward Blake stepped down and Wilfrid Laurier became the first French-Canadian

³⁰Pennington, *The Continentalist Movement*, 65.

³¹Ibid, 64.

³²Warner, 182.

leader of a Canadian national political party. Laurier's ascension to the Liberal leadership itself was significant, but the party made another drastic and essential decision to adopt the cause of commercial union as its official platform. This change was for several reasons, the most important of which was that if the party was to have any chance of defeating the Conservatives in a general election, it needed a new policy that could garner broad support. Secondly, many Liberals were also ardent continentalists who sincerely believed that commercial union with the United States would provide the best opportunity for the young Dominion to flourish. With Canadians discussing the best economic strategy for their nation's development it was natural that questions about its political future would also arise and enable the development of pro-union sentiments.

John Valentine Ellis was elected to the House of Commons as the Liberal member for Saint John, New Brunswick, in 1887. In early 1888, he caused a mild controversy by making a public declaration in favour of political union with the United States. He also used his position as editor of the Saint John *Globe* to promote the idea of political union, an idea that was received with both support and consternation. As Ellis wrote in the *Globe*, "There is but one simple way by which [...] all other troubles on this Continent between Great Britain and the United States can be settled, and that is by a political union of Canada and the United States. [...] Whatever was the original cause, the reason for separation exists only as a sentiment to-day [*sic*]. To the Canadians, full of national aspirations and seeking national life, where can he secure it as he can in the United States?"³³ At this time support for political union in New Brunswick was quite weak, but Ellis helped to revive the issue amongst his fellow citizens as well as the people of the Maritimes as a whole. Most importantly, as highlighted in letters to the editor in the Saint

³³Printed in the Toronto *Globe*, 29 February 1888.

John *Globe*, “Although politically united with Ontario and Quebec, the Maritime Provinces have but little sympathy with them in comparison to that they have with the United States.”³⁴ Dissatisfaction with Confederation, prevalent in Nova Scotia, was seemingly evident in New Brunswick, which caused some to seek union with the United States.

Not surprisingly, Ellis’s support for political union drew strong criticism from the Conservative press. The Halifax *Morning Herald*, for example, labeled Ellis a traitor for his desire to remove Canada from the British Empire.³⁵ It also rejected the notion that Ellis had the right and freedom to speak publicly in favour of political union because he was a Member of Parliament.³⁶ Throughout the month of February 1888 there were repeated calls for Ellis to resign his seat because of his “treasonous opinions.” This controversy raised the important issue of whether or not elected officials were entitled to advocate for political union with the United States. While Ellis did not resign, he was defeated in the 1891 general election, although he continued to express his belief that continental union was in the best interest for Canada. As will be seen later, this was not the only time that a controversy emerged due to a public servant supporting political union.

In January 1888, James W. Longley, the Attorney General of Nova Scotia, also caused a stir while at a meeting in Boston. According to a report in the New York *World*, Longley declared in a speech “he was both a commercial unionist and an annexationist.”³⁷ If Longley indeed made this statement, it would have meant that two

³⁴Saint John *Globe*, 24 February 1888.

³⁵Halifax *Morning Herald*, 26 January 1888.

³⁶Ibid, 2 February 1888.

³⁷Reprinted in the Halifax *Morning Herald*, 9 January 1888.

prominent Liberal Maritime politicians were backing political union with the United States, shattering the perception that such sentiment was all but non-existent in the Dominion. While some of his contemporaries believed that Longley was a closet annexationist this, however, is difficult to determine. Throughout the period under study Longley seems to have changed his opinion on the Dominion's future. In 1892, for example, he wrote an essay titled "The Future of Canada," in which he called for a reasoned discussion and approach to deciding Canada's political destiny. Within, he rejected the notion that he was, or had ever been, a supporter of political union.³⁸ Despite his refutations, many still believed that Longley's sympathies sat with the other political unionists.³⁹

Similar discussions about political union occurred in Ontario in the latter half of 1888. For example, the Toronto *Globe* printed a series of letters that discussed "Our National Future" in which expressions both in favour and against political union were articulated.⁴⁰ One of the more common sentiments in favour of political union was that as Canadians and Americans were one people, their destiny in North America inexorably linked. Such was the opinion of Seth H. Yerkk of Whitby. Yerkk's support for union was quite clear: "we all sprung from the same stock, use the same language, have the same customs and religion."⁴¹ In December 1888 a bill appeared in the US Congress that called for union between Canada and the United States, and the Saint John *Globe* offered its full support. "It embraces an offer of union," it declared, "from one great member of the

³⁸James W. Longley, "The Future of Canada," reprinted from the *Lake Magazine*, September 1892.

³⁹Saint John *Globe*, 26 August 1892. The Saint John *Globe* was a known supporter of political union, and thus the article printed seems more like a plea for Longley to embrace his opinions and join the movement.

⁴⁰See the Toronto *Globe* 20 & 29 October, and 2 & 5 November 1888.

⁴¹*Ibid*, 2 November 1888.

British speaking people of America to another member that has in it a recognition of kinship and of friendly relationship; and it may be held to show that causes of difference between the Americans and Canadians are fast disappearing.”⁴² The notion that English-speaking Canadians and Americans were similar people based upon common “racial” characteristics was an essential reason why some supported the idea of political union, and expressions such as those from Toronto and Saint John were consistently repeated.

While Ellis and Longley stirred up controversy in the Maritimes and discussions in Ontario began to circulate, the idea of political union took another shape. In February 1889, the Halifax *Morning Herald* reported that there was a movement afoot in Boston that proposed the annexation of New England to Canada. According to one article, some “far-sighted men in New England are beginning to suggest that their only salvation lies in becoming part of Canada.” As the Boston *Transcript* reported:

The public has been entertained of late with a description of the many advantages New England, and Boston in particular, would gain by the annexation of Canada to the United States, but suppose Canada does not desire annexation, the question has arisen in the minds of many New Englanders whether it would not be greatly to the advantage of New England to return to her former allegiance, and become a part of the great and glorious empire on which the sun never sets.⁴³

It even went so far as to claim that the United States government would not object to this plan if was so desired by the people of New England.

The idea that the New England states seriously desired to be united with Canada is suspect. *The Wichita Daily Eagle* argued that the move to annex New England to Canada “is meant, no doubt, as an offset to the proposed annexation of the whole of Canada to the United States, a matter that is worrying the Canadians infinitely more than

⁴²Ibid, 15 December 1888.

⁴³Halifax *Morning Herald*, 2 February 1889.

it is anybody in this country.”⁴⁴ Besides, as the *Halifax Morning Herald* concluded, “While a good thing for New England to be annexed to Canada, it would be of little or no benefit to Canada.” Therefore, “All schemes for annexing us to the United States, or of annexing New England to us, should meet with our determined opposition.”⁴⁵ The *Washington Post* agreed with this conclusion, writing that “the scheme won’t work” because “It is contrary to the glacial theory. If there is ever any change, Canada must slide down and not the United States up.”⁴⁶ Still, fanciful discussions such as these, however out of touch with actual public sentiment they may have been, stoked the larger discussions of continental union in North America.

On 5 March 1889 the *Halifax Morning Herald* once again reported on the prospect of union with New England:

Mr. [John B.] Mills (Annapolis) has given notice of a motion reciting the failure of the republican government in the United States and the strong indication prevalent that a dissolution of the republic is imminent; and in view of discussion and the advisability of union between Canada and New England, the resolution declares that the parliament of Canada [*sic*] views the agitation with sympathy, and authorizes the cabinet to co-operate in securing an amendment to the confederation act as may be necessary to expand the boundaries of the Dominion.⁴⁷

No such motion, however, was presented in Parliament. While the proposal to annex New England to Canada may have been nothing more than a hyperbolic reaction to the revival of the idea of political union, doubtless it had at least some supporters on both sides of

⁴⁴*The Wichita Daily Eagle*, 7 March 1889.

⁴⁵*Halifax Morning Herald*, 5 February 1889.

⁴⁶*Washington Post*, 4 March 1889.

⁴⁷*Halifax Morning Herald*, 5 March 1889. The same motion was reported in the *Phillipsburg Herald* (Phillipsburg, Kansas), 22 March 1889.

the border. Indeed, the idea of annexing New England to Canada appeared again in 1891.⁴⁸

Despite the outburst of discussion in the Maritimes and New England, political union was not generally viewed as a legitimate option in either region. Nova Scotians generally remained sceptical of Confederation and consistently sought better terms with the Dominion government, and political union was mainly used as a bargaining chip. As for New Brunswick and Prince Edward Island, support for union with the United States was likely on par with that in the other provinces at this time. This becomes especially clear since the main impetus for union came from Central Canada, with the other regions not providing much encouragement to the movement.

Nevertheless, changing political and economic dynamics were pushing the two countries closer together, but tensions remained. In 1887-88, Canada and the United States experienced strained relations due to the fisheries question. Politicians in both countries were concerned that these poor relations could deteriorate further and produce a war between the United States and Great Britain, although the vast majority of Canadians and Americans did not want to go to war over the fisheries.⁴⁹ As tensions mounted, so too did the rhetoric that the two countries were on a collision course and were heading toward war. Such was the opinion of *The Washington Critic*. As it outlined on 25 May 1886, “We do not believe that war is imminent, but many things much more surprising have happened before and may happen again. At any rate, it will do no harm to suppose it possible, and the more the question is agitated the stronger will grow the sentiment of

⁴⁸The *Fort Worth Gazette* (Fort Worth, Texas) reported on this on 13 May 1891, outlining that there was a proposal in the Canadian House of Commons to annex New England to the Dominion. Interestingly, the southern perspective declared: “We see no reason to object.”

⁴⁹Richard A. Preston, *The Defence of the undefended Border: Planning for War in North America, 1867-1939* (Montreal and Kingston: McGill-Queen’s University Press, 1977), 102-103.

annexation. Our northern boundary line, some day or other, will have to be straightened out on a higher degree of latitude, war or no war.”⁵⁰

Anglo-American relations were tense at best in the 1880s. Old animosities from the Revolutionary War and the War of 1812 remained, along with residual anger over British “support” for the Confederacy during the Civil War. Charles Campbell has also pointed to the fact that “Britain was the world’s strongest country, and wherever Americans took a step outside their own borders, there they seemed to run into British opposition. Britain blocked an American isthmian canal; she encouraged the Hawaiians to maintain their independence; [and] her Caribbean bases warned off Americans from adventures in that sensitive area.” Americans also “denounced Britain for her allegedly tyrannical rule over their colonial forefathers, and they resented the derisory attitude of her ruling classes toward republicanism and democracy [...]” Possibly more importantly, was the fact that “[Britain’s] mighty power seemed to hover menacingly over the United States.”⁵¹ Britain was the old enemy and the source of much American frustration. Americans were also quite suspicious of Britain because of its ongoing ties with Canada.

The *Hocking Sentinel* (Logan, Ohio) warned of the threat that Canada posed: “It may be well for them to know that WE CANNOT AFFORD TO HAVE THE BRITISH EMPIRE ON OUR BORDER. The whole force of that empire might be hurled against us from that side in the event of war.”⁵² Only with Canada’s annexation could there be peace in North America. Former US Army General Benjamin Butler also took the opportunity that the

⁵⁰*The Washington Critic* (Washington, D.C.), 25 May 1886. For an in depth analysis of this controversy see Charles C. Tansill, *Canadian-American Relations, 1875-1911* (Toronto: The Ryerson Press, 1943). Also see Charles Campbell, *From Revolution to Rapprochement: The United States and Great Britain, 1873-1900* (New York: John Wiley & Sons, 1974).

⁵¹Charles S. Campbell, *The Transformation of American Foreign Relations, 1865-1900* (New York: Harper & Row, Publishers, 1976), 5

⁵²*Hocking Sentinel* (Logan, Ohio), 17 March 1892. Emphasis in original.

fisheries controversy presented to outline his belief that the United States would eventually acquire Canada, “Peacefully we hope, forcefully if we must!”⁵³ According to Butler, so long as Canada remained separate from the United States the threat of war would always be present. As a British Dominion Canada could harass the United States and was thus viewed as a continual menace to the peace and security of the continent. As Butler saw it, Canada was destined to join the United States. And while a peaceful “annexation” was desired he clearly did not overlook the possibility of war.

Butler, though, was by no means alone in his advocacy for war to secure Canada, as across the United States voices emerged that called for the conquest of its northern neighbour.⁵⁴ On 31 December 1888, for example, *The New York Times* reported, “Senator [Henry William] Blair of New Hampshire is out for war. He believes we ought to have Canada, peacefully if Canada will, but forcibly if she does not want to be annexed.” As Blair reasoned, “Two aggressive, warlike people, living on either side of an imaginary line, cannot exist forever without at some time coming into conflict with each other. It is foolish to think otherwise.”⁵⁵ A similar call to arms was expressed within the pages of the *Morning Oregonian* (Portland, Oregon), citing a speech made by “An Ohio Man,” albeit with much stronger language:

Fellow Citizens: Hurrah! There’s got to be a war! I’m in for whipping Great Britain right off, without stopping for consequences. We must hustle the British lion heels over head out of the everlasting borders of this ’ere Western continent! Hurrah for the annexation of Canada! We must have the critter, head and heels, if we have to wade in blood up to our knees to pull it from the horns of John Bull. [...] Let us all set up the cry for a universal North American republic – Canada and the United

⁵³Benjamin F. Butler, “Defenseless Canada,” *North American Review*, 174:4 (1888: Oct.), 443.

⁵⁴See the *Alexandria Gazette* (Alexandria, Virginia), 24 January 1887; *St. Paul Daily Globe*, 5 December 1888; *The Manning Times* (Manning, South Carolina), 3 April 1889; *Wichita Daily Eagle*, 22 December 1895; *The Daily Herald* (Brownsville, Texas), 31 January 1891.

⁵⁵*New York Times*, 31 December 1888.

States forever! Begot in a warwhoop, born in blood, cradled in thunder
and brought up in glory.⁵⁶

Making hostile declarations against Britain was an easy way to garner public support in the United States as Americans continued to revel in twisting the lion's tail.

If war between the United States and Britain erupted, Canada would be the battlefield. Further, in the event of an American victory the Dominion would be conquered and added to the Republic. Confidence in an easy American victory dominated the discourse about this hypothetical war and the eventual annexation of Canada that would follow. Secretary of the US Navy William C. Whitney was one prominent voice that shared this opinion. In an interview published in the *Weekly Expositor* (Brockway, Michigan), Whitney said that, "I suppose any one will admit that we would easily win if such a conflict were carried out on land. [...] It is evident that the final result of any war would end in the annexation of Canada to the United States."⁵⁷

But there was also a vocal group that urged against this line of thinking. In the event of war Canada would be conquered and added to the American union, but as G.T. Ferris contended in the *North American Review*, "The evils of a violent seizure by the United States [...] would be terrible to the mother-country, while a peaceful secession of Canada from Great Britain would rather strengthen than weaken that great people." Besides, Ferris reasoned, "Canada is fast ripening to drop into the mouth of her big neighbour," and "War would only hasten this a quarter or maybe a half century."⁵⁸ A

⁵⁶*Morning Oregonian* (Portland, Oregon), 15 December 1888. Emphasis original.

⁵⁷*Weekly Expositor*, 29 November 1888. See also the *Manning Times* (Manning, South Carolina), 3 April 1889; the *Morning Oregonian* (Portland, Oregon), 15 December 1888; *New York Times*, 31 December 1888; *Washington Post*, 17 December 1888;

⁵⁸G.T. Ferris, "A Possible War," *North American Review*, 148 (1889: Jan/Jan), 132. A common metaphor for the eventual political union between the United States and Canada was that the Dominion was a young fruit slowly ripening into maturity on the British tree. Once it became of age, Canada would break loose from the British Empire and fall into the eagerly waiting hands of Uncle Sam.

common belief in the United States was that Canada's destiny was to seek entrance into the American Union one day, and this was based on the notion that Canada was an unnatural entity. Not only was it a colonial dependency, the Dominion retained its monarchical institutions rather than becoming a republic like other states in the New World. This was the opinion of US Secretary of State James G. Blaine. While he was an expansionist who had designs on Canada, Blaine refused to make any direct moves in that direction, as he believed it would negatively impact Canadian sentiment toward union. Like other Americans, Blaine adhered to the belief that Canada would eventually seek union with the United States, saying, "Canada is like an apple on a tree just beyond our reach. We may strive to grasp it, but the bough recedes from our hold just in proportion to our effort to catch it. Let it alone, and in due time it will fall into our hands."⁵⁹

Many in Canada worried that it was only a matter of time before their much stronger neighbour attacked and the Dominion was forcefully annexed. To settle these Canadian fears *The Daily Morning* (Astoria, Oregon) reassured its northern neighbour that the United States would not go to war to annex Canada. "Americans," it stated, "are not lying awake nights [*sic*] trying to think of some easy way to get Canada into the Union. If it comes at all it must come of its own free will and by its own special request."⁶⁰ Others still viewed the costs of war to secure Canada to be too high of a price to pay. In 1887 *The Wichita Daily Eagle* (Wichita, Kansas) outlined that "A war between this country and England would result probably in the annexation of Canada to this

⁵⁹Quoted in Warner, *The Idea of Continental Union*, 217-18.

⁶⁰*The Daily Morning* (Astoria, Oregon), 8 January 1889.

country with an increased debt and a few battered sea coast towns. These in addition to the loss of human life would be the gains to this country.”⁶¹

Besides the financial and human costs, there was another position in the United States against a war with Britain. As *The Forrest Republican* (Tionesta, Pennsylvania) reported, Canada could be used as “a perpetual hostage for the safety of our seaboard cities against the British navy. [...] Canada is of more value to us as a hostage than as a part of our country.”⁶² If Canada was an American hostage Britain would have to conduct all its international affairs with the United States on friendly and fair terms. The threat of attacking Canada if Britain acted in bad faith should be enough to keep the old Mother Country honest. It would also forever prevent war in North America, thus ensuring the security of the United States. Meanwhile, as Richard Preston highlighted, the strength of the Royal Navy maintained Canada’s defence and dissuaded an American attack on the Dominion.⁶³ While this was a rather bleak outlook on the future Anglo-American-Canadian relations, it was an option that not only avoided war but also made the idea of political union unnecessary.

Some Americans also thought that rather than viewing Canada as a competitor, it should become an important ally to the United States.⁶⁴ In an article in *The North American Review*, William Henry Hurlbert explained the existing American frustration with the Anglo-American-Canadian relationship. The people of the United States, he felt, did not object to the fact that Canadians desired to maintain their connections with Britain as an autonomous member of the British Empire; rather, Americans were opposed to the

⁶¹*The Wichita Daily Eagle*, (Wichita, Kansas), 8 February 1887.

⁶²*The Forrest Republican* (Tionesta, Pennsylvania), 27 February 1889.

⁶³Preston, 95-124.

⁶⁴William Henry Hurlbert, “‘Reciprocity’ and Canada,” *North American Review*, 153 (1891: July/Dec.), 476.

interference of Britain in the commercial relations between Canada and the United States.⁶⁵ Therefore, to promote improved economic relations in North America Canada should declare its independence and become a republic. Nineteenth century Americans who were aware of Canada's monarchical government were also puzzled as to why the Canadians had not adopted a republican system. A majority of Americans would likely have preferred that Canada abandon its "antiquated" monarchy and become a New World Republic.⁶⁶

Another option to secure political union was presented that would also avoid the prospect of war. Some Americans proposed purchasing Canada from Great Britain. The United States had experience with purchasing territory in the past, notably Louisiana in 1803 and Alaska in 1867. There was, however, some disagreement on the cost involved, and Congress did not seriously entertain the idea. In October 1888, the New York *Sun* printed an article under the headline, "Canada for Sale," which suggested that the Dominion could be purchased for the sum of \$300,000,000.⁶⁷ Purchasing Canada would serve two purposes: it would avoid the possibility of war with Britain and it would not contravene the United States' republican ethos. However, some Americans believed that any price would be too much to acquire Canada. As the Los Angeles *Daily Herald* declared, "This country has all the territory it needs, and it certainly don't want Canada," especially because "That portion of the British Empire is loaded down with debt [...]."⁶⁸ While the United States would procure an abundance of natural resources it would also have to assume Canada's sizeable debt. One estimate placed Canada's national debt

⁶⁵Ibid, 476.

⁶⁶This sentiment was best expressed in the *Wichita Daily Eagle*, 4 March 1890.

⁶⁷New York *Sun*, 4 October 1888. The same was reported in *The Fairfield News and Herald* (Winnsboro, South Carolina), 10 October 1888.

⁶⁸Los Angeles *Daily Herald*, 15 December 1888.

around \$300 million, which would be added to the American national debt of \$1.4 billion.⁶⁹

After two years of negotiations an agreement was finally reached between Britain and the United States regarding fishing rights.⁷⁰ All it required was US Senate approval. Not everyone, though, was pleased with the outcome. Within the Senate it became clear that a few Republican Senators were opposed to the proposed treaty because it would alleviate some of the economic difficulties in the Dominion. Rather, they hoped that Canada would continue to experience commercial pressure and eventually seek union with the United States as a solution to its long-standing economic issues. On 21 August 1888, the treaty was defeated in the Senate, 30-27. While it is certainly true that some Republicans desired to force their northern neighbours into political union, Congress rejected several proposals to that effect.

Yet for all the talk of war and annexation in 1887 and 1888, the main issue confronting the two North American nations was free trade, a notion that received varying degrees of support. Several prominent Americans publicly favoured commercial union with Canada. Some supporters, such as S.J. Ritchie, would have benefited personally from commercial union since many had business ventures in Canada. Eliminating the tariff wall, of course, would be good for their business. Support for commercial union could also be found in Congress, especially from Benjamin Butterworth and John Sherman. For these men, though, commercial union was seen as the first step toward the eventual political union between Canada and the United States.

⁶⁹Toronto *Globe*, 3 December 1888.

⁷⁰The fisheries episode in Canadian-American relations was a long and drawn-out process and is too large to address here. Charles Tansill, however, provided a complete examination of this incident in his *Canadian-American Relations, 1875-1911*.

In 1888 and 1889 the United States Congress discussed and debated the possibility of union with Canada on three separate occasions; each time, however, the resolutions presented did not incite concrete action.

On 6 August 1888 Republican Senator Henry William Blair of New Hampshire presented S.R. 101, “Requesting the President to open negotiations with the Government of her Britannic Majesty with a view to the political union of the Dominion of Canada or any of the provinces or subdivisions thereof and the United States [...]”⁷¹ The resolution was referred to the Committee on Foreign Relations where it was not debated until October. When discussion on the resolution recommenced, Blair revealed that he had received a report from a *New York Times* correspondent, Charles Thompson. Having travelled across Canada, Thompson concluded that the Dominion and its people were ready for political union. Using Thompson’s detailed report Blair announced in the Senate, “I think we need the union as much as Canada needs the union, and that the line of peace for the future, the relations of these two great sections of the continent, and of the people who now and are hereafter to inhabit them, lies in the direction of conciliation and of unity, and that the project should never be put forth between these two great countries as one specially for the advantage of either, but for the unquestionable advantage of both.” As a Senator from New Hampshire, Blair had another reason for promoting political union. As he made clear, “I do not believe that these peoples can develop, can exist alongside of each other for any great length of time unless united, if they are to live in peace.”⁷²

⁷¹*Political Union with Canada*, S.R. 101, 50th Cong., 1st sess., *Congressional Record*, vol. 19, pt. 8:7261.

⁷²*Ibid*, 9463.

During his speech in the Senate Blair clearly outlined that only a peaceful union should be the goal, a sentiment shared by the majority of American supporters of political union. Blair was adamant that he was not proposing a hostile takeover of the Dominion. Instead, “I am willing to be united with Canada and that Canada to be united with the United States, but I am not willing that the idea of inequality on either side should find its way into these considerations. It is nothing but political union that suits my mind [...]”⁷³ This sentiment of an honourable and equal union was an essential aspect to political unionism in the United States. Indeed, this sentiment was the driving idea behind much of the rhetoric supporting political union in both countries. Blair’s motion was referred to the Committee on Foreign Relations where it appears to have stalled.

The second discussion in Congress occurred on 18 September 1888 when Senator John Sherman delivered a lengthy speech to Congress on the need for commercial and political union with Canada. “Our policy has been especially favorable to Canada,” he said, adding that the policy “was adopted not by treaty only, but by friendly laws, in harmony with the general good will of our people toward a kindred race in language, institutions, and origin, having a common boundary of 4,000 miles.” As such, “it is our desire and hope to establish more intimate relations, and, in due time, a common union and destiny.” Much like Blair, Sherman argued in favour of union with Canada as a means to avoid war. “Our whole history since the conquest of Canada by Great Britain in 1763,” he stated, “has been a continuous warning that we can not [*sic*] be at peace with each other except by political and commercial union.”⁷⁴ Sherman called for friendly overtures on the part of the United States to convince the Canadian people of the need for

⁷³Ibid, 9463.

⁷⁴*Relations with Canada*, 50th Cong., 1st sess., vol. 19, part 9:8670.

political union: “The way to union with Canada is not by hostile legislation; not by acts of retaliation, but by friendly overtures. [...] The true policy of this Government is to tender freedom in trade and intercourse, and to make this tender in such a fraternal way that it shall be an overture to the Canadian people to become a friendly part of this Republic.” Furthermore, “The natural advantages of the union would be in closing forever all controversies inseparable from a long boundary line,” as well as “increasing the power and influence of republican institutions among the nations of the world.” Besides, “may we not hope that, with a broader area, the unhappy sectionalism of the past between the North and the South may be dissipated by new questions that will arise, by a more intense patriotism invoked by the expansion of our institutions?”⁷⁵ In response, John Tyler Morgan, a Democrat Senator from Alabama, highlighted the fact that political union with Canada received bipartisan support.⁷⁶

Sherman’s speech did a great service for the cause of political union. His personal papers contain dozens letters from correspondents across Canada and the United States that congratulate him on his speech and voice their support for his plan for union.⁷⁷ His most emphatic supporter, though, was S.J. Ritchie. For several months prior to Sherman’s speech Ritchie had been in contact with the Ohio Senator regarding the promotion of commercial and political union with Canada. Following Sherman’s speech Ritchie could not contain his excitement, revealing in a letter dated 20 September 1888:

I cannot do my feelings justice without going upon record as indorsing [*sic*] in the strongest language at my command the grand effort you have so recently made in the Senate upon our relations with the Dominion of

⁷⁵Ibid, 8670-8671.

⁷⁶Ibid, 8913-8919.

⁷⁷For examples, see John Cameron to Sherman, 20 September 1888, 30978, and J.F. Atkinson to Sherman, 20 September 1888, 30982, Box 458, John Sherman Papers, Manuscript Division, Library of Congress, Washington, D.C.

Canada. If you carry a measure through Congress making a square and open offer to Canada to come in with us and be of us nothing but your death and mine intervening will deprive me of the great pleasure of voting for you in the year of Our Lord 1892 as the first president of the Republic of North America. This will be the third great epoch in the history of this nation. The first being the declaration and maintenance of our independence. The second the oppression of the war of the Rebellion and the emancipation of slavery.⁷⁸

Sherman's speech clearly outlined the distinction between commercial and political union. It also clarified that he desired a peaceful union and not the hostile annexation of Canada. Once Sherman had made the distinction between the two and indicated which he desired, people began to discuss the idea of political union independently.

While Sherman's speech in the Senate clarified the difference between the movements for commercial and political union, Benjamin Butterworth's resolution in the House of Representatives on 13 December 1888 received the most public attention, especially in Canada. Butterworth presented H. Res 240, "Authorising the President to negotiate with reference to the unity and assimilation with the United States of the Dominion of Canada, or one or more of the provinces thereof."⁷⁹ Butterworth's resolution, much like those of Blair and Sherman, stressed the similarities of the Canadian and American people, while also outlining that political union would forever remove all tensions, both economic and political, in the relations between the United States, Great Britain, and Canada. Like previous resolutions, it too was referred to the Committee on Foreign Affairs where it stalled. Clearly, the United States government was not interested in pursuing the idea of union with Canada.

⁷⁸Ritchie to Sherman, 20 September 1888, 30989, Box 458, John Sherman Papers, Manuscript Division, Library of Congress, Washington, D.C.

⁷⁹Cited in the George Foster Fonds, MG 27-IID7, LAC, Vol. 36, Folder 3 Canada-US Relations, 1871-1894.

Butterworth's resolution had a significant impact and caused an indelible rift between the supporters of commercial union with those in Canada and the United States. Liberal MP John Charlton, a leading advocate of free trade, was immensely disappointed in Butterworth's actions as he believed that the Ohio Congressman had delivered a serious blow to the cause of commercial union. Charlton revealed in his diary that he was present at Washington in the days leading up to the resolution and that he attempted to dissuade Butterworth "against any annexation motion in Congress as it would be inconsequential and would cause irritation and produce exactly the opposite effect desired."⁸⁰ Charlton was right. In Canada the Conservative newspapers, such as the *Halifax Morning Herald*, relished the opportunity to inform its readers that, "The liberal-conservative journals have never been deceived by arguments which Butterworth, Wiman, Smith, and others have advanced in favor of commercial union or unrestricted reciprocity. They early foresaw that those who accepted these arguments as valid must, if consistent, sooner or later, become out and out annexationist."⁸¹

During subsequent discussions about commercial and political union with Canada in Congress in 1889, Butterworth was afforded the opportunity to expand on his desire to see the Dominion and the Republic form one nation. Union went beyond simple commercial and material interests, he stated. Rather, "It has a direct relation to the permanency of free institutions upon this continent. It has immediate relation to the destiny of the English-speaking race, and the part that race will take in shaping the course

⁸⁰See Charlton's diary, especially the entries for 10, 11, 13, and 14 December 1888 in the John Charlton Papers, MS 1101, Thomas Fisher Rare Book Library, University of Toronto.

⁸¹*Halifax Morning Herald*, 20 December 1888.

and destiny of both Canada and the United States.”⁸² Warning that Canadians rejected political union for more sinister reasons, Butterworth believed that “The Government of Canada has no patience with any arrangement that will remove all cause of attrition between Canada and the United States.” This did not necessarily mean that Canada posed a military threat to the safety and security of the Republic; rather, the Dominion’s ultimate aim was “to treat us as a hostile nation while seeking a closer relation with the European powers, the ultimate object being to bring about imperial federation, thus establishing on this continent a government positively hostile to our institutions and standing as a constant menace to our peace.”⁸³ Despite these bold declarations, Butterworth was incorrect. Although Canadians desired to maintain their connection with Britain, they did not want to threaten the safety and security of the United States.

William Morris Stewart, a Republican Senator from Nevada, echoed Butterworth’s sentiments in the Senate on 12 March 1889. He believed that:

The great security of our republican government is in the fact that we are under no necessity to maintain large standing armies, because we have no rival on this continent. If a great nation should spring up north of us, it would involve the necessity of a standing army on our part, and they would have a standing army, and an ultimate conflict would be the result, and that would mean danger to the republican government. I believe that the North American continent, that is, the United States and all that is north of it, certainly must be one if our form of government is to be perpetuated.⁸⁴

Stewart clearly based his opinions on anti-British and anti-Canadian sentiment, which was shared by several other American statesmen during this era.

⁸²*Commercial and Political Union with Canada*, H.R. 240, 50th Cong., 2nd sess., *Congressional Record*, vol. 20, pt. 3:211.

⁸³*Ibid*, 214.

⁸⁴*Select Committees*, 51st Cong. 1st sess., *Congressional Record*, vol. 21, pt. 1: 9.

Canadian opponents to political union, however, vehemently disagreed with Butterworth's conclusion that a grand reunion of the "Anglo-Saxons" in North America would occur. As early as 1885 George Denison had balked at the suggestion that the United States was an "Anglo-Saxon" nation. For over a century, he outlined, "the American Republic [has been] the 'cess-pool' of Europe, and has attracted the worst classes from the old world." Therefore, "I don't call the United States an Anglo-Saxon community now. It once was, but since the revolution [*sic*] it has been the dumping ground of Europe, and they are forming there a community entirely different from ours."⁸⁵ In 1891, Conservative MP Louis-Georges Desjardins also rejected the notion of an "Anglo-Saxon" reunion because "C'est une utopie. Les États-Unis ne sont pas un pays anglais."⁸⁶

Some Americans were also opposed to Butterworth's bold statements. On 20 December 1888, for example, *The National Tribune* (Washington, D.C.) expressed disappointment with the Congressman's speech because he "has made the blunder that we feared some of our public men would. He has made a move looking to the annexation of Canada and of course the Canadians are up in arms to resist it." Overt declarations in favour of union were not the way to go to ensure that Canada joined the United States. "The right way," according to *The National Tribune*, "is to show indifference, until the advantages of such a union appear so plain that they are more eager for it than we are."⁸⁷ This was a rather common argument found in the United States regarding political union. Many Americans felt that it was only a matter of time before Canada sought entrance into

⁸⁵The Centennial Committee, *The Centennial of the Settlement of Upper Canada*, 96-97, 102.

⁸⁶Louis-Georges Desjardins, *Considérations sur l'annexion* (Québec, 1891), 10.

⁸⁷*The National Tribune* (Washington, D.C.), 20 December 1888.

the Republic. So, in the meantime, it would be wise for American statesmen to remain quiet on the subject, lest they invoke a strong sentiment in opposition.

Butterworth's speech did not present any new ideas, and in reality was a rehashing of previous attempts to receive governmental support for political union. But what was significant was that within the last five months of 1888 three declarations were made in Congress in support of political union. During the 1880s discussions pertaining to Canadian-American relations had largely been with regards to the fisheries dispute and the establishment of free trade. While some in the United States desired freer trade relations with Canada, it appeared as though the most outspoken supporters were in fact pushing for political union, not reciprocity.

As American attention regarding union with Canada continued to grow, so too did Congressional consideration to the subject. On 12 March 1889 Republican Senator George F. Hoar of Massachusetts, chairman of the Senate Committee on Relations with Canada, informed the Senate that his committee was investigating into "the fact that there is a large and growing body of men in Canada who desire annexation to this country." Thus, Hoar believed that "Political power is likely to turn and hinge upon the question in the near future in the Dominion of Canada, and upon the question whether the American people desire such annexation or not."⁸⁸ Therefore, the Committee sought to explore American opinion regarding political union and the possibility of it becoming a reality. Reactions to this revelation were mixed. Some wholeheartedly supported the initiative of the Committee on Relations with Canada, as they also sustained the desire to see political union become a reality. But there were also those who opposed this investigation because

⁸⁸*Select Committees*, 51st Cong., 1st sess., vol. 21, pt. 1: 8.

the committee was created to only study the economic relations between the two countries.

One of the supporters of the Committee's actions was Shelby Cullom, a Republican Senator from Illinois. Cullom made it clear that he "very much desire[d] that such investigations may be made, and that such progress may be made as that ultimately the two countries may become one; in other words, that the great country lying upon our northern border called Canada shall finally be part of the United States."⁸⁹ William Morris Stewart also supported the Committee because he believed "that the North American continent, that is, the United States and all that is north of it, certainly must be one if our form of government is to be perpetuated."⁹⁰

John Sherman, while he used this discussion to reaffirm his desire for political union, was wary about letting the Committee investigate political union sentiment in Canada "because I certainly would not propose any measure that would either threaten, or coax, or beg, or ask, even, the people of Canada to join their fortunes with ours." In essence, Sherman saw the Committee's investigation as unnecessary because "The time will come when, by the growth of popular sentiment on both sides of the line, it will be felt that it is necessary [...] to gradually melt into allegiance to one government, under the same common flag, and, I trust, with the hearty good will of the mother country of both." Besides, Sherman felt confident that when the time came for the United States and Canada to unite in a political union, "It will be a popular movement and not a movement of governments."⁹¹

⁸⁹Ibid, 9.

⁹⁰Ibid, 9.

⁹¹Ibid, 10.

Sherman opposed the investigations but not political union. But for Republican George F. Edmunds of Vermont, the reverse was true. As Edmunds said, “while I am not in the least degree in favor of the annexation of the British North American provinces to the United States at this present time [...], I am perfectly willing and desirous that this committee shall pursue its explorations and ascertain all the facts relating to the intercourse between these two parts of this continent.”⁹² Wilkinson Call, a Democrat from Florida, echoed these sentiments, stating “I shall vote for it, [but] not because it will promote the annexation of Canada, as this country has no right to advance a proposition of that kind until it shall come from the people of Canada or from Great Britain.”⁹³ A common theme during this Senate debate was that the United States had no right to interfere in the politics of another nation for fear of violating its republican character.

The lone vocal opponent to the Committee’s actions came from Senator Matthew Butler, a Democrat from South Carolina. Butler’s challenge to the Committee was based on the fact that he “did not suppose when this committee was provided for that there was any idea of considering the question of annexation of Canada or any portion of it to the United States.” Concluding his brief remarks, Butler emphatically declared, “I should like it to be thoroughly understood that we are to have nothing to do with the question of annexation or ever, as I have stated, of political union.”⁹⁴ The objection by the Senator from South Carolina carried some weight. When the Committee on Relations with Canada was created its mandate was to “report on the relations of commerce and business

⁹²Ibid, 9.

⁹³Ibid, 12.

⁹⁴Ibid, 11.

existing between the United States and the dependencies of Great Britain in North America [...].”⁹⁵ There was no mention of annexation or political union.

Regardless of its mandate, between 8 May and 31 December 1889 the Select Committee on Relations with Canada travelled across the United States ostensibly to obtain vital information on trade relations with the Dominion. During that time committee members conducted dozens of interviews in order to get a better sense of economic interactions with Canada, as well as other aspects of Canadian-American relations. On several occasions, though, the investigation moved from discussing economic realities to the possibility of political union. Some respondents believed that if Canada were denied free trade that it would eventually seek admission into the Union. Others stated that Canada was already becoming more republican in its institutions and outlook, thus making union more likely.⁹⁶ Others did not believe that “annexation” was likely at any time, especially since Canada and the United States were not perceived as “rival nations.”⁹⁷ Besides, Canadian loyalty to Britain was particularly strong, thus making political union highly unlikely in the foreseeable future.⁹⁸

In 1890 Senator Hoar submitted a two-volume report to Congress, and it reveals several important elements of the movement for political union. The first was the interest that several Senators placed on the question of “annexation”. Senators George Hoar and Eugene Hale (Republican, Maine) were clearly interested in the issue of union with the Dominion. Secondly, the report highlights the various opinions of political union across

⁹⁵United States Select Committee on Relations with Canada, *Testimony Taken by Select Committee on Relations with Canada, submitted by Mr. Hoar, 21 July 1890* (Washington: Government Printing Office, 1890), 1.

⁹⁶See the testimony of Bernard Goldsmith, 21 May 1889 and Eugene Semple, 24 May 1889, in *Testimony taken by Select Committee on Foreign Relations with Canada*, 226-229 and 339, respectively.

⁹⁷See the testimony of William B. Dean, 10 June 1889, *Testimony taken by Select Committee on Foreign Relations with Canada*, 407.

⁹⁸See the testimonies of E.F. Drake, 10 June, and Otis Shepard, 13 September 1889.

the United States. Some were quite candid in their desire to annex Canada to ensure American economic, political, and military superiority in North America. Others believed that more intimate commercial relations was the best course to pursue. The fear that Canada was becoming an economic and military rival was enough for some to seek union, and others felt that a strong partner on the continent was best for all parties. Ultimately, much like the previous motions in Congress, nothing came from this report. The US government, however, had some good indications about American public sentiment with regards to union with Canada. But what is most telling is the lack of deliberation given to political union in Congress. The US government was clearly not interested in forming a continental union with Canada, nor did it become interested during the period under study.

When initially created in 1888, Lord Sackville-West, British Envoy Extraordinary and Minister Plenipotentiary to the United States, wrote to the Colonial Secretary in London expressing hope that friendlier relations might emerge following the committee's investigations. "Although it is to be presumed," he wrote,

that the resolution offered by Senator Hoar [...] had for object to collect information leading to show the unfriendly action of the Dominion Government towards the U.S. in commercial relations, still it appears to me that much good might result therefrom by a cordial cooperation on both sides in furnishing every facility for an enquiry into the existing commercial relations between the two countries which might lead to a satisfactory understanding on questions of intercourse which are constantly arising and which produce a vexatious correspondence on both sides.⁹⁹

Because the committee's mandate was to explore Canadian-American trade relations there was no reason for Sackville-West or the British Colonial Office to

⁹⁹Lord Sackville-West to the Colonial Secretary, 6 August 1888, LAC, RG7 G10, Drafts to Colonial Secretary Secret and Confidential, vol. 9 January 1888 to December 1891, vol. 19.

be concerned about the issue of political union. Even after the publication of the committee's report, in which political union with Canada was an important subject for Senators Hoar and Hale, neither the British Envoy in Washington nor the Colonial Office raised any concerns. An examination of the Secret Despatches sent from Washington to London did not uncover any further messages regarding the Senate Committee on Relations with Canada. The British government did not have any reason to be worried about discussions regarding union between the Dominion and the Republic, especially since the vast majority of Canadians were loyal British subjects who had no desire to change their political allegiance.

As the Senate Committee travelled the country seeking American insight into the possibility of union with Canada, Benjamin Butler delivered yet another impassioned speech on the "Annexation of Canada" at Colby College in Waterville, Maine, in July 1889. Although a virulent Anglophobe, Butler fervently believed in the need for an "Anglo-Saxon" reunion amongst the English-speaking "race", first in North America and then with England "when She Gets Ready to Become a Republic Herself." Like many other Americans at the end of the nineteenth century Butler hated the monarchical and imperial entity that Great Britain represented, while paradoxically greatly admiring the "Anglo-Saxon race" that originated from the British Isles. In his speech, Butler's admiration for "Anglo-Saxonism" was clear. "If democracy is not to be a failure," and if "this continent shall be the home and exemplar of English freedom and of the English language," the United States must annex Canada. Not only would it unite the "Anglo-Saxons" of North America, Butler also believed that it "would save all the other nations

of Europe from final and inevitable bankruptcy, because of maintaining immense armies and navies,” because this united “Anglo-Saxon” nation would be the world’s most powerful state, and thus could act as arbiter in all future conflicts.¹⁰⁰ For all of Butler’s bluster, his real aim was “the healing of the Anglo-Saxon schism,” which would be “accomplished by, first, the political fusion of the United States and Canada.”¹⁰¹

The New York *Sun* reported that in light of Butler’s remarks on an “Anglo-Saxon” reunion the sentiment in favour of political union was “rapidly gaining ground in the Dominion,” especially amongst those in Ontario who feared the “inevitable domination of Canada by the French Canadians.”¹⁰² This report shows how out of touch some Americans were with regards to Canada. As a whole, the Dominion was not moving closer to political union even though small pockets of support could be found. By focusing on the union of the two great “Anglo-Saxon” nations, Butler sought to present the idea of political union in much grander and sweeping terms. The betterment of the “race” was often repeated throughout this period, a notion that resonated amongst both English-speaking Canadians and Americans. However, Butler’s speech encountered scorn in Canada. The Charlottetown *Herald* dismissed Butler’s “foolish notion that the Dominion should join the United States.” “Expressions such as these,” it continued, “coming from one who has hitherto been no friend of this country, should cause those in the Dominion who never have a good word to say of their own country to stop and reflect.”¹⁰³

¹⁰⁰New York *Sun*, 3 July 1889.

¹⁰¹*Ibid*, 4 July 1889.

¹⁰²*Ibid*, 8 July 1889.

¹⁰³Charlottetown *Herald*, 10 July 1889.

Butler, of course, was not alone in expressing Anglophobic ideas. One of the clearest examples of anti-British sentiment used to further the cause of political union appeared in an article in the *New York World* on 5 January 1889. Republican Senator John J. Ingalls of Kansas provided his opinion on why union with Canada was necessary:

England's interest lies in holding her empire and extending it. But Canada's interests and ours are identical. England's desire is to retain Canada, just as she retains her other colonies, exclusively for her own profit and convenience. Her entire colonial policy is for the aggrandizement of Mother England, and not for the good of the colony. She worked the American colonies for suckers a long time. Now she is working Canada of a sucker, but she can't do it much longer. Canada won't have it. Canada knows she would get along better with us if it weren't for the continual interference of Mother England to make trouble, and Canada knows that all these troubles are ultimately borne on her shoulders. They don't affect us very much; for England knows that the United States won't stand any nonsense. The whole boundless continent shall be ours; and the Canadians shall be part of us.¹⁰⁴

Ingalls's ideas reflected what many Americans thought at the time: by adding Canada to the United States the last vestige of British power would be removed from the continent and tensions between the two great English-speaking powers would be forever settled.

All the discussions ongoing in Congress and public statements regarding relations with Canada naturally led some to wonder how the President regarded political union. Some Republicans, including John Sherman, had hoped that the proposed fisheries treaty would fail, which would force Canada into economic difficulties and cause it to seek political union with the United States to solve those difficulties.¹⁰⁵ Yet throughout this period Democrat President Grover Cleveland demonstrated neither belligerency nor animosity toward Canada or Great Britain. He stood firm in his conviction in the need to

¹⁰⁴*New York World*, 5 January 1889. Found in the George Foster Fonds, LAC, MG 27-IID7, Vol. 82 Scrapbook.

¹⁰⁵Charles C. Tansill, *The Foreign Policy of Thomas F. Bayard, 1885-1897* (New York: Fordham University, 1940), 557.

protect the United States against discriminatory practices, but his aim was to secure resolutions that were fair to all parties involved.¹⁰⁶ Indeed, throughout his first administration Cleveland exhibited no signs of expansionist impulses or covetous designs upon Canada. It was partly for this reason that Canadians were somewhat distraught with the outcome of the 1888 American presidential election.

That November the Republicans under Benjamin Harrison won the White House, the House of Representatives, and the Senate. With the appointment of Republican justices to the Supreme Court soon thereafter, the party controlled all three branches of government.¹⁰⁷ During the election campaign much was made about Harrison's supposed desire to annex Canada. For example, on 22 November 1888 the *Evening Post* (Washington, D.C.) printed a report from an "intimate friend" of Harrison that outlined that "General Harrison, like all Presidents, will desire to do something that will give his administration a prominent place in the history of his country, and I have reason to believe that one of his first official acts will be the negotiation for the annexation of Canada."¹⁰⁸ On 18 May 1889 *The Ohio Democrat* (Logan, OH) made a similar claim, stating that Harrison had made the annexation of Canada and Cuba "two distinguishing features through which his administration should be celebrated in history."¹⁰⁹ Despite these pronouncements Harrison did not come out in favour of political union. Like many other Republicans he was an expansionist, but that did not necessarily mean that he actively desired to annex Canada.

¹⁰⁶H. Paul Jeffers, *An Honest President: The Life and Presidencies of Grover Cleveland* (New York: William Morrow, 2000), 211.

¹⁰⁷*American President: Benjamin Harrison. The Campaign and Election of 1888*. Miller Center, University of Virginia <<http://millercenter.org/president/bharrison/essays/biography/3>>.

¹⁰⁸*The Evening Post* (Washington, D.C.), 22 November 1888.

¹⁰⁹*The Ohio Democrat* (Logan, OH), 18 May 1889.

Much of this increased attention toward political union was likely due to Harrison's appointment of James G. Blaine as Secretary of State. Although born in Pennsylvania, Blaine was first elected as a Representative from Maine.¹¹⁰ As one biographer has outlined, Blaine "had always a feeling toward Canada which was a queer combination of a rather suspicious dislike and a conviction that Canada must sometime in the probably far distant future become a part of the United States or of some Union of American States which the United States would dominate."¹¹¹ Blaine's anti-Canadian sentiments greatly impacted Canadian-American relations throughout Harrison's administration. Interestingly, Blaine's predictions for the future of North America provided some hope for supporters of political union in Canada, while at the same time strengthening the resolve of those opposed to the idea.

Due to the attention on political union in the United States, opponents in Canada were determined to present the situation in black and white terms. As William P. Lett declared in a pamphlet published in 1889, "it becomes the duty of every man in Canada to stand up and show his colours and to signify by word and act which side he is on – the side of loyalty or the side of treason."¹¹² To support more intimate continental relations in any form was presented as treason. This charge was, of course, an extreme hyperbole, especially considering that a majority of Canadians that supported free trade believed themselves to be loyal Canadians and British subjects. Yet in an ironic turn of events, this determined anti-annexationist rhetoric used by opponents to political union in fact

¹¹⁰Allan Burton Spetter, "Blaine, James Gillespie," *American National Biography Online*, Oxford University Press, 2000, <<http://www.anb.org.proxy.bib.uottawa.ca/articles/05/05-00072.html>>.

¹¹¹Alice F. Tyler, *The Foreign Policy of James G. Blaine* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1927), 351.

¹¹²William Pittmann Lett, *Annexation and British Connection: Address to Brother Jonathan* (Ottawa: Mason & Jones, Printers, 1889), 3.

strengthened the notion. Considering its limited support in Canada at this time, the movement for political union would have in all likelihood experienced its demise much sooner. Nevertheless, those that opposed it viewed political union as a real threat that had to be countered, and bold declarations of loyalty were one of the best ways to do so.

Another important issue was the determination of French Canadians to avoid assimilation into the larger English-speaking North American society. Some commentators, in fact, lauded French Canada's resistance to assimilation and their ardent defence of their language, institutions, and religion. John George Bourinot, for example, even saw Canada's Francophone communities as a bulwark against annexation. As Bourinot boasted in an 1887 article, no people had been more decidedly antagonistic toward union with the United States "than that of the thoughtful, intelligent classes of the French Canadian population, who are anxious to preserve their institutions and language intact."¹¹³ So while English-Canadian society was heavily influenced by the power of the United States due to its proximity, French Canada seemed largely removed from such influence. As Charles Binmore concluded in 1888, "there exists in Canada a nationality which bears all the distinctive marks of national difference, difference in race, religion, language, and purpose, attached to the Dominion but not assimilating with it [...]." Because of this desire to maintain a separate "racial" identity, the "Anglo-Saxons" of Canada had failed to assimilate their French-speaking compatriots, which was a "striking [...] contrast with the widely different results obtained by the same race in the United States."¹¹⁴

¹¹³John George Bourinot, "Canada and the Federation of the Empire," *Revue Coloniale Internationale*, juillet 1887 (V:1), 8.

¹¹⁴Charles Binmore, *The Canadian Nationality* (London: Hamilton, Adams, 1888), 6.

That French Canadians were a significantly different people from the English-speakers in North America was a constant theme used in the opposition to political union. Erastus Wiman, the Canadian-born, New York City entrepreneur consistently reminded his audience, both Canadian and American, that French Canadians were a serious obstacle to ever forming a united continent. Addressing the destiny of Canada in 1889, Wiman candidly wrote, “Perhaps the most serious barrier [...] to the vital change in the political condition of Canada which would follow annexation to the United States, is the French Canadian element [...].” According to Wiman, it was because of the strong attachment to the Roman Catholic Church that French Canadians would not accept union with the United States. Although Quebec might form a strong state, it would nonetheless remain a state “whose people and politics were entirely dominated by the Roman Catholic Church.”¹¹⁵ The Dominion’s former Governor General, the Marquis of Lorne, who was intimately aware of the “racial” dynamic in Canada, also sought to inform the people of the United States about the futility of trying to promote annexation. “Now, in Canada,” he wrote in an article in the *North American Review* in 1891, “there is a population of French-speaking Catholics, who refuse thus to be amalgamated, and who rejoice in their province of Quebec, in their own laws, language, institutions. [...] To try and absorb this population would be one of the cold-water draughts that would give Uncle Sam dyspepsia.”¹¹⁶

For all that was said in favour of annexing Canada to the United States to avoid “French Domination,” an article from the Toronto *Globe* best summarized the futility of attempting to assimilate the French-Canadian community. On 19 August 1887 it

¹¹⁵Erastus Wiman, *What is the Destiny of Canada?* (New York, 1889), 7, 8.

¹¹⁶The Marquis of Lorne, “Canada and the United States,” *North American Review*, 152 (1891: Jan/June), 559.

declared, “We are linked to them geographically, and Annexation would not put Quebec further away nor stop her overflow. Therefore the project of smashing the Confederation cannot have been undertaken in the hope to ‘get rid of the French’ so much as from a desire to gain money by exciting and pandering to such absurd prejudice and intolerance [...]”¹¹⁷

French Canadians believed that they had a significant role to play in the development and future of not only Canada but North America as a whole. Political union with the United States, in all likelihood, would undermine this influence. Such was the belief of *Le Canadien*, a Liberal paper from Quebec City edited by Joseph-Israel Tarte. On 10 December 1888 *Le Canadien* printed an article by L.-G. Desjardins that outlined the importance for French Canadians to realize their proper place on the continent:

Nous avons aujourd’hui le légitime orgueil d’avoir joué un rôle important dans l’histoire politique de notre pays et même de ce continent. Avec l’annexion, ce rôle aurait été pour ainsi dire absolument nul. Plus le progrès matériel aurait été rapide et grand, plus vite nous aurions été submergés, et plus tôt nous serions disparus de la scène politique comme élément national distinct.¹¹⁸

As the movement continued to grow and the idea of political union was further discussed, more expressions in opposition appeared.

As the sentiment in favour of political union continued to grow in the United States, overt anti-Americanism intensified in Canada. According to some contemporary observers, American society was moving toward anarchy due to its republican character and lax morals. Many Canadians abhorred the American practice of electing their judiciary and law enforcement officers, seeing those as overt examples of corruption. In

¹¹⁷Toronto *Globe*, 19 August 1887.

¹¹⁸*Le Canadien* (Quebec City), 10 December 1888.

1889 John Hague delivered an address to the Toronto Branch of the Imperial Federation League in which he revealed his distaste for American republicanism. According to Hague, the American “political system is vicious [because] it puts the control of political life into the hands of those least worthy to wield and least able to use their power with wisdom.” With regards to the presidential system, Hague was also quite harsh: “Every four years the future of the Republic is committed into the hands of a mob who decide national questions [...]” Hague, like many other Canadians at the time, shunned the concept of a continental republic, “a prospect full of direst portents of future civil wars, domestic tyranny, and wide spread deadness in the body politic.”¹¹⁹

For nineteenth century Americans, republicanism and republican institutions were extolled as the finest political system on earth and much of the American prejudice against Canada’s institutions was due to anti-monarchism – much like American prejudice against Canada’s attachment to the British Westminster system of government. The absence of an aristocracy and monarchical institutions was what many Americans believed made the United States a truly great nation. Speaking in 1888, W.H.H. Murray expressed this sentiment when lauding the idea of political union, stating “Titles and strips of ribbons [are] laughed at as ridiculous, in the eyes of sensible men, and the only throne fit to aspire is that high eminence builded [*sic*] on ten millions of free ballots.”¹²⁰ *The Worthington Advance* also viewed the aristocracy as a hindrance to society, especially when it came to advancing the cause of political union. On 29 November 1888 it informed its readers that “The opposition to becoming States of the Union will mainly come from sluggish and snobbish dependents on British pensions or appointments, and

¹¹⁹John Hague, *Canada for Canadians: A Royalist ‘Roland,’ for the Annexationist ‘Oliver’* (Toronto: Hart & Company, 1889), 6-8.

¹²⁰W.H.H. Murray, *Continental Unity: An Address by W.H.H. Murray* (1888), 15.

those fond of the trappings of titles now little respected anywhere on the western side of the Atlantic.”¹²¹ Monarchism was viewed as an archaic system, one that was no longer the dominant political system in the Western Hemisphere, yet Canadians clung to their attachment to the Crown.

Many Americans were curious as to why Canadians desired to maintain their ties to the British Crown. The *Rocky Mountain News* (Denver, Colorado) was certainly perplexed why Canadians “would deliberately ally themselves with the effete monarchalism of Europe, with its remains of feudalism, its hereditary aristocracy, its state church, and its military systems [...]”¹²² Republicanism, on the other hand, was regarded as a superior political system. American republican institutions and laws, as expressed by *The Hocking Sentinel* (Logan, Ohio) were “the outgrowth of the national life; the natural expression of the needs and desires of the people, and are not limited by the privileges and prerogatives of nobility and royalty [...]”¹²³ Monarchical governments, of course, derive its powers through the monarch and are responsible to him/herself alone. “Our theory of rightful government is,” however, “that it rests upon the consent of the governed, and derives all its powers from them alone, having none of its own nor any otherwise derived; [...] Governments are FOR THE PEOPLE, not for the governors.” The superiority of American republican institutions, therefore, was enough for *The Hocking Sentinel* to assert that “the true policy of this government, is to negotiate for annexation. [...] It is a foregone conclusion with the people of this country, that the British provinces

¹²¹*The Worthington Advance* (Worthington, Minnesota), 29 November 1888.

¹²²*Rocky Mountain News* (Denver, Colorado), 17 November 1890.

¹²³*The Hocking Sentinel* (Logan, Ohio), 17 March 1892.

on our northern and north-eastern border, all of them, from the Atlantic to the Pacific, MUST come into this union, and that at no far distant day.”¹²⁴

As Canada matured and developed into a more autonomous country some Americans believed that the Dominion was drifting further away from Great Britain and was thus slowly embracing its North American character. As the *Washington Evening Star* reported in March 1889, “Rapidly for years past the Dominion has been growing away from the old country and acquiring by force of example and emulation thorough-going ideas of independence and self-government.” The emulation of “thorough-going ideas” in its estimation was by following the American example. “Her government,” it continued, “almost by force of contact with ours is republican, and to come into the United States and keep step to the music of the Union would be an almost imperceptible transition. Those are excellent reasons for annexation.”¹²⁵ On 17 November 1890, the *Rocky Mountain News* echoed this idea by writing

that Canadian institutions are naturally moulded under the same broad influences of North American civilization as characterize those of the United States; that monarchy can never permanently flourish in America; and therefore since Canada is bound ultimately to have a republican form of government, and has already the federal system, it would subserve the interest of the whole continent to have one federation government instead of two, as at present.¹²⁶

Once again, these assertions were out of touch with the reality in Canada.

Canadians were certainly influenced by the forces of Americanization, but they remained a staunchly British people.

Attention afforded to continental union rose in the United States between 1887 and 1889. Dr. W. George Beers, however, believed that it was a waste of time. A dentist

¹²⁴Ibid. Emphasis in original.

¹²⁵*Washington Evening Star*, 18 March 1889.

¹²⁶*Rocky Mountain News*, 17 November 1890.

by profession who had also helped to codify the game of lacrosse in Canada, Beers was an ultra-nationalist who “gave frequent and eloquent expression to a nascent Canadian nationalism at a time when, following the American Civil War, the United States appeared to many to be an ever-increasing menace to a continuing separate existence for the young Dominion.”¹²⁷ For example in 1889 Beers gave a speech titled *Young Canada’s Reply to ‘Annexation’* as a direct response to American pronouncements to unite the continent. He argued that Americans misunderstood the political union sentiment in Canada, saying “when a few obscure cranks in Canada declare their favor of annexation, you think they speak the sentiment of a sober people who do not find it necessary to indulge in the spectacular of the rhetorical that you may see and hear the truth.”¹²⁸ Canadians, Beers urged, only desired friendly relations, not annexation.

The rise in attention toward political union did not escape the attention of the Canadian Parliament. Between 1885 and 1891 the question of political union was closely tied to the issue of closer economic relations between Canada and the United States. Though they were distinct issues that deserved separate treatment, Conservatives in Parliament successfully conflated the issues presenting them as one in the same. Rather than discussing an economic policy, the Conservatives had made the issue about Canada’s political future and its continued attachment to the British Empire, a tactic they would reuse in the future. The Liberal party was one of the main targets of these

¹²⁷J. Thomas West, “Beers, William George,” *Dictionary of Canadian Biography*, accessed 5 February 2014, <http://www.biographi.ca/en/bio/beers_william_george_12E.html>.

¹²⁸Dr. W. George Beers, *Young Canada’s Reply to ‘Annexation’* (Montreal: Blaiklock Bros., 1889), 6.

speeches, and not even Wilfrid Laurier, labelled a radical and accused of desiring independence as a precursor to annexation, escaped criticism.¹²⁹

By the end of 1889 the idea of political union had once again emerged in the Dominion and the Republic, and support seemed to be growing in Ontario. For example, in 1889 Solomon White was elected mayor of Windsor by acclamation. A few months later he was elected to the Ontario provincial Legislature on the strength of his support for political union with the United States.¹³⁰ Thanks in large part to the actions of a handful of American politicians, it became an idea that moved to the forefront of political debate. Yet for all that was said in favour of forming a continental republic many questions were left unanswered, and would remain so during the rest of the movement's existence. Canadians were more concerned with securing a new free trade agreement with the US than seeking political union. As talk of union with the United States intensified, however, an essential turning point occurred in 1891. Rather than being an offshoot of the commercial union movement, Canadians began to openly discuss and debate the merits of political union with the United States. This was, ironically, in large part due to the attention afforded to political union during the 1891 Canadian election. Interest in continental union, however, dissipated in the United States, although it remained strong amongst a small group of staunch supporters.

¹²⁹N.A., *M. Laurier, c'est un radical, admirateur de Papin et de l'Enfant terrible: la personification du libéralisme* (Montréal, 1890), 1-7.

¹³⁰Warner, 202.

Chapter Two: The Heyday of the Movement for Political Union, 1890-1892

Between 1885 and 1889 the idea of political union experienced a revival in both Canada and the United States, albeit unevenly. Most of the attention that it garnered was in the American Republic, thanks in large part to the public declarations made by several Republican Senators and Representatives in Congress. Though a popular movement did not materialize, the idea had gained some semblance of legitimacy and it caused people on both sides of the border to contemplate forming a continental union. By 1890, a second phase in the movement for political union had developed, one that saw increased attention afforded to the idea, especially in Canada.

Much of the previous American attention had dissipated as the United States sought to expand its territory in the Pacific and Caribbean, yet the stalwarts remained committed to political union with Canada. A significant turning point, though, occurred in Canada during the 1891 general election. This is one of the more famous elections in Canadian history in which the use of the “loyalty cry” won the Conservatives another electoral victory. Ironically, this very campaign tactic provided immense attention to political unionism, thus motivating its supporters to create what they hoped would become a national organization and granting the idea some measure of legitimacy. By 1892 the movement for political union experienced its heyday.

During the era under study the use of “annexationism” as a political weapon was a popular and somewhat successful tactic used by the opponents of political union, and it was used most prominently during the period 1890-1892. Being accused of holding “annexationist” sympathies in Canada was a difficult, although not impossible, label to remove. This was because “annexation” was a pejorative term. The accusation did not

have to be true or supplemented with evidence; the impact that it had was all that was important. The Conservatives proved quite adept at using the “annexationist” label, especially in trying to discredit the Liberals’ attempts to secure closer economic relations with the neighbouring Republic.¹ As Patricia K. Wood astutely concluded about the 1891 election, “It was a loyalty campaign in which each party tried to convince the people that its vision of Canadian prosperity was best. [...] The Liberals preached loyalty to Canada, the Conservatives loyalty to Britain, and by extension, Canada. However, at the heart of the Conservative loyalist vision [...] was anti-Americanism.”² As will become quite clear, the use of the annexation bugbear paid great dividends for the Conservatives in 1891, but it also helped to spur along discussion and debate surrounding political union with the United States.

The success of the loyalty cry was based upon the importance of the British connection and institutions in English Canada. English Canadians and Americans may have been members of the same “Anglo-Saxon race” according to the pseudoscientific theories of the era, but as most Anglophone Canadians were first and foremost British, remaining British subjects in North America was paramount. There was also an inherent belief that the British Westminster parliamentary system was a superior form of government and that monarchism ensured public peace and stability, particularly in contrast to the perceived anarchism in the American Republic. Many Canadians opposed union with the United States because, as Damien-Claude Bélanger highlighted,

¹As seen in the previous chapter, the Liberal Party had gone as far to adopt commercial union, and then unrestricted reciprocity, as its official economic platform.

²Patricia K. Wood, “*Under Which Flag, Canadian?*” *Anti-Americanism and the Election of 1891* (Unpublished MA Thesis, Queen’s University, 1991), 65.

“Annexation threatened to eliminate Canada as a distinct and British political entity.”³

Closer relations, therefore, in this context were considered suspect.

Unlike their English-speaking counterparts, French Canadians were different from Americans thanks in large part to the use of the French language. As Bélanger noted, “In nationalist prose, Quebec was frequently portrayed as a bulwark against annexation. Despite Canada’s internal weaknesses, the nation’s separateness had been maintained by French Canada’s repeated refusal to accept continental union.”⁴ However, the gradual Americanization of Quebec and the potential for annexation to the United States had many French Canadian *nationalistes* worried because “Americanization entailed the gradual suffocation of traditional society. Religious indifference would become generalized, the family would slowly disintegrate, and the French language and culture would progressively disappear; French Canada would cease to exist.”⁵ What worried many Francophones was that the United States was officially a secular nation with no guarantees in place for the Catholic Church. The potential loss of this cherished institution, along with the gradual assimilation of French Canadians, was a significant reason to reject political union with the United States.

As early as 1887 Conservatives had begun to label members of the Liberal Party traitors and closet annexationists because of their platform of unrestricted reciprocity with the United States. This was done despite the fact that the Conservatives had tried for many years to establish a new reciprocity treaty with the American Republic, though each time they were rebuffed. Due to the growing discussions about political unionism in

³Damien-Claude Bélanger, *Prejudice and Pride: Canadian Intellectuals Confront the United States, 1891-1945* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2011), 148.

⁴Ibid, 152.

⁵Ibid, 154.

Canada, and the increasing attacks against their party, some Liberals felt it necessary to make an official affirmation of loyalty to Britain. Thus, on 29 January 1890, Liberal MP William Mulock (York North, Ontario) rose in Parliament to deliver an address on “Loyalty to Her Majesty”. Although it is not possible to say with certainty, it is likely that Mulock’s passionate motion was an attempt to remove any and all accusations of “annexationist” sentiments within the Liberal Party, thus affirming the Party’s loyalty to Canada and Britain.” As Mulock said:

Most Gracious Majesty: We, Your Majesty’s most dutiful and loyal subjects, the Commons of Canada in Parliament assembled, desire most earnestly in our own name, and on behalf of the people whom we represent, to renew the expression of our unswerving loyalty and devotion to Your Majesty’s person and Government. [...] We feel assured that Your Majesty will not allow any such statements [regarding political union with the United States], emanating from any source whatever, to less Your Majesty’s confidence in the loyalty of your Canadian subjects to Your Majesty’s person and Government, and will accept our assurances of the contentment of Your Majesty’s Canadian subjects with the political connection between Canada and the rest of the British Empire, and of their fixed resolve in maintaining the same.⁶

Mulock’s message was clear: Canadians were loyal subjects to Queen Victoria and that Canada “is now prepared in her very infancy, to commit political suicide, I cannot for a moment believe.”⁷ Speaking on behalf of Canada’s Francophone population, Conservative MP Guillaume Amyot (Bellechasse, Quebec) reiterated Mulock’s sentiment. As Amyot averred, it was in the best interest of French Canadians to be loyal because, “In this country we enjoy the fullest freedom that citizens of any country may expect. We practice freely our religion, we talk our language, we enjoy our own customs,

⁶Canada, Parliament, *House of Commons Debates*, 6th Parl, 4th Sess, Vol. 30 (29 January 1890).

⁷*Ibid.*

and we live in peace and harmony with all the different races and creeds of the Dominion.”⁸ Not surprisingly, Mulock’s motion passed unanimously.

Affirmations of loyalty to the British Empire were an essential response to the rise of political union sentiment in Canada. Because Canada was very much a British country in the late nineteenth century, and loyalty to the Empire was strongly felt across the Dominion, the idea of political union was quite unpopular. The vast majority of Canadians eschewed the notion of changing their political allegiance from the Mother Country to the United States. Between 1884 and 1890, numerous essays, pamphlets, and articles were written that directly addressed the issue of political union. All contained a common element: that Canadians were loyal subjects who did not want union with their southern neighbours. The various authors sought to show that there was no sentiment in favour of political union in Canada – despite the fact that the measure garnered some degree of support in the Dominion. For example, John George Bourinot, who supported the idea of an Imperial Federation, outlined in an 1887 article that Canadians, both English- and French-speaking, were happy with the connection to the British Empire. “Besides the national sentiment that is now strong in Canada, especially among the young men,” he wrote, “there have always existed certain influences most decidedly antagonistic to political absorption into the United States.” Therefore, as Bourinot declared: “For the foregoing reasons we may fairly conclude that the question of annexation to the United States is not in any shape before the people of Canada at the present time, and is not likely to be before them while the country continues to make the

⁸Ibid. Other such declarations of loyalty were made in 1888 by several MPs in Parliament. Some of the best examples are the speeches of Alexander McNeil, 19 March; Adam Brown, 20 March; Joshua Freeman, 3 April; and Joseph A. Chapleau, 5 April 1888. Canada, Parliament, *House of Commons Debates*, 6th Parl, 2nd Session, Vol. 26 (19 & 20 March, 3 & 5 April).

same progress it has made for years past.”⁹ As seen previously, sentiments in favour of political union were not quite strong in Canada in 1887, but that changed as the years passed and the Dominion’s economic conditions languished.

Bourinot was not alone in his belief in the strong conviction of Canadians’ loyalty to the British Empire. In “An Open Letter on the Question Do you Want Annexation to the United States?”, the anonymous “Bastion Old” responded on behalf of Canadians in the negative. He outlined that the United States was a dangerous country ruled by corrupt politicians who were elected by an “anarchist mob.” The “Negro problem” also made the United States unattractive. Above all, though, “The great hope which Canada has as regards the future is by remaining under the aegis of the British flag, with British models and British rule and British liberty and in federal union with the Mother land. We know what it is to share in her traditions and *the glory of the grandest Empire on earth!*”¹⁰ Anti-Americanism and anti-republicanism were two central elements to the issue of loyalty, and authors such as Bourinot and “Bastion Old” utilized these prominent Canadian sentiments in their rejection of union with the United States.¹¹

In an 1884 article, Watson Griffin warned his Canadian readers that America’s southern white population would reach 30,400,000 by 1985, while the black population would soar to 118,400,000, making it impossible for the white element to assimilate the black. For this reason Griffin concluded, “Canadians have no desire to be governed either

⁹John George Bourinot, “Canada and the Federation of the Empire,” *Revue Coloniale Internationale*, tome v, no. 1 (juillet 1887), 8, 10. Bourinot again expressed his opposition to political union in 1890 with *Why Canadians do not Favor Annexation*, and again in 1891 with *Canada and the United States: Their Past and Present Relations* (London: April 1891).

¹⁰“Bastion Old,” *An Open Letter on the Question Do You Want Annexation to the United States? Written to an American Friend* (Toronto: J.G. Printers, 1890), 7-11. Emphasis in original.

¹¹Other titles written during this time that were printed in opposition to the political union movement include: J.-X. Perrault, *L’Émancipation coloniale et l’Union douanière avec les États-Unis* (Montréal: J.-X. Perrault, 1880) and G.M. Grant, *Imperial Federation* (Winnipeg: Manitoba Free Press, 1890).

by negroes or the class of white politicians most likely to control negro votes, nor do they wish to have any part in the disputes that must arise between the two races, perhaps ending in a bloody civil war.”¹² This issue was raised again in May 1890, when the *Toronto Globe* reported on the publication of a recent book titled “The Negro Question.” The *Globe* believed that “Canadians will find plenty of matter in the volume to confirm them in the resistance to Political Union with the Republic.”¹³ Although not much at all was said or written about racial tensions, historian Edward Kohn has observed that in general “Canadians often argued against union with the United States because of America’s racial conflict.”¹⁴ Despite “Bastion Old’s” warnings, the so-called “Negro problem” was not much of a concern during the movement for political union.

The issue of loyalty, however, was an important element in Canada during this era. By using the concept of loyalty as a weapon, opponents of political union attempted to label anyone that promoted closer relations with the United States as a traitor. This sweeping rhetoric had a significant impact on several figures and their attempts to secure closer economic relations between the Dominion and the Republic. Despite what some historians have argued, there was a difference between proposals for unrestricted reciprocity and commercial union.¹⁵ While both entailed establishing much more intimate economic relations with the United States, neither plan abdicated Canadian political

¹²Watson Griffin, *The Provinces and the States: Why Canada does not want Annexation* (Toronto: J. Moore, Publisher, 1884), 46, 48.

¹³*Toronto Globe*, 10 May 1890. “The Negro Question” was written by Louisiana novelist George W. Cable.

¹⁴Edward P. Kohn, *This Kindred People: Canadian-American Relations and the Anglo-Saxon Idea, 1895-1903* (Montreal and Kingston: McGill-Queen’s University Press, 2004), 3.

¹⁵Both P.B. Waite and Charles Tansill stated that unrestricted reciprocity and commercial union were essentially the same, with only small differences. See P.B. Waite, *Canada, 1874-1896: Arduous Destiny* (Toronto: McClelland and Stewart, 1971), and Charles Tansill, *Canadian-American Relations, 1875-1911* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1943).

sovereignty. Whether or not they would have ultimately led to political union was furiously debated in the late nineteenth century.

The principal Canadian proponents of closer economic relations with the United States – either in the form of unrestricted reciprocity or commercial union – were Sir Richard Cartwright and John Charlton, both Liberal MPs. In the United States, the Canadian-born, American businessman Erastus Wiman was the most outspoken proponent of establishing commercial union between the two North American nations. Cartwright was a popular target of Conservative attacks during the debates over free trade between 1887 and 1891. One example of this is an 1891 political cartoon, “The Way He Would Like It – Canada For Sale,” in which Cartwright is portrayed as a slave trader selling a bound and innocent young Canada into servitude to a sinister looking Uncle Sam.¹⁶ The American-born Charlton fervently supported more intimate economic relations between the two North American nations, but was not an advocate of political union. He made this quite clear in speeches in the House of Commons and, more importantly, in his private diary.¹⁷ Wiman was arguably the staunchest promoter and defender of free trade between Canada and the United States during this period. He was thoroughly active in both countries where he espoused the merits of commercial union, while simultaneously rejecting the idea that free trade would lead to political union. Throughout this period Wiman delivered numerous speeches and published many articles defending his position.¹⁸ None of these men, however, were “annexationists” because

¹⁶See LAC, 1983-33-1103X.

¹⁷For examples of Charlton’s speeches see: Canada, Parliament, *House of Commons Debates*, Vol. 25 (16 March 1888); Vol. 27 (7 March 1889); and Vol. 35 (7 February 1893). For his private insights, see *Diaries of John Charlton*, University of Toronto, MS 1101, specifically: 10, 11, 13, 14 December 1888.

¹⁸Some of his titles include: *Does Annexation Follow? Commercial union and British connection: an open letter from Erastus Wiman to Mr. J. Redpath Dougall, editor of the Montreal Witness* (New York, 1887); *The Farmer’s Future* (New York, 1887); *The Feasibility of Commercial Union between the United*

they did not support the movement for political union. Yet it was the heightened awareness of the rising political union sentiment that caused all three to be labelled as traitors and dangerous to the future connection of Canada with Britain, something that continued with regularity as the years progressed.

Much like during the years 1885-1889, Canada's economy continued to develop slowly, although there were distinct signs of improvement and growth between 1890 and 1892. Canadians continued to import more goods than they exported, but the gap was shrinking. Table 8 outlines how the trade deficit, over \$17 million in 1890, dropped significantly to only \$3 million by 1892.

Table 8: Foreign Trade, domestic exports, total exports, total imports, and the balance of trade, 1890-1892 in Canada (thousands of dollars)¹⁹

Year	Domestic exports	Total exports	Total imports	Balance of trade
1890	85,257	94,309	111,682	-17,373
1891	88,672	97,470	111,534	-14,064
1892	99,032	112,154	115,160	-3,006

The Canadian federal revenue deficit also decreased. Although Ottawa still ran a deficit each year, the figures were considerably lower than they were in the previous decade (see Table 9). In 1887 the deficit was \$7.2 million; by 1892 it had dropped to half a million dollars.

States and Canada (New York, 1889); *The Greater Half of the Continent* (Toronto: Hunter, Rose & Co., 1889); *What is the Destiny of Canada?* (New York, 1889); *Avantages à la Province de Québec et surtout à la ville de Montréal résultant de relations commerciales les plus intimes avec les États-Unis* (Montréal: La Patrie, 1890); "The Capture of Canada," *North American Review*, 151 (1890: August): 212-222; "The Struggle in Canada," *North American Review*, 152 (1891: March): 339-348; *Impossibility of Canadian Annexation* (New York, 1891); *The Conflict in Canada* (New York: New York Independent, 1891); *Union between the United States and Canada: Political or Commercial – Which is Desirable and Which is Presently Possible?* (New York, 1891); *Canada and Great Britain* (New York, 1892); *Closest Trade Relations Between the United States and Canada* (Toronto: National Publishing Company, 1892).

¹⁹M.C. Urquhart, ed., *Historical Statistics of Canada* (Toronto: The Macmillan Company of Canada, 1965), 73.

Table 9: Canadian Federal government, budgetary expenditures, 1890-1892 (millions of dollars)²⁰

Year	Revenue	Expenditures	Difference
1890	38.6	38.9	-0.3
1891	36.9	40.2	-3.3
1892	38.2	38.7	-0.5

With significant decreases in trade and spending deficits, the Canadian economy was clearly showing signs of growth after almost a decade of recession.

If support for political union was predicated on improving Canada's economic fortunes, as it was in 1849, then the movement should have lost momentum and failed much sooner than it did. In contrast, between 1891 and 1894 public meetings about continental union increased in spite of the fact that Canada's economy showed signs of improvement. These were by no means large-scale or popular meetings, but there was enough interest in political union, positive and negative, to warrant these public discussions.

During the same period the economy of the United States continued to expand at a much more rapid rate than Canada's. Trade surpluses increased each year between 1890 and 1892, while the public debt of the federal government continued to decrease (see Tables 10 and 11).

Table 10: US Imports and Exports, 1890-1892 (millions of dollars)²¹

Year	Exports	Imports	Difference
1890	910	823	+87
1891	993	881	+112
1892	1,113	897	+216

²⁰Ibid, 199-200.

²¹United States Department of Commerce, *Historical Statistics of the United States, Colonial Times to 1970* (Washington, D.C., 1975), 884-885.

Table 11: Public debt of the United States Federal Government, 1890-1892

Year	Total debt (thousands)	Per capita
1890	1,122,397	17.80
1891	1,005,807	15.63
1892	968,219	14.74

It is no wonder that many Canadians desired increased trade relations with the United States, especially since the American economy continued to grow while Canada's was stagnant for much of the 1870s and 1880s. Any degree of free trade would have been immensely beneficial for Canada, as seen during the period of 1854-1866, but not necessarily for the United States. However, most Canadians were concerned that more intimate economic relations would lead to annexation, while many Americans simply did not consider lowering their tariffs for Canadian goods.

But new events also influenced the movement for political union in North America. Arguably the most important was the passing of the McKinley Tariff in late 1890; the tariff was named for Republican Congressman William McKinley of Ohio, who became president in 1897. McKinley's bill was designed to establish a protective tariff while at the same time to allow some degree of reciprocal trade between the United States and Latin American countries. Many in both the Dominion and the Republic were dismayed by this turn of events, especially S.J. Ritchie who had significant business interests in Canada. Ritchie attempted to convince McKinley to amend his bill and allow some concessions for Canada, but the Congressman refused. Undeterred, Ritchie convinced Senator John Sherman to add an amendment to the bill to offer free admission of Canadian coal into the United States. This amendment, however, was given little consideration and the McKinley Tariff passed the Senate with no amendments on 10

September 1890.²² Instead, customs duties on a number of Canadian goods, both natural and manufactured, were raised.²³

Unsurprisingly, Canadians reacted negatively and despairingly to the passing of the tariff. Gone were the hopes of many in Parliament, especially amongst Liberals, that the two North American nations could improve relations and reach some sort of economic agreement. More significantly, some in both Canada and the United States believed that the McKinley Tariff was meant to force Canada into the US. One of the strongest promoters of using the McKinley Tariff to influence political union sentiment was James Blaine. Blaine, rejecting the idea of free trade with Canada, believed that the tariff could be used to starve the Dominion into accepting its destiny and seeking political union.²⁴ President Benjamin Harrison, however, was more sceptical than his Secretary of State. In a letter to Blaine on 1 October 1891, the President stated that he was unsure that a reciprocity agreement could be achieved with Canada without a common tariff against foreign imports – in other words, a commercial union. But, as Harrison made clear, “You know I am not much of an annexationist [...]”²⁵ Regardless of whether or not the McKinley Tariff was passed as a means to force Canada into seeking annexation, it galvanized popular opinion in Canada.

With the passing of the McKinley Tariff, opponents to political union declared that the United States did not want free trade; it wanted annexation. The Conservatives and Loyalists felt vindicated, and Prime Minister John A. Macdonald, using his political

²²Charles C. Tansill, *Canadian-American Relations, 1874-1911* (Toronto: The Ryerson Press, 1943), 420-423.

²³Christopher Pennington, *The Continentalist Movement in the Politics of Canada and the United States* (Unpublished PhD Dissertation, University of Toronto, 2007), 214.

²⁴Blaine revealed this attitude to President Harrison in a letter dated 23 September 1891. Albert T. Volwiler, ed., *The Correspondence Between Benjamin Harrison and James G. Blaine, 1882-1893* (Philadelphia: The American Philosophical Society, 1940), 194.

²⁵Harrison to Blaine, 1 October 1891, in Volwiler, 202.

savvy, exploited this situation to the fullest.²⁶ The Liberals could not simply drop unrestricted reciprocity lest they concede that the Conservatives had in fact been correct. Sensing an opportunity, Macdonald called an election to determine what he thought would solve the issue of political union once and for all.

On 5 March 1891 the people of Canada were given an opportunity to choose between the Conservatives and the National Policy on one side and the Liberals and unrestricted reciprocity on the other. While the 1891 election was ostensibly about free trade, it soon became about Canada's political destiny. Macdonald and the Conservatives utilized what is now famously known as the "loyalty cry," in which they successfully presented the Liberals as a party of closet annexationists, and that only by voting Tory could Canada avoid absorption by its southern neighbour. The charge that all Liberals were traitors, as O.D. Skelton later contended, "had no basis other than the heated imagination of self-righteous partisans." However, Skelton was forced to admit that the "repeated and reckless assertion had some effect."²⁷ Rather than focusing on the economic challenges of the era, political union with the United States became the election's *cause célèbre*.

The 1891 election was an essential and defining moment in the history of the political unionism in Canada. Much has been written about this famous election in the past, therefore it is not necessary to go into full detail about it here.²⁸ Yet the impact of

²⁶Waite, *Canada, 1874-1896*, 221.

²⁷O.D. Skelton, *Life and Letters of Sir Wilfrid Laurier*, vol. I (Toronto: McClelland and Stewart, 1965), 135-36.

²⁸For some examples, see: Tansill, *Canadian-American Relations, 1874-1911*; W.R. Graham, *Sir Richard Cartwright and the Liberal Party, 1863-1896* (Unpublished PhD Dissertation, University of Toronto, 1950); Donald Creighton, *John A. Macdonald: The Old Chieftain* (Toronto: Macmillan, 1955); Donald Warner, *The Idea of Continental Union: The Agitation for the Annexation of Canada to the United States, 1849-1893* (Lexington: University of Kentucky Press, 1960); K.A. MacKirdy, "The Loyalist Issue in the 1891 Federal Election Campaign, and an Ironic Footnote," *Ontario History*, 40:30 (1963): 143-154;

the election and the discussions and debates that emerged from it significantly altered Canadians' perceptions about continental union. Most importantly, rather than debasing the idea of political union, as was the hope, the continuous opposition during the election from the Conservative Party and other Loyalists actually provided it with a degree of legitimacy. The strong and vocal opposition toward political union made it at least appear like more of a threat than it in reality posed. The debates initially centred on the competing economic policies as advanced by the Conservatives and the Liberals, but by February 1891 the focus had shifted away from economic themes. Instead, in English Canada the campaign quickly became centred on the continued connection with the British Empire; and in French Canada, it was about *la survivance*.

The Conservative press across the country quickly took up the "loyalty cry" and denounced the Liberals as traitors. In Ontario, the Toronto *Empire*, using the headline "Star Spangled Banner or Old Union Jack, Which Shall it Be?" contended that "For some months this country has been afflicted with a band of missionaries advocating a policy so evidently in the interests of the United States that it was impossible to come to any other

Robert Craig Brown, *Canada's National Policy, 1883-1900: A Study in Canadian-American Relations* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1964); O.D. Skelton, *Life and Letters of Sir Wilfrid Laurier*, vol. I (Toronto: McClelland and Stewart, 1965); J. Murray Beck, *Pendulum of Power: Canada's Federal Elections* (Scarborough: Prentice Hall of Canada, Inc., 1968); P.B. Waite, *Canada, 1874-1896: Arduous Destiny* (Toronto: McClelland and Stewart, 1971); H. Blair Neatby, *Laurier and a Liberal Quebec: A Study in Political Management* (Toronto: McClelland and Stewart, 1973); Gary Pennanen, "Goldwin Smith, Wharton Barker, and Erastus Wiman: Architects of Commercial Union," *Journal of Canadian Studies*, 14:3 (Fall, 1979): 50-62; J.R. Miller, "The 1891 Election in Western Canada," *Prairie Forum*, 10:1 (Spring, 1985): 147-167; Patricia K. Wood, "Under Which Flag, Canadians?" *Anti-Americanism and the Election of 1891* (Unpublished MA Thesis, Queen's University, 1991); Carman Cumming, *Secret Craft: The Journalism of Edward Farrer* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1992); J.L. Granatstein, *Yankee Go Home? Canadians and Anti-Americanism* (Toronto: Harper Collins Publishers Limited, 1996); Patricia Wood, "Defining 'Canadian': Anti-Americanism and Identity in Sir John A. Macdonald's Nationalism," *Journal of Canadian Studies*, 36:2 (Summer, 2001): 49-69; Christopher Pennington, *The Continentalist Movement in the Politics of Canada and the United States, 1887-1894* (Unpublished PhD Dissertation, University of Toronto, 2007); Aaron W. Boyes, *Canada's Undecided Future: The Discourse on Unrestricted Reciprocity and Annexation in Quebec, 1887-1893* (Unpublished MA Thesis, University of Ottawa, 2010); Pennington, *The Destiny of Canada: Macdonald, Laurier, and the Election of 1891* (Toronto: The Penguin Group, 2011).

conclusion than that it was intended to pave the way for annexation.”²⁹ In Quebec, *Le Quotidien* (Lévis) declared that unrestricted reciprocity “serait la ruine de notre industrie nationale, la ruine de nos manufactures, un véritable désastre national; [...] ce serait enfin la route nous conduisant à la taxe directe et comme conséquence à l’annexion.”³⁰ For the Conservative press the goal was clear: convince the Canadian electorate that unrestricted reciprocity would not only injure the Canadian economy, but that it would also lead to annexation.

By the end of February, however, the tone became more robust. In grandiose terms, the Halifax *Morning Herald* declared: “Never before in the history of this country were the electors placed face to face with an issue of such far-reaching importance as that upon which they are now invited to decide.”³¹ In Ottawa, *Le Drapeau National* informed its readers: “Nous sommes en pleine lutte électorale, et l’un des deux partis en présence à aboré un drapeau nouveau que nous croyons être anti-national, anti-canadien, et il faut que dans tous les coins du pays cette tentative malheureuse soit exposée et dénoncée comme elle le mérite.”³²

But the election meant much more than simply political union. In French Canada, Conservative newspapers presented the election in even more dire terms: unrestricted reciprocity would lead to annexation, and the eventual elimination of the French “race” in North America. *Le Trifluvien* (Trois-Rivières), a Conservative paper aligned with the Catholic Church, presented such a reality in several articles published throughout February 1891. On the 14th it stated that the Liberals’ goal was “L’annexion, [et]

²⁹Toronto *Empire*, 5 February 1891.

³⁰*Le Quotidien*, 9 February 1891.

³¹Halifax *Morning Herald*, 9 February 1891.

³²*Le Drapeau National* (Ottawa, ON), 28 February 1891.

l'assimilation de la race française à la race anglaise, voilà leur but." In a further address "Aux Électeurs de la Province de Québec," on 18 February, it outlined how "la réciprocité illimitée signifie l'annexion." Thus:

L'annexion signifie pour les Canadiens-français: (a) L'abolition de la langue française; (b) L'annexion signifie aussi l'éducation des enfants par l'État; (c) L'annexion signifie aussi la disparation de toutes les lois constitutionnelles garantissant aux Canadiens-français l'usage de leurs lois et de leurs coutumes; (d) L'annexion signifie la taxe directe du peuple nécessaire pour compenser la perte subie par le trésor.

It further stated to its readers, "La lutte qui a pour prétexte une question de tarif, une politique douanière – question bien matérielle, bien physique, en apparence – est une véritable lutte nationale."³³ The election, at least according to *Le Trifluvien*, was clearly about much more than economics, and the bugbear of annexation was used quite skilfully.

The 1891 election provided some of the most important declarations regarding *la survivance* and what annexation to the United States could mean for French Canadians. Some French-Canadian observers believed that the election was "une question nationale." *Le Trifluvien* once again provided an impassioned call to French-Canadian electors in Quebec to really consider what the election was all about. "Électeurs canadiens-français," it wrote on 18 February 1891:

vous qui avez foi dans l'avenir de votre patrie, vous qui voyez à la mission privilégiée de votre race, vous qui entrenez de grandes espérances sur le sort que Dieu réserve à votre nationalité, recueillez-vous et réfléchissez. Vous êtes arrivés à une de ces crises dans lesquelles se jouent les destinées d'un peuple. Le moment est solennel. Encore une fois, réfléchissez.³⁴

³³*Le Trifluvien*, 14 and 18 February 1891.

³⁴*Ibid.*

Comparisons can be drawn from such conclusions to those made by ultra-Conservative English-language presses that warned that unrestricted reciprocity would end in the forceful removal of Canada from the British Empire and the elimination of the British element in North America. These were notions that could not be ignored by the Canadian people because they questioned their very identity as British and French Canadians. The “racial” element in the political union movement, although expressed in hyperbole at times, reflected how important it was to nineteenth-century Canadians.

Newspapers certainly played an immense role in influencing public opinion in regards to political union during the 1891 election. Declarations in opposition to union with the American Republic were often reflected in the need to ensure *la survivance de la race*. As *Le Quotidien* warned its readers on 21 February 1891, the Canadian constitution protected the French language and permitted the use of French in Parliament. “La constitution des États-Unis,” on the other hand, “ne reconnaît pas la langue française comme langue officielle, et dans le parlement à Washington il n’est pas permis de parler français.” Thusly, “L’annexion serait donc pour le peuple canadien-français la perte de sa langue maternelle.”³⁵ The editor of *La Vérité* (Quebec City), Jules-Paul Tardivel offered a stark reminder to French Canadians on 28 February warning them that the pursuit of closer economic relations with the United States and the desire for increased prosperity “pourrait pousser le peuple canadien-français au suicide.”³⁶ Annexation, therefore, clearly

³⁵*Le Quotidien*, 21 February 1891.

³⁶*La Vérité*, 28 February 1891. Interestingly, Tardivel believed that both Canada and the United States would eventually dissolve, and that the French-speaking communities of Ontario, Quebec, New Brunswick, and New England would form a French Canadian republic. Tardivel was not, however, a supporter of political union. In fact, he was at times a harsh critic of the United States in spite of his American birth. Bélanger, *Prejudice and Pride*, 64, 201.

meant the assimilation of French Canadians and the destruction of the French-speaking community in North America.

Another central element to *la survivance* was the maintenance of Catholicism and Catholic institutions amongst French Canadians. The clergy not only opposed union with the United States because of what it might do to its position and influence in society but also because of the impact it would have on French Canadians' faith. Conservatives in Quebec stressed the importance and prominence of the Church and the clergy in the lives of French Canadians as a means to oppose political union. As *Le Quotidien* declared on 25 February 1891, "La province du Québec qui est essentiellement catholique reconnaîtra son devoir et mettra en pratique, comme toujours, les recommandations et les conseils de son clergé."³⁷ And Jules-Paul Tardivel extolled the connection with the Catholic Church after the Conservative victory at the polls. "Notre peuple," he wrote, "pris, dans son ensemble, ne veut pas se laisser absorber par les États-Unis: voilà, croyons-nous, la véritable signification du vote du 5 mars."³⁸

In 1891, Catholic priest Père Édouard Hamon published his study *Les Canadiens-français de la Nouvelle-Angleterre*, examining the impact of French-Canadian immigration to New England and how the French-speaking immigrants fared as citizens of the American Republic.³⁹ Hamon believed that only by retaining the French language and practicing Catholicism could French Canadians avoid assimilation into the wider English-speaking community. What is most interesting about Hamon's observations are his conclusions about French Canada's destiny. Unlike many others in Quebec, Hamon

³⁷*Le Quotidien*, 25 February 1891.

³⁸*La Vérité*, 14 March 1891.

³⁹Édouard Hamon, *Les Canadiens-français de la Nouvelle-Angleterre* (Québec: N.S. Hardy, Librairie-Éditeur, 1891).

did not fear independence for Quebec or political union with the United States because in either situation French Canadians would be in control of their destiny. Besides, he did not believe that annexation would result in the assimilation of the Francophone community in North America because such a continental republic was unfeasible due to geographic size and “racial” differences. Therefore, Hamon believed that the new United States would become too large to be governed effectively which would result in the breakup and creation of many smaller republics, one of which would be a conglomeration of French-speakers from Quebec and New England. “Deux suppositions semblent possible,” he wrote:

ou la province de Québec aura un jour son autonomie, et deviendra un peuple indépendant; ou bien elle s’annexera aux États-Unis. Indépendance ou annexion, voilà deux hypothèses possibles, mais dans l’un ou l’autre cas, les Canadiens ne peuvent, me semble-t-il, qu’y trouver une force nouvelle contre l’assimilation.⁴⁰

For most of the campaign, the Catholic Church did not issue a public declaration on the issue of Canada’s political destiny. In 1877 Montreal’s Bishop Édouard-Charles Fabre informed his priests that they were to refrain from accepting political posts and from taking political sides from the pulpit, which continued until 1891. Despite this ordinance, Fabre himself supported the Conservatives and the ideas that the party represented.⁴¹ Considering the highly conservative nature of the Church, this is no surprise. Yet the appearance of a pastoral letter in late February 1891 was somewhat of a surprise, as Fabre broke his silence and his own directive. Fabre’s letter focused on the necessity to preserve the French-Canadian presence in North America, and the only way

⁴⁰Ibid, xi.

⁴¹Brian Young, “Fabre, Édouard-Charles,” *Dictionary of Canadian Biography* <http://www.biographi.ca/en/bio/fabre_edouard_charles_12E.html>.

in which to do so would be to maintain Canada's connection with the British Empire. As an extract from Fabre's letter reveals:

Quand il lui a plu, à la suite d'évènements douloureux, de nous faire passer sous l'égide de l'empire britannique, la divine Providence, ménagea admirablement toutes choses de manière à nous assurer une existence nationale et religieuse aussi complète qu'il fut alors permis de l'espérer. A l'ombre du drapeau qui nous abrite, pour nous protéger plutôt que pour nous dominer, nous jouissons d'une liberté précieuse sanctionnée par des traités solennels, et qui nous permet de conserver intactes nos lois, notre nationalité, et par-dessus tout notre sainte religion.⁴²

Fabre informed French-Canadian voters, as reported in *Le Quotidien*, "il était de son devoir de dénoncer toute idée d'annexion aux États-Unis et toute politique conduisant à cette fin."⁴³ The protection of French Canada's traditions was an essential element in the opposition to political union, especially the need to ensure Catholicism's survival. There can be no doubt that this pastoral letter had an impact on a large number of French-Canadian voters. Fabre's pastoral letter, as well as numerous newspaper articles, made it seem that the election in 1891 was about more than free trade.

Meanwhile amongst English-speaking Canadians, the maintenance of the British connection was the essential element to the Conservatives' campaign. To the Canadian electorate the Liberal platform was presented as a means to remove Canada from the Empire and instead attach it to the American Republic. The *Toronto Empire* made this evident on 9 February, declaring, "Sir John Macdonald calls upon his fellow-countrymen of all classes and opinions to rally to the cause of the nation, now threatened and endangered by a base and treasonable movement, which, under the guise of a new commercial policy, seeks to wrest this fair Dominion from the British Empire and add it

⁴²*Le Drapeau National* (Ottawa, ON), 28 February 1891.

⁴³*Le Quotidien*, 25 February 1891.

to the United States.”⁴⁴ The most vociferous and self-appointed defender of the British connection was George T. Denison. A staunch opponent to the idea of political union, Denison even took credit for advising Macdonald to call the election in early 1891 instead of waiting until 1892.⁴⁵ Both he and another ardent Loyalist, William Kirby, truly believing that the British connection was at stake, contended that annexation would only be achieved “over the bodies of thousands of loyal Canadians.”⁴⁶

The most memorable declaration of the commitment to the British connection came from Prime Minister Macdonald himself. In his electoral manifesto, “An Address to the Electors of Canada,” Macdonald concluded with arguably one of the most famous closing lines in Canadian history: “As for myself, my course is clear. A British subject I was born – A British subject I will die. With my utmost effort, with my latest breath, will I oppose the ‘veiled treason’ which attempts by sordid means and mercenary proffers to lure our people from their allegiance.” He further appealed to the voters of Canada “to give me their united and strenuous aid in this, my last effort, for the unity of the Empire and the preservation of our commercial and political freedom.”⁴⁷ The Prime Minister’s masterful control of politics was on full display with his manifesto as he successfully presented himself as the leading protector of Canada’s cherished British connection. His direct appeal to the voters of the Dominion about the British tie certainly had an impact on the electorate.

The Liberals also tried to present their party as defenders of the British connection. During a Liberal convention Ontario Premier Oliver Mowat made his own

⁴⁴Toronto *Empire*, 9 February 1891.

⁴⁵George T. Denison, *The Struggle for Imperial Unity: Recollections & Experiences* (Toronto: The Macmillan Company of Canada, Ltd., 1909), 161.

⁴⁶Kirby to Denison, 21 February 1891. Cited in Pennington, *The Destiny of Canada*, 230.

⁴⁷Pennington, *The Destiny of Canada*, 176.

declaration about Canada's British ties. "For myself I am a true Briton," he said. "I love the old land very dearly. I am glad I was born a British subject. [...] I hope to live my life a British subject and as a British subject die."⁴⁸ Mowat repeated his strong attachment to Britain on several occasions, endeavoured to remove the treasonous label placed upon the Liberals by the Conservatives. But the use of the loyalty cry and the defence of Canada's imperial tie by the Tories proved too powerful in the election campaign.

Liberal newspapers also did their best to respond to the "loyalty cry" by presenting unrestricted reciprocity as solely an economic policy that did not consider union with the United States. For example, the *Ottawa Free Press* ridiculed the "loyalty cry." "What does all the treason cry of the Tories amount to?" it asked on 28 February. "Is there a man in Canada who thinks that he would become tainted with disloyalty if he was allowed to trade with Americans without giving toll out of his sales and purchases to customs collectors?"⁴⁹ The *Saint John Globe* more emphatically rejected the Conservatives' electoral tactic: "What a gross piece of impertinence it is for a party to set themselves up as the custodians of the nation's loyalty, and to stamp disloyal all men who may not see eye to eye with them. Every free-born Canadian, who claims the right to think and act for himself, must resent this insulting, un-British doctrine."⁵⁰

One of the more intense rejections of the "loyalty cry" came from the *Winnipeg Tribune*, which railed against the Conservatives, and Macdonald in particular. On 13 February it printed a scathing attack against the Prime Minister:

What miserable twaddle, it is to talk about 'loyalty' under these circumstances! We hear about 'veiled treason.' Who is it, we ask, that is guilty of treason; is it those who demand that the artificial barriers that

⁴⁸Toronto *Globe*, 19 February 1891.

⁴⁹Ottawa *Free Press*, 28 February 1891.

⁵⁰Saint John *Globe*, 20 February 1891.

obstruct trade between the United States and Canada should be removed and a cause of discontent thereby destroyed? Or is it not much more than a man who seeks to retain a system which impoverishes the few at the expense of the many simply because the beneficiaries of that system furnish him with campaign funds.⁵¹

In Montreal, *La Patrie*, a radical-liberal paper edited by Honoré Beaugrand, led the charge against the “loyalty cry” and defended the Liberals’ platform of unrestricted reciprocity. “C’est avec le cri d’annexion aux États-Unis,” it stated on 27 February, “que nos adversaires tentent le plus vigoureusement de jeter le terreur dans le cœur de nos nationaux à propos de traité du réciprocité illimitée que le parti libéral propose de conclure avec nos voisins.” That unrestricted reciprocity would lead to annexation was “aussi faux que stupide. Nous l’avons déjà eu, la réciprocité de 1854 à 1866 et alors, a-t-on jamais à changer de régime.”⁵² For many in the Liberal camp it was obvious that a change in administration was needed because, as the Toronto *Globe* reported, “If Canada were prosperous and well-governed there would be no fear of an annexation movement making headway; because it would be difficult to persuade the people that they had anything to gain by making a change.”⁵³ Voting Liberal, according to these papers, would ensure prosperity and would eliminate the desire for political union with the United States.

While loyalty to Britain was a central issue during the election, the Continental Union Club, an obscure organization founded in Windsor, Ontario, presented a different idea regarding loyalty. In an 1891 pamphlet, seemingly its only contribution to the movement for political union, the Club argued that, “Prosperity is universally the foundation of loyalty. Contentment rests on prosperity, and loyalty and prosperity go

⁵¹Winnipeg *Tribune*, 13 February 1891.

⁵²*La Patrie* (Montréal, QC), 27 and 28 February 1891.

⁵³Toronto *Globe*, 28 February 1891.

hand in hand. Our duty is first to ourselves.”⁵⁴ Canadians, it declared, should choose the economic policy that would best ensure their own material growth and financial security, not one that benefitted Britain. This meant securing free trade with the United States which would act as a precursor to political union.

While most of the Conservative attacks on the Liberals had been speculative and accusatory, on 17 February that changed. Macdonald and the Conservatives obtained a copy of a pamphlet describing how the United States could force Canada into annexation.⁵⁵ Authorship of this now infamous pamphlet was attributed to Edward Farrer, the “stout, bearded, amiable (and brilliant) chief editorial writer of the *Globe*.”⁵⁶ Farrer’s own viewpoints on political union seemed to have wavered at times. For example, Goldwin Smith once commented that “if Mr Farrer could get Canada into the United States tomorrow he would start the next day to get her out.”⁵⁷ There has since been some doubt as to whether or not Farrer actually wrote the pamphlet, but in the winter of 1891 he accepted complete responsibility for it. Farrer had close ties with the Liberal Party and was concerned that this association would harm their chances of winning the election. This, in fact, is what happened, as many voters were convinced that the Liberals were working for political union.⁵⁸

⁵⁴Continental Union Club, *Canada’s Future! Political Union with the United States Desirable: A Plain Argument for the Consideration of Thoughtful Canadians* (1891), 3.

⁵⁵Christopher St. George Clark claimed responsibility for acquiring a copy of this pamphlet. He made this known in several letters written between 1893 and 1894 to numerous recipients. See the Christopher St. George Clark fonds, LAC, MG 29-E17, specifically the letters dated 3 July, 25 August, 7 September 1893, and 22 August 1894.

⁵⁶Cumming, *Secret Craft*, 6.

⁵⁷*Ibid*, 23.

⁵⁸Interestingly, Cumming reveals that there is some doubt as to whether or not Farrer actually wrote that notorious pamphlet. In 1919, John Willison received a letter from George Ham, Farrer’s closest friend, indicating that Farrer did not write the pamphlet, but he took responsibility for it to protect the Liberal party. Cumming, *Secret Craft*, 10-11.

Liberal newspapers including the *Ottawa Free Press* tried to perform damage control following the pamphlet's discovery. "Because Mr. Edward Farrer," it stated, "a Conservative newspaper man, while editing a Conservative newspaper, wrote to Mr. Erastus Wiman arguing in favor of the annexation of Canada to the United States, therefore the Reformers of Canada are annexationists! To what desperate straights must the combinesters and their slaves be reduced when they resort to such childish nonsense."⁵⁹ Even Oliver Mowat, seeking to discredit Farrer with hopes of proving Liberal loyalty, claimed that it was while Farrer was working in the Conservative camp did he embrace the annexationist idea. Therefore, the party responsible for the rise in political union sentiment was not the Liberals, but the Conservatives.⁶⁰

When Canadians went to the polls on 5 March many believed they were voting to save their country from annexation. As Donald Warner concluded, "the election of 1891 became the closest approach to a plebiscite on annexation in Canada's history."⁶¹ Although many Canadians cast their ballots with the fear of the annexationist bugbear hanging over their heads, a significant proportion were not entirely swayed by the loyalty cry. The Conservatives did not win by a landslide, as the Liberals actually gained seats in Parliament, especially as many French Canadians voted for Laurier, in spite of Mgr. Fabre's pastoral letter.⁶² Rather than dealing a deathblow to political unionism, as the Conservatives and their supporters had hoped, the 1891 election and the use of the "loyalty cry" ironically breathed new life into it. The Conservatives were, however, successful in dealing a significant blow to the Liberals.

⁵⁹*Ottawa Free Press*, 28 February 1891.

⁶⁰*Toronto Globe*, 19 February 1891.

⁶¹Warner, 225.

⁶²A full breakdown of the voting results by province is best described in Pennington, *The Destiny of Canada*, 243-250.

The 1891 general election and the use of the “loyalty cry” actually did more to assist the movement for political union than to debase it. By fighting so voraciously to destroy it, the Conservatives unwittingly made political union a more significant matter than it had been previously. It is impossible and futile to try to predict what would have happened had the Conservatives not raised the “loyalty cry”. But what is certain is that the opposition campaign against political union afforded the idea some degree of legitimacy and enabled it to become a national issue.

For some time former Liberal leader Edward Blake had been watching the development of the Liberals’ policy of unrestricted reciprocity with apprehension as he, like the Conservatives, feared that it could lead to the Canada’s annexation to the United States. He made this point clear in a letter to D. Burke Simpson on 28 January 1891: “The tendency of unrestricted free trade with the States, high duties being maintained against the United Kingdom, would be rather towards ultimate political union with the States.”⁶³ Blake further outlined his sentiments in an address to the “Members of the West Durham Reform Convention” on 8 February, where he blamed the failure of the Conservatives’ National Policy “to accomplish the predictions of its promoters.” Rather than stimulating growth, “Its real tendency has been, as foretold twelve years ago, towards disintegration and annexation, instead of consolidation and the maintenance of that British connexion of which they claim to be the special guardians.” In conjunction with the poor performance of the Canadian economy which led to financial despair, Blake believed that there was a growing sentiment in the United States about the need to politically reorganize the continent, be it peacefully or by force. Thus, he inferred that the

⁶³Blake to Simpson, 28 January 1891, in the Edward Blake Papers, Archives of Ontario, F 2, Reel 11, General Political Correspondence.

Americans would not enter into a free trade agreement with Canada because it might delay the union of the two North American nations.⁶⁴ In Blake's mind Canada was in a very difficult position as the Conservative policy had failed and the Liberals' proposal of unrestricted reciprocity would likely lead produce political union.

On 6 March, the day after the election, the Toronto *Globe* printed Blake's long and somewhat confusing letter, now commonly known as the "West Durham Letter." In it, he explained his sentiments to the West Durham Reform Convention, telling the people of Canada that commercial union would invariably lead to political union. It appeared to some that the former Liberal leader had given in to despondency and that he had embraced political union as the final outcome for Canada. But this was a misreading of Blake's intentions, as he clarified his position in another letter to the *Globe* printed on 12 March.⁶⁵ In reality, the "West Durham Letter" was not an argument in favour of political union as some, such as Goldwin Smith and Francis Wayland Glen, had hoped. Rather, it was a lament by Blake about the situation at hand.

Hoping to capitalize on Blake's revelations, Glen, an American-born former MP in the Canadian Parliament, sent the former Liberal leader a letter, dated 7 March, that expounded upon the virtues of Canadian independence. "Why not directly demand Independence," Glen wrote, "and when secured enter freely into such commercial treaties as may be advantageous to Canada? [...] If separation from England is to be the result, why not first liberate Canada from all restraint that she may arrange her future relations, not only with [the United States] but all countries, as her best interests demand?"

⁶⁴Address by Edward Blake to the West Durham Reform Convention, 8 February 1891, in the Edward Blake Papers, Reel 11, General Political Correspondence.

⁶⁵Toronto *Globe*, 6 and 12 March 1891; Pennington, *The Continentalist Movement*, 240-41; Warner, 226.

Canadian independence, as Glen saw it, would be the most advantageous option for Canada because it would give the Dominion complete autonomy over its affairs without harming relations with Britain, something that Blake feared. As for Canada's political future, Glen assured Blake that "Independence does not necessarily mean annexation. It simply secures the Canadian people perfect freedom of action to direct their own affairs."⁶⁶ Despite what he said in his letter, Glen hoped that Canadian independence would be the first step toward securing political union with the United States, a view that he made quite evident in later years. It also shows that Glen, like others, had misinterpreted Blake's ideas. Blake's revelations certainly shocked many Liberals.

In April 1891, the British-born and Oxford-educated essayist Goldwin Smith published his (in)famous text *Canada and the Canadian Question*, which was initially written as a campaign document for the Liberal Party. Arguably Smith's most important contribution to political unionism, and Canadian intellectual history, Damien-Claude Bélanger has astutely referred to it as "English Canada's Durham Report."⁶⁷ According to Smith, Canada was an economic, geographic, and cultural absurdity, and its destiny lay in union with the United States. Smith also eschewed the term "annexation". He preferred the term "reunion" because "before their unhappy schism [Canadians and Americans] were one people. Nothing but the historical accident of a civil war ending in secession, instead of amnesty, has made them two."⁶⁸ Thus, an essential part of Smith's study was spent outlining in candid terms why union between the English-speaking peoples in North America would be the best option for all "Anglo-Saxon" nations. The other critical

⁶⁶Glen to Blake, 7 March 1891 in the Edward Blake Papers, Reel 11, General Political Correspondence. Emphasis in original

⁶⁷Bélanger, *Prejudice and Pride*, 9.

⁶⁸Goldwin Smith, *Canada and the Canadian Question*, Carl Berger, ed. (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1971), 212.

aspect of *Canada and the Canadian Question* was Smith's rabid anti-Catholicism and francophobia. One of the reasons why Smith actively promoted political union with the United States was his belief that Canada's French-speaking community must be assimilated, something that the Dominion, with its relatively small English-speaking population, at least compared to the United States, could not do on its own.

Despite the controversial arguments, an examination of Smith's personal correspondence reveals that he received letters from across Canada and the United States that praised *Canada and the Canadian Question* and expressed sympathy for political union in general. For example, on 14 April 1891 Herbert Warren wrote to Smith to express his great interest in reading *Canada and the Canadian Question*, while on 21 April 1891, J. Clark Murray thanked Smith for his copy and revealed that he was "thoroughly in sympathy with the general drift of your views."⁶⁹ Even Erastus Wiman, who personally rejected the idea of political union, wrote to Smith stating that he believed that the book would do a world of good.⁷⁰ Selim Peabody, President of the University of Illinois, thanked Smith for a copy of the book and stated plainly that the Dominion and the Republic should be united as one country as soon as a reasonable and peaceful solution could be found.⁷¹ Smith continued to receive letters about his famous essay until his death in 1910.

Two responses to *Canada and the Canadian Question*, however, stand out for their criticism levelled against Smith's views. The first was a systematic rejection of

⁶⁹Herbert Warren to Goldwin Smith, 14 April 1891, and J. Clark Murray to Goldwin Smith, 21 April 1891, in the Goldwin Smith Fonds, LAC, MG 29-D69, Reel 4 M-2184.

⁷⁰Erastus Wiman to Goldwin Smith, 25 May 1891, in the Goldwin Smith Fonds, LAC, MG 29-D69, Reel 4 M-2184.

⁷¹Selim Peabody to Goldwin Smith, 5 June 1891, in the Goldwin Smith Fonds, LAC, MG 29-D69, Reel 4 M-2184.

Smith's arguments written by G.M. Grant of the Imperial Federation League.⁷² Grant unequivocally denied Smith's claims that Canadians were ready for political union. "As an Englishman and an Oxford man," Grant wrote, "Goldwin Smith is almost incapable of rightly understanding Canadian sentiment. He refuses to understand it, and even if the telescope thrust into his hand, he can always put it to his blind eye. Before knowing Canada, he made up his mind what Canadian sentiment ought to be, and from that preconception he refuses to be turned aside by any number of dirty facts or by a development that everyone else is able to see."⁷³ A staunch imperialist, Grant fervently opposed eliminating ties with the mother country. Rather than abandoning Confederation, Grant rhetorically asked his readers "Would it not be wiser to join hands to make the Canada of to-day more united and more worthy of the love of her sons and the respect of her neighbours?"⁷⁴ Along with the rejection of joining the United States, Grant sought to show that Canada was not a failure, despite some early difficulties in nation building.

The second response to *Canada and the Canadian Question* was a collection of essays composed by Conservative MP for L'Islet, Quebec, Louis-Georges Desjardins, titled *Considérations sur l'annexion*.⁷⁵ For his part, Desjardins, responding on behalf of French Canadians, rejected union with the United States, as well as Smith's bleak portrayal of French Canada. Union with the United States, Desjardins affirmed, would lead to assimilation because French Canadians would lose their language and their religion.⁷⁶ Desjardins also argued that one reason to reject union with the United States

⁷²G.M. Grant, *Canada and the Canadian Question: A Review* (Toronto: C. Blackett Robinson, 1891), 9-13.

⁷³Ibid, 4.

⁷⁴Ibid, 37.

⁷⁵Louis-Georges Desjardins, *Considérations sur l'annexion* (Québec, 1891).

⁷⁶Ibid, 44.

was because French Canadians had a significant role to play in North America separate from the American Republic.⁷⁷ Much like Grant, Desjardins did not view political union as Canada's destiny. Rather, French Canadians would continue to play an essential role in Canada's development.

Although highly controversial, *Canada and the Canadian Question* had an important influence on the movement for political union. It clearly outlined the reasons why union with the United States was not only necessary, but also why it was in the best interest of the Canadian people. For the rest of his life Smith defended his positions outlined in arguably his most famous work, positions that resonated with a select group in both the Dominion and the Republic.

In the aftermath of the 1891 election continental union between Canada and the United States had become a significant issue in the political discourse in the Dominion. The focus was no longer about trade relations with the American Republic; rather, it was concentrated squarely on the issue of political union. Although still small and disjointed, a movement for political union had appeared. As George T. Denison recalled in a letter to Lord Salisbury in December 1891, "There was a lull after the elections, but when the fall set in the movement for open annexation commenced, as I anticipated."⁷⁸

In the summer of 1891 political unionism received another boost. On 6 June Sir John A. Macdonald died after falling ill during the election campaign. The Conservatives were now leaderless and the death of the man who championed the British connection against all "traitors" had left a significant void in the anti-annexation campaign, creating speculation that the movement for political union would experience a surge in support

⁷⁷Ibid, 45.

⁷⁸Denison to Lord Salisbury, 19 December 1891, 2078-2080, in the George T. Denison Fonds, LAC, MG 29-E29, Vol. 3 & 4, Correspondence.

now that the “Old Leader” was gone. The Jamestown *Weekly Alert* (Jamestown, North Dakota) believed that “On all sides it is conceded that the death of the Canadian statesman Sir John McDonald [*sic*], will give an impetus to annexation. A portion of Canadian sentiment is undoubtedly in favor of this political partnership.”⁷⁹ Although Macdonald was a dominant figure in the opposition to political union, there were several others in the Dominion willing to take up the cause to ensure that Canada and the United States continued their separate political existence.

By the autumn of 1891 most of the attention afforded to political union in the United States had faded, although some Americans continued to discuss and debate the prospect of union with Canada. One aspect not sufficiently developed was how the continent would be organized following political union. Would the existing Canadian provinces maintain their borders? How would the Canadian West be divided? Supporters of political union in the United States had conflicting answers, and opponents capitalized on the lack of clarity. On 1 December 1888, for example, the *New York World* provided one interpretation of how North America would look. Twenty-seven new states would be added to the Union, along with the expansion of some existing borders (see Figure 1).

⁷⁹Jamestown *Weekly Alert* (Jamestown, North Dakota), 18 June 1891.

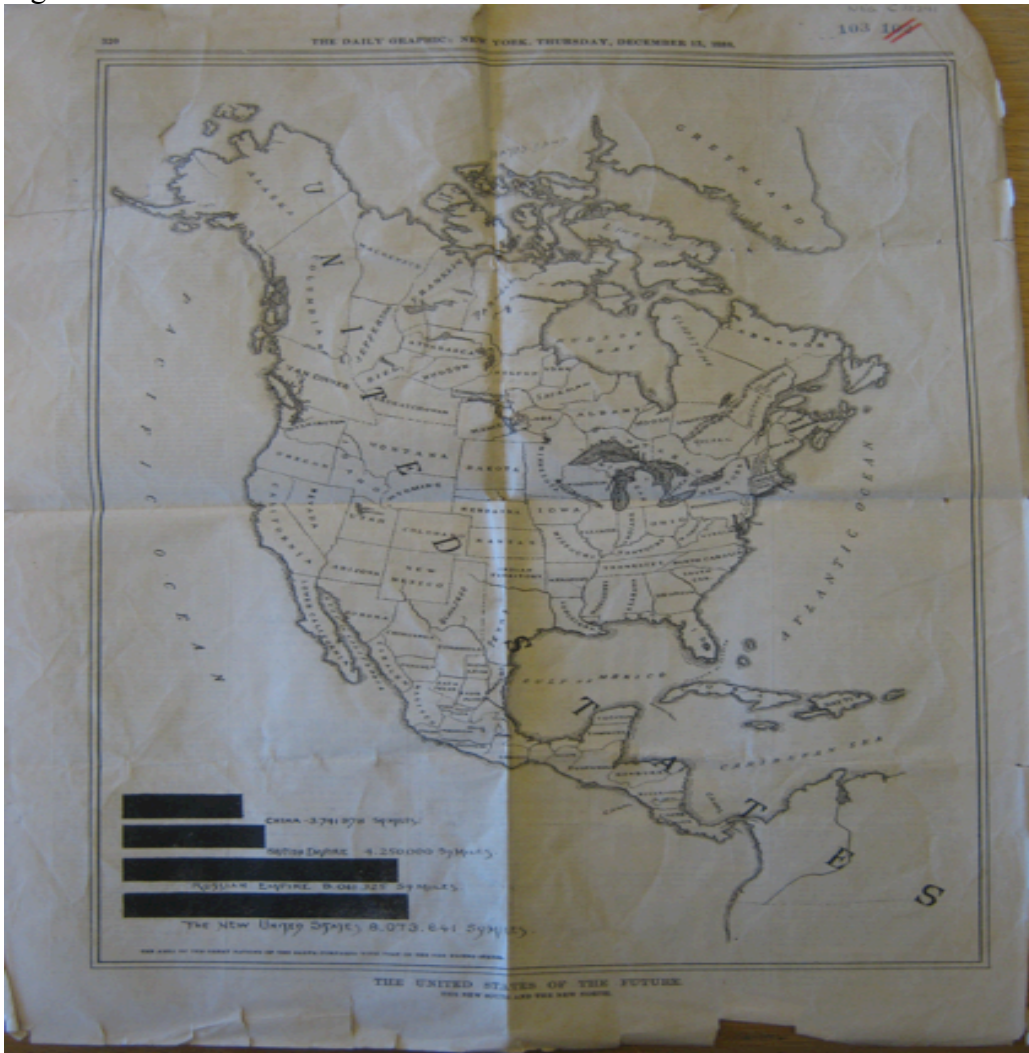
Figure 1: “The Future Great Republic”⁸⁰



Another interpretation of how the continent would look following political union was presented in the *New York Daily Graphic* on 13 December 1888 (see Figure 2). This map also included the acquisition of Mexico and Central America. By doing this, the “New United States” would become the single largest nation on the planet, surpassing China, the British Empire, and the Russian Empire.

⁸⁰Found in the George T. Denison Fonds, MG 29-E29, LAC, vol. 19.

Figure 2: “The United States of the Future”⁸¹



The political organization of the United States had been a contentious issue in the past, one that, in part, had prompted the Civil War. In the 1880s and 1890s, Southerners once again feared that the acquisition of more territory in the north would upset the precarious status quo that had been in place since the end of Reconstruction; adding Canada indeed would change America’s political composition. The *Sacramento Record-*

⁸¹Found in the George T. Denison Fonds, MG 29-E29, LAC, vol. 19. The numbers in the bottom-left corner of the map notes “THE AREA OF THE GREAT NATIONS OF THE EARTH COMPARED WITH THAT OF THE NEW UNITED STATES.” It reads: China – 3,741,878 sq. miles; British Empire – 4,250,000 sq. miles; Russian Empire – 8,061,325 sq. miles; The New United States – 8,073,641 sq. miles.

Union addressed this issue of the political reorganization of the continent in October 1891:

If we should absorb Canada, as the unionists think we should, we would have to erect not less than eight or nine States of her territory. At the lowest we would thus add sixteen new members to the Senate and some thirty or thirty-five to the House of Representatives. These would serve to destroy the familiar political checks and balances, and for a long time we would be without chart or compass upon the political sea.⁸²

There was also the issue of bestowing statehood to the newly acquired provinces. In the past, states had to seek entrance into the Union along clearly developed guidelines, but it was unclear if the Canadian provinces would have to follow the same path. Since the supporters of union proved unable to provide a clear plan for the reorganization of North America, the unknown political results were another reason to reject union with Canada.

Another issue for many Americans was the “racial” element. In the nineteenth century Canada was viewed as peopled by two “races,” English and French Canadians. While English-speaking Canadians would make good republican citizens, given their “Anglo-Saxon” heritage, many American commentators did not look favourable on the French-Canadian community. The *Anaconda Standard* (Anaconda, Montana), for example, argued that “if it were not for the province of Quebec and her French institutions the United States would have annexed Canada long ago.”⁸³ Other American newspapers, however, more explicitly expressed their disdain for French Canadians. The *Belmont Chronicle* (St. Clairsville, Ohio), called French Canadians “narrow minded fanatics” who “would have to undergo a complete change before they would become good American citizens [...]”⁸⁴ In Colorado, the *Rocky Mountain News* (Denver,

⁸²*The Record-Union* (Sacramento, California), 23 October 1891.

⁸³*The Anaconda Standard* (Anaconda, Montana), 22 February 1890.

⁸⁴*Belmont Chronicle* (St. Clairsville, Ohio), 13 July 1893.

Colorado), bluntly stated, “That it is not uncharitable to speak of the French Canadians at this point as an inferior race, a walk through their village would prove [this].”⁸⁵

Most importantly, as the *New York Times* reported in 1892, French Canadians would not make good American citizens, “not because it is a most industrious and frugal population, but because it is and continues to be an alien population, refusing to be incorporated with the mass.” French Canadians were viewed as “alien” because they “remain[ed] different from the rest in race, in language, and in religion, and offers an inert but effective opposition to every effort to assimilate it to the rest.”⁸⁶ As a different “race,” French Canadians clearly were seen as an impediment to political union. Given America’s own ongoing race problem, stemming from the emancipation of millions of black slaves during the Civil War, adding another “racial” group was seen as undesirable. As *The Helena Independent* (Helena, Montana), reported: “The race feeling in Canada between the French and the English of the lower provinces has grown so steadily during the past few years as to suggest a serious problem for near solution. One race problem in the United States at a time seems quite sufficient to worry the heads of our social scientists.”⁸⁷

One reason explaining Americans’ opposition to union with Canada was Roman Catholicism. Religion was very important in both Canada and the United States in the nineteenth century, with a vast majority of people adhering to a religious denomination. As seen in Table 12, while Roman Catholics were the largest single denomination in both countries, many Protestant English Canadians and Americans distrusted Catholics.

⁸⁵The *Rocky Mountain News* (Denver, Colorado), 1 January 1890.

⁸⁶*New York Times*, 30 October 1892.

⁸⁷*The Helena Independent* (Helena, Montana), 19 November 1892.

Table 12: Four largest religious denominations in Canada and the United States according to the 1891 and 1890 census records, respectively

	Canada ⁸⁸	United States ⁸⁹
Religion	1. Roman Catholic: 1,992,017 2. Methodist: 839,815 3. Presbyterian: 754,193 4. Anglican: 646,059	1. Roman Catholic: 8,277,000 2. Methodist: 3,511,000 3. Baptist: 1,282,000 4. Presbyterian: 790,000

Anti-Catholicism was still quite strong in the United States and some Americans were leery of annexing a territory with a sizeable Roman Catholic population. Specifically, many Americans opposed the influence of the clergy on political affairs. As a secular nation the United States separated church and state; this, however, was not the case in Canada. The *Jamestown Weekly Alert* worried that not only were the people of Canada divided on language, social customs, and “nationality,” but also that “They are sharply divided on religion, and the influence of the clergy extends more into the political arena than in this country.”⁹⁰ Because of the clergy’s influence, as the *Morning Oregonian* (Portland, Oregon) assessed, “The province of Quebec is non-progressive; the mass of its French peasantry are as ignorant and superstitious slaves of their priesthood as they were fifty years ago [...].”⁹¹

Given Catholicism in Quebec, many argued that union with Canada was to be avoided. As *The Congregationalist* (Boston, Massachusetts) reported, “The French population of the Province of Quebec and Eastern Ontario is absolutely priest-ridden, and is assiduously educated to place papal above civil authority.” Many Americans, thus,

⁸⁸*Census of Canada, 1890-91*, volume I (Ottawa: S.E. Dawson, Printer to the Queen’s Most Excellent Majesty, 1893), 224-225. These were the four largest denominations in Canada according to the 1891 census.

⁸⁹*Historical Statistics of the United States*, 390-392. These were the four largest denominations in the United States according to 1890 census information.

⁹⁰*Jamestown Weekly Alert* (Jamestown, North Dakota), 18 June 1891.

⁹¹*Morning Oregonian* (Portland, Oregon), 26 June 1890.

believed that Catholics could not make good republican citizens and were incapable of patriotism because their loyalty was first and foremost to the Papacy in Rome. Part of this stemmed from the fact that the separate school system in Canada, which enabled separate Protestant and Catholic education, further inhibited the growth of a national and patriotic spirit. Once again *The Congregationalist* warned that “the separate school system, which practically means the nurturing for all time of racial and religious prejudices, [was] an insuperable barrier against the ultimate assimilation of the two races.”⁹²

Supporters rejected the notion that French Canadians were an impediment to political union and instead believed that they would make fine Americans. Francis Wayland Glen emphatically rejected the notion that because French Canadians were Catholics they were unsuitable to join the United States. “This objection [to French Canadians],” he wrote in 1893, “is not founded upon knowledge but upon prejudice. The Canadian French Romanists are kindly, home and kindred loving, domestic, peaceful, law-abiding, moral, people.”⁹³ Despite his defence of the French-speaking community, Glen nonetheless viewed French Canadians as a backwards and an almost infantile group.

The New York *Sun* followed Glen’s example in January 1893. Rather than discouraging political union the *Sun* printed an article to convince French Canadians in Quebec that they had much more to gain by becoming a state in the American Union. “Quebec,” it argued, “[...] would be at liberty to embody her State Constitution [with] such institutions and [with] such systems of political, civil and criminal law as she saw fit, provided only the State Government were republican in form [...]” Regarding

⁹²*The Congregationalist* (Boston, Massachusetts), 11 July 1889.

⁹³Francis Wayland Glen, *The Political Reunion of the United States and Canada* (New York: 1891-1893), 566.

language, “It would be for the State Constitution of Quebec to make such provision with regard to that matter,” although “the delegates of the State of Quebec to the Senate and House of Representatives at Washington would have to speak English [...]”⁹⁴

As Americans continued to debate the merits of union with the Dominion, an opposition movement began to emerge in Canada by late 1891 with Ontario Premier Oliver Mowat as its *de facto* leader. Mowat was a staunch Liberal who had advocated unrestricted reciprocity during the 1891 election, albeit laced with “firm declarations of loyalty to his British birthright.”⁹⁵ While he agreed that free trade with the United States would assist Canada’s development, he also feared that Canada would be inexorably drawn into the American political orbit. Thus, he “began his open attack on the annexationists in late 1891.”⁹⁶ For example, when Solomon White organized a public meeting at Woodstock, Ontario, to discuss free trade with the United States on 24 November, Mowat sent M.P.P. Dr. Angus Mackay to the meeting to refute White’s annexationist claims and affirm the Liberal Party’s loyalty. As with most of these political union meetings, it is not clear who organized the event although Oliver Mowat revealed in a letter dated 23 November that it was “Mr. Solomon White’s meeting [...] to-morrow.”⁹⁷ White was one of the speakers promoting union with the United States, but opponents to the idea, such as Liberal MP for Woodstock James Sutherland, were also given the opportunity to address those assembled. Despite White’s best attempts, the audience in Woodstock was decidedly opposed to seeking political union, made clear by the informal voting on a resolution proposed at the meeting’s end. As the *Toronto Globe*

⁹⁴New York *Sun*, 6 January 1893.

⁹⁵Carman Miller, “Mowat, Laurier and the Federal Party 1887-1897,” in *Oliver Mowat’s Ontario*, Donald Swainson, ed. (Toronto: Macmillan of Canada, 1972), 76.

⁹⁶*Ibid.*, 79.

⁹⁷*Toronto Globe*, 26 November 1891.

reported, “Only about 25 responded to the call to declare themselves annexationists. The meeting was against annexation by about 12 to 1,”⁹⁸ inciting George Denison’s rather premature declaration that the movement for political union had been delivered a deathblow.⁹⁹ Another meeting was held at Paris, Ontario, in March 1892, which White chaired. The balloting, however, was much different than it was at Woodstock. Of the 187 ballots cast, 109 backed political union.¹⁰⁰

While it is not entirely clear from the historical record why certain counties in Ontario were more prone to hosting political union meetings than others, some conclusions can be gleaned. During this period the provincial Liberals held a majority in the Legislative Assembly while at the federal level 66 of Ontario’s 113 MPs were Conservatives. Interestingly, almost all of the counties in which a public discussion was held on the topic of political union were Liberal strongholds both provincially and federally, including Premier Mowat’s own county of Oxford North, excepting only Cardwell which was Conservative at both levels. This is not altogether surprising, especially since Liberals tended to be more outspoken in support of closer relations with the United States.

It is also well known that rural areas, where these meetings were held, were more prone to oppose the National Policy and to prefer free trade with the United States. Ontario remained a rural province throughout the nineteenth century. According to the 1891 census records, Ontario had 1,295,323 rural dwellers compared to 818,998 urban

⁹⁸Toronto *Globe*, 25 November 1891.

⁹⁹Miller, “Mowat, Laurier and the Federal Party 1887-1897,” 79.

¹⁰⁰See the Toronto *Globe*, 17 and 30 March 1892. Like Woodstock in North Oxford, Paris was part of the electoral district of Brant South, which was also Liberal at the time of the meeting.

residents.¹⁰¹ Another reason could be due to the number of American-born residents in the counties where political union meetings were held. There were 80,915 American-born residents in Canada in 1891, which represented 1.67% of the total population. The number of American-born was higher in Ontario where 42,702 listed the United States as their birth nation, 2.01% of the provincial population. Essex County, for example, had an American-born population of 7.5%; while in Oxford North (where the Woodstock meeting took place), the American-born population was only 1.27%.¹⁰² Although sentiment in favour of political union was generally stronger in Ontario than in the other provinces, the majority of Ontarians opposed forming a continental republic.

Continuing his campaign against political union, on 12 December 1891, Mowat wrote an influential open letter to former Prime Minister Alexander Mackenzie and had it printed in the *Toronto Globe*. The letter outlined that despite the Conservatives' use of the "loyalty cry" in the previous election, the majority of Liberals opposed political union; what they wanted was free trade and nothing more. Given the Tory victory and the defeat of unrestricted reciprocity, Mowat highlighted that "as a result, a disposition has been manifested in some quarters to favour even political union with the United States as the best means of obtaining such reciprocity [...]."¹⁰³ To combat the growing desire for political union Mowat called for friendly and peaceful relations with the United States and especially an end to anti-British rhetoric in the Republic which he viewed as a significant impediment to friendly relations. According to Mowat, the Canadian people did not hate their American neighbours but they did want to maintain their autonomy.

¹⁰¹Ian M. Drummond, et al., *Progress Without Planning: The Economic History of Ontario from Confederation to the Second World War* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1987), 412.

¹⁰²*Census of Canada, 1890-91*, vol. I, 332-363.

¹⁰³Oliver Mowat, *The Reform Party and Canada's Future: An Open Letter* (Toronto: Hunter Rose, 1891), 1-38.

The movement for political union had clearly become a cause for concern for Mowat, so much so that he felt it necessary to issue a public declaration in an attempt to confront it head on and dissuade it from growing in popularity and momentum. He was most concerned about the loss of the cherished British tie and the complete disintegration of the Canadian state:

Those who favour political union are not going for ‘Canada first,’ but are going for the very reverse. In case of annexation Canada would be no more. It would, as a political organization, be effaced from the map of the world. Annexation would be an absolute transfer of this great country, and all its resources, Federal interests, from its own people to the United States. [...] Canadians can have no pleasure in such a prospect.¹⁰⁴

This statement was a direct challenge to the advocates of political union and their belief that it was best for Canadians. He believed instead that Canada should seek friendly, profitable, and peaceful relations with the United States, so long as those relations did not impinge upon its sovereignty.

As support for political union grew, especially in Ontario, Mowat increased his campaign to squash it. His most drastic action occurred in June 1892 when he dismissed Elgin Myers, the Crown Attorney for Dufferin County, for Myers’ public declarations in support of political union. The two exchanged a series of public letters in which Myers indicated he supported “the reunion of our Canadian colony with the English-speaking nation to the south on terms equally honorable and fair to both. In doing so I had not the slightest idea that I was transgressing the rules that govern an officer in the public service.”¹⁰⁵ Mowat, however, believing that such opinions were inconsistent with the

¹⁰⁴Ibid, 23-24.

¹⁰⁵Toronto *Globe*, 22 June 1892.

office of the Crown Attorney, relieved Myers of his duties. It should be remembered that a similar argument was made against John Ellis in 1888.¹⁰⁶

On 28 June, shortly after Myers' removal from office, a public meeting was held in Orangeville, Ontario, on the topic of political union. Another important idea discussed that night was freedom of speech. Myers fervently criticized his removal from office, outlining the hypocrisy "that the police magistrate of Toronto [George Denison], was permitted to express the most violent opinions on the same subject matter unrebuked, because they happened to conform to Governmental ideas."¹⁰⁷ The former Crown Attorney was not alone in his defence of free speech. On 2 July the *Toronto Globe* printed a letter in which Katherine B. Coutts defended Myers's right to openly declare his support for political union as a free Canadian.¹⁰⁸ It is very interesting to have a poignant public opinion voiced by a woman as the vast majority of letters, pamphlets, and speeches made during the movement were by men. The Conservative press, however, fully supported Mowat's dismissal of Myers. The *Ottawa Citizen* also disagreed that public servants should have the right to freedom of speech to promote union with the United States. "If men who hold annexationist views and preaches in favor of annexation, has a public office," it wrote on 29 June, "he should be deprived of it!" "Mr. Elgin Myers," it continued, "has a perfect right to advocate annexation if he chooses, but while

¹⁰⁶For more insight into the dismissal of Elgin Myers, see: Ken Weber, "Did Ontario Premier, Sir Oliver Mowat, Stomp on Free Speech in Dufferin County?", *In the Hills*, Autumn, 2005; Wayne Townsend, *Orangeville: The Heart of Dufferin County* (Toronto: National Heritage Books, 2006), 237-238; Miller, "Mowat, Laurier and the Federal Liberal Party," 79; Pennington, *The Continentalist Movement*, 257; Autobiography of W.D. Gregory, in the Walter Dymond Gregory Fonds, Queen's University Archives, MF 135, Box 9 folder B.

¹⁰⁷*Toronto Globe*, 29 June 1892.

¹⁰⁸*Ibid*, 2 July 1892.

doing so he has no right to retain office. His ideas are abhorrent to the great body of our people [...].”¹⁰⁹

The Toronto *Empire*, the official organ of the Conservative party, offered a rather interesting insight into the Mowat-Myers controversy and the idea of political union as a whole. “The few annexationists in this country,” it wrote:

have long enjoyed free rein. Nobody in Canada fears open discussion, and consequently annexationists have been given every opportunity for ventilating the personal spleen or the individual craze which is in each case responsible for advocacy of national surrender. As long as the community [are] like to tolerate windy declamations about the right of individuals to advocate revolution by peaceable means, they may be left to their enjoyment. When the advocates of severing Canada from the British Empire and handing it over to the United States get down to business – when they threaten our political independence and seriously frame measures for a change of allegiance – they will find that the patriotic ardor has rough ways of its own and does not always proceed by the slow machinery of the courts.¹¹⁰

Like Mowat, the *Empire* believed that it was necessary to issue a public declaration to state in no uncertain terms its opposition to severing the British connection and joining the United States. Despite its bold declaration that no one feared an open discussion about continental union, the article was clear that joining the United States posed a threat to Canada’s ties with Britain. This shows that the *Empire* must have been more concerned about discussing political union than it was willing to admit. By doing so, it provided more attention to the issue of political union.

Mowat’s defence of Canada’s British connection did not end with Myers’s dismissal. In July 1892 the premier was invited to speak at Niagara-on-the-Lake to celebrate the centennial of the Province of Upper Canada. Much like the public displays in 1884 that celebrated the UEL myths, Mowat’s speech focused on the British

¹⁰⁹Ottawa *Citizen*, 29 June 1892.

¹¹⁰Toronto *Empire*, 23 June 1892.

connection. “I am glad to know that Canadians of this day,” he boasted, “have as a body no inclination to undo the work of those noble founders of our Province. As Canadians we, too, are glad that by reason largely of their fidelity we are British subjects here in Canada, and we live here still on British soil.” Mowat then directly addressed the issue of political union with the United States and what it would entail for Canadians:

As a Canadian, I am not willing that Canada should cease to be. Fellow Canadians, are you? I am not willing that Canada should commit national suicide. Are you? I am not willing that Canada should be absorbed into the United States. Are you? I am not willing that both our British connection and our hope of Canadian nationality shall be destroyed for ever [*sic*]. Annexation necessarily means all that. It means, too, the abolition of all that is to us preferable in Canadian character and institutions as contrasted with what, in these respects, what our neighbours prefer.

Mowat, unlike the virulent anti-American George Denison, was more tempered in his approach. He assured his audience that “I speak without one particle of animosity toward the United States,” and instead “I should hold the whole [American] people in most affectionate brotherhood.”¹¹¹

In 1892, amateur historian Reverend Henry Scadding gave a speech that also praised the British connection in the development of the Dominion and the sacrifices made by the UEL. Considering the rise of political union sentiment in English Canada, Scadding believed that “The initials U.E. seem likely ere long to assume fresh importance in Canadian history. [...] They have been found convenient in conveying an idea which otherwise would require a multitude of words to express, and they often have the power of creating a certain degree of enthusiasm.” The myth of the UEL was highly accessible and powerful for many English Canadians, especially in Ontario, and the revival of this

¹¹¹The Centennial Committee, *Centennial of the Province of Upper Canada, 1792-1892* (Toronto: Arbuthnot & Adamson, 1893), 18, 22-23, 25-26.

myth during the political union movement was an important element for the opposition. As loyalty to Britain was paramount, Scadding said “We shall, none of us I am sure, feel willing to throw ourselves away; we shall, none of us, be found willing to abandon our status as British subjects and all the proud associations with the history of the British Empire.”¹¹²

Mowat’s dismissal of Myers, as well as the increased public attention that political union received, such as Mowat’s and Scadding’s public addresses, had encouraged supporters of continental union to become better organized. The most prominent of these was Toronto lawyer Walter Dymond Gregory. Gregory, an admirer of Goldwin Smith, had been a staunch supporter of commercial union. But like many others of the time he slowly came to accept that only through political union could Canada ensure better trade relations with the US. Early in 1892 the idea of creating a permanent organization in Ontario with the sole purpose of promoting political union with the United States was proposed. More than ever before the issue of a continental union was being discussed and supporters sought to capitalize on this trend. In May 1892 Gregory received a letter from William Algie, a businessman from Alton, Ontario, explaining that “from the amount of interest taken in the movement in our rural district, I estimate that there should be no difficulty in forming a [political union] organization in Toronto of at least 1000 members, paying a yearly fee of say \$5.00 which would form a firm financial foundation at the outset.”¹¹³ Algie was not alone in his desire to create a political union league in Ontario. Shortly after his public dismissal, Myers wrote to Gregory bemoaning,

¹¹²Rev. Dr. Henry Scadding, *The Revived Significance of the Initials “U.E.” A Paper Read Before the Pioneer and Historical Society of the County of York, July 1892* (Toronto: The Copp, Clark Company, Limited, 1892), 4, 7.

¹¹³Algie to Gregory, 30 May 1892. In the Walter D. Gregory Fonds, Box A-1, Letters, 1890-1899, Folder 1892, A-L.

“There has been an infusion of courage which is what we want more than a dissemination of knowledge on the subject. If we had only had an active organization in Toronto as the friends from the country, including myself, wished to take advantage of it, much more could be accomplished.”¹¹⁴

As it appeared that the time was ripe to form a permanent organization for the political union movement in Ontario, after several months of discussions the first meeting of the newly created Continental Union Association (CUA) took place on 14 October 1892 on the second floor of the Canada Life Building, located at 47 King Street West in Toronto. An invitation was sent out across the province informing recipients of “A meeting of a few gentlemen favourable to the Political Union of Canada and the United States [...] for the purposes of organizing a Continental Union Association for Toronto.”¹¹⁵ Only twelve men attended this first meeting, but at a subsequent gathering they elected Windsor lawyer Thomas White as Secretary, John Morrison, manager of the British American Fire Insurance Co., as its President, and Gregory was elected treasurer. Soon thereafter Elgin Myers, Edward Farrer, and S.R. Clarke, another Toronto lawyer, joined the ranks as part of the Toronto chapter.¹¹⁶ Goldwin Smith, who initially refused to get involved due to his retirement from public life, changed his mind and became its *de facto* leader.¹¹⁷ There was finally a central organization from which to run the movement for political union in Ontario with a devoted group of supporters. There were not,

¹¹⁴Myers to Gregory, 27 June 1892. In the Walter D. Gregory Fonds, Box A-1, Letters, 1890-1899, Folder 1892, M-Z.

¹¹⁵George Ross to _____, 11 October 1892. In the Walter D. Gregory Fonds, Box B-1. It is, unfortunately, unclear who got these invitations.

¹¹⁶Autobiography of W.D. Gregory, 107-108.

¹¹⁷Pennington, *The Continentalist Movement*, 256.

however, any French Canadian members, an absence which clearly speaks to the disjunction of the movement for political union.

The new organization drew up a constitution in which it stated in clear terms in Article I: “The name of this Association shall be the Continental Union Association of Ontario, and its object shall be by all peaceful and constitutional means to promote the complete union on fair and honourable terms of the Dominion of Canada and the United States of America with the consent of Great Britain.” According to Article VII, regular meetings were to be held and the secretary was to keep a detailed list of attendees, although these apparently did not survive. Interestingly, under Article IX subordinate associations “may be formed throughout the Province of Ontario for the purpose of furthering the objects of the Association.” Clearly CUA members were confident about the future of their organization and believed that others across Ontario would follow their lead.¹¹⁸ The reality would prove much different.

For the next four years the CUA received hundreds of letters from across Ontario and other provinces in Canada. Many authors stated that they supported the idea of political union but could not publicly join for fear of facing social ostracism.¹¹⁹ Charles Colwells of London, Ontario, expressed his support for political union to the CUA because he felt that “Almost anything would be better than the present deplorable condition of Canada.”¹²⁰ Dr. Herbert H. Read of Halifax, Nova Scotia, informed the organization that he supported political union because he was tired of being a subject of a

¹¹⁸*Constitution, Rules, and By-Laws of the Continental Union Association of Ontario*, in the Walter D. Gregory Fonds, Queen’s University Archives, MF 135, Folder E Continental Union Material.

¹¹⁹For example see John Cameron to Gregory, 8 August 1892, Walter D. Gregory Fonds, Box A-1, Letters 1890-1899.

¹²⁰Charles Colwells to Thomas F. White, 17 December 1892. In the Walter D. Gregory Fonds, Box A-1, Letters 1890-1899, File 1892, A-L.

dependency and would rather be a free citizen of the United States.¹²¹ B.F. Youngs of Stratford, Ontario, professed that “I have always had the hope that I would live to see the time when the United States and the Dominion as well as all the islands in the gulf of the St. Lawrence will be one People, under one government, one flag, all joining hand and hand with the Mother Country in all that tends to advance civilization and make our people happier.”¹²² Others felt that more people needed to speak out in favour of political union if the movement was going to find success. As one supporter from Belleville, Ontario, stated, “What we lack here is Courage to express our convictions openly, for far more are in its favour than will state so publicly.”¹²³ Most of the letters received simply asked for more information about the organization so as to become better informed about political union. Others provided lists of names of potential supporters.¹²⁴

Not all correspondence received was positive. C.A. Mallory, president of the Patrons of Industry, for example, informed the CUA that the Patrons preferred stronger free trade relations with Britain than with the United States, and that their goal was to maintain the British connection.¹²⁵ M.W. Cook of Cooksville, Ontario, wrote to Thomas White saying that he was not in sympathy with the organization.¹²⁶ Interestingly, there

¹²¹Herbert H. Read to the CUA, 12 November 1892. In the Walter D. Gregory Fonds, Box A-1, Letters, 1890-1899, File 1892, M-Z.

¹²²B.F. Youngs to Thomas White, 24 October 1892. In the Walter D. Gregory Fonds, Box A-1, Letters, 1890-1899, File 1892, M-Z.

¹²³T.E. Ewen, 25 October 1892. In the Walter D. Gregory Fonds, Box A-1, Letters, 1890-1899. Emphasis in original. A considerable number of letters originated from the Bay of Quinte County. This is interesting as this county, as well as its eastern neighbour Frontenac County, was home to a large number of descendants of United Empire Loyalists.

¹²⁴For example, see E.A. Brickman to T.M. White, 3 November 1892 and W.W. Anderson to T.M. White, 27 November 1892. In the Walter D. Gregory Fonds, Box A-1, Letters 1890-1899, File 1892, A-L.

¹²⁵C.A. Mallory to Thomas White, 31 October 1892. In the Walter D. Gregory Fonds, Box A-1, Letters 1890-1899, File 1892 M-Z.

¹²⁶M.W. Cook to T.M. White, 22 October 1892. In the Walter D. Gregory Fonds, Box A-1, Letters 1890-1899, Folder 1892, A-L.

are no letters declaring the CUA to be a treasonous organization or that its members were traitors; a likely explanation is that such complaints simply were not kept.

The CUA had even established contact with supporters of political union in the United States. Between October and December 1892, American General James H. Wilson sent several letters to Thomas White about his pleasure that the moment for action regarding political union had finally arrived. Wilson also indicated that he would do whatever he could from his home in Wilmington, Delaware, to create a feeling of cooperation and friendship between Canadians and Americans. Wilson sought more information from the CUA about the movement in Canada to prepare pamphlets and other documents for dissemination in the United States about why Americans should support political union.¹²⁷

In 1893 the CUA published the pamphlet *Continental Union: A Short Study of Its Economic Side*, which, according to Gregory, was written by Edward Farrer.¹²⁸ Its title, however, is a slight misnomer since it actually addressed a variety of topics, not just economics. Other issues included the hazards of maintaining Canada's attachment to Britain, the "imaginary line that separate[d]" the Dominion from the Republic, and the natural bonds of English-speaking Canadians and Americans. With regards to "its economic side," the pamphlet stressed that Canadians would gain unlimited access to the American economy, as well as the benefits of commercial treaties between the United States and other nations of the world. Its message was clear: "The 'nationality' which it is said we should forfeit is not ours. We are at present not a nation but a dependency [...]."

¹²⁷See Wilson to White, 18 & 23 October, and 18 December 1892. In the Walter D. Gregory Fonds, Box A-1, Letters, 1890-1899, File 1892, M-Z.

¹²⁸The Continental Union Association of Ontario, *Continental Union: A Short Study of its Economic Side* (Toronto: Hunter, Rose & Company, 1893).

To think that we shall acquire a national spirit by remaining a dependency is as idle as is to imagine that under the present system we shall grow strong enough to be a match for the United States.”¹²⁹

To spread its message further the CUA sought to establish a newspaper in Toronto that would be the mouthpiece of the political union movement. As early as July 1892 E.A. Macdonald, who later served briefly as Mayor of Toronto, had developed a scheme to create a pro-union newspaper, had established contacts with John Cameron of the London *Advertiser* and David McGillicuddy of the *Huron Signal*.¹³⁰ According to a letter that Cameron sent to Gregory on 2 January 1893, a political union newspaper was established in Toronto under the Sun Printing Company. However, much like the CUA itself, the newspaper was wrought with internal issues. “It is rumoured here,” Cameron informed Gregory, “that [E.A.] Macdonald is the Editor – if so please let me know for if he has anything to do with it, he will only damage the cause.”¹³¹ The newspaper only printed one issue before fading into oblivion.¹³² Although this venture failed, it shows that the members of the CUA were exploring numerous avenues to promote political union.

E.A. Macdonald delivered an address on political union at Boston’s famous Faneuil Hall in the fall of 1892. His speech tried to cover as many aspects of political unionism as possible, including Canada’s slow economic development, the superiority of republicanism, and America’s Manifest Destiny. Macdonald told his audience that he

¹²⁹Ibid, 41.

¹³⁰Elgin Myers to Gregory, 9 July 1892. In the Walter D. Gregory Fonds, Box A-1, Letters 1890-1899, File 1892 M-Z; Pennington, *The Continentalist Movement*, 263. As Pennington has pointed out, neither Cameron nor McGillicuddy were willing to convert their papers into the official organ of the movement despite the fact that both were supporters of the CUA.

¹³¹John Cameron to Gregory, 2 January 1893. In the Walter D. Gregory Fonds, Box A-1, Letters 1890-1899, File 1893 A-L.

¹³²Pennington, *The Continentalist Movement*, 263.

believed that public sentiment in Canada in favour of creating a continental republic had grown in the early years of the 1890s. Thus, he rhetorically asked, “if it is desirable and inevitable, why not have it now and let us, as well as posterity, enjoy the fruits?”¹³³

Macdonald insisted that by remaining a separate political entity Canada would continue to develop slowly; only through union with the United States, thus establishing unlimited access to the ever-growing American market, could the Canadian people hope to be prosperous. In his speech he related an anecdote about how he was enthralled with the ideas of William Lyon Mackenzie, the leader of the 1837 rebellion in Upper Canada who desired greater liberty for the British American subjects. Macdonald even claimed that his father took up arms with Mackenzie during the rebellion and was forced into exile in the United States following the rebellion’s demise, events that led to Macdonald’s birth in Oswego, New York. Raised in a strong republican household, Macdonald thus viewed Canada’s limited monarchical system as “an unnatural hybrid system of government, veiled in allegory and illustrated by symbol.” As for the British monarchy, it is “a history of a thousand years of oppression, the people contending against the landed aristocracy for their liberty, their lives, and the boasted result is a mongrel production satisfactory to no one.” He further heaped scorn on Canada’s system of responsible government, viewing it as “a device of the landed aristocracy whereby a small wealthy minority can control and rob the nation, in the name of, and with the seeming consent of the majority.”¹³⁴ For the Canadian people to truly enjoy representation in their government, Macdonald reasoned, they needed to remove all ties to the British Crown and unite with the American Republic.

¹³³ *Address by E.A. Macdonald, Under the Auspices of the North American Union League, 23 September 1892* (Toronto, 1892), 2.

¹³⁴ *Ibid.*, 6-7.

United by a common language, history, and culture, Macdonald also reasoned that the Dominion and the Republic were moving closer together rather than further apart. As such, he believed the inevitable result was political union in North America. If the two countries continued a separate existence the possibility of war remained, which, Macdonald claimed, would be the most disastrous war civilization and the world had ever known. “Unite these countries under one flag,” however, “with a bond of common interest and that dreadful possibility war between [the United States] and Britain would be forever averted,” leaving in its stead a “far more friendly feeling between all parties than at present exists.” Macdonald was quite confident that union would occur. As he informed his audience, “I verily believe that it is the design and will of Omnipotence that the English speaking peoples of the world shall federate for the preservation and advancement of the human race,” and that union would take place within seven years.¹³⁵ Much of what Macdonald said in his speech at Faneuil Hall was not new, but a rehashing of several familiar ideas. Advocates of political union generally agreed on these things: that Canadians required unlimited access to the expanding American economy if they were to become materially prosperous; that republicanism was superior to monarchism; and that only through political union could the “Anglo-Saxons” of North America not only avoid a disastrous and costly war but also unite for the betterment of all mankind.¹³⁶

In the spring of 1892, as the Continental Union Association formed, for the first time the legality of promoting political union with the United States was called into question. Much like the controversy about the right of free speech that arose between Myers and Mowat in the spring-summer, this issue relied on whether or not publicly

¹³⁵Ibid, 3, 9, 12.

¹³⁶The importance of “race” and republicanism is further explored in Chapter Four.

promoting political union constituted a treasonable offence. Interestingly, this question was not debated in the House of Commons. It appears that it was only broached twice in Parliament. The first occurred on 19 May during discussions about the revised Criminal Code. MP Philippe Auguste Choquette (Montmagny, QC) simply asked the Minister of Justice, John Thompson, “Would a speech favouring annexation be seditious?”

Thompson’s reply was, “Not if the person thought that the constitution should be changed by lawful means.”¹³⁷ The second instance occurred on 25 May during another discussion of the Criminal Code. This time MP David Mills (Bothwell, ON) further elaborated on the legality of promoting political union. “There was a member,” he said:

I think of the Local Legislature, representing one of the divisions of Essex [Solomon White], who went to Woodstock sometime ago and delivered a speech in favour of annexation, and for that speech he was not interfered with, he was not prosecuted. It was allowed to be within the limitation of the exercise of his judgement. I suppose he proposed to bring about these revolutions by the sanction of public office; but suppose that speech were printed and copies of it were sent through the post office, the hon. gentleman [Thompson] would make it a criminal offence.

In response to Mills, Thompson admitted that such an action would not be considered disloyal nor treasonous: “The agitation of the question, or speaking in advocacy of a change in the relations of this country with other countries, to which change Her Majesty would be a party, would in no sense be considered disloyalty.”¹³⁸

Advocating union with the United States in the past was presented as a treasonous undertaking, as made evident during the 1891 election. Yet the legality of the issue had not been addressed before 1892. While on the surface Thompson’s statements in Parliament appeared to reverse what the Conservatives had said the year before, it spoke

¹³⁷Canada, Parliament, *House of Commons Debates*, 7th Parl, 2nd Sess, Vol. 35 (25 May 1892).

¹³⁸*Ibid.*

to the fact that the Minister of Justice did not believe that the movement for political union was a serious threat. It was one to be monitored and opposed, but it did not require the arrest and prosecution of its advocates as per the criminal code. Unfortunately for Thompson his words came back to haunt him.

On 21 December 1892, M. Walsh of Ingersoll, Ontario, wrote to Thompson, who had recently become Prime Minister, to raise his concern about the growing number of political union meetings taking place in south-western Ontario. Most importantly, “These men,” Walsh wrote, “have, it seems to me, formed ‘an intention’ to depose Her Majesty ‘from the style, honour and royal name of the Imperial Crown of this Dominion,’ and the question is whether openly advocating that intention at a public meeting is an overt act rendering them liable under [Section 69 of the Criminal Code].”¹³⁹ According to Section 69 of the 1892 Criminal Code of Canada, regarding Treasonable Offences:

Everyone is guilty of an indictable offence and liable to imprisonment for life who forms any of the intentions hereinafter mentioned, and manifests any such intention by conspiring with any person to carry it into effect, or by any other overt act, or by publishing any printing or writing that is to say –

- (a.) an intention to depose Her Majesty from the style, honour and royal name of the Imperial Crown of the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Ireland, or of any other of Her Majesty’s dominions or countries;
- (b.) an intention to levy war against Her Majesty within any part of the said United Kingdom, or of Canada [...]
- (c.) an intention to move or stir any foreigner or stranger with force to invade the said United Kingdom, or Canada, or any other of Her Majesty’s dominions or countries under the authority of Her Majesty.¹⁴⁰

Walsh believed that those affiliated with the CUA, and anyone that supported political union more broadly, were guilty of treason, specifically under subsections (a.) and (c.).

¹³⁹M. Walsh to John Thompson, 21 December 1892, in the Sir John Thompson Fonds, LAC, MG26-D, Reel C-9260, 21340.

¹⁴⁰Criminal Code 1892, 55-56 Victoria, Chap. 29 (Ottawa: Printed by Samuel Edward Dawson, Law Printer to the Queen’s Most Excellent Majesty, 1892), 49-50.

He also suggested that the authorities take note of the “treasonable talk” that was spreading throughout the province.

In early 1893 the CUA issued a Pronunciamento that outlined details of how the proposed “Federated States of North America” would operate. Signed by Toronto lawyer S.R. Clarke, the Pronunciamento began by quoting Sir John Thompson’s speech in Parliament that advocating political union “was **NOT TREASONABLE** or indictable so long as those advocating the union confine themselves to peaceful agitation, and do not propose to bring about such result by force of arms.”¹⁴¹ This was a clever use of Thompson’s responses in the House of Commons to further promote continental integration. Whereas George Denison feared what such a statement would do, Thompson, as Chris Pennington has stated, “reacted to it all with his characteristic good cheer, telling Denison that ‘The pronunciamento is really a wonderful production and the manner in which they have twisted my expression displays ability worthy of a better cause.’”¹⁴² The Prime Minister was clearly not concerned about the publication of the Pronunciamento or the legality of promoting political union. Had Thompson made a declaration in opposition as John A. Macdonald had done with the Farrer pamphlet in 1891 or as Mowat had done by dismissing Myers in the summer of 1892, it likely would have provided more attention for the CUA and added further legitimacy to the idea of political union.

The Pronunciamento contained a detailed description of how the new “Federated States of North America” would be organized and function. Most importantly, the new nation was to be “federal in character, as that now prevailing in Canada; but to be also strictly Republican, thereby ensuring the election by the people of all presidents,

¹⁴¹*Pronunciamento of the Continental Union Association of Toronto* (n.d.) in the Sir John Thompson Fonds, MG 26-D, LAC, Reel C-9261, 21939. Emphasis in original.

¹⁴²Pennington, *The Continentalist Movement*, 265, fn.

governors, or rulers.” It was essential for the CUA to make clear that no other system of government was to be considered other than republicanism. Support for republicanism not only reflected the personal desires of the members of the CUA, it also recognized that Americans would not consider political union with Canada if Canadians opposed the adoption of a republican form of government. Besides the election of representatives, a republican government would also ensure that “The national government [would] be prohibited from establishing any religion, or from interfering with the free exercise thereof,” and that “Each province and State [would] have full and absolute control within its own boundaries, in all matters of religion or conscience.”¹⁴³ Freedom of religion and State’s Rights, two essential aspects of American republicanism, were especially important for French-Canadian advocates of political union.

In its conclusion the Pronunciamento made perfectly clear that

The members of this Association pledge themselves to use all lawful and honourable means to promote the cause of continental unity as herein described. Our aim is to form a perfect union among the people of this continent; [...] to secure the blessings of freedom to ourselves and our posterity; to insure peace; to provide for the common defence; to promote the general welfare, and to make the Federated States of North America with their 70,000,000 people, the most powerful, progressive, and wealthy nation in the world.”¹⁴⁴

This peaceful declaration avoided a treasonable offence and a life sentence in prison, as it did not violate Section 69 of the Criminal Code of 1892. More importantly, it was also consistent with the desire to peacefully establish a continental republic and avoid a hostile annexation. However, despite this clear outline of how the new Federated States

¹⁴³For the full text of the Continental Union Associations Pronunciamento see the Sir John Thompson Fonds, LAC, MG26-D, Reel C-9261, 21939.

¹⁴⁴Ibid.

would operate, there is no evidence that the Pronunciamento caused a rise in membership or participation within the CUA.

The Continental Union Association of Ontario was plagued with difficulties right from its inception. Its founders, as Pennington has noted, “had drafted an ambitious constitution.” But although it received some degree of support from Canadians and Americans, it fell short of “the aggressive promotion that had first been envisioned.”¹⁴⁵ The CUA’s Secretary, Thomas White, “carried on a voluminous correspondence,” reaching up to thirty or forty letters a day. Yet as Gregory recalled in his autobiography, “we had no confidence in his judgement and finally he retired.” Soon thereafter its President, John Morrison, resigned, and Gregory sought to do the same.¹⁴⁶ William Algie’s assumption that the CUA could garner one thousand members paying a five-dollar yearly membership fee also did not pan out. An examination of the financial records in the Gregory Fonds reveals that the organization received some monetary contributions from people across Ontario. But between 1893 and 1896 the organization was spending a considerable sum on the rent at the Canada Life Building, printing costs, and advertising fees.¹⁴⁷ Only Thomas White received a salary and Goldwin Smith paid it directly.¹⁴⁸ Indeed, had it not been for Goldwin Smith’s personal fortune, more specifically his wife’s, the CUA would have collapsed much earlier.

Although the CUA received correspondence until 1896 it was essentially moribund by mid-1894. It was, if nothing else, a well-meaning attempt to inform Canadians about what they perceived to be the advantages to union with the United

¹⁴⁵Pennington, *The Continentalist Movement*, 263-264.

¹⁴⁶Gregory autobiography, 109-110.

¹⁴⁷See the Walter D. Gregory Fonds, Box 13, File F, Financial Papers.

¹⁴⁸Gregory autobiography, 109.

States. But it did not amass a strong following and it lacked the financial support necessary to maintain such an organization. So, as Pennington astutely concludes, the CUA “was too small, too amateurish, too anonymous, and above all, too narrowly Ontario-based.”¹⁴⁹

Yet there was more happening across Canada that influenced the movement for political union outside of Ontario. In the late 1880s and early 1890s, considerable economic, social, and political problems emerged in Manitoba and the North-West Territories that threatened to upset the status quo. On 30 July 1892 the Judicial Committee of the Privy Council (JCPC) ruled that Manitoba’s government could abolish publicly-funded Catholic and Protestant schools after reviewing the cases of *Barrett v. Winnipeg* and *Logan v. Winnipeg*.¹⁵⁰ Reactions to this ruling in Quebec, where the majority of Canada’s French-speaking population lived, were overwhelmingly negative. This ruling was viewed by French Canadians as one more example of how French-language and Catholic rights were slowly being eliminated in the Dominion despite the protection that the BNA Act supposedly afforded. As Patrice Dutil has concluded, “the Manitoba Schools Question helped to revive the notion that annexation to the United States was desirable.”¹⁵¹ Donald Warner also noted that the social tensions caused by the controversy in Manitoba convinced many Quebecers, both English- and French-speaking, that union with the United States was required.¹⁵²

¹⁴⁹Pennington, *The Continentalist Movement*, 260.

¹⁵⁰John S. Ewart, *The Manitoba School Question* (Toronto: The Copp, Clark Company (Limited) Publishers, 1894), 21.

¹⁵¹Patrice Dutil, *Devil’s Advocate: Godfroy Langlois and the Politics of Liberal Progressivism in Laurier’s Quebec* (Montreal-Toronto: Robert Davies Publishing, 1994), 62.

¹⁵²Warner, 209-210.

One of the more emphatic proponents of political union in Quebec was Godfroy Langlois, a young newspaper editor who had imbibed the ideas of the *Rouges* while working for *La Patrie* in Montreal. Throughout the summer and fall of 1892 Langlois used his position to advocate for the immediate union between Canada and the United States. He used the ruling by the JCPC to argue that “The time has come to put an end to concessions and to make ourselves [French Canadians] respected. [...] There must be a national awakening in all four corners of Papineau’s province.”¹⁵³ He believed that only as American citizens could French Canadians assure their linguistic and religious rights, especially with regards to education.¹⁵⁴ Though the movement for political union was making inroads in Quebec, Langlois was distraught that more attention was not being given to it amongst French Canadians. In an article in *L’Écho des Deux-Montagnes* (Ste.-Scholastique, Quebec) on 10 November Langlois lamented this fact, writing: “La grande cause de l’annexion du Canada aux États-Unis fait de grands progrès de tous les jours dans la province d’Ontario et elle n’en fera dans notre province que lorsque cette question vitale aura froidement et sérieusement été discutée devant le public.”¹⁵⁵

Despite Langlois’s impassioned calls for political union in Quebec most of the province’s newspapers remained relatively quiet on the issue of “annexation” following the JCPC decision. Reports on the Manitoba Schools rulings appeared intermittently between August and November of 1892, but articles backing political union were extremely rare. One reason for this is that the JCPC ruling caused a rise in French-Canadian nationalism. That Quebec was the true homeland of French Canadians became

¹⁵³Dutil, 61.

¹⁵⁴For Langlois’ full attitudes on the matter of the Manitoba Schools Question and its impact on his “annexationism”, see Dutil, and *L’Écho des Deux-Montagnes*, the “Organe du parti libéral dans le district de Terrebonne,”

¹⁵⁵*L’Écho des Deux-Montagnes*, 10 November 1892.

an influential rallying cry in the province. Unfortunately for Langlois, the Manitoba Schools case did not provide a major spark in favour of political union with the United States.¹⁵⁶ *La Patrie*, however, used the opportunity to discuss political unionism that was gaining momentum in Ontario and Quebec. On 3 October, for example, printing an article under the headline “L’Union Politique,” it argued that Canadian independence – an option that was presented in opposition to political union – would be detrimental to the Canadian economy whereas union with the United States would be beneficial for both countries. It also claimed that “Le mouvement [d’annexion] s’accroît de plus en plus,” but it provided no clear examples to back this up.¹⁵⁷

In response to the increased attention toward political union in light of the Manitoba Schools ruling, *Le Canadien*, a Liberal newspaper published in Quebec City, strongly opposed union with the United States on 1 September 1892. Written by Théo Bertrand, the article rejected the idea that French Canadians would be better off as American citizens. “Il n’en est pas ainsi de nous,” Bertrand wrote, “Canadiens-français. Nous sommes ici chez nous; nous sommes les vrais Canadiens. Nous aimons le Canada non pas comme une seconde patrie.” His conclusion, though, provided the most relevant and insightful summary of the issue of political union in Quebec: “Il existe dans l’esprit, de presque tout les colons l’idée de former à côté des États-Unis un pays libre et indépendant, et je ne crois que l’idée d’annexion fasse jamais beaucoup de progrès, surtout si nos relations commerciales avec nos voisins viennent s’améliorer.”¹⁵⁸

¹⁵⁶For a detailed description of the Manitoba Schools Question and its impact on French-Canadian nationalist discourse, see A.I. Silver, *The French Canadian Idea of Confederation, 1864-1900* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1982), specifically chapter nine.

¹⁵⁷*La Patrie*, 3 October 1892.

¹⁵⁸*Le Canadien*, 1 September 1892.

Bertrand's conclusion was somewhat prophetic, as the desire for political union quickly evaporated as Canada's economic conditions began to improve the following year.

Although the Manitoba Schools controversy incited some to support political union in Quebec, it did not suddenly make the province a hotbed of "annexationist" sentiment. An examination of the newspapers across the province in the aftermath of the Manitoba Schools Question reveals that expressions in favour political union were rare and were reserved to the small group of the movement's supporters, namely Langlois and those associated with *La Patrie*.

Hoping to capitalize on the attention afforded to political union in the summer and fall, however, a large conference was organized at Montreal's Sohmer Park on the night of 28 November 1892. The topic: Canada's destiny. A sizeable number, between 5,000 and 7,000, attended the conference, the majority of whom were French Canadian, including a sizeable number of women. On the day of the conference *La Patrie* published a special invitation to the women of Montreal to attend: "Les dames sont spécialement invitées à assister à cette intéressante séance dans laquelle on discutera de l'avenir du pays. On veut qu'elles expriment hardiment leur opinion en cette circonstance, et c'est pour cela qu'elles prennent part aux suffrages au même titre que les hommes."¹⁵⁹ The exact number of participants is unknown. For example, *La Patrie* stated that close to 10,000 had attended; *Le Quotidien* reported close to 9,000; while the *Montreal Gazette* stated a mere 4,000.¹⁶⁰ In Toronto, the *Globe* wrote, "The immense auditorium, which

¹⁵⁹*La Patrie*, 28 November 1892. The Toronto *Globe* mentioned in its report on 29 November that there "The gathering included a sprinkling of women..."

¹⁶⁰*La Patrie*, *Le Quotidien*, *Montreal Gazette*, 29 November 1892.

seats 7,000, was packed, and several hundred remained standing all evening.”¹⁶¹

Whatever the precise figure amounted to, it was a well-attended political conference.

Joseph-Xavier Perrault organized the conference in hopes of forming connections between the continentalists of Ontario and Quebec. Perrault was an agronomist by profession, and while he opposed Confederation, he was more concerned with improving the economic welfare of French Canadians. As one of his biographers concluded, “A man of boundless energy, Perrault throughout his life kept the economic advancement of his compatriots uppermost in his mind. A Liberal politically, he supported political independence for Canada and commercial union with the United States.”¹⁶² While planning the conference Perrault sent a letter to T.M. White, the CUA Secretary, informing him of the possibility of making former Quebec premier Honoré Mercier as the leader of the political union movement. It read:

The province of Quebec is ready for anything and has been all along but Ontario has kept us back. We are waiting till you are ready for action and I believe that you are fast coming into line. [...] Mercier is the man for delivery if he will come forward squarely and fiercely... [...] If you want Mr Mercier to take the lead you should sent a deputation from Ontario, Conservatives and Liberals to ask him to do so and pledging your support... I have no doubt Mr Mercier will accept for he is well disposed.¹⁶³

It is likely that Perrault reached out to White to capitalize on the attention that the movement for political union had garnered in order to advance the cause of Canadian independence. Perrault made this clear to White in a letter dated 17 December 1892 in

¹⁶¹Toronto *Globe*, 29 November 1892.

¹⁶²François Hudon, “Perrault, Joseph-Xavier,” *Dictionary of Canadian Biography Online*, Accessed 5 February 2014, <http://www.biographi.ca/en/bio/perrault_joseph_xavier_13E.html>.

¹⁶³Pennington, *The Continentalist Movement*, 261.

which he outlined, “We prefer going for independence first and then make our own bargain with the U.S. and keep all the advantages to ourselves.”¹⁶⁴

Regardless of Perrault’s reasons, four respected orators took the stage that night to defend their preferred course for Canada’s political future. The first was J.T. Cardinal, the president of Montreal’s *Club Conservateur*, who proposed maintaining the status quo. Next came Archibald McGoun, a professor of law at McGill University, who advocated in favour of Imperial Federation with Britain. The most popular speaker of the night was Rodolphe Lemieux, law partner of Honoré Mercier, who championed the cause of Canadian independence. Finally, Elgin Myers praised the benefits of political union with the United States. Each speaker also sat in front of a flag that represented the political option they supported. Cardinal and McGoun sat before the Union Jack while Myers sat in front of the Stars and Stripes. Interestingly, Lemieux sat in front of the so-called “independence flag” that, according to the *Toronto Globe*, was “a curiosity, consisting of three stripes of the English, American, and French, red, white and blue placed longitudinally, and in the background seven gold stars representing the seven provinces of the Dominion...”¹⁶⁵

According to Myers, Canada could never hope to become a strong political power or achieve commercial greatness if it remained a dependency of a European nation. He argued that Confederation was a failure and that Canadian independence would not solve the problems that plagued the young Dominion. Only union with the United States would make Canadians a strong people. He referred to this proposed union as a natural confederation as indicated by Providence. Speaking directly to the French-Canadian

¹⁶⁴J.X. Perrault to Thomas White, 17 December 1892. In the Walter D. Gregory Fonds, Box A-1, Letters 1890-1899, File 1892 M-Z. Emphasis in original.

¹⁶⁵*Toronto Globe*, 29 November 1892.

attendees, Myers also stressed that as a state in the American union Quebec would have more political power and freedom since Congress had no power to veto state legislation.¹⁶⁶

At the end of the presentations a vote was held, allowing attendees to choose one of the options presented. A total of 2,999 ballots were cast that night, with the voting distributed as follows: 364 for the status quo; 29 for Imperial Federation; 1,164 for independence; and 992 for union with the United States.¹⁶⁷ Sympathy toward political union with the United States had been growing in Quebec in the years after the 1891 election, especially with prominent figures revealing their support.

In the days following the conference public reactions were mixed, which was reflected in newspaper reports. Some papers believed that the conference was a success, such as *L'Etendard* (Montreal). "La réunion au Parc Sohmer hier soir," it reported on 29 November, "a été magnifique," and "[I]es orateurs ont été écoutés et applaudis." *La Minerve* (Montreal) and the *Toronto Globe*, echoed similar sentiments.¹⁶⁸ Yet not all responses were positive. *La Presse* (Montreal) believed that the people should not take the conference seriously because "la soirée pour n'avoir pas le caractère sérieux d'une réunion politique, a cependant été fort intéressante et parfois amusante."¹⁶⁹ The English-language *Montreal Gazette* reported that the conference "Turned Out a Fizzle. A good

¹⁶⁶While the conference at Sohmer Park provides a fascinating insight into the heart of the debate over Canada's destiny, it is too multifaceted to explain it at length here. Several sources, however, have addressed the conference at length. See: *Le Canadien*, 29 November 1892; the *Toronto Globe*, 29 November 1892; *La Patrie*, 29 November 1892; *Le Quotidien*, 29 November 1892; *La Minerve*, 29 November 1892; *L'Etendard*, 29 November 1892; *La Presse*, 29 November 1892; *La Gazette de Joliette*, 7 December 1892; the *New York Times*, 29 November 1892; Warner, 210; Pennington, *The Continentalist Movement*, 260-261; Robert Rumilly, *Honoré Mercier et son temps*, tome II (1888-1894) (Montréal: Fides, 1975), 340; Aaron Boyes, *Canada's Undecided Future: The Discourse on Unrestricted Reciprocity and Annexation in Quebec, 1887-1893* (Unpublished MA Thesis, University of Ottawa, 2010), 90-99.

¹⁶⁷Warner, 210.

¹⁶⁸*L'Etendard*, *La Minerve*, *Toronto Globe*, 29 November 1892.

¹⁶⁹*La Presse*, 29 November 1892.

natured crowd assembled to hear four orators discuss the future of Canada and laughs at them.” The *Gazette* also believed that “The balloting was a farce,” because “The annexationists who ran the meeting voted several times, as they had the foresight to gather in a heap of the programmes containing the ballots.”¹⁷⁰

The meeting at Sohmer Park was one of the only instances in which a large-scale public vote was directly taken on the issue of Canada’s political future. It, plus the meetings in Ontario, demonstrates that over the preceding years support for political union had grown in the Dominion. By the end of 1892 the movement for political union had emerged as a serious political issue in Canada. It boasted an organization in Ontario and it had some support in Quebec. Public meetings were held on the topic, and newspapers constantly reported on the development of political union sentiments. But the use of the loyalty cry during the 1891 election had had the most important impact on its development. Opponents to political union continued to use the loyalty sentiment, but it appeared that their objections only strengthened the resolve of the advocates. The success at Sohmer Park in late 1892 had also provided a new wave of support amongst French Canadians, which was reflected in two subsequent public conferences the following year.

Despite some considerable growth, at no point did political union ever become a “popular movement” or have the support of a majority of Canadians. Its advocates were limited to a small group of like-minded individuals who had limited success promoting their cause on a national level. Meetings held in Ontario and Quebec showed that the idea of political union had some degree of support, but a national platform from which to promote it did not materialize. A significant reason for this was an overall absence of leadership. Political unionism lacked a strong personality that could direct and coordinate

¹⁷⁰Montreal *Gazette*, 29 November 1892.

the efforts of the disparate group of advocates. As Wilfrid Laurier somewhat prophetically told Walter Gregory in October 1891, “The movement for political union which now manifests itself in certain counties is not yet a serious one, but it might very soon become so, if a prominent man were to place himself at the head of it.”¹⁷¹ Goldwin Smith was the most obvious and likely candidate to lead the movement for political union, and many regarded him as its *de facto* leader. Yet Smith was reluctant to accept the position and he never officially assumed that role. Indeed, there was a distinct lack of agency amongst the movement for political union, which explains why it experienced a sharp decline and one final gasp before its demise.

¹⁷¹Laurier to Gregory, 26 October 1891. In the Sir Wilfrid Laurier Fonds, MG 26-G, LAC, Reel C-738, 1913.

Chapter Three: Towards the End of the Movement, 1893-1896

By the beginning of 1893, while political unionism had become a significant aspect of the political discourse in Canada and to some extent in the United States, it was by no means a “popular movement.” While most of the interest in political union between 1890 and 1892 originated from Canada, in 1893 another surge of support emerged in the United States as the National Continental Union League (NCUL), an organization akin to the Continental Union Association (CUA), was created in New York at year’s end. The Canadian economy, which had been plagued by recessions since the 1870s, slowly began to show signs of improvement. In the United States, however, after years of sustained growth the economy experienced a sharp decline. With increased prosperity in Canada interest in political union quickly dissipated while Americans focused their attention on opening new international markets and acquiring overseas territories. By late 1894 political unionism was moribund. It was only due to the Venezuela Crisis of 1895-1896 that the prospect of political union enjoyed one last gasp before fading into historical oblivion.

In early 1893 more public meetings were convened in Ontario to discuss Canada’s political future. The first occurred on 13 January when a large gathering was held in Toronto, which provided a platform for the new Prime Minister Sir John Sparrow David Thompson to address the nation and outline his party’s plan for the future. Organized by the Young Men’s Conservative Association, approximately three thousand heard the Prime Minister speak.¹ First and foremost, Thompson’s speech outlined that he would continue with the National Policy, as he believed it was the only way to ensure Canada’s

¹*The Quebec Gazette*, 18 January 1893. According to this report, the auditorium was completely full.

economic development. With regards to the nation's slow economic growth, Thompson assured his audience that "there are no 5,000,000 of people in the world [*sic*] more busy and more prosperous, more active and more alive to the wants of their country and trade of their country than the 5,000,000 of Canadians are to-day." By continuing to follow the National Policy, first established in 1879, the Conservatives would "make this country a great country, a united country, and a nationality of itself."²

Promoting the National Policy was not the only aspect of Thompson's speech. Instead, he spent a good portion of his directly challenging the growth of political union sentiment in Canada that seemed to have developed over the years. Much like his predecessors, Thompson returned to the reliable message that Canada would continue to mature while maintaining its British connection. "That is why," he said, "in coming before you [...], I feel bound to tell you that we intend to stand by the policy which will make Canada a nationality of which every Canadian will be proud, and that we intend, above all things, that that nationality shall be based upon British principles and [the] British connection." The Prime Minister remarked that a great change had occurred in the United States, as more than ever Americans were interested in annexing Canada. Canada, therefore, had to be more vigilant in protecting its political future. "Everybody knows," he argued:

that with the great nation to the south of us, comprising sixty millions of people, immensely strong in war, immensely powerful even in peace, and immensely aggressive in the pursuit of their trade and commerce, and every interest that belongs to them, it requires the vigilance, care and help of the empire to keep the independence of Canada and safeguard the rights of Canada to-day. The man who advocates independence while we are in that state of national existence advocates practically the absorption

²Toronto *Globe*, 14 January 1893.

of Canada – indirectly in effect, if not by intention – the absorption of this country by the United States.³

According to the Toronto *Globe*, Thompson received a great applause for his defence of the British connection and his opposition to political union.

The Prime Minister was, however, somewhat incorrect in his assessment of political union sentiment in the United States. By 1893 American statesmen had turned their attention to the Pacific and the Caribbean for future expansion, not north to Canada. Furthermore, some of the earliest proponents of political union had gone silent. There were of course those in Canada that also rejected Thompson's positive depiction of the success of the National Policy. For example, on 20 January 1893 the Toronto *Globe* printed a letter from T.M. White, Secretary of the Continental Union Association (CUA), which challenged the Prime Minister's message. White believed that Thompson and the Conservatives were not telling the Canadian people the truth about Canada's economic growth. Moreover, that the figures the Conservatives based their conclusions on were inflated. The Canadian people were not prospering, White argued, and thus the National Policy should be questioned. Surprisingly, however, White did not make an overt appeal in support of political union in his letter to the editor.⁴

A second meeting occurred a few days later on 17 January in Stouffville, Ontario. Here, Thomas White and S.R. Clarke, two prominent CUA members, spoke about the benefits of political union. White detailed Canada's poor development since Confederation while Clarke lauded American republicanism and republican institutions, which he viewed as superior to those of Canada. Despite their best efforts, the meeting was not considered a rousing success, as neither speaker received much applause.

³Ibid.

⁴Toronto *Globe*, 20 January 1893.

However, about half of those in attendance stood in support of political union when a motion was proposed. As the Toronto *Globe* reported about the meeting, “The great majority of the people of Stouffville may not be in favor of annexation, but they are not afraid of hearing the question discussed.”⁵

Though political unionism continued to appear in the public discourse, Ontarians were not the only ones that openly discussed their country’s future. Following the example of the conference at Sohmer Park two more public meetings convened in Montreal to once again address union with the United States. The first occurred on 17 March 1893 when Jean-Baptiste Rouilliard delivered a speech in support of continental union at the Club national. As a young man Rouilliard enlisted in the Union Army and fought during the American Civil War.⁶ It was likely during those years that he developed an attachment to republicanism, which he espoused later in life by founding several newspapers in New England that promoted political union.⁷ This speech, however, did not receive the same media attention afforded to the one at Sohmer Park in the previous November. Only one notice advertising Rouilliard’s speech could be found within the pages of *La Patrie* on 16 March.⁸ The number of attendees was not recorded, which makes determining the impact of Rouilliard’s speech difficult. But much like the conference at Sohmer Park a sizeable number of women were in attendance, something that Rouilliard noted in his introductory remarks. As he said, “Les dames de Montréal, en

⁵Toronto *Globe*, 18 January 1893. Stouffville is about fifty kilometers north of Toronto, in what is now considered the Greater Toronto Area.

⁶André Bélisle, *Histoire de la presse franco-américaine* (Worcester, MA: L’Opinion publique, 1911), 288-91.

⁷Pierre Rannou, *Jean-Baptiste Rouilliard et la variole à Longueuil, 1885-1886* (Longueuil: Les Éditions Chantal Déragon, 2002), 55-56.

⁸See *La Patrie*, 16 March 1893.

véritables patriotes ont tenu de démontrer par leur présence, qu'elles sont aujourd'hui encore, comme l'étaient leurs aïeules, favorables à l'union."⁹

Rouilliard spoke for two hours on the topic of political union with the United States, and his speech outlined what he believed would be the advantages for French Canadians if a continental republic were formed. In terms of economics, Rouilliard argued that union with the United States made sense because:

nous avons un territoire plus grand que celui des États-Unis, et notre population n'étant pas à peu près qu'un douzième de celle de l'Union Américaine. Nous avons donc beaucoup de terrain à occuper, à développer, à exploiter et ce qui mieux est, nos 70 millions de voisins sont en état de nous aider à utiliser nos vastes ressources, ce qui nous enrichirait et permettrait à nos compatriotes de demeurer au Canada.¹⁰

Both Canadians and Americans would greatly benefit from the removal of the border and the development of a continental-wide economy. Economic improvement was an important aspect of Rouilliard's speech, but he did not spend much time on it. Interestingly, Rouilliard did not initially support the idea of political union with the United States. Rather, he preferred to see the establishment of a reciprocity treaty and not "annexation". In fact, between 1887 and 1889 Rouilliard wrote several articles in *Le Patriote* (Sorel, Quebec) and *La Patrie* in which he outlined why reciprocity was preferred over political union.¹¹

Rouilliard's main focus in his speech was on the political and cultural plight of the French-Canadian community of Quebec. He believed that Confederation was imposed by the British to force the assimilation of French Canadians. By remaining subservient to the English-speaking minority in Quebec, this would eventually be

⁹Jean-Baptiste Rouilliard, *Annexion: Conférence l'Union Continentale* (Montréal, 1893), 1.

¹⁰Ibid, 27.

¹¹See *Le Patriote*, 8 November 1887; 23 February 1888; 29 March 1888; 6, 12, 27 December; 14 February 1889.

accomplished. As a *Rouge*, Rouilliard blamed the Catholic clergy for the submissiveness of French Canadians which kept them subservient to Canada's English-speaking population. He rejected the idea so often presented by the clergy that French Canadians would lose their national identity as citizens of the Republic. The success of French-speaking communities throughout the United States, especially in New England, was proof that French Canadians could retain their linguistic and cultural identity, central elements of *la survivance*.¹²

He also blamed the clergy for the widespread anti-republican sentiment that was so prevalent in French Canada. "Ce sentiment," he declared:

de haine anti-républicaine que l'on remarque parmi le clergé catholique d'origine française au Canada, est la conséquence des traditions perpétuées dans les collèges, dans les écoles où l'on avait l'habitude [*sic*] de représenter la république comme la forme de gouvernement la plus cruelle, la plus injuste, la plus couverte d'opprobres, où la vertu était condamnée et le vice loué [...].¹³

Rouilliard's own republicanism was evident throughout his speech as he defended the government and institutions of the United States and presented republican ideas in the best light possible. Such was his opinion about republicanism and the free practice of religion: "le système républicain appliqué en religion comme en politique, possède une supériorité indéniable, indiscutable, car il ne pourrait, comme l'hérédité, donner des chefs ou des pontifes ignorants, vulgaires, [ou] criminels [...]."¹⁴

Rouilliard consistently emphasized that political union was necessary to ensure *la survivance*. "Certains écrivains," he told his audience, "menacent l'élément français d'être absorbé par les 65 millions de citoyens américains. Nous comprendrions ce danger

¹²Ibid, 2-41.

¹³Ibid, 5.

¹⁴Ibid, 13.

s'il nous fallait occuper aux États-Unis, la position que l'on nous fait dans l'Empire Britannique avec ses quatre cent millions de sujets [...]”Unlike in Canada, where Quebec was but one province within the vast British Empire, as a state in the American Union, Rouilliard argued that Quebec would have much more autonomy to preserve its institutions, language, traditions, and culture. Instead of being spread out across the various provinces of the Dominion, Rouilliard proposed creating a large French-speaking state in which French Canadian affairs would be directed and safeguarded.¹⁵ French Canadians would then finally be removed from the persecution they experienced as British subjects. Besides, “Le gouvernement des États-Unis n’a jamais persécuté nos ancêtres comme le firent les Anglais, les maîtres du Canada *Colonial*.”¹⁶

The main goal as envisioned by Rouilliard, therefore, was

de créer un ou des États ayant une majorité composée d’influences aux aspirations françaises. Ce sera le moyen de préserver l’élément français déjà fixé aux États-Unis, ainsi que les groupes dispersés dans différentes localités de la Confédération, lesquels trouveraient alors dans l’État de Québec les avantages qu’ils sont forcés d’aller chercher aux États-Unis.

For Rouilliard it was imperative that French Canadians support political union with the United States to create a French-speaking state to ensure *la survivance*. Under a republican government French Canadians would have complete control over education and religion, and they would not be persecuted as they had been previously under the English regime.¹⁷

At the conclusion of Rouilliard’s speech a new “national flag” for French Canadians was also revealed: “six jeunes filles vêtues de tricolore et portant dans leurs mains, les unes, des corbeilles de fleurs, les autres, le drapeau, débouchèrent sur la scène

¹⁵Ibid, 20-21.

¹⁶Ibid, 21. Emphasis in original.

¹⁷Ibid, 21.

par une porte latérale et déployèrent aux regards des spectateurs enthousiasmés le drapeau-modèle du futur État de la ‘Nouvelle France.’”¹⁸ This was the second new ensign introduced in the past six months, joining Lemieux’s “independence flag.” According to the Montreal *Daily Herald*, the new flag “was the tricolor reversed with wreaths of maple leaves and stars and [a] cross.” Following the presentation of the new flag Rémi Tremblay, then Editor-in-Chief of *La Patrie*, took the stage and read a poem titled “Le Drapeau du 14ième,” reminiscing of his military service with Rouilliard during the American Civil War, which was received with stirring applause.¹⁹ In the printed version of Rouilliard’s speech Tremblay included the poem “LA GRANDE LOI DE L’ANNEXION,” which he dedicated to “mon ami J.B. Rouilliard.”

Despite the topic and the success at Sohmer Park in November 1892, Rouilliard’s speech did not draw much media attention and most historians have overlooked it.²⁰ Aside from a positive article in *La Patrie* and a mixed response to his speech in the pages of *La Minerve*, Rouilliard’s conference went relatively unnoticed.²¹ A few months after the fact the young *Rouges* journalist Godfroy Langlois praised the appearance of Rouilliard’s speech in pamphlet form, stating in the pages of *La Liberté* (Ste.-Scholastique, Quebec), “Nous accusons réception d’une brochure contenant la magnifique conférence de notre ami M. J.B. Rouilliard.”²² Nonetheless, Rouilliard presented several clear reasons why Canadians, and Francophones in particular, would be better off forming a continental republic with their American neighbours. His influence,

¹⁸Ibid, 41.

¹⁹Ibid, 41, 45, 47.

²⁰For reports on Rouilliard’s speech, see *La Patrie*, 18 March 1893; *La Minerve*, 18 March 1893; and *La Liberté*, 4 May 1893.

²¹See *La Patrie* and *La Minerve*, 18 March 1893.

²²*La Liberté*, 4 May 1893.

however, was limited. He was unable to incite a wave of support for political union and the vast majority of French-Canadians remained opposed to union with the United States.

On 4 April 1893 another public meeting on Canada's future was held in Montreal, although this one had much more of an impact. Former Quebec Premier Honoré Mercier came out of semi-retirement to speak on the topic of Canadian independence at Sohmer Park. For several years Mercier had been asked his opinion on Canada's future and each time his response had been purposefully vague. This conference, which was attended by upwards of eight thousand, provided the opportunity for Mercier to once and for all clarify his thoughts on his country's future.²³ Many attendees, though, were disappointed as the former premier was once again ambiguous. He stated that as Confederation was a failure because it had not achieved the goals that the British North America Act had set out to accomplish, it was time for Canadians to decide their political future. Mercier saw only two viable options: independence or union with the United States. According to Robert Rumilly, sentiment in favour of Canadian independence was growing in popularity amongst the younger generation of French Canadian liberals, while political union remained more popular with those born before Confederation who were associated with the *Rouges*.²⁴ Amongst the older generation that desired union with the United States was Louis-Joseph-Amédée Papineau, the son of the famed *Patriote* leader Louis-Joseph Papineau.

According to the *Quebec Daily Telegraph*, which published a long report on Mercier's speech, the former premier "said that in very many minds, the immediate entry of Canada into the American union was the only practical solution of the difficult

²³*Quebec Daily Telegraph*, 5 April 1893.

²⁴Robert Rumilly, *Henry Bourassa: La vie publique d'un grand Canadien* (Montréal: Les Éditions Chantecler Ltée, 1953), 20.

problem of Canada's future." Mercier, however, "respected that opinion, but did not share it [...]." He would not dismiss the belief that union with the United States could in time become Canada's ultimate destiny, which would "carry with it many a great moral and material advantages," but that was not what he desired for his country.²⁵

On the issue of religion, Mercier "ridiculed the pretended fears of those who claimed to see in annexation a grave danger to the religion of French Canadians." In the United States, he outlined, Americans were free to worship as they pleased as religious freedom was one of the pillars of American society. He also did not believe that the French language would disappear in the United States. Unlike the Cajuns of Louisiana who had largely been assimilated over the previous century, French Canadians knew how to fight to keep their language, culture, and their heritage. In his support of Canadian independence Mercier was candid about the type of government that the Dominion should adopt. Only a republican government "was best suited to the situation and the circumstances." This was because Mercier viewed republicanism as "the simplest and least expensive" form of government, and also that it "would be unjust and dangerous to provoke the United States, which would certainly not look with a favorable eye upon the establishment of another monarchy" alongside it.²⁶

Yet it was his concluding remarks that left many in the audience confused. Mercier stated that Canada should become independent so that it may "treat with the United States for annexation [...]." ²⁷ While on the surface this was a direct call for political union with the United States, Mercier was a shrewd politician. By advocating both independence and political union he garnered the widest body of support for his true

²⁵*Quebec Daily Telegraph*, 5 April 1893.

²⁶*Ibid.*

²⁷Rumilly, *Henry Bourassa*, 20.

passion, which was Canadian independence.²⁸ His speech, therefore, was not about promoting annexation; rather, it sought to convince the supporters of political union of the need for Canadian independence.

Mercier's pursuit of Canadian independence, and also union with the United States, did not go unnoticed. For the next two months the print media in Central Canada and the Maritimes debated the prospects of independence and political union, spurring discussion and providing further legitimacy to the idea of forming a continental republic with the US.²⁹ The day before Mercier's speech, *La Patrie* – an unabashed supporter of union with the United States – printed an article stating, “Nos lecteurs connaissent notre opinion en ce qui concerne l'avenir du pays. Nous sommes convaincu que l'Union politique continentale est le but vers lequel devraient tendre les efforts de tous les hommes sérieux.” Those at *La Patrie* also saw the advantages to Canadian independence as the first step towards forming a continental union. For example, “Que le Canada soit nécessairement destiné à faire partie, tôt ou tard, de la grande république américaine cela ne laisse pas l'ombre d'un doute dans notre esprit. Cela n'empêche pas que tout mouvement en faveur de l'indépendance aura nos sympathies.”³⁰

The day after Mercier's speech *La Patrie* called it “Un éloquent et vigoureux plaidoyer en faveur de l'annexion.”³¹ The Conservative press, on the other hand, was not as pleased. *Le Quotidien* reported that despite the calls for independence Mercier was actually advocating annexation. Because of this fact, “Il est donc évident que M. Mercier

²⁸Robert Rumilly stated that Mercier “a toujours recommandé l'indépendance plutôt que l'annexion.” *Honoré Mercier et son temps*, tome II, 365.

²⁹See the *Toronto Globe*, 5 April, 18 July, and 10 August 1893; the *Ottawa Free Press*, 6 and 14 April, 8 May 1893; the *Toronto Empire*, 5 and 6 April 1893; *La Presse* 3 April 1893; *Le Quotidien*, 6 April; *Le Trifluvien*, 15 April 1893; the *Saint John Globe*, 12 April 1893; the *Halifax Morning Herald*, 5 April 1893.

³⁰*La Patrie*, 3 April 1893.

³¹*Ibid*, 5 April 1893.

possède de très faibles notions de patriotisme.”³² The mixed reaction to the idea of political union in Canada was clear for all to see in the aftermath of Mercier’s speech. Some, emphatic in their support, hoped that Mercier was right that independence would lead to political union. Others in conservative circles abhorred this prospect.

Mercier’s speech even garnered attention in the United States. On 30 May 1893 the Michigan Club asked him to speak about the future of Canada and the prospects of political union at its Annual Dinner scheduled for 22 February 1894. After nearly a year of correspondence, Mercier eventually declined the invitation, citing that he would have preferred to present his ideas on Canada’s future to more important political figures in the United States.³³ With his conference at Sohmer Park Mercier quickly had become the most sought after orator on the important issue of Canada’s future as well as its relations with its southern neighbour.

During the summer of 1893 Mercier travelled to the United States and delivered numerous speeches, the majority of which were in New England and to Franco-American audiences, on Canadian-American relations, Canadian independence, and political union. Opponents believed that Mercier was in the US to drum up support for political union. They pointed to an interview in *The New York Times* in which Mercier said that “three-fourths of the people [of Quebec] favor annexation.”³⁴ Yet Mercier refuted these claims, stating: “je suis allé aux États-Unis pour deux motifs principaux. D’abord connaître les conditions sociales et matérielles dans lesquelles se trouvent nos compatriotes émigrés, et

³²*Le Quotidien*, 6 April 1893.

³³Henry A. Haigh to Mercier, 30 May 1893. In the Fonds famille Mercier, Bibliothèque et Archives nationales du Québec, P 28 S1, reel 10444.

³⁴Chris Pennington, *The Continentalist Movement in the Politics of Canada and the United States 1887-1894* (Unpublished PhD Dissertation, University of Toronto, 2007), 262.

ensuite pour les intéresser à la cause de l'indépendance du Canada."³⁵ Mercier also fuelled the controversy by meeting with the prominent political unionists Andrew Carnegie, the wealthy steel magnate, and Charles Dana, editor of the *New York Sun*, in New York in the hope of securing American capital for the upcoming provincial elections in Quebec.³⁶ While the connection between these men and the political union movement is obvious, Mercier's true intentions are not entirely clear. Certainly some Canadians and Americans hoped that Mercier would accept financial assistance from Carnegie and run on a platform of political union. But, in all likelihood Mercier, desired the money in order to further promote Canadian independence or to simply promote his political return.

Although Mercier's speaking tour in the spring and summer of 1893 certainly reinvigorated the idea of political union in Quebec, his speeches did not generate a flurry of pro-union sentiment as Conservatives had feared. Save for the reports in various newspapers across Quebec, Mercier's speech created little stir. That little was done to promote political union in the province in the aftermath of Mercier's speech shows that the issue of joining the United States was once again blown out of proportion by the Conservative press. By the fall of 1893 support for continental union was in decline, and despite the hopes of supporters that Mercier would become the movement's leader, his speech did not breathe new life into it. Most importantly, there was no real movement for political union in Quebec. Unlike in Ontario, which hosted the CUA, there was no central organization in Quebec, while the advocates of political union did not work together with

³⁵Rumilly, *Honoré Mercier et son temps*, 368.

³⁶Robert Craig Brown, *Canada's National Policy, 1883-1900: A Study in Canadian-American Relations* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1964), 254.

other like-minded individuals to bring about the political amalgamation of Canada and the United States.³⁷

French-Canadian attention toward political union had certainly grown in 1892 and 1893, and according to a small group “annexation” to the United States was the best option for Canada’s French-speaking population. In November 1893, for example, Louis-Honoré Fréchette published an important article, written for an American audience, titled “The United States for French Canadians.” Written in English, Fréchette’s aim was “to serve as interpreter of what I believe to be the opinion of most of my compatriots, the French Canadians of the Province of Quebec.” The roots of this yearning, he wrote, dated back to the Conquest when French Canadians were impelled to change their allegiance from France to the British Crown. Yet the loyalty shown to England after 1763, a pledge that French Canadians had kept for over a century, did not bind them to be loyal to Britain and the British connection forever. Thus, Fréchette believed that French Canadians had a much different approach to their political future because it was complicated “not only by difference of race and religion, but also by the instinctive feeling common to all conquered people.”³⁸

Whereas English Canadians felt a natural affection for the British Empire, due to “tradition, by intellectual association and by nationality,” French Canadians “have not at all the same motives of sacrifice towards Downing Street.” As Fréchette clearly outlined, “We are British subjects by neither blood nor choice. No particular affection binds us to England. We honor her flag which floats above us; we have before this spilt our blood in

³⁷For a more complete analysis of political unionism in Quebec, see the author’s *Canada’s Undecided Future: The Discourse on Unrestricted Reciprocity and Annexation in Quebec, 1887-1893* (Unpublished MA Thesis, University of Ottawa, 2010).

³⁸Louis-Honoré Fréchette, “The United States for French Canadians,” *The Forum*, November 1893, 336-338.

her defence, and we are ready to answer her call; but she does not awaken with us any of those same feelings which stir a nation.”³⁹ The “racial” difference between French and English Canadians, according to Fréchette, made the failure of Confederation only a matter of time, which left only two options: Quebec independence or union with the United States. The former was rejected for French Canadians, not comprising a large enough population to sustain a national existence, would be at the mercy of their giant neighbour.⁴⁰ Consequently, a peaceful union with the American Republic would enable French Canadians to not only choose their destiny but also ensure *la survivance*.

Fréchette’s main point was that the idea of political union with the United States “has, during the last few years, made rapid progress with Canadians of French origin.”

This was true, he argued, because:

The memory of old quarrels has passed away; the murderous struggles of a former day are completely forgotten; even the name of *Bostonais*, which by reason of the long struggle, formerly called forth such antagonistic feeling amongst us, is not now heard once in a year throughout the length and breadth of the land. With it has disappeared also the name ‘Yankee,’ with its sordid or even contumelious significance.

Fréchette also believed that the clergy, which had recently reiterated its opposition to political union in the form of an 1891 pastoral letter, had appeared to soften its approach to the United States. As Fréchette declared, “The number of priests established in New England and especially in the great centres where French Canadian immigrants have gathered together have contributed not a little to destroy the legend of the ‘social slough’ and the *démagogie effrénée* [*sic*].”⁴¹ This analysis, however, appears to be wishful thinking. The Catholic clergy and French-Canadian nationalists alike remained staunchly

³⁹Ibid, 339.

⁴⁰Ibid, 342.

⁴¹Ibid, 343-344.

opposed to the United States and its society. As Damien-Claude Bélanger noted, “America was a secular nation, but it was also an essentially Protestant nation. And Protestantism, the *nationalistes* believed, was a worldly faith. It encouraged individualism, materialism, and secularism, which in turn spawned religious indifference.”⁴² It is highly doubtful that the clergy had changed its opinion on the United States and that it would offer its support to forming a continental republic.

Fréchette truly believed that “the fact is that, even to-day, were [French Canadians] consulted on the question under conditions of absolute freedom, without any moral pressure from either side, I am certain that a considerable majority of Annexationists would result from the ballot.”⁴³ Since no official poll was ever taken on this matter it is impossible to determine with certainty how the majority of French Canadians would have voted if presented with the option of political union. But due to the fact that no popular movement for political union materialized in Quebec, it is evident that most Quebecers did not support joining the United States.

Mercier’s speaking tour in the United States and his argument that a sizeable portion of his fellow countrymen desired political union gave a semblance of hope to American advocates. In the spring of 1893 an American counterpart to the Continental Union Association of Ontario was created, called the National Continental Union League (NCUL) with its headquarters in New York.⁴⁴ The key members of this American league were Charles Dana, Francis Wayland Glen,⁴⁵ and Andrew Carnegie. During the first few

⁴²Damien-Claude Bélanger, *Prejudice and Pride: Canadian Intellectuals Confront the United States, 1891-1945* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2011), 85.

⁴³Fréchette, 344.

⁴⁴Pennington, *The Continentalist Movement*, 269.

⁴⁵There is some discrepancy to the spelling of Glen’s surname within the sources available. Some sources have it spelled “Glenn,” while another “Glynnne.” For consistency, the spelling of his name reflects

months of 1893 Glen and his brother Gerrit Smith Glen travelled throughout several northern states seeking support and donations for the newly founded organization. By their trek's end they had accumulated over one thousand signatures of support, the majority of whom were from the North East.⁴⁶ Gerrit Smith Glen also sent a letter to the Continental Union Association of Ontario, which informed his Canadian counterparts of the American organization and the need for the movement for political union to spread from Canada to the United States.⁴⁷

Much like its Canadian equivalent, the NCUL desired “that all peaceful and honorable means should be used to consummate the political union of the United States and Canada.” This was because, according to its founding document known colloquially as the “Flag Circular”, the time had come for Europe to cease its direct control over Canada. By doing so it would help to unite the English-speaking peoples of the world for the greater good of humanity. “We earnestly desire,” it states, “to see the two great English families who now occupy this continent united under one flag upon terms generous, just and honorable to both of the contracting parties.”⁴⁸ The wording of this document is important. The NCUL clearly outlined that it sought political union and not annexation.

There was some, albeit limited, contact between the CUA and the NCUL, including several sojourns by Canadians seeking financial assistance from their American counterparts. In August 1893 Mercier travelled to New York and asked for donations for

how he himself signed his letters, as they appear within the Department of Justice Secret File on American Annexationists, 1893-1894, LAC, RG 13 vol. 963.

⁴⁶Pennington, *The Continentalist Movement*, 269; Department of Justice Secret File on American Annexationists, 1893-1894, LAC, RG 13 vol. 963, file two, Francis Wayland Glen Letters.

⁴⁷Gerrit Smith Glen to the CUA, 7 June 1893. In the Walter D. Gregory Fonds, Box A-1, Letters 1890-1899, File 1893, A-L.

⁴⁸NCUL Manifesto, Secret Justice File, LAC, 178-179.

the upcoming Quebec elections;⁴⁹ at this meeting Edward Farrer and W.D. Gregory were also in attendance.⁵⁰ Goldwin Smith was also in regular communication with the NCUL members. These few meetings and exchanges of correspondence appear to be the extent of the cooperation between the two groups. In his 1960 study Donald Warner concluded that both Canadians and Americans created the Continental Union League, though the name was slightly different in each country, implying that the organizations were a joint effort.⁵¹ This claim, however, is erroneous. While there was communication between founding members it would be incorrect to conclude that they were created in unison. Both groups advocated the same goal and used similar methods to promote their cause, but there was little concrete cooperation. Indeed, this failure to successfully combine their efforts helped to hasten the eventual demise of the movement for political union in the 1890s.

Yet the failure to cooperate between the Canadian and American organization was not the only element that led to the demise of political unionism. The NCUL was disorganized and somewhat inept. After the initial surge of financial support – the NCUL received \$3,120 from thirty-eight donors, including \$600 from Carnegie – it struggled to spread its message around the United States.⁵² It even had difficulties paying its lone employee, a typist by the name of S. Angela Barnard. In May 1895 Barnard wrote a letter to Goldwin Smith asking for payment of \$82.15 for typewriting work done for the NCUL. She initially had asked Francis Wayland Glen, but after getting no reply she

⁴⁹Mercier to Dana, 9 August 1893, Secret Justice File, LAC, 5-6; Warner, 236.

⁵⁰This was, at least, based on the recollection of Gregory. See his Autobiography in the W.D. Gregory Papers, Queens' University Archives, 110.

⁵¹Donald Warner, *The Idea of Continental Union: The Agitation for the Annexation of Canada to the United States, 1849-1893* (Lexington: University of Kentucky Press, 1960), 234. He explains this distinction in a footnote.

⁵²Secret Justice File, LAC, file 2, page 190.

turned to Smith because he was “one of the notable men connected with the annexation movement.”⁵³ There were even plans to publish a “who’s who” of political unionists in Canada and the United States, but this idea was abandoned. Francis Wayland Glen was a sincere supporter of political union. But, in the words of Chris Pennington, he “lacked the ability to properly promote the League,” and he “was often at odds with other annexationists, particularly John Morison in Toronto, and he alienated potential supporters in the United States.”⁵⁴ Given the inability to promote the NCUL’s cause Charles Dana had to send out a second request for financial support in November 1893.⁵⁵ This time the organization was largely unsuccessful in attracting new sponsors.

Although the NCUL was a failure it caused some degree of concern in Canada. In November 1893 an Irish-American journalist, Thomas Burke Grant, successfully convinced David Creighton, editor of the Toronto *Empire*, to keep track of the NCUL and the growth of the political union movement in the United States. Creighton, P.B. Waite revealed, “thought it would be useful to send a Canadian agent to New York to keep an eye on the activities of the American annexationists and their Canadian confreres. For once, [Prime Minister] Thompson agreed, and a secret file was prepared at the Department of Justice.”⁵⁶ Over the course of a year, Grant sent regular correspondence to Creighton – using an alias to protect his identity – about NCUL actions. His first letter, dated 24 November 1893, informed Creighton in no uncertain words that “This is no ordinary movement,” likely because it involved several prominent politicians of both

⁵³S. Angela Barnard to Goldwin Smith, 22 May 1895, Goldwin Smith Fonds, LAC, MG 29-D69.

⁵⁴Pennington, *The Continentalist Movement*, 273; this is also revealed in several letters within the Secret Justice File at LAC.

⁵⁵Secret Justice File, LAC, 6 November 1893, file 2, page 202.

⁵⁶P.B. Waite, *The Man from Halifax: Sir John Thompson, Prime Minister* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1985), 395.

political parties and men who represented big business in the United States.⁵⁷ Grant was also convinced that the NCUL leaders sought to persuade “Sir Wilfred [*sic*] Laurier, who is an annexationist at heart, [to] join hands and forces with Mr. Mercier, and come out publicly and squarely on the annexation issue.”⁵⁸

However dramatic Grant’s reports were, he was initially persuaded that the organization posed a serious threat to the security of Canada.⁵⁹ As time passed, and the NCUL failed to attract broad support, Grant realized that the American organization was not a genuine threat. In March 1894 Grant admitted his earlier misconception:

Now the more I am becoming acquainted with the leaders of this movement here and the more informed I become upon their plans, backing and so forth, the more visionary and bottomless the whole business seems to me and the more satisfied I become that what at a distance I believed to be a great national movement seems to be the work of a few mischief makers. If there is no annexationist sentiment in Canada there certainly is none here outside of a few.

“[R]est easy,” he continued, “that there is absolutely no popular feeling in this movement and once the cry of millionaires is raised the bubble will burst and the entire bottom will fall out of the movement.”⁶⁰ Despite this realization, Grant continued to send regular correspondence to Creighton about NCUL actions until October 1894.

Grant did more than send regular updates about the actions of the NCUL. In June 1894 he informed Creighton that he had recently “succeeded in inducing [S. Angela Barnard] to place herself in this matter under my protection and to cast her lot in with me.” Although the movement for political union was not the serious threat that he

⁵⁷Thomas Burke Grant to David Creighton, 24 November 1893, Secret Justice File, LAC, file one, pages 1-3.

⁵⁸Ibid, 26 February 1893, page 44.

⁵⁹Pennington, *The Continentalist Movement*, 273; Secret Justice File, LAC.

⁶⁰Grant to Creighton, 21 March 1894. Signed “Marcus,” Grant’s alias. Secret Justice File, LAC, file one, page 68-69.

believed, Grant was thorough in his task and was able to acquire “all [of Glen’s] letters and documents [Barnard] had, which as you will see embrace a complete list of these Americans who signed the flag circular and a partial list of which I sent to you in January and some additional names later on.”⁶¹ All of Glen’s letters then were passed on to Prime Minister Thompson where they were sealed in a Secret File in the Justice Department.⁶² The Prime Minister, was convinced that nothing would come from the agitation from the NCUL in New York, though he did inform the Governor General, Lord Aberdeen, in case London wanted more information.⁶³ An examination of the despatches from the Colonial Office to the British Ministry at Washington did not reveal any concern from London.⁶⁴ Throughout the process Creighton kept Thompson informed of developments in New York, as is evident from the letters received in Thompson’s personal papers.⁶⁵

Glen’s papers contain a wealth of information about the NCUL’s creation and development from November 1893 to October 1894. Not only was he an active promoter of political union, but Glen also in contact with a diverse array of figures in both Canada and the United States. For example, he corresponded with several American politicians at various times, such as Charles A. Chickering (Republican Representative, New York), W. Bourke Cockran (Democrat Representative, New York), Chauncey Depew (Republican Senator, New York), Anthony Higgins (Republican Senator, Delaware), and R.R. Hitt (Republican Representative, Illinois) to secure support for the NCUL and political union more broadly. Glen also corresponded with other figures associated with the political union movement, including Andrew Carnegie, Goldwin Smith, and Elgin Myers.

⁶¹Ibid, 6 June 1894, page 140.

⁶²Secret Justice File, LAC.

⁶³ Waite, *The Man from Halifax*, 396.

⁶⁴Office of the Governor General of Canada, LAC, RG7 G11 and G17A.

⁶⁵See the Sir John Thompson Fonds, LAC, MG 26-D, specifically Reel C-10534 and C-10538.

Between January and April 1894 Glen and Edward Farrer were in almost constant communication, discussing how continental union could be achieved. In particular, Farrer kept Glen and the American organization well informed about the actions of its Canadian counterpart. Throughout, Glen remained positive and on 22 February 1894 that “there is nothing to be discouraged about as far as Continental Union is concerned, everything is working well here.”⁶⁶ From reading these letters it becomes quite evident that Francis Wayland Glen was a sincere supporter and advocate of political union, who worked diligently in to make union happen.

Beginning in January 1894 Glen attempted to convince Honoré Mercier to support political union. For several years Mercier had been vague about his preference for Canada’s future, which was all the more muddled after his speech at Sohmer Park in April 1893. Yet Glen believed that Mercier had sympathy with the movement for continental union, and for good reason. Mercier had been influenced by *Rougeisme* and was certainly not opposed to working with supporters of political union. He was not, however, a supporter of continental union. Glen realized, though, that Mercier was needed to convince the French Canadian population of Quebec to also support the idea. As Glen wrote to Mercier on 22 January 1894, “It is a kind invitation from 70,000,000 to 5,000,000 to discuss reunion, will force a discussion all over the continent and in every capital in Europe. [...] Get Quebec right and all will come right.”⁶⁷ Another task Glen hoped Mercier could help with was to convince Wilfrid Laurier to join the cause. In a letter dated 16 March 1894, Glen advised Mercier, “Don’t try to elect Laurier to power as the mouth piece of Sir Oliver Mowat. His victory will only delay Continental Union. His

⁶⁶Secret Justice File, LAC, Glen to Farrer, 22 February 1894, page 218.

⁶⁷Ibid, Glen to Mercier, 22 January 1894, pages 257-258.

defeat will force him into your arms. I appreciate and love Laurier, but Continental Union more. I hope Mowat will fall in Ontario.”⁶⁸ As Laurier was a staunch opponent of political union with the United States, this was somewhat of a fool’s errand.

Glen’s attempt to add Mercier to the cause of political union is important even though he failed. Unlike other advocates, Glen realized that French-Canadian support was necessary if Canada and the United States were to form a continental republic. Most of the literature and speeches in favour of political union were disseminated in English and directed toward the “Anglo-Saxons” of North America, some of which, notably Goldwin Smith’s *Canada and the Canadian Question*, were openly hostile to French Canadians. The realization that French-Canadian support was required likely stemmed from Glen’s past experience as a Liberal Member of Parliament for Ontario South (1879-1887) and his understanding of the political and social division along linguistic lines in the Dominion. Although Glen’s effort failed, this was a concerted effort made by a sincere supporter of political union.

Glen’s correspondence shows a man that was continually frustrated by a lack of commitment on both sides of the border. As the NCUL consistently sought more supporters, Glen looked for assistance wherever he could. Certainly Creighton and Thompson would have been able to conclude from examining Glen’s correspondence that the movement for political union in the United States was very much a localized affair in New York and the northeast amongst only a small gathering of true supporters.⁶⁹ Much like its Canadian counterpart the NCUL did not attract a significant number of supporters, ultimately causing its failure. Despite initial interest, the majority of Americans were not

⁶⁸Ibid, Glen to Mercier, 16 March 1894, pages 269-270. Emphasis original.

⁶⁹Ibid, pages 178-294.

interested in pursuing union with Canada. After the failure to secure more funding and support after November 1893, the NCUL slowly faded into the background although it never truly ceased to exist as a second incarnation appeared briefly in 1901-1902.⁷⁰

The idea of political union with Canada resurfaced in Congress in early 1893 after little attention in the two preceding years. As seen previously, in 1888 and 1889 three bills were introduced in the House of Representatives and the Senate which had proposed an official US declaration of intent to form a continental union with the Dominion. But the bills died there. The Senate Committee on Relations with Canada also raised interest regarding political union, although it also did not submit a concrete proposal. Thereafter, discussions about political union in Congress all but disappeared until 2 February 1893 when Democrat Representative Amos Cummings of New York submitted H.R. 10404, “A bill [...] to provide for and facilitate commercial and political union between the United States of America and the Dominion of Canada.” Much like previous bills Cummings proposed that the Canadian provinces “be admitted into the Union by virtue of this act on an equal footing with existing States as soon as the terms and conditions of such admission and the cession of the remaining territory of said Dominion to the United States by the government of said Dominion shall be completed by the two governments,” with the full consent of the government of Great Britain.⁷¹ Like other bills before it, this resolution proposed a form of political union and not a forceful annexation. Also like the previous bills it was referred to the Committee on Foreign Affairs. In fact, Cummings

⁷⁰Former US General James H. Wilson, who had been interested in political union throughout the 1885-1896 period and had been in contact with Goldwin Smith and the CUA in Ontario, was elected president of the new incarnation of the NCUL in 1902. Box 9, James H. Wilson Papers, Manuscript Division Library of Congress, Washington, D.C.

⁷¹*Commercial and Political Union with Canada*, H.R. 10404, 52nd Cong., 2nd sess., *Congressional Record*: vol. 24, pt. 2:1104.

reintroduced his bill the following session on 6 September 1893 (H.R. 31), where it was once again referred to the Committee on Foreign Affairs without discussion.⁷²

Not until December 1894 did another proposal for political union appeared in Congress. On 18 December Republican Senator Jacob Gallinger of New Hampshire addressed the Senate about the necessity for political union with Canada. He proposed, “That we invite the Canadian people to cast in their lot with their own continent, and assure them that they shall have all the continent can give them. We will respect their freedom of action and welcome them when they desire it into an equal and honorable union.” Although not an official Senate Resolution, Gallinger wanted the matter be referred to the Committee on Foreign Relations.⁷³ Unsurprisingly, Gallinger’s resolution, like Cummings’, Henry Blair’s, and Benjamin Butterworth’s, did not garner debate in the Senate. The United States Senate as a whole was not interested in discussing the matter of political union with Canada. Moreover, by this time the United States had turned its attention to acquiring further territory in the Pacific Ocean and Caribbean Sea, most notably Hawaii and Cuba.

An examination of the discussions in Congress regarding political union with Canada between 1888 and 1894 is quite revealing. It shows that the idea enjoyed limited support in Congress but not amongst the majority of the Representatives or Senators, a fact which is generally reflective of the attitude amongst the American people. During the years 1885-1896 a total of five resolutions were presented in the House and the Senate. In each case they were referred to the Committee on Foreign Relations or Foreign Affairs where they simply died. The time elapsed between these bills is also important, as it

⁷²*Commercial and Political Union with Canada*, H.R. 51, 53rd Cong., 1st sess., *Congressional Record*, vol. 25, pt. 2:1270.

⁷³*Union with Canada*, 53rd Cong., 3rd sess., vol. 27, pt. 1:386-7.

shows that American statesmen were willing to give a hearing to the reasons in favour of political union. Still, a vast majority were unwilling to engage in a lengthy and serious debate over union with their northern neighbour. Besides, the United States had other, more pressing international and domestic issues to address during this era.

Thanks to NCUL actions, though, political union with Canada had once again become a talking point in the United States, albeit nowhere near to the degree that it had been in 1888 and 1889. Although those associated with the organization in New York could be pleased with their efforts, the attitude across the rest of the country was not as positive. In January 1893, for example, the *Washington Evening Star* rejected further aspirations to form a continental republic. “This country is big enough,” it stated, “and the proper management of its affairs affords its government all the business it can well attend to. The chief cause of the decline of the Roman empire [*sic*] was its annexation of foreign territory. The United States can certainly avoid that danger, and if their people are wise they will be sure to do so.”⁷⁴ The *Washington Evening Star*’s concern was that if the US grew too large it might fall prey to despotism and, even worse, become an Empire. To maintain its republican character, therefore, the United States should not entertain the idea of further territorial expansion.

Another reason why some Americans rejected union with Canada was because the Dominion was not a republic. By the 1890s Canada was one of only a very small number of American nations to retain its ties with a European power. Most of which were in the Caribbean, while the majority of others had successfully become republics. Some Americans rejected political union because Canada lacked a republican spirit. The *Los Angeles Times* made this very conclusion back in 1888:

⁷⁴*Washington Evening Star* (Washington, D.C.), 30 January 1893.

There is one controlling reason which is alone sufficient, in our judgement, to dispel all prospects of annexation ever becoming a fact accomplished, and that is this: Canada receives little or no immigration from the United States; little or no American blood is infused into the veins of the body politic; few republican ideas of the republican pattern, obtain lodgement among her people; there is no considerable element of her population who are believers in American institutions and methods of government to such an extent to make them active in the work proselyting the populace to the American cause.⁷⁵

Despite the influx of American ideas throughout the nineteenth century, republicanism remained unpopular amongst a vast majority of Canadians, as highlighted by the continued affirmation of loyalty to the Crown.

Because Canadians continued to eschew republicanism in favour of continued ties with the British Empire, some American newspapers cautioned their readers that Canadians would make poor American citizens. As *The Austin Weekly Statesman* (Austin, Texas) warned its readers, “Canada is not homogenous in its traditions with the United States, and if it was annexed the difficulty in adopting our form of government to the Canadians would be almost insurmountable.”⁷⁶ As early as 1889 the *Homer Guardian* (Homer, Louisiana) expressed an alarmist reaction to the prospect of political union: “To bring in such an immense voting population devoid of the free spirit of our institutions and government, could entail naught but curses on us. It is a bad omen that the senate considered such a thing even though it were done in the lightest manner.”⁷⁷

The political, social, and economic benefits that would be reaped by both Americans and Canadians, supporters believed, should have been enough to convince the majority of people in both countries to embrace the idea of political union. Besides, Canadians were individually annexing themselves to the United States by the tens of

⁷⁵Los Angeles *Times*, 15 December 1888.

⁷⁶*The Austin Weekly Statesman* (Austin, Texas), 27 December 1894.

⁷⁷*The Homer Guardian* (Homer, Louisiana), 22 March 1889.

thousands every year. According to the United States census bureau, between 1850 and 1890 the population of Canadian-born residents rose from 147,711 to 980,938, not including those that crossed the border and eventually returned to Canada.⁷⁸ This mass emigration caused serious concerns in Canada and some worries in the United States. Since thousands of Canadians opted to move to the United States every year the promotion of political union was seen by some as superfluous. As the *Rock Island Daily Argus* (Rock Island, Illinois) pronounced in 1893, “The brain and brawn of Canada seem to be annexing themselves as fast as they can without any formal act of government.”⁷⁹ Therefore, a patient United States could wait for Canada to seek entrance into the Union. As the old idiom went, Canada was like a ripening plum set to fall into the lap of Uncle Sam. But as the *Evening Capital Journal* (Salem, Oregon) quipped in opposition to political union: “Canada may want to annex, but who wants to pluck the ‘blamed thing,’ anyway? She’s a sour, tasteless plum at best, as a country.”⁸⁰

Despite the fact that the NCUL initially boasted over one thousand supporters, by 1894 that number had shrunk considerably. So much so that by February 1894 the *Scranton Tribune* offered an astute conclusion about the declining movement: “It is safe to say, that aside from a small coterie of blatherskites, who do not believe what they are saying, and a smaller coterie of ‘believers,’ who are ignorant of the conditions of the two countries, there is not a person who heartily and sincerely believes in annexation.” Overall, the majority of Americans were indifferent to political union, while a considerable portion was openly hostile to the idea. As the *Tribune* stated, “Nine-tenths

⁷⁸Michael Woodsworth, “Continental Drift: The Canadian Clubs of New York City and the Question of Canadian-American Relations, 1885-1914,” *International Journal of Canadian Studies*, 44 (2011), 139.

⁷⁹*Rock Island Daily Argus* (Rock Island, Illinois), 15 April 1893.

⁸⁰*Evening Capital Journal* (Salem, Oregon), 18 September 1890.

of the whole American people, on both sides of the line, would vote point blank against it. In the United States, we have all the problems we want to attend to without importing any.”⁸¹

It was a somewhat ironic twist of fate that at the same time supporters of political union had established two organizations to promote their cause, the Canadian economy, which had been sluggish since the 1870s, began to make a recovery. Between 1891 and 1893 a modest improvement in Canada’s economic condition occurred thanks to “good harvests, an increase value of agricultural products, and diversification [...]”⁸² By 1893 the economy showed direct signs of recovery, especially in terms of foreign trade. As Table 13 shows, after almost a decade of running trade deficits Canadians started to export more goods than they imported. By 1896, the surplus reached almost \$11 million, a considerable improvement from the bleakest year during the period under study of 1889 when the trade deficit was almost \$22 million.

Table 13: Foreign Trade, domestic exports, total exports, total imports, and the balance of trade, declared values in Canada, 1893-1896 (thousands of dollars)⁸³

Year	Domestic exports	Total exports	Total imports	Balance of trade
1893	105,489	114,431	115,171	-740
1894	103,852	115,686	109,071	+6,615
1895	102,828	109,313	100,676	+8,637
1896	109,708	116,315	105,361	+10,954

In addition, Britain once again became Canada’s prime trading partner following the expansion of the British agricultural market.⁸⁴ Canadians consistently traded more goods

⁸¹Scranton *Tribune* (Scranton, Pennsylvania), 24 February 1894.

⁸²John T. Saywell, “The 1890s,” in *The Canadians, 1867-1967*, J.M.S. Careless and R.C. Brown, eds. (Toronto: Macmillan of Canada, 1967), 113.

⁸³M.C. Urquhart, ed., *Historical Statistics of Canada* (Toronto: The Macmillan of Canada Company, 1965), 173.

⁸⁴Brown, *Canada’s National Policy*, 221.

with Britons than with their continental neighbours and the years between 1891 and 1896 experienced an increase in overseas trade to Britain (see Table 14).

Table 14: Foreign trade exports to Great Britain and the United States, excluding gold, 1886-1896 (thousands of dollars)⁸⁵

Year	Exports to Great Britain	Exports to the United States
1886	36,694	34,284
1891	43,244	37,743
1896	62,718	37,789
1901	92,857	67,984

While the economy was on the road to prosperity, surpluses were not present everywhere. After a few years of moving toward a balanced budget, the Dominion government once again experienced increased deficit spending (see Table 15).

Table 15: Canadian Federal government, budgetary expenditure, 1893-1896 (millions of dollars)⁸⁶

Year	Revenue	Expenditures	Difference
1893	36.4	40.9	-4.5
1894	34.0	40.9	-6.9
1895	36.6	42.0	-5.4
1896	37.8	40.9	-3.1

After thirty years of poor economic growth, however, the Canadian economy showed signs of promise.

Meanwhile, after decades of growth and industrial development the United States entered into a recession due in part to a mounting surplus of manufactured goods.⁸⁷ The 1880s and early 1890s was a period of prosperity and growth; but as Gilbert Fite and Jim Reese explained, “except for the short recession of 1890, economic conditions remained relatively favorable until the country was hit by the Panic of 1893. During the early months of 1893, there was a sharp downward trend in stock prices on the New York

⁸⁵Urquhart, 173.

⁸⁶Ibid, 202-203.

⁸⁷Charles S. Campbell, *The Transformation of American Foreign Policy Relations, 1865-1900* (New York: Harper & Row, Publishers, 1976), 142.

Stock Exchange, and by summer a genuine panic gripped the country.” Gold reserves also dipped below the traditional \$100 million stockpile, causing a general loss of confidence which plunged the nation into a depression. This depression lasted three years, and it was not until 1897 that recovery was truly evident.⁸⁸ By the end of 1893, according to John Steele Gordon, “some fifteen thousand companies had failed, along with 491 banks. The gross national product fell by 12 percent, and unemployment rose rapidly from a mere 3 percent in 1892 to 18.4 percent two years later.”⁸⁹

Another indicator of the American economic depression was the increase in the federal debt. Between 1885 and 1892, thanks to continued economic growth, the United States was able to significantly decrease its public debt, down from \$27.86 per capita in 1885 to \$14.74 in 1892. Beginning in 1893, however, the debt began to increase once again. As seen in Table 16, the public debt rose in each year between 1894 and 1896.

Table 16: Public debt of the US Federal government, 1893-1896 (millions of dollars)⁹⁰

Year	Total debt	Per capita
1893	961,432	14.36
1894	1,016,898	14.89
1895	1,096,913	15.76
1896	1,222,729	17.25

As the US economy continued to struggle, and the American people as a whole purchased fewer goods, many statesmen worried about underconsumption. As such, politicians and political leaders looked to expand into the Pacific Ocean and open trade with other foreign states to develop new markets for American goods. The most coveted territory was Hawaii as it would provide an American naval base halfway across the

⁸⁸Gilbert C. Fite and Jim E. Reese, *An Economic History of the United States* (Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1965), 306.

⁸⁹John Steele Gordon, *An Empire of Wealth: The Epic History of American Economic Power* (New York: HarperCollins Publishers, Inc., 2004), 264.

⁹⁰United States Department of Commerce, *Historical Statistics of the United States, Colonial Times to 1970* (Washington, D.C., 1975), 1118.

Pacific Ocean that would enable expansion into Asian markets. Beginning in 1893 and concluding in 1901, the United States underwent another period of overt expansion. Unlike in the past when the Republic advanced westward, in 1893 the United States stretched already from the Atlantic to the Pacific Oceans and the historic western frontier had been closed. Americans had become obsessed with securing more territory to not only open up more markets, but to also spread American values and ideas to the “lesser races” around the globe. Much has been written about this period in American history, especially the drive to open new markets and acquire territory in the Pacific. American historians, therefore, have focused intently on the annexation of Hawaii and the acquisition of Cuba, Puerto Rico, and the Philippines following the Spanish-American War (1898). Consequently, little attention has been afforded to political union with Canada.⁹¹

Due to the economic improvement in Canada and the economic downturn in the United States, an important impetus for political unionism had been removed. Donald Warner accurately summarized the general sentiment across North America, concluding that “This spectacular smash dropped the Republic into a terrible depression. As in 1873, the United States on its way back down passed the Dominion, which was beginning its long climb back to prosperity. Canadian envy of the United States, rankling for a decade,

⁹¹For more information about American overseas expansion during this period, see: Alfred K. Weinberg, *Manifest Destiny: A Study of Nationalist Expansionism in American History* (Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins Press, 1935); Harold U. Faulkner, *Politics, Reform, and Expansion, 1880-1890* (New York: Harper & Brothers, Publishers, 1959); R.W. van Alstyne, *The Rising American Empire* (Chicago: Quadrangle Paperbacks, 1960); Walter LaFeber, *The New Empire: An Interpretation of American Expansion, 1860-1898* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1963); Tom E. Terrill, *The Tariff, Politics, and American Foreign Policy, 1874-1901* (Westport, CT: Greenwood Press, 1973); Robert L. Beisner, *From the Old Diplomacy to the New, 1865-1900* (New York: Thomas Y. Crowell Company, 1975); Sean Dennis Cashman, *America in the Gilded Age: From the Death of Lincoln to the Rise of Theodore Roosevelt* (New York: New York University Press, 1984); Howard Zinn, *A People's History of the United States, 1492-Present* (New York: HaperCollins, 1999); Rebecca Edwards, *New Spirits: Americans in the Gilded Age, 1865-1905* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2006).

disappeared and carried with it the desire for annexation.”⁹² Warner is correct to an extent, but his conclusion is too simple. Although support for political union had waned, the idea did not all of a sudden vanish. Instead, it lingered for another two years as discussions were held on both sides of the border about the potential for uniting the continent. It is clear, however, that whatever support existed for political union had declined dramatically by 1895.

In late 1894 and early 1895 two public debates occurred in the United States on the topic of political union in North America. The first was held between the Universities of Kansas and Nebraska on the following topic: “Resolved: that Canada should be annexed to the United States.” Interestingly, debaters from both universities had contacted Goldwin Smith looking for advice and information about political union.⁹³ The second was held in North Clarendon, Vermont. One of the organizers, Gary Horton, wrote to Smith stating, “I will do my best to convince the people of this vicinity that Canada should be annexed.”⁹⁴ On 24 January, Horton triumphantly informed Smith that “The debate upon the question was held last evening and resulted in an overwhelming victory for annexation.”⁹⁵ As it is unknown how many people attended these debates their impact is questionable. What they do show, however, is that some Americans remained interested in a union with Canada. They were certainly a minority, but it is not surprising that Americans were interested in forming one large continental republic

⁹²Warner, 238.

⁹³Charles Skiles to Goldwin Smith and DJW to Smith, 19 November 1894, in the Goldwin Smith Fonds, LAC, MG 29-D69, Reel 6, M-2186.

⁹⁴Gary Horton to Goldwin Smith, 29 December 1894, LAC, MG 29-D69, Reel 6, M-2186. Emphasis in original.

⁹⁵Horton to Smith, 24 January 1895, LAC, MG 29-D69, Reel 6, M-2186.

considering the expansionist impulse that had been an essential aspect to American identity throughout the nineteenth century.

Nevertheless, by early 1895 the movement for political union was all but non-existent. Despite the initial support for the Continental Union Association in Toronto and the National Continental Union League in New York, neither organization acquired a broad support base. Public meetings on the topic, which had been infrequent at best in previous years, were no longer being held. Support remained limited to a small group of like-minded individuals. But the idea of political union was reinvigorated one last time in the nineteenth century during the Venezuela Crisis of 1895-96. During this crisis the poor relations between the US and Britain, strained since the Civil War, were exacerbated, leading some to fear that war was on the horizon. In the United States, plans were drafted on how to secure Canada if war broke out. Some American expansionists, such as Theodore Roosevelt and Henry Cabot Lodge, even believed that the Venezuela Crisis provided an opportune moment to secure Canada once and for all. Meanwhile in Canada, defence plans were prepared to counter an American invasion. For those that lived through the Crisis, it seemed that a third Anglo-American war had become unavoidable.

The Venezuela Crisis was a multifaceted issue in international politics and is much too large to discuss in full. However, a brief outline of the American and British position is necessary. The cause of the crisis arose from a dispute about the border between British Guiana and Venezuela.⁹⁶ In 1840 the British had drawn a border that was

⁹⁶The following is a brief summation of the events that led to the crisis as it relates to the political union movement in Canada and the United States. The information was gleaned from three sources: H. Paul Jeffers, *An Honest President: The Life and Presidencies of Grover Cleveland* (New York: William Morrow, 2000), 313-315; Richard Preston, *The Defence of the undefended Border*, 125-126; and Dorothy Marie Branding, *Canada and the Monroe Doctrine, 1895-1940* (Unpublished MA Thesis, University of Colorado, 1945), 9-11.

rejected by the Venezuelans because it was seen as too favourable to Britain. For the next several decades tensions mounted, as neither country was willing to cede extra territory. In 1876 Venezuela formally appealed to the United States “for assistance in the name of the Monroe Doctrine.” Named for the fifth president James Monroe, the 1823 Monroe Doctrine outlined US foreign policy regarding other American states. It stated that the United States was the dominant power in the Western Hemisphere and any attempt by a European power to colonize a part of North or South America would be viewed as a hostile act. In 1895 President Grover Cleveland, now serving his second non-consecutive term, initially preferred that Britain and Venezuela resolve the dispute through arbitration without American intervention.⁹⁷ Yet Cleveland also feared that Britain’s refusal to solve the border dispute peacefully masked a true intent, to expand British colonial territory in South America.⁹⁸ “Not only did the President believe that Britain was violating the Monroe Doctrine,” Charles Campbell has stated, “he also came to believe that Britain was bullying Venezuela [...] and brushing off American protests in an intolerable manner.” Cleveland’s tough stance toward the British stemmed from his own personal hatred of imperialism.⁹⁹

Despite Cleveland’s hopes, the British and the Venezuelans remained resolute in their claims. This refusal to negotiate continued to cause tensions and it appeared as though the United States, in defence of the Monroe Doctrine, would have to intervene. On 17 December 1895 President Cleveland issued a message to Congress stating that he would personally arbitrate between the British and the Venezuelans and would back his

⁹⁷Charles S. Campbell, *The Transformation of American Foreign Relations, 1865-1900* (New York: Harper & Row, Publishers, 1976), 194-95.

⁹⁸Jeffers, 313.

⁹⁹Charles Campbell, *The Transformation of American Foreign Relations*, 201.

decision with force if necessary. Cleveland's speech surprised many in Congress and it sent a shockwave throughout North America. In the United States, "A wave of patriotic fervour swept [the nation]," and "Calls for the invasion of Canada were heard, while the New York *Sun* carried the headline 'War if Necessary.'"¹⁰⁰

In 1893, Civil War veteran Henry B. Atherton spoke on the need for war to unite the continent. Britain, he believed, was conspiring to threaten the United States and only through war could Americans ensure that this threat was removed. Atherton was convinced that:

Annexation must come and continental unity will be achieved. War, if Canada or England choose to bring it on, will hasten that result. [...] I am inclined to believe that only by war will it be brought about. European states unite only as a result of war, peaceful unions do not take place. If it must be by war, the more sparse the population the less the resistance.¹⁰¹

By 1895 it appeared that Atherton might have been correct in his assumptions and that the need for war was at hand. Other Americans, like the boisterous future President Theodore Roosevelt and Massachusetts Senator Henry Cabot Lodge, openly called for war. Roosevelt revealed his support for war in a letter to Lodge, writing, "Personally I rather hope the fight will come soon. [...] The clamor of the peace faction has convinced me that the country needs war. Let the fight come if it must; I don't care whether our sea coast cities are bombarded or not; we would take Canada."¹⁰² Enforcing the Monroe Doctrine to ensure American dominance in the Western Hemisphere was important. But the Venezuela Crisis also enabled a pretext for which to secure Canada through the use of

¹⁰⁰Ibid, 190.

¹⁰¹Henry B. Atherton, *Which: American Unity or British Domination?* Memorial Address at Antrim, NH, 30 May 1893, 10.

¹⁰²Cited in David Nasaw, *Andrew Carnegie* (New York: Penguin, 2006), 499.

force. In fact, following President Cleveland's message the Irish National Alliance offered 100,000 men in order to conquer Canada.¹⁰³

American military personnel were discussing plans for an invasion of Canada. As Kenneth Bourne has revealed, "little has survived from the army's staff and intelligence records of the period to say much about their plans though it is clear from many tantalizing entries in their lists and indexes that they were still thinking of making their main attack upon Montreal from Lake Champlain," while at the same time disrupting various Canadian railroads.¹⁰⁴ Although a land invasion was considered, the most pressing concern for the United States was securing its maritime borders from the might of the Royal Navy. The US Navy was not a significant force, which meant that shipping and maritime defence would be at the mercy of the much larger British fleet. American Captain Alfred Thayer Mahan, author of the influential text *The Influence of Sea Power Upon History* (1890), recognized the British naval superiority and argued for the invasion of Canada in case of war. "Canada lies at our mercy," he said, "unless the British navy by action on our coasts can stay our hand. If our coast defences can hold the enemy in check a month, two months, we may obtain decisive advantages. If for six months, we can overrun Nova Scotia, and hold the enemy's only Atlantic coalfield."¹⁰⁵

In the words of Richard Preston, "For Canadians, the Venezuela problem was not a distant imperial question like those of 1878 and 1885. Even though the dispute was almost as remote from Canadian interests as the international incidents of those years, it

¹⁰³Ibid, 209.

¹⁰⁴Kenneth Bourne, *Britain and the Balance of Power in North America, 1815-1908* (London: Longmans, Green and Co Ltd., 1967), 319-320.

¹⁰⁵Ibid, 321.

raised the spectre of invasion.”¹⁰⁶ Due to such concerns newspapers across the country discussed ways in which the Dominion could defend itself against an American attack, never doubting that Britain would come to their aid in case of an invasion.¹⁰⁷ In January and February 1896, Captain A.H. Lee, a professor of strategy at the Royal Military College in Kingston, was planning the defence of Canada. In theory, Canada’s active militia numbered approximately 37,000 troops. Lee believed that 10,000 men would be needed to defend strategic cities such as Quebec, Halifax, Prescott, and Kingston, while another 1,000 militia would sit along the border between New Brunswick and Maine. A remaining 12,000 would be required to defend Montreal and Quebec along the border with New York, Vermont and New Hampshire.¹⁰⁸ This planning was deemed necessary to prevent an armed American invasion and subsequent annexation.

Despite all of the planning and strategizing historians have generally concluded that war was a remote possibility between the United States and Britain in 1895. Duncan Campbell asserted that “Although it is sometimes cited as the last time Britain and the United States nearly went to war, there is not much substance to the claim.”¹⁰⁹ Looking back on the threat of war, Kenneth Bourne concluded, “the crisis itself often appears to historians to have been ‘somewhat synthetic,’” and that the Americans, “Caught in their own bluff perhaps [...] seemed to get the more agitated about war.”¹¹⁰ Hindsight has also enabled another examination of the Canadian reaction to the threat of war. Richard Preston has suggested that in light of the threat of invasion, “the people of Canada were not greatly disturbed. Many of them believed that they understood American political

¹⁰⁶Preston, 126.

¹⁰⁷Branding, 13.

¹⁰⁸Bourne, 324.

¹⁰⁹Duncan Campbell, 188.

¹¹⁰Bourne, 319-320.

behaviour better than did the British.”¹¹¹ Goldwin Smith iterated the same sentiment in a letter in December 1895, stating that war was highly unlikely considering that trade relations between Canada and the United States were on a good standing. The Monroe Doctrine was still essential to American foreign policy, but with regards to Canada there was no real threat.¹¹² Although many signs pointed toward an Anglo-American conflict – and there were certainly some Americans who desired such a war – the actual possibility was remote.

The American and British desire to avoid an armed conflict impacted future negotiations between Britain and Venezuela, and a boundary commission was eventually established in January 1896 to study the case in South America, although a resolution was not founded until February 1897.¹¹³ Once again the importance of “Anglo-Saxonism” was a prevalent response and a reason for renewed peaceful negotiations.

The Venezuela Crisis, however, revealed the continued importance of the Monroe Doctrine in American foreign policy. As arbitrator during the dispute, the United States not only assisted another American state, it also protected its own interests. For all of the robust rhetoric used in defence of the Monroe Doctrine, however, the United States did not attempt to annex Canada due to British “aggression”. As the *Fergus County Argus* (Lewiston, Montana) explained, “This nation does not want Canada, it does not want any part of South America, but, it does insist that no European power shall extend her domain on this hemisphere by force of arms.”¹¹⁴ There was one way in which Canada could help the United States enforce the Monroe Doctrine without political union: declaring

¹¹¹Preston, 126.

¹¹²See Smith to Mowbray, 18 December 1895, Goldwin Smith Fonds, LAC, MG 29-D69, Reel M-552.

¹¹³Preston, 219.

¹¹⁴*Fergus County Argus* (Lewiston, Montana), 2 January 1896.

independence and becoming a republic. In this, Canadians could expect to receive the full support from the United States, which to some was a more beneficial option than political union.

The conclusion of the Venezuela Crisis inflicted yet another deathblow to the idea of political union. As Dorothy Branding has explained, “Across [Canada] the people united, bound together by the common danger which [...] seemed to threaten their peace. [...] The idea of voluntary annexation to the United States received a death-blow.”¹¹⁵ Even in the United States the desire to conquer Canada by force was rejected. During the Crisis Republican Senator Cushman K. Davis, for example, stated that “the interests of Great Britain and the United States in the great and common cause of civilization are too enormous and too vital to each of them,” to risk war. “No American soldier,” he continued, “will stand upon the soil of Canada; no American militia force will burn a Canadian village.”¹¹⁶ Besides, the British ultimately accepted American intervention to solve the dispute through arbitration.

British acceptance of American intervention, however, was part of a much more significant phenomenon. Beginning in the mid-1890s, a great rapprochement occurred between the United States and Great Britain, which dramatically changed the Anglo-American relationship, especially in the aftermath of the Venezuelan Crisis. Additionally, Britain was more concerned with the threat emanating from Germany. Many Britons were forced to accept the fact that their nation’s resources were stretched thin, thanks in large part to its increasing expansionist policies, as well as confronting other European

¹¹⁵Branding, 13.

¹¹⁶Ibid, 16.

powers on the high seas, and after 1898 this included the United States.¹¹⁷ The slow rise of the United States to world power status, although not realized until after the First World War, had begun by the latter years of the nineteenth century. Therefore, a significant part of the Anglo-American rapprochement was that Britain could no longer easily challenge the United States, which also altered relations in North America.

There was a second, and arguably more important, aspect of this rapprochement. In the last years of the nineteenth century a sense of “racial” unity appeared amongst English-speakers in Canada, the United States, and Great Britain. “Emphasizing their shared language, civilization, and forms of government,” as Edward Kohn noted, “many English-speaking North Americans drew upon Anglo-Saxonism to find common ground.”¹¹⁸ This “racial” unity was based partly upon “scientific and biological” arguments and the idea of Social Darwinism, which stated that only the strongest nations would survive in the changing world of the late nineteenth century. The English-speaking peoples, on account of their “Anglo-Saxon” heritage, were perceived as a superior “race” who would dominate world affairs. In his study *The Idea of Greater Britain: Empire and the Future of World Order, 1860-1900*, Duncan Bell revealed that some in Britain wanted to expand the reach and influence of the Empire due to the supremacy of the English-speaking “race”. “Most advocates of Greater Britain,” Bell explained, “hoped for some sort of alliance with the United States, although they differed over whether this was to be informal, and anchored in a shared culture, history, and interests, or whether it was to be

¹¹⁷Bourne, 340.

¹¹⁸Edward P. Kohn, *This Kindred People: Canadian-American Relations and the Anglo-Saxon Idea, 1895-1903* (Montreal and Kingston: McGill-Queen’s University Press, 2004), 4.

institutionalized in a federal structure of some kind.”¹¹⁹ A sense of shared “Anglo-Saxonism” helped to alleviate many of the long-standing issues between the United States and Great Britain, which in turn removed some of the impetus for forming a continental union with Canada.

The concept of “Anglo-Saxon unity” also influenced how some viewed political union. Henry Cabot Lodge believed in the inevitable union between Canada and the United States based upon the “Anglo-Saxon” idea. Not only were Canadians and Americans one people, but the sheer continental influence of the American Republic would eventually draw in the Dominion. In 1895 Lodge argued that, “I do think that all of the English-speaking races of the North American continent will eventually come under the direction of, if not the rule, of Uncle Sam. This may not mean absolute annexation to the United States for some time, but the tendency is bound to be in that direction.”¹²⁰ “Racial” thinking was not only common in the late nineteenth century, it was also an essential aspect of foreign policy and international relations. Some Canadians and Americans ardently believed that due to the common “racial” profile of the English-speaking inhabitants of North America political union was only a matter of time. *The Crittenden Press* (Marion, Kentucky) printed an article on 13 June 1895 in support of the “Annexation of Canada” based upon the “Anglo-Saxon” idea. “The Dominion of Canada and the United States,” its author declared, “are separated only by an imaginary line and the great lakes. They are peopled by the races of similar, if not the same characteristics;

¹¹⁹Duncan Bell, *The Idea of Greater Britain: Empire and the Future of World Order, 1860-1900* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2007), 254.

¹²⁰Scranton *Tribune*, 19 July 1895. Similar sentiments about the commonality of Canadians and Americans based upon the “Anglo-Saxon” idea can be found across the United States during this period. For more examples, see: *Daily Public Ledger* (Maysville, Kentucky), 16 February 1893; *The Yakima Herald* (North Yakima, Washington), 1 June 1893; *The Morning Call* (San Francisco, California), 10 September 1893; *New York Sun*, 22 April 1894; *The Scranton Tribune*, 21 November 1896.

both people are liberty loving and patriotic, and to promote the general welfare of both countries, I say nothing could be better than to form a union between these, the two great powers of America.”¹²¹ In an address to the Union League Club in Chicago in 1895, Harry Rubens also believed that union between Canada and the United States was the best option for all because “[Canada’s] population is to an overwhelming degree composed of people of our blood, of our religion, of our customs, [...] accustomed to self-government, peaceable, [and] law-abiding [...]”¹²²

The grand rapprochement removed much of the impetus toward political union in English Canada. In French Canada, however, there were still those who believed that Canada’s destiny lay in union with its southern neighbour. In 1896 Edmond de Nevers, described by Damien-Claude Bélanger as “Quebec’s most brilliant annexationist,” published his influential study *L’avenir du peuple canadien-français*.¹²³ Born Edmond Boisvert, de Nevers, amongst other talents, was a skilful writer who travelled extensively in Europe and the United States, and was considered to be the greatest French Canadian intellectual of his time. As Claude Galarneau stated, “Although he wrote mainly about Canada, Quebec, and the United States, de Nevers was nevertheless well informed about the major problems confronting the western world in the late 19th century.”¹²⁴ Unlike his French-speaking contemporaries that supported political union, such as Honoré Beaugrand, Louis Fréchette, Jean-Baptiste Rouilliard, and Godfroy Langlois, de Nevers was not influenced by *Rougeisme*. De Nevers rejected Imperial Federation, and he

¹²¹*The Crittenden Press* (Marion, Kentucky), 13 June 1895.

¹²²Harry Rubens, *The Dominion of the United States: An Address by Harry Rubens at the Union League Club, Chicago* (1895), 4.

¹²³Bélanger, *Prejudice and Pride*, 148

¹²⁴Claude Galarneau, “Boisvert, Edmond, Edmond de Nevers,” *Dictionary of Canadian Biography*, <http://www.biographi.ca/en/bio/boisvert_edmond_13E.html>.

believed that Canadian independence was not possible; therefore, Canada's only "option" was union with the United States.¹²⁵

While Rouilliar and Fréchette viewed union with the Republic in positive terms, in that French Canadians would thrive as American citizens, de Nevers differed considerably. After providing a rich history of French Canada from the founding of New France in the seventeenth century up to 1894, de Nevers concluded that French Canadians were at an impasse. "Réconciliés maintenant avec notre situation de vaincus," he lamented:

le dernier obstacle à notre complet développement disparaissait. Le moment était venu, pour nous, de lever haut la tête; de montrer que si nous avons tenu à conserver l'héritage de nos ancêtres, ce n'était pas en vain; de prouver que l'élément français était appelé à prendre en Amérique une part brillante aux luttes pacifiques d'une ère nouvelle. Le moment était venu, enfin, d'affirmer avec énergie que nous pouvions créer, nous aussi, des richesses, et des richesses de l'ordre le plus élevé. Malheureusement, au lieu de cette ardeur enthousiaste qui eût été si naturelle chez un peuple jeune et plein de sève, c'est un souffle d'apathie et d'égoïsme qui a passé sur notre province. On s'est dit que le temps des sacrifices était passé; le *chacun* pour soi a tout envahi. Et c'est ainsi que sans lutte, nous nous en allons à la dérive, lentement, insensiblement, vers l'absorption finale.¹²⁶

De Nevers stood apart from his fellow Francophone supporters of political union because he did not enthusiastically promote the idea of political union as the saving grace for French Canadians. Although union with the United States was inevitable, de Nevers shared the opinion that the French-speaking "race" in North America would not be assimilated into the wider English-speaking society of the continent.

What also set de Nevers apart from other French-speaking political unionists was how he envisioned the future continental republic. Rather than forming a state in the

¹²⁵Bélanger, *Prejudice and Pride*, 148.

¹²⁶Edmond de Nevers, *L'avenir du peuple canadien-français* (Paris: Henri Jouve, Éditeur, 1896), 62-63.

union as an “expansionist annexationist”, de Nevers believed that the continent would be more like a loose confederation of “ethnic blocs,” thus enabling French Canadians to finally assume their New World and North American destiny.¹²⁷ Within a wider North American union the French language would also be ensured its survival, as all French-speakers, located primarily in Quebec and the American north-east, would combine to have a significant influence. As de Nevers stated in *L’avenir*, “Les fils de notre race se réuniront en un groupe puissant pour les œuvres de paix, d’humanité et de progrès.”¹²⁸ Most importantly, de Nevers believed that “Nous sommes les maîtres de notre destinée,” a concept that was shared by his fellow supporters of political union.¹²⁹ While political union with the United States may not occur for many years, de Nevers thought that Canada was slowly drifting toward its continental neighbour, and that political union would be the fulfillment of its destiny.

Whereas de Nevers was sympathetic to the American Republic, Jules-Paul Tardivel was openly hostile and was a fierce opponent to continental union. An American by birth, Tardivel has been described by one of his biographers “the herald of French Canadian nationalism” as he promoted a strong attachment to conservative values, most specifically centred on the Catholic Church, and opposition to the assimilation of French Canadians in North America.¹³⁰ Tardivel was critical of many facets of American society, such as its democratic republicanism, yet he was most outspoken against the official state secularism of the United States.¹³¹ Tardivel most desired the creation of an independent

¹²⁷Bélanger, *Prejudice and Pride*, 148.

¹²⁸De Nevers, *L’avenir*, 424.

¹²⁹Ibid, 426.

¹³⁰Pierre Savard, “Tardivel, Jules-Paul,” *Dictionary of Canadian Biography*, <http://www.biographi.ca/en/bio/tardivel_jules_paul_13E.html>.

¹³¹Bélanger, *Prejudice and Pride*, 64-65.

French-speaking state in North America made up of Quebec, New England, and parts of Ontario.¹³²

By the end of 1896, the idea of political union was no longer taken very seriously in either country. The United States focused more of its attention on securing overseas markets for its ever-expanding economy while at the same time attempting to add foreign territory to its sphere of influence. It was thus better to have peaceful and friendly continental relations with Canada than attempt to form a political union. In Canada, the Conservatives suffered an electoral defeat in 1896, and the Liberals had clearly shaken off the traitorous label that prevented their electoral success in 1891, ushering in a new era of Canadian history with the first French Canadian Prime Minister, Wilfrid Laurier. As J.W. Russell revealed in an article in the *North American Review*, the Conservative press had “repeated[ly] impugned the loyalty of the Liberals and represented their tariff principles as the cover of annexationist designs. [...] the annexationist propaganda never had any considerable number of friends in either party, and such as it had were about equally drawn from both.”¹³³ The Liberals had abandoned unrestricted reciprocity in 1893 and instead continued the National Policy for the betterment of Canadian economic development.

Although the movement for political union was for all intents and purposes dead, that did not stop those interested from continuing the cause. Between 1895 and 1897 the Continental Union Association, despite having very little influence, continued receiving

¹³²Ibid, 201.

¹³³J.W. Russell, “The Canadian Elections and Their Results,” *North American Review*, 163:2 (1896: Aug), 160.

numerous letters expressing interest in political union.¹³⁴ The National Continental Union League, which received a large, although not entirely unexpected, show of support in 1893, had faded into the background of American political discourse. Yet the NCUL continued to promote the free and peaceful union between Canada and the United States, especially with a revival of the organization in the latter stages of the nineteenth century and into the twentieth century. Francis Wayland Glen, unsurprisingly, was the prime motivating force behind the re-birth of the NCUL, and James H. Wilson, who maintained regular contact with Goldwin Smith regarding Canadian-American relations and the prospects of union during the 1890s, was selected as its new president in 1902.¹³⁵ On 23 October 1902 Glen wrote to Wilson exclaiming that “The outlook for Continental Union in Canada never was better, in fact never so good since 1849.”¹³⁶ While this was a misreading of the political atmosphere by the eternal optimist Glen, it showed that although the movement was no longer present the idea of continental union did not simply vanish. The idea of political union between Canada and the United States appeared again at irregular intervals during the twentieth century as Canadian-American relations continued to change.

¹³⁴Goldwin Smith to Clement Shorter, 22 April 1895. Arnold Haultain, ed., *A Selection from Goldwin Smith's Correspondence. Comprising Chiefly to and from his English Friends, Written Between the Years 1846 and 1919* (London: T. Werner Laurie, Ltd., 1910), 282-283. This is also revealed from an examination of the letters received by the CUA within the Walter Dymond Gregory Fonds, Queen's University Archives, MF 135.

¹³⁵See the letters in the Goldwin Smith Fonds, LAC, MD 29-D69. Information about the revived National Continental Union League, see the James Harrison Wilson Papers, Manuscript Division, Library of Congress, Washington, D.C. Wilson's acceptance of the presidency of the NCUL occurred on 4 November 1902.

¹³⁶Glen to Wilson, 23 October 1902. Box 9 General Correspondence, James Harrison Wilson Papers, Manuscript Division, Library of Congress, Washington, D.C.

Chapter Four: The Leading Figures and Ideas of the Movement for Political Union

The movement for political union did not occur in a vacuum nor did it appear out of nowhere. Rather, it developed due to the changing socio-economic and political conditions in Canada and the United States and was supported by a core group of like-minded individuals that were convinced that union between the Dominion and the Republic was the best option for the two countries and their peoples. Despite this strong, albeit limited support, a mass or popular movement for political union never materialized, which helps to explain why it failed. Although many factors influenced the re-emergence of political unionism in the 1880s and 1890s, for the core group of advocates it was based upon two central ideas: racialism and republicanism. On account of their shared “Anglo-Saxon racial” profile, advocates charged that English-speaking Canadians and Americans should unite to form a continental republic, one that would become the most wealthy and powerful nation on the planet due to a sense of “Anglo-Saxon” and republican superiority. French-Canadian advocates also supported political union based along “racial” lines because they believed that joining the United States with its republican society would ensure *la survivance de la race française* in North America. Despite the “racial” differences, they all believed that forming a political union would best ensure the economic and material prosperity of Canadians and Americans, although this was a secondary aim.

Unlike the previous chapters, which provided a chronological examination of the events of the movement for political union, this chapter offers an analysis of the key figures and the core ideas that they used to promote their cause. Not all of these individuals were responsible for the re-emergence of the debate on political union, but

they were all central to its development and promotion in the 1880s and 1890s. They brought public attention to the idea and caused the people of Canada and the United States to discuss and reconsider their political future in North America. To more fully understand the movement for political union it is necessary to move beyond the events and to explore the intellectual basis of political unionism as it was expressed at the end of the nineteenth century.

This chapter begins with a prosopography of key figures. This not only identifies the most active and prominent supporters of the movement for political union, it also shows that the Canadian advocates were very much political and religious outsiders while American proponents were political, religious, and cultural insiders. Furthermore, the American advocates were a more homogenous group than their Canadian counterparts. The promotion of political union by these individuals demonstrates that while the idea remained unpopular amongst the majority of Canadians and Americans, union between Canada and the United States became an important aspect of the political discourse thanks in large part because of their efforts.

Next, the idea of prosperity as a motivation for continental union is analyzed, even though for this core group of advocates it was not as important as the other two ideas. The importance of the idea of racialism is then explored. Nineteenth century Canadians and Americans were captivated with pseudoscientific and Darwinian notions of “race” and racial hierarchy which were used to justify the need to unite the continent under one flag. The concept of “race” in the 1880s and 1890s, however, was much different than today. Finally, both Canadian and American advocates of political union fervently believed in the superiority of republicanism and republican institutions. They

believed that the Dominion needed to discard all vestiges of monarchism from North America so that Canadians could finally embrace their New World ethos as had their southern neighbours.

I

For all the attention that the movement for political union garnered in both Canada and the United States, it failed to attract a significant following. Active support was limited to a small faction of like-minded individuals. These men were an eclectic group as they came from different generations, educational backgrounds, religious beliefs, and geographic regions. Yet they also had much in common besides their conviction that forming a continental union between the Dominion and the Republic would be the best option for the future of North America. As a group they were well educated – many of these figures had attended either college or university – almost all were active in some manner of public life either as politicians or journalists, and they were very much from the middle class as only four could be considered personally wealthy. They were also well funded in their endeavour, thanks in large part to financial contributions made by Goldwin Smith and Andrew Carnegie, two of the wealthiest supporters of political union.

While earlier studies have designated several individuals as “annexationists”, they did not distinguish between who was and who was not an active promoter of political union. For example, it has been previously suggested that Sir Richard Cartwright, John Charlton, Erastus Wiman, and Honoré Mercier were all “annexationists” given their strong continentalist outlook. This definition is problematic as Cartwright, Charlton, and Wiman all desired more intimate commercial relations between the Dominion and the

Republic, not political union. Mercier, on the other hand, advocated for Canadian independence, and any reference he made to continental union was a means to further promote that cause. This dissertation rectifies this issue by identifying the small group of key figures that were truly in favour of uniting North America under one flag, and who actively promoted the movement for political union. Furthermore, previous studies have not fully examined the French-Canadian advocates of political union; instead they focused almost solely on English Canadians and Americans. This oversight is problematic since French Canadians were, statistically speaking, well represented in relation to the Canadian population.¹ In 1891, the French Canadian population was almost 1.5 million, or 29% of the population. Of the fourteen Canadian advocates identified in this thesis five were French Canadian. That one-third of the advocates were French Canadian demonstrates that support for political union was not reserved only amongst Anglophones.

A specific set of criteria was established for this dissertation to determine who were the leading figures of the movement for political union. This criteria included: being a member of the Continental Union Association of Ontario (CUA) or the National Continental Union League of New York (NCUL); giving two or more public speeches in favour of political union; writing several newspaper articles in favour of political union; writing a book or a pamphlet that focused on political union; and/or providing funding to a political union organization. The contributions, however, were unequal as some supporters were more active and vocal than others. Yet these individuals were the core group that actively campaigned to unite North America to form one continental republic.

¹*Census of Canada, 1890-1891*, vol. 2 (Ottawa: S.E. Dawson, Printer to the Queen's Most Excellent Majesty, 1893), 2.

From these criteria twenty-three men – fourteen Canadians and nine Americans – can be identified as the leading figures of the movement for political union. The

Canadians were (in alphabetical order):

- Honoré Beaugrand (1848-1906)
- Samuel R. Clarke (1846-1932)
- John V. Ellis (1835-1913)
- Edward Farrer (1846/1850-1916)²
- Louis-Honoré Fréchette (1839-1909)
- Walter D. Gregory (1860-1939)
- Godfroy Langlois (1866-1928)
- Ernest A. Macdonald (1859-1902)
- Elgin Myers (1855-1903)
- Edmond de Nevers (1862-1906)
- Jean-Baptiste Rouilliard (1842-1908)
- Goldwin Smith (1823-1910)
- Solomon White (1836-1911)
- Thomas White (Unknown).

The Americans were:

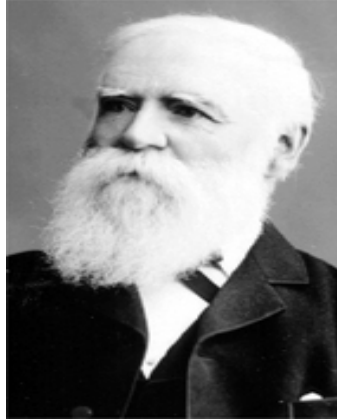
- Henry Blair (1834-1920)
- Benjamin Butler (1818-1893)
- Benjamin Butterworth (1837-1898)

²There is some discrepancy as to Farrer's birth year. One account of his life states that he was born in 1846 yet his gravestone reads 1850. Carman Cumming, *Secret Craft: The Journalism of Edward Farrer* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1992), 17.

- Andrew Carnegie (1835-1919)
- Charles Dana (1819-1897)
- Francis W. Glen (1836-1912)
- Samuel J. Ritchie (1838-1908)
- John Sherman (1823-1900)
- James H. Wilson (1837-1925)³



Honoré Beaugrand⁴



John V. Ellis⁵



Louis-Honoré Fréchette⁶

³No image could be found for Samuel R. Clarke, Edward Farrer, Walter D. Gregory, S.J. Ritchie, or Thomas White.

⁴Image from Wikipedia Commons, accessed 22 July 2015, <[https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Honor%C3%A9_Beaugrand#/media/File:Honor%C3%A9_Beaugrand_\(2\).png](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Honor%C3%A9_Beaugrand#/media/File:Honor%C3%A9_Beaugrand_(2).png)>.

⁵Image from Wikipedia Commons, accessed 22 July 2015, <https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/John_Valentine_Ellis#/media/File:John_Valentine_Ellis.jpg>.

⁶Image from Wikipedia Commons, accessed 22 July 2015, <https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Louis-Honor%C3%A9_Fr%C3%A9chette#/media/File:Louis-Honore_Frechette.jpg>



Godfrey Langlois⁷



E.A. Macdonald⁸



Elgin Myers⁹



Edmond de Nevers¹⁰



Jean-Baptiste Rouilliar¹¹



Goldwin Smith¹²

⁷Image from Wikipedia Commons, accessed 22 July 2015, <https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Godfrey_Langlois#/media/File:God_Lang_4606572992_1ba3b3d99f_o.jpg>.

⁸Image from Wikipedia Commons, accessed 22 July 2015, <https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Ernest_A._Macdonald#/media/File:Ernest_Albert_Macdonald.png>.

⁹From a copy of the *Detroit Evening News*, 25 May 1893, found in the Walter Dymond Gregory Fonds, Queen's University Archives, Box 12, Folder E, Continental Union Material 1.

¹⁰Image from *La Presse*, "Edmond Boisvert dit de Nevers 1862-1906," by Louis Caron, 26 February 2010, accessed 22 July 2015, <<http://www.lapresse.ca/le-nouvelliste/portraits-historiques/201002/26/01-4255586-edmond-boisvert-dit-de-nevers-1862-1906.php>>.

¹¹This image of Rouilliar is found in the printed copy of his *Annexion: Conférence l'Union Continentale* (Montréal, 1893).

¹²Image from Wikipedia Commons, accessed 22 July 2015, <https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Goldwin_Smith#/media/File:Goldwin_Smith.jpg>.



Solomon White¹³



Henry Blair¹⁴



Benjamin Butler¹⁵



Benjamin Butterworth¹⁶



Andrew Carnegie¹⁷



Charles Dana¹⁸

¹³Image from Wikipedia Commons, accessed 22 July 2015, <https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Solomon_White#/media/File:Solomon_White.png>.

¹⁴Image from Wikipedia Commons, accessed 22 July 2015, <https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Henry_W._Blair#/media/File:Henry_W._Blair_-_Brady-Handy.jpg>.

¹⁵Image from Wikipedia Commons, accessed 22 July 2015, <[https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Benjamin_Butler_\(politician\)#/media/File:Benjamin_Franklin_Butler_Brad_y-Handy.jpg](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Benjamin_Butler_(politician)#/media/File:Benjamin_Franklin_Butler_Brad_y-Handy.jpg)>.

¹⁶Image from Wikipedia Commons, accessed 22 July 2015, <https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Benjamin_Butterworth#/media/File:Benjamin_Butterworth.png>.

¹⁷Image from Wikipedia Commons, accessed 22 July 2015, <https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Andrew_Carnegie#/media/File:Andrew_Carnegie,_three-quarter_length_portrait,_seated,_facing_slightly_left,_1913.jpg>.

¹⁸Image from Wikipedia Commons, accessed 22 July 2015, <https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Charles_Anderson_Dana#/media/File:Charles_Anderson_Dana_profile.jpg>.



Francis Wayland Glen¹⁹



John Sherman²⁰



James H. Wilson²¹

Using prosopographical analysis, it became quite apparent that the Canadian supporters of continental union were political and social non-conformists as they did not adhere to traditional approaches to Canadian society and politics, namely the British connection and religious norms. While the majority of Canadians exhibited more conservative forms of loyalty as seen by the imperialists in English Canada and the *nationalistes* in French Canada, the advocates of political union were ardent republicans. Although republicanism had been present in Canada since the 1770s, it failed to develop a strong following amongst British North Americans, a trend that continued through the 1880s and 1890s. Advocating for a fundamental change to Canada's British political institutions, which also meant an overhaul of Canadians' political and social values, placed these figures on the fringe of the nation's political culture. The same was true with

¹⁹Image from the Parliament of Canada, ParlInfo, accessed 22 July 2015, <<http://www.parl.gc.ca/parlinfo/Files/Parliamentarian.aspx?Item=f918be12-52fb-4cd4-a35c-aa8ce62ff1a2&Language=E&MenuID=Lists.Members.aspx&MenuQuery=http%3A%2F%2Fwww.parl.gc.ca%2Fparlinfo%2FLists%2FMembers.aspx%3FSortColumn%3DPersonName%26SortDirection%3DASC%26Parliament%3D%26Riding%3D%26Name%3Dglen%26Party%3D%26Province%3D%26Gender%3D%26New%3DFalse%26Current%3DFalse%26First%3DFalse%26Picture%3DFalse%26Section%3DFalse%26ElectionDate%3D>>.

²⁰Image from Wikipedia Commons, accessed 22 July 2015, <https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/John_Sherman#/media/File:John-Sherman-2.jpg>.

²¹Image from Wikipedia Commons, accessed 22 July 2015, <[https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/James_H._Wilson#/media/File:James_Wilson_\(soldier\).jpg](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/James_H._Wilson#/media/File:James_Wilson_(soldier).jpg)>.

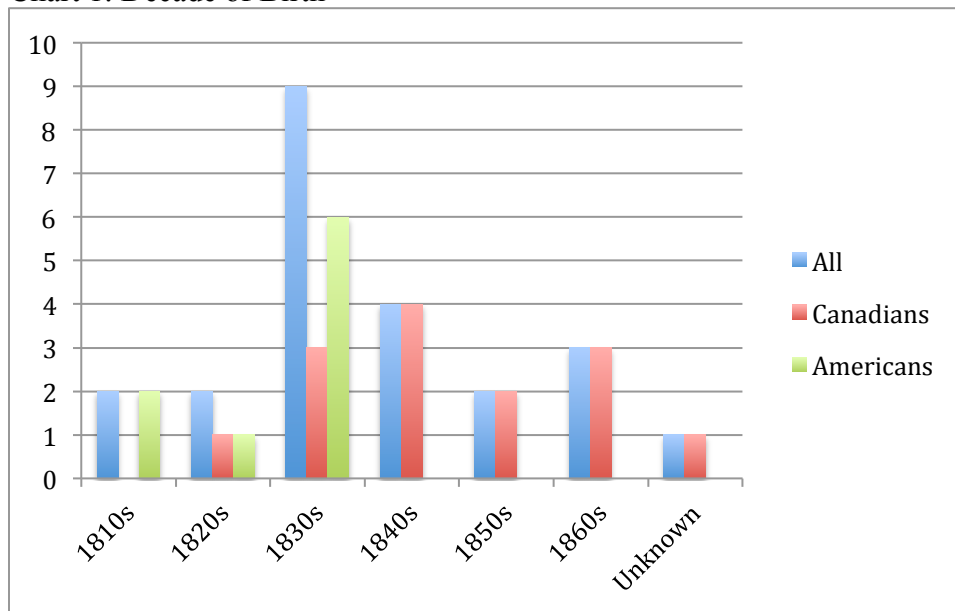
religious affiliation, for being outside of the religious norms also placed an individual outside of political ones.

To provide a more complete analysis of these figures, the American and Canadian advocates are first examined separately and then as a group. This is because they matured during different eras and different socio-economic and political atmospheres, which in turn influenced their desire for political union. But there were several important similarities amongst them, which is why a larger group portrait is necessary. The decade of birth, career, education, and religious affiliation, where known, are all outlined to provide a better sense of these figures and their reasons for supporting political union.

The decade in which these men were born will first be given consideration. As seen in Chart 1, the decade of birth ranged from the 1810s to the 1860s, which means that there was a considerable age gap amongst some of these figures. The average age of the American supporters as of 1 January 1891 was 60.2 years; the Canadians, on the other hand, were considerably younger with an average age of 43.5 years.²² These men matured during different eras and thus belonged to different generations, which shaped their ideas on the political future of North America.

²²The year 1891 was selected to determine the average age for uniformity purposes, as the Canadian census was conducted in that year while the American census information was gathered in 1890. Therefore, this was not an arbitrary year to choose since the movement for political union gained momentum following the Canadian general election in March 1891. The difference in the average age would be the same regardless of what year was selected.

Chart 1: Decade of Birth



Most of the American advocates were born in the 1830s, and none thereafter, which means that they belonged to the same generation and that they matured during the era of Manifest Destiny. During the 1840s and 1850s, the Republic continued to push west and added new territory to the expanding nation, both peacefully and through the use of force. American settlers eventually reached the Pacific Coast, making the United States truly a continental nation. Concurrently, the American economy greatly expanded during the nineteenth century largely thanks to the rapid growth of industry.²³ By 1860, the population of the United States reached over 31 million, ten times the size in 1790, and its land area more than tripled from 846,746 sq. miles in 1790 to 2,989,840 sq. miles in 1860.²⁴ The American supporters of political union, therefore, were very confident in the power and of the United States to further expand. They were also highly influenced by the powerful idea of Manifest Destiny.

²³Gilbert C. Fite and Jim E. Reese, *An Economic History of the United States*, (Boston: Houghton Mifflin Company, 1965), 131, 133.

²⁴United States Department of Commerce, *Historical Statistics of the United States, Colonial Times to 1970* (Washington, D.C., 1975), 8.

There remained in the US strong sectional animosity and racial tensions, which eventually led to the Civil War (1861-1865). Three of the American proponents of political union – James H. Wilson, Benjamin Butler, and Henry W. Blair – all served in the Union Army during the war to preserve the Republic. By the 1890s, with the American Republic stretching from the Atlantic to the Pacific Oceans, overseas territorial expansion became an essential part of the United States' foreign policy. And the Monroe Doctrine of 1823 once again became a hallmark of American hegemony in the western hemisphere, influencing the political outlook of these figures.

A degree of animosity toward Britain remained throughout the United States during the century, especially in the 1860s, and anti-British sentiment was important to these figures. Joining in political union with Canada would once and for all remove all vestiges of monarchism in North America and make the entire continent a republic. In Benjamin Butler's case, he desired to exact revenge against the old mother country by conquering the Dominion. The others opposed the use of force. These men were part of the last generation of Americans to have anti-British sentiment as a significant aspect of their national identity. All of these men belonged to an older generation that was confident in the economic and military power of the United States, and hoped to continue continental expansionism.

While the American supporters were all relatively close in age, the disparity amongst the Canadian advocates was significant. Goldwin Smith was by far the eldest, being 68 years old in 1891. The youngest was Godfroy Langlois, at only 25. All of these men were born before Confederation, although five of the fourteen – Elgin Myers, Ernest A. Macdonald, Godfroy Langlois, Edmond de Nevers, and Walter D. Gregory – were

children in the 1860s, which meant that they matured in a different era in Canadian history.

Unlike in the United States the development of the Canadian state was not as rapid or sweeping. The elder Canadian advocates, excepting Goldwin Smith, Edward Farrer, Walter D. Gregory, and Ernest A. Macdonald, lived through the political turmoil that gripped British North America between the 1840s and 1860s, from the union of the Canadas, the granting of responsible government in the colonies, and finally the Confederation debates. Therefore, they matured in an era dominated by political uncertainty in the British provinces in the mid-nineteenth century. The younger generation, on the other hand, matured after Confederation in a relatively stable political environment, although there were new problems that plagued the young Dominion. Slow economic development continued to be a challenge, as were heightened “racial” tensions between English and French Canadians.

While all but one of the American advocates were born in the United States, not all of the Canadian advocates were born in Canada.²⁵ Four of the fourteen, or just over a quarter, were born outside of the Dominion. Goldwin Smith and Walter D. Gregory were born in England, Edward Farrer hailed from Ireland, and Ernest A. Macdonald had immigrated from upstate New York. Gregory and Macdonald moved to Canada with their families at a young age, thus maturing in the Dominion, while Smith and Farrer migrated to Canada as adults.

In terms of personal finances the movement for political union was very much a “middle class” venture. Only four of the twenty-three – Goldwin Smith, Andrew

²⁵As all of these men were born before the creation of the Dominion, they were not born in “Canada” in the modern sense. The use of the word Canada, however, is to simplify the terminology.

Carnegie, S.J. Ritchie, and Honoré Beaugrand – could be considered personally wealthy. Carnegie was by far the wealthiest supporter of political union as his life embodied the classic “rags to riches” story. Goldwin Smith was the wealthiest Canadian. Upon his father’s death, Smith inherited £20,000, making him quite wealthy, along with his marriage to Harriet Elizabeth Mann, widow of William Henry Boulton. Ritchie’s wealth was due to his stake in the Central Ontario Railway and the Canadian Copper Company, and he desired free trade as a prelude to union between the two North American nations.²⁶ Honoré Beaugrand’s wealth came from his newspaper *La Patrie*, which, by the 1890s, had become a commercial success.²⁷ As for the others, their professions indicate that their wealth was of average means.

The majority of these advocates were lawyers, journalists, politicians, or a combination thereof. Carnegie and Ritchie, however, were businessmen. Elgin Myers, Walter D. Gregory, Solomon White, S.R. Clarke, John Sherman, Benjamin Butterworth, Benjamin Butler, and Henry Blair were lawyers. Charles Dana, editor and proprietor of the New York *Sun*, was the lone full-time American journalist. Honoré Beaugrand, Jean-Baptiste Rouillard, and Godfroy Langlois all at some point wrote for *La Patrie* in Montreal, whereas Edward Farrer was affiliated with numerous newspapers, including the Toronto *Globe*. Louis-Honoré Fréchette, while also contributing to *La Patrie*, is best known as an author/poet, and James H. Wilson, a career soldier, became an author in later life.

²⁶Matt Bray, “Ritchie, Samuel J,” *Dictionary of Canadian Biography*, <http://www.biographi.ca/en/bio/ritchie_samuel_j_13E.html>.

²⁷François Ricard, “Beaugrand, Honoré,” *Dictionary of Canadian Biography*, <http://www.biographi.ca/en/bio/beaugrand_honore_13E.html>.

Those that held elected political office at some point in Canada were E.A. Macdonald (Mayor of Toronto), John V. Ellis (MP, Saint John, NB), Solomon White (MPP, Windsor, ON), and Honoré Beaugrand (Mayor of Montreal). Elgin Myers had been the Crown Attorney for Dufferin County, Ontario, until his very public dismissal in 1892. In the United States, John Sherman (Senator, OH), Benjamin Butterworth (Representative, OH), Benjamin Butler (Governor, MA), and Henry Blair (Representative and Senator, NH) were also elected to public office at some point during their life. Unsurprisingly, all four were also Republicans. By the early 1890s, as Theodore Eversole explains, “From their earlier expansionist roots, the Democrats now opposed further expansion, whereas the Republicans embraced expansion as an economic and social necessity,” which lasted as a party mainstay until the 1920s.²⁸ The majority of Republicans interested in expansion during the era under consideration, however, set their sights on the Pacific and the Caribbean, not on Canada.

As politicians and/or journalists these men had direct means to disseminate their support for political union. Sherman, Butterworth, and Blair all used their positions in Congress to put forward bills that called for union between Canada and the United States. Meanwhile, Ellis openly declared himself in favour of continental union once elected to the House of Commons. Those affiliated with *La Patrie* were candid in their support for political union, with numerous articles appearing during the era under examination. The same is true of Dana at the New York *Sun*. Goldwin Smith was the most prolific writer of the group, as he penned numerous essays that stressed the need for an “Anglo-Saxon”

²⁸Theodore W. Eversole, “Expansionism,” in *Encyclopedia of U.S. Campaigns, Elections, and Electoral Behavior*, Kenneth F. Warren, ed. (Thousand Oaks, CA: SAGE Publications, Inc., 2008), 226.

reunion in North America. S.R. Clarke used his legal training to write the CUA's Pronunciamento in 1893, outlining the need to create one North American republic.

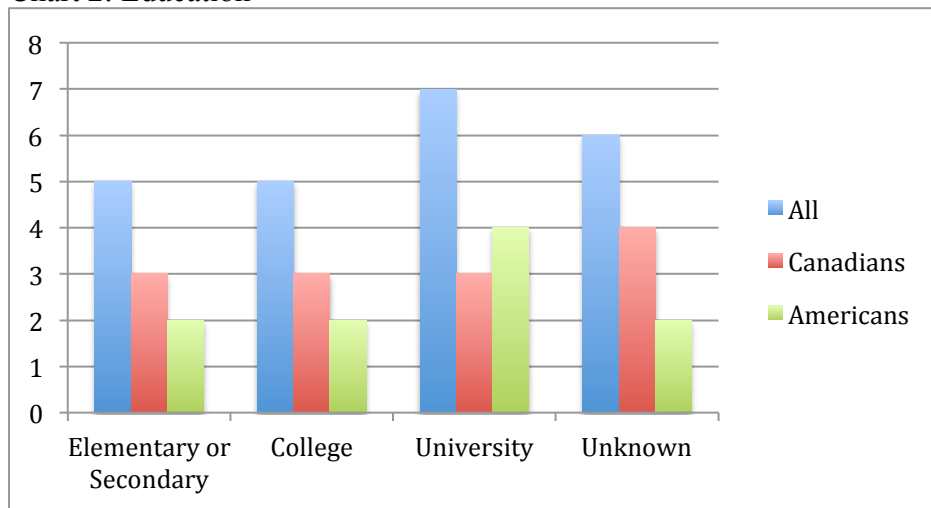
Determining the origins of some of these figures proved to be one of the difficulties of this prosopographical examination. Little personal details about many of the Canadian advocates are known. It was easier to compile a portrait of the American advocates as these men were more well known during this era. For those for which information was available, many were farmer's sons, while others were the children of a weaver, a mariner, a dockyard worker, a teacher, and a county judge. Solomon White was the son of an Aboriginal Chief. With the exception of Goldwin Smith whose father was a physician, none of these figures grew up in a wealthy family. Smith's father committed suicide in 1867, which no doubt influenced his decision to leave for North America.²⁹ Andrew Carnegie experienced a childhood of poverty in Scotland before becoming one of the wealthiest men in the United States.³⁰

These advocates were also well educated. Of the twenty-three identified herein, as Chart 2 indicates, more than half attended college or university and four received at least an elementary or secondary education.

²⁹Ramsay Cook, "Smith, Goldwin," *Dictionary of Canadian Biography*, <http://www.biographi.ca/en/bio/smith_goldwin_13E.html>.

³⁰David Nasaw, *Andrew Carnegie* (New York: Penguin, 2006), 21. Carnegie's life is one of the best examples of the "rags to riches" stories that underline the idea of the American Dream.

Chart 2: Education



All of the Americans received their schooling in the United States. Charles Dana attended Harvard University, although he did not finish his studies; Benjamin Butterworth attended Ohio University; James H. Wilson graduated from McKendree College (Illinois) and West Point; and Benjamin Butler was an alumnus of Colby College. Not all of the Canadians, however, were educated in the Dominion. Goldwin Smith, the most educated of all, obtained a BA and an MA from Oxford University, while Edward Farrer attended Stonyhurst College in England. Both Louis-Honoré Fréchet and Godfroy Langlois attended the Université Laval, although Langlois did not complete his studies. There was, therefore, a diverse array of formal education amongst these men, which was also reflected in their careers and their ideas in the promotion of political union.

At the end of the nineteenth century, Canadians generally knew more about their southern neighbour than Americans did about Canada. Supporters of political union had a better understanding of both North American countries, and for eight of the twenty-three this was true, in part, because they had spent considerable time in both. When Goldwin Smith first moved to North America in the late 1860s, he took up a teaching position at Cornell University in Ithaca, New York; he did not immigrate to Canada until 1871 at the

age of 48.³¹ Honoré Beaugrand left Canada in 1865 and did not return until 1878, during which time lived in Mexico, France, and the United States. While in Fall River, Massachusetts, as a biographer outlined, “he soon became a leading figure among the immigrants from Quebec.”³² Louis Fréchette moved to Chicago in 1866, likely in opposition to Confederation, where he remained for four years and supported Canada’s annexation to the United States, before returning to Quebec in 1871.³³ Jean-Baptiste Rouilliard had served in the Union Army during the American Civil War, and later relocated to New England where he founded several unsuccessful newspapers that promoted political union.³⁴ Returning to North America after a sojourn in Europe, Edmond de Nevers moved to the United States where his family had recently taken up residence. Although he did not live in the Republic long, he developed a lasting admiration for the United States, and died in Rhode Island in 1906.³⁵ E.A. Macdonald was an American by birth – he was born at Oswego, New York – though he moved to Brockville, Ontario at a young age.³⁶ Francis Wayland Glen was born and raised in the United States. Upon moving to Canada he served eight years as a Liberal Member of Parliament for Ontario South before moving back to the United States, where he took up

³¹Cook, “Smith, Goldwin,” *Dictionary of Canadian Biography*.

³²Ricard, “Beaugrand, Honoré,” *Dictionary of Canadian Biography*.

³³Jacques Blais, “Fréchette, Louis,” *Dictionary of Canadian Biography*, <http://www.biographi.ca/en/bio/frechette_louis_13E.html>.

³⁴André Bélisle, *Histoire de la presse franco-américaine* (Worcester, MA: L’Opinion publique, 1911), 288-91.

³⁵Claude Galarneau, “Boisvert, Edmond,” *Dictionary of Canadian Biography*, <http://www.biographi.ca/en/bio/boisvert_edmond_13E.html>.

³⁶*Robertson’s Landmarks of Toronto: A Collection of Historical Sketches of the old Town of York from 1792 until 1833 and of Toronto from 1834 to 1914* (Toronto: J. Ross Robertson, 1914), 201.

the cause of continental union in New York.³⁷ Finally, S.J. Ritchie, while born in Ohio, had considerable business interests in Northern Ontario.³⁸

With the exception of Macdonald, these figures had spent some of their adult years living in both Canada and the United States. They would have thus gained a greater understanding and appreciation of the political, economic, and social affairs of both countries, knowledge that shaped their opinions regarding political union. For the Canadian advocates, an admiration for American republicanism was an important element in their desire for continental union, while the American supporters viewed Canada as a kindred nation, and not an altogether foreign state.

At the end of the nineteenth century religion played a central role in the lives of both Canadians and Americans. There were, of course, numerous denominations in both countries; Table 17 outlines the different affiliations that the advocates of political union adhered to. For seven of the sixteen men whose religious affiliation is known, it appears that the religion of their parents was passed down and was followed throughout their lifetime. The other nine can be considered religious free thinkers as they either changed religious denominations or were openly critical of an established religion. Many of these men, especially the Canadians, changed their religious affiliation or they adhered to non-conformist denominations. The Canadian advocates in particular adhered to religions considered outside the religious norms of Canadian society.

³⁷F.R.E. Campeau, *Illustrated Guide to the Senate and House of Commons of Canada* (Ottawa: A. Bureau, 1885), 82.

³⁸Bray, "Ritchie, Samuel J.," *Dictionary of Canadian Biography*.

Table 17: Religious Affiliation

	All	Canadians	Americans
Church of England	1	1	0
Presbyterian	2	2	0
Quaker	2	1	1
Catholic	4	4	0
Swedenborgianism	2	0	2
Episcopalian	1	0	1
Calvinist	1	0	1
Congregationalist	1	0	1
Lapsed Catholic	1	1	0
Deist	1	1	0
Unknown	7	4	3

The most obvious case where religious beliefs influenced the ideas of political unionism were amongst the French Canadian advocates. The Catholic Church was central in the lives of French Canadians and the clergy held considerable moral and social authority in Quebec. The Church was also quite critical of American society, especially the United States' adherence to republicanism.³⁹ For the advocates of political union in Quebec, except for de Nevers, the Church was thus viewed as something of an encumbrance and the best way to diminish its power was to seek admission into the United States where there was greater religious freedom due to official state secularism. The clergy vehemently opposed political union as evidenced in the Pastoral Letter issued by Mgr. Édouard-Charles Fabre in February 1891.⁴⁰

Godfroy Langlois, Louis-Honoré Fréchette, Honoré Beaugrand, and Jean-Baptiste Rouilliard were all born Catholics, yet they became critical of the power and influence of the Catholic clergy. Beaugrand abandoned the Church and became a Freemason in 1873

³⁹Pierre Bance, *Beaugrand et son temps* (Unpublished PhD Dissertation, University of Ottawa, 1964), 308.

⁴⁰See *Le Quotidien*, 24 February 1891. Fabre stated in clear terms that French Canadians must remain part of the British Empire and not join the United States, as the Empire protected “nos lois, nos institutions, notre langue, notre nationalité, et par-des-sus tout notre sainte religion.”

at the age of twenty-five.⁴¹ Godfroy Langlois also joined the Freemasons in 1895 at the age of twenty-nine. For Langlois, the Masons enabled “a fertile ground for his advanced liberalism,” although he continuously denied being a Mason in public.⁴² Since the Masons are a secret society, it is not known if others had joined this association. But it was significant that two French-Canadian advocates had joined the Freemasons, especially considering the Catholic Church’s strong opposition to Masonry. For Beaugrand, Langlois, Rouilliard, and Fréchette, anti-clericalism played a prominent role in their avocation for political union. Anti-clerical ideas were most prominently expressed within the pages of *La Patrie*, and Rouilliard addressed the anti-American attitudes of the clergy in his conference at Montreal on 17 March 1893. These men were most certainly religious outsiders and non-conformists, and their ideas about the role of religion in society highly influenced their political outlook.

Edward Farrer also was born Catholic but eventually became ardently anti-clerical. During the late 1880s, as Carman Cumming noted, “Farrer argued that a fundamental conflict was looming between the doctrine of the Catholic Church and a New World belief in religious equality, liberty of opinion, and secular control of courts and legislatures.” Farrer was accused by his opponents of attempting to incite “racial” tension amongst English- and French-speaking Canadians in hopes of pushing the Dominion toward political union with the United States.⁴³ Farrer, though, was not alone in critiquing religious authority. Goldwin Smith was born into the Church of England, and as a student and then professor at Oxford he adhered to the dogma of the Anglican

⁴¹Bance, 27.

⁴²Patrice Dutil, “Langlois, Godfroy,” *Dictionary of Canadian Biography Online*, Accessed 5 February 2014. <http://www.biographi.ca/en/bio/langlois_godfroy_15E.html>.

⁴³Carman Cumming, “Farrer, Edward.” *Dictionary of Canadian Biography*, vol. 15, University of Toronto/Université Laval, 2003, <http://www.biographi.ca/en/bio/farrer_edward_14E.html>.

Church, although uneasily. Smith's attitude toward religion in general, and toward Christianity more specifically, changed becoming an agnostic later in life. As one his biographers has commented, Smith's changing attitude toward religion enabled him a "pure freethinking position."⁴⁴ Much like Farrer, Smith was also highly anti-Catholic, as was made clear in his attacks on French Canadians throughout his life. For both Farrer and Smith, religion was seen as an impediment to social progress and a barrier to political union. In Canada, being outside of the religious norms was also directly tied to being outside of the political ones. The 1880s and 1890s was an era in which there was considerable overlap between Church and State in the Dominion. Although there was no established state church being a member of a non-conformist religion played a role in shaping political outlook.

Andrew Carnegie and Charles Dana also changed religious affiliations during their lifetime. Carnegie was born into a family with few religious ties as his grandfather, Thomas Morrison, was "an enemy of the Established Church." When he moved to the United States in 1848, Carnegie and his family became members of the Swedenborgian Church, an institution that he temporarily embraced as it was "the antithesis of the Scottish Presbyterianism [of] his relatives." Carnegie left the Swedenborgian Church in 1858 and for the rest of his life Christianity played a rather insignificant role. Instead, he leaned more toward atheism and agnosticism, though his hostility toward organized religion softened in later life.⁴⁵ Charles Dana, on the other hand, grew up in the Congregational Church but he too was open-minded on religious matters. He eventually turned toward Utilitarianism, and once in New York also became interested in the

⁴⁴Paul T. Phillips, *The Controversialist: An Intellectual Life of Goldwin Smith* (Westport: Praeger, 2002), xiii-xiv.

⁴⁵Nasaw, 6, 48, 49, 50, 211, 226-227, 624, 625.

Swedenborgian Church. Dana kept his mind open and desired candid discussion and the search for truth, as evident in the pages of the *New York Sun*.⁴⁶

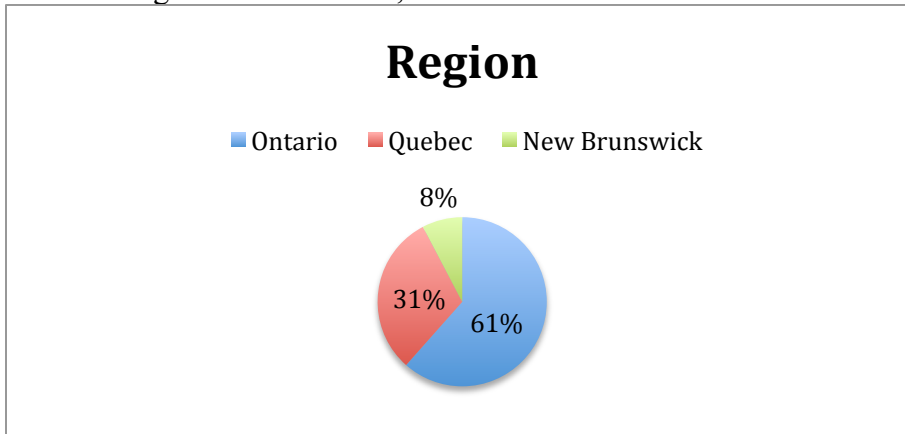
There is no evidence to suggest that any of these men were atheists, although several seemed to have leaned more toward agnosticism. Like Honoré Beaugrand, who later in life was more of a Deist than a Christian, belief in God was viewed as a personal matter and one that should not influence public life. The desire to join with the republican United States was partially motivated out of a desire for more religious freedom.

Although there were small pockets of support for political union across Canada, the leading figures identified in this thesis hailed from three provinces: Ontario, Quebec, and New Brunswick (see Chart 3). Between 1885 and 1896 many of the public speeches and gatherings that discussed and promoted political union were held in Ontario, although two major events were also convened in Quebec. Six of the eight Ontarian advocates were at one time members of the Continental Union Association of Ontario, the *de facto* official organization of the movement for political union in Canada. Support for political union remained quite sparse in Quebec, despite the fact that five figures were strong promoters. Not surprisingly, except for de Nevers all of the French-Canadian political unionists were at one point affiliated with *La Patrie*, the radical-liberal French-language newspaper from Montreal, founded by Beaugrand in 1879. Unlike their counterparts from Ontario, these Quebecers did not form an association like the CUA. The lone figure from New Brunswick, John Valentine Ellis, was active in his home province and he was elected to the House of Commons 1887, a development that caused a controversy in Saint John because of his well-known support for political union.

⁴⁶James H. Wilson, *The Life of Charles Dana* (New York: Harper & Brothers Publishers, 1907), 27, 451, 452.

However, there is no evidence to suggest that Ellis or the advocates in Central Canada made any attempt to combine their efforts, a significant factor as to why the movement for political union ultimately failed.

Chart 3: Regional Distribution, Canada

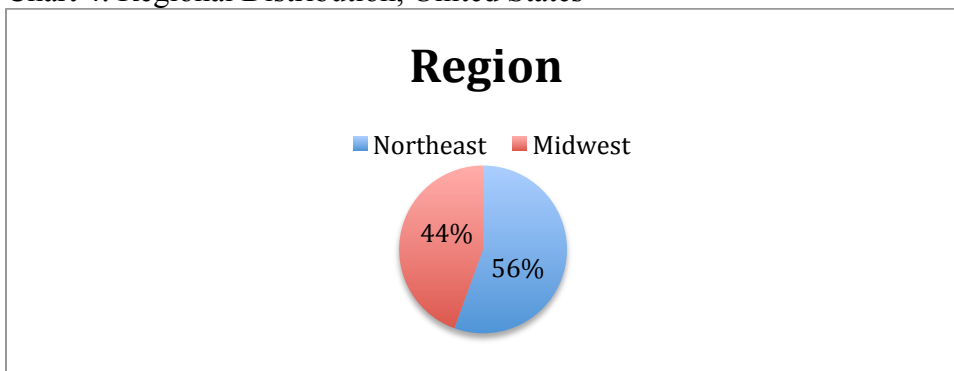


As for the regional distribution of American advocates only two of the four US census regions were represented: the Northeast and the Midwest (see Chart 4).⁴⁷ It is clear that the American advocates lived in or represented states near the Canadian border, an understandable phenomenon as these states had the most interaction with Canada. Those who lived near the international boundary were more likely to favour political union, as interest and even awareness of Canada diminished considerably further south. There were exceptions to this rule as some support could be found in Texas, California, and even from Democrat Senator John T. Morgan of Alabama. The sustained promotion of political union, however, was from men who came from the Northeast and the Midwest. In these regions, the Republican Party dominated the political landscape, which also explains the interest in political union. The movement for political union in the

⁴⁷According to the US census bureau, the Northeast is comprised of: Maine, New Hampshire, Vermont, Massachusetts, Connecticut, Rhode Island, New York, New Jersey, and Pennsylvania. The Midwest is comprised of: Michigan, Ohio, Indiana, Illinois, Wisconsin, North Dakota, South Dakota, Nebraska, Kansas, Iowa, and Missouri.

United States was concentrated to these two geographic areas as well as Washington D.C. where Republican Senator John Sherman and Republican Representative Benjamin Butterworth were most active in Congress. The *de facto* official American organization, the National Continental Union League, was founded and headquartered in New York City, although it garnered support only throughout the Northeast region in its initial campaign.⁴⁸

Chart 4: Regional Distribution, United States



The fact that this core group was geographically limited greatly diminished their potential effectiveness in creating a mass or popular movement. Their ideas were certainly disseminated throughout the continent, thanks to improved news reporting and circulation, but they were unable to convince a large portion of Canadians and Americans that political union was the best option for the future.

Equally, the lack of connection between each other also caused the movement's eventual demise. There was little interaction between the Canadian and American advocates save for limited relations between the CUA and the NCUL, and some exchanges of letters, most of which originated from the pen of Goldwin Smith or Francis Wayland Glen. In Canada there was little to no interaction between Anglophone and

⁴⁸A comprehensive list of signers and contributors to the NCUL was compiled in the Department of Justice Secret File on American Annexationists, 1893-1894, LAC, RG 13 vol. 963, File Two, Francis Wayland Glenn's Letters, pages 178-190.

Francophone supporters. This lack of cooperation ensured that the movement for political union remained small and disjointed.

This core group of supporters of political union were eclectic. They came from diverse backgrounds, had various levels of education, belonged to different religious denominations, and even came from different generations. The Canadians were marginal to their nation's political, intellectual, and religious norms, while the Americans were political, intellectual, and religious insiders. Excepting Edmond de Nevers who was more of a pessimist about the future of French Canadians, all of these figures believed that political union between Canada and the United States was the best option for both Canadians and Americans because they thought that forming a continental republic would produce an ideal society in which North Americans could enjoy full liberty and prosperity. This desire was based on two central ideas: racialism, and republicanism. Both English and French Canadian advocates agreed that forming a continental union would ensure prosperity and material wealth. They were also convinced that union with the United States would solve the "racial" tensions that were present in Canada, although for radically different reasons. American supporters, although initially favouring commercial union, stressed the virtues of republicanism and the republican institutions of their country, plus an "Anglo-Saxon" reunion that would better the English-speaking "race", as well as but for the safety and power of the United States.

II

Many previous studies have concluded that the movement for political union was simply about gaining access to the expanding American market, an understandable conclusion since the movement partly developed due to the economic malaise in Canada

and then largely disappeared in 1893 with the return of prosperity. Before 1891 a significant amount of attention was provided to the policies of commercial union and unrestricted reciprocity, although many Canadians worried that these economic policies might lead to annexation. The 1891 election was fought on the issue of free trade, and the Conservatives played on Canadians' concepts of loyalty and anti-Americanism to ensure yet another victory. Amongst the Canadian people, improving their nation's economic well being was essential and some were even willing to accept political union with the United States to do so. Despite the desire for improved trade relations with the US, a majority of the Canadian electorate made clear in March 1891 their unwillingness to sacrifice national sovereignty and the British connection.

Nonetheless, English Canadian supporters of the movement recognized the utility of promising economic and material prosperity should political union become a reality.

For example, S.R. Clarke outlined in an 1891 essay:

Here in North America is now laid the great foundation stone of the most wonderful empire in the world. There is a vast matrix of production now pregnant with varied and inexhaustible riches fresh from the land of their creator God. Why should the people to whom it belongs be longer divided against themselves with frowning tariff walls, restricted trade, possibility of war, and national enmity and prejudice impairing their giant strength?⁴⁹

Political union would eliminate the international boundary and place Canadians and Americans under the same tariff, which, it was generally agreed upon, would lead to prosperity. However, an examination of the arguments put forward by the leading advocates of political union reveals that securing economic and material prosperity was

⁴⁹S.R. Clarke, *A New Light on Annexation. A Political Brochure* (Toronto: James Murray & Co., Printers and Bookbinders, 1891), 16.

not the driving force behind the movement. Rather, continental union was based on a sense of shared racial “Anglo-Saxonism” and a belief in the superiority of republicanism.

This was even more pronounced in French Canada, where cultural and political issues were more important than economic ones. French-Canadian advocates rarely spoke about the economic and material advantages that might follow political union. During his address in March 1893, for instance, Jean-Baptiste Rouilliar noted very briefly about the prospects of improving Canadians’ economic wealth, with the majority of his speech about the benefits of republicanism. For example:

L’union continentale, par l’annexion aux États-Unis, assurerait un tarif uniforme, un tarif protecteur élevé, contre les pays transatlantiques, et libre échangiste avec les peuples des amériques [*sic*]. Les traités de commerce existant entre les États-Unis et les différents gouvernements des Amériques sont précisément ce qui assurerait le succès industriel et commercial du Canada. Les progrès moraux les suivraient.”⁵⁰

Like Rouilliar, much of what was said or written in support for political union by the other French-Canadian advocates was based on the need to preserve *la race française en Amérique* and for Canada to embrace its New World ethos by becoming a republic and not about personal wealth.

Amongst American advocates, establishing free trade with Canada was viewed as a step towards uniting the continent. Representative Benjamin Butterworth and Senator John Sherman were two of the most outspoken proponents of securing commercial union with Canada as a means of bringing about continental union. As Republicans they were protectionists. But viewing the international border as an impediment to economic growth, they wanted to bring Canada within the American tariff wall. Improving and protecting the economic well being of Americans was important, but it paled in

⁵⁰Rouilliar, 26.

comparison to the importance placed on uniting the continent to achieve “racial” reunification and spreading republicanism from the Rio Grande to the Arctic Circle. Butterworth best expressed how political union between Canada and the United States was about more than economic improvement. “The question,” he said in an address before Congress, “is one of transcendent importance to the Canadians and to ourselves. It involves something beyond a mere exchange of commodities. It has direct relation to the permanency of free institutions upon this continent. It has immediate relation to the destiny of the English-speaking race, and the part of the race that will take in shaping the course and destiny of both Canada and the United States.”⁵¹

Unlike what some previous studies have concluded, excepting S.J. Ritchie, this core group of advocates did not support political union for personal economic gain. Rather, their support was founded on a conviction for the need to unite the two countries to ensure “racial” harmony and growth and to spread republican values and institutions throughout the continent. Moreover, if the movement for political union were only about economic improvement it should have died in 1891. The reality was much different. As the preceding chapters have shown, after 1891 the movement for political union in Canada not only gained momentum, but its supporters made clear that the movement was ultimately about much more than economic and material wealth.

III

The concept of “race” was an essential aspect for the movement for political union in Canada and the United States for both supporters and opponents. As seen in Chapter One, it was in part due to “racial” tensions between English and French

⁵¹*Commercial and Political Union with Canada*, H.R. 240, 50th Cong., 2nd sess., *Congressional Record*, vol. 20, pt. 3:211.

Canadians that the idea of political union re-emerged in the mid-1880s. In English Canada and the United States this racialism was rooted in a belief of “Anglo-Saxon” superiority, that the English-speaking people of North America were destined to unite and become a powerful community and a global force. In so doing they would also assimilate the “lesser races” on the continent, specifically the French-Canadian community. Of course “race” also played a prominent and important role in French Canada. Not only would French Canadians thrive as American citizens, supporters believed that political union would protect the French-speaking community against assimilation by the much larger English-speaking element in North America.

The use of the term “race” is antiquated, but it is used in this dissertation to explain how contemporaries of the 1880s and 1890s viewed their world and human societies. In the late nineteenth century each ethnic group was considered to be a singular “race” based upon certain characteristics such as language, culture, and history. This was an easy and useful way to classify people and establish a racial hierarchy. Concepts of “race” were also based upon Darwinian theories of evolution and pseudoscientific research.⁵² The established racial hierarchy, therefore, was about more than simply skin colour. In fact, mental fortitude and the ability to create complex and functioning societies was viewed as one of the most important factors in determining this racial hierarchy.

Theories on racial hierarchies were particularly important in the nineteenth century, especially with regards to foreign policy. This was particularly true for the United States and it shaped American expansionism in the latter years of the nineteenth century.

⁵²Thomas F. Gossett, *Race: The History of an Idea in America* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1997), 144.

Certain races were inherently superior, progressive, and civilized, while others were barbaric or backwards.⁵³ On one end of the racial hierarchy, based upon pseudoscientific and ethnographic analysis, were blacks.⁵⁴ Aboriginals were slightly above blacks, though not by much. In the United States in particular, blacks and Aboriginals were subject to intense racism and racial violence throughout the nineteenth century. Asians were viewed as more progressive than blacks, but still inferior to whites.⁵⁵ Even amongst whites there existed a racial hierarchy. Latinos and those of Spanish ancestry were associated with concepts of “servility, misrule, lethargy, and bigotry.” In the eyes of American statesmen, “Latin governments were but parodies of the republican principles that they claimed to embody.”⁵⁶ Other “Latin peoples” of Europe included the French and Italians.⁵⁷ French Canadians, in the eyes of nineteenth century English Canadians and Americans, constituted an inferior “race” even though they were white. This was, in part, due to the long-lasting opposition to and suspicion of Catholicism.

At the top of this Anglo-American racial hierarchy were the “Anglo-Saxons,” descendants of the peoples of the British Isles that had established themselves as the world’s most dominant “racial” group. The term “Anglo-Saxon”, however, was somewhat misleading. As Reginald Horsman clarified, “The term ‘Anglo-Saxon’ has had a long history of misuse. In reality there was never a specific Anglo-Saxon people in England. [...] When in the nineteenth century the English began writing ‘Anglo-Saxon’ in a racial sense, they used it to describe the people living within the bounds of England, but, at times, they also used it to describe a vague brotherhood of English-speaking

⁵³Michael Hunt, *Ideology and U.S. Foreign Policy* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1987), 52.

⁵⁴Ibid, 48.

⁵⁵Ibid, 69.

⁵⁶Ibid, 59.

⁵⁷Ibid, 79.

peoples throughout the British Isles and the world.”⁵⁸ In essence, there existed a romantic perception about the perceived “racial” superiority of the “Anglo-Saxons”.

The perceived superiority of the “Anglo-Saxon race” was based upon concepts of prominent industry, intelligence, a keen sense of moral purpose, and a talent for government. English-speakers in Canada, Britain, and the United States were linked by blood, which explained their ability to rise to unprecedented power.⁵⁹ A similar expression existed amongst British elites in their pursuit of a Greater Britain, which stressed the superiority of Anglophones.⁶⁰ For supporters of political union this common racialism subsumed the political animosities that had been so prevalent in Anglo-Canadian-American relations during the previous decades.

It was partly along “racial” lines that political union between Canada and the United States was proposed. The English-speaking peoples of the Dominion and the Republic were viewed as one “race” that was separated by an imaginary line. By eliminating the border the superior “Anglo-Saxons” could re-unite for the well being of the “race”. For supporters of political union, nature had decreed that the English-speaking peoples were the most powerful and were meant to spread their values and institutions around the world; political differences should not stand in the way of the “Anglo-Saxons” from their destiny.

The use of “Anglo-Saxon” rhetoric was essential to the movement for political union, as common racialism was readily recognizable to a growing number of Canadians

⁵⁸Reginald Horsman, *Race and Manifest Destiny: The Origins of American Racial Anglo-Saxonism* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1981), 4.

⁵⁹Ibid, 62-63.

⁶⁰See Duncan Bell, *The Idea of Greater Britain: Empire and the Future of World Order, 1860-1900* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2007).

and Americans.⁶¹ By the end of the 1890s, a great rapprochement had occurred in Anglo-American relations, and a significant reason for this was the idea of “Anglo-Saxonism.” Rather than continue the old animosities, the English-speaking communities around the world were being drawn closer together.⁶² This new approach to Canadian-American relations based along “racial” grounds was most evident in the aftermath of the Venezuela Crisis of 1895-1896. Improved relations brought with it a new perspective on Canada’s place within the Anglo-American relationship, acting as the middle-power between the two branches of the “English-speaking race.” Thanks in large part to this “racial” harmony the drive to secure political union in North America had all but disappeared by the end of the century.

The “racial” issue in Canada had long been a point of contention. Following the execution of Louis Riel in 1885, as it appeared that a “race” war would erupt, some again wanted discuss union with the United States. “Racial” tension, which never really disappeared, threatened to tear the young country apart, and Anglophones in Quebec, for example, once again worried about French domination. The Toronto *Globe* printed an impassioned letter from an English-speaking Quebecer that declared, “we [must] strike our colors and abandon Quebec, [and] we will make a grand effort to annex this country to the United States. These [...] are the sentiments of ninety-nine English settlers in every hundred.”⁶³ While much of this antagonism toward French Canadians was a product of prejudice against Catholics, it fanned the flames of “racial” unease which was used to promote union with the United States.

⁶¹Edward P. Kohn, *This Kindred People: Canadian-American Relations and the Anglo-Saxon Idea, 1895-1903* (Montreal and Kingston: McGill-Queen’s University Press, 2004), 58-9.

⁶²Ibid, 4.

⁶³Toronto *Globe*, 27 January 1887.

The American Republic had a much more pervasive and troubling race problem of its own. By the mid-1880s, although slavery had been abolished and millions of emancipated blacks struggled to make a new life, overt racism was still very much prevalent. The Jim Crow laws – a series of laws instituted throughout much of the American south to ensure the separation of the races – exacerbated the already tense social situation. As seen in Chapter One, some Canadians vehemently opposed union with the United States due to this genuine racial problem.

In English Canada, Goldwin Smith was the most vocal and influential proponent of the notion of “Anglo-Saxon” superiority. As an ardent supporter of political union, Smith believed that union was necessary to undo the great schism that had occurred during the American Revolution. This schism, he argued, caused a distinct weakness in the “race” and the American Revolution was the “most single and disastrous instance of this weakness.”⁶⁴ During his life Smith focused a considerable amount of his attention toward the reunification of the “Anglo-Saxon” people in North America, as is evident in many of his speeches and writings. In 1887, for example, Smith delivered an address to the Canadian Club of New York on “The Schism in the Anglo-Saxon Race”, in which he outlined the need to unite the “race” based upon the common bond. As he stressed, “If political union ever takes place between the United States and Canada [it will be because] in blood, character, language, religion, institutions, laws, and interests the two portions of the Anglo-Saxon race on this continent are one people.”⁶⁵

From the 1870s to the 1890s, Smith lamented the fact that the people of Canada were seemingly incapable of creating a distinct “Canadian” identity. Rather than

⁶⁴Goldwin Smith, *The Schism in the Anglo-Saxon Race: An Address Delivered before the Canadian Club of New York* (New York: The American News Company, 1887), 6.

⁶⁵Ibid, 43.

embracing their New World ethos – characterized in large part by republicanism – Canadians clung to the institutions of the Old World which Smith personally detested. Canada’s sizeable French-speaking community had also resisted assimilation by the larger English-speaking population, making it appear that so long as Canada remained a bilingual country a distinct Canadian nationality was impossible. As early as 1878 Smith proclaimed that “Canadian nationality being a lost cause, the ultimate union with the United States appears now to be morally certain.”⁶⁶ This lack of a coherent Canadian nationality remained a constant source of frustration for Smith, as revealed in a letter dated 8 July 1885 in which he wrote, “I am persuaded that the attempt to separate from the rest of the continent and weld into an anti-continental Empire, by means of political railways, this string of Provinces united by no identity of interest, geographically disjointed, and further disconnected by the interposition of Quebec between the British Provinces is already hopeless, and that the enormous sums which are being lavished upon it are miserably wasted.”⁶⁷

Closely tied to his belief of “Anglo-Saxon” superiority was the need to assimilate the French-speaking population in Canada. In Smith’s eyes North America was an “Anglo-Saxon” continent and the Dominion was clearly incapable of assimilating the French-Canadian community. Smith’s disdain for the French-speaking inhabitants, made abundantly clear throughout his life, probably was best exemplified in his article “Anglo-Saxon Union,” printed in *The North American Review* in 1893. “The continent would be

⁶⁶Goldwin Smith, *The Political Destiny of Canada* (Toronto: Willing and Williamson, 1878), 71.

⁶⁷Goldwin Smith to James W. Longley, 8 July 1885, in Arnold Haultain, ed., *A Selection From Goldwin Smith’s Correspondence. Comprising Chiefly to and from his English Friends, Written Between the Years 1846 and 1910* (London: T. Werner Laurie, Ltd., 1910), 171. This sentiment is revealed in several other letters written by Smith during his lifetime. For examples see the Goldwin Smith fonds, MG 29-D69, LAC, specifically: Smith to Lord Lansdowne, 7 February 1887, Reel 3 M-2183; Smith to Lord Rathborne, 24 December 1891, Reel 4 M-2184; Smith to General James H. Wilson, 21 April 1899, Reel 9 M-2189.

fortunate,” he wrote, “if it were not likely to receive any worse addition to its inhabitants than the French of Quebec. They are backward, it is true, in education, in intelligence, and in industrial activity, because they have been kept back by influences, ecclesiastical and social, to which they are subjected in their state of isolation.” Although backwards, French Canadians could be assimilated because “they are good people, kindly by nature, courteous, eminently domestic like the country people of France, frugal and generally moral, their clergy having, to do it justice, taken great care of their morality.”⁶⁸ Political union, therefore, would not only reunite the English-speaking peoples in North America, it would also assimilate the lesser “races” for their own benefit.

For French-Canadian supporters of political union, “race” was also an important issue, although seemingly not to the same extent as it was for their Anglophone counterparts. While English-speaking advocates lauded the “Anglo-Saxon” connection and desired “racial” reunification, Francophone supporters believed that only through political union could *la survivance* be ensured. Riel’s hanging in 1885 and the elimination of French and Catholic education in Manitoba in 1892 were proof to this point. Godfroy Langlois, particularly enraged by the Manitoba Schools decision, used his multiple newspapers as a platform in which to promote political union to save the French “race” from assimilation.⁶⁹ In his speech in March 1893, Jean-Baptiste Rouilliard addressed the concern that “Certaines personnes redoutent que l’entrée de la province de Québec dans l’Union Américaine soit le signal de son asservissement et que nous nous trouvions jetés dans les flots d’un océan...anglo-saxon.” This, he argued, was nothing to

⁶⁸Goldwin Smith, “Anglo-Saxon Union,” *The North American Review*, vol. 157 (1893: July/Dec.), 177. Smith also outlined his desire to see French Canadians assimilated in *Canada and the Canadian Question* (1891).

⁶⁹*L’Écho des Deux-Montagnes*, 11 and 25 August 1892; 1, 8, and 15 September 1892; 3 and 10 November 1892.

fear since “Il y a déjà longtemps qu’on nous y a jetés dans les flots de l’océan...anglo-saxon.” As citizens of the American Republic, Rouilliard asserted, French Canadians would be members of a country with a population of sixty-five million compared to the over four hundred million of the British Empire.⁷⁰ French Canadians would, therefore, have more influence in the shaping the future of *la race française* as American citizens than as British subjects.

Interestingly, French-Canadian supporters and opponents to political union essentially argued the same point: it was fundamental to preserve the French “race” in North America. They disagreed on how best to achieve this goal. Opponents pointed to the example of the Cajuns in Louisiana – the former French colony in the American Deep South – who had slowly been assimilated into the wider “Anglo-Saxon” community of the United States. These fears, however, were subsequently rejected. Unlike the Cajuns, French Canadians could remain committed to their language, culture, and institutions, and as a state in the Union they would have greater autonomy over education and religion thanks to the prevailing sentiment of States’ Rights. *La race française* was in more danger of assimilation as part of Canada. Yet for all the importance placed on *la survivance*, the issue of “race” at no point became as important an issue as it had in English Canada and the United States.

Much like their English Canadian counterparts, American advocates of political union also spoke in terms of “Anglo-Saxon” superiority and the need to reunite the “race” in North America. Anti-British sentiment, which was an essential aspect of American nationalism throughout the nineteenth century, slowly diminished. By the end of the century many Americans began to embrace their “Anglo-Saxon heritage” as another form

⁷⁰Rouilliard, 10, 20.

of nationalism.⁷¹ In the late nineteenth century Americans felt charged with a special world mission to spread the values of “Anglo-Saxonism,” albeit infused with American ideals and ingenuity, to create a better world. By the end of the 1890s the United States had acquired several overseas territories, including Hawaii and the Philippines. Because “inferior races” populated these territories, the United States could impart American values such as democracy and liberty. In fact, it was because these territories had an “inferior racial” population that American statesmen justified annexing them. The same could not be said about Canada. Since English-speaking Canadians were members of the same “Anglo-Saxon race”, Canada could not be annexed. Rather, only a peaceful and mutually beneficial union could occur. In their speeches in Congress in 1888 and 1889, both Benjamin Butterworth and John Sherman stressed the “racial” affinities between English Canadians and Americans, which necessitated the eventual political union of Canada and the United States. They also were quite clear that what they desired was political union and not annexation. Clearly, “race” mattered according to the Representative and Senator from Ohio.

Andrew Carnegie was one of the more outspoken proponents of the need for an “Anglo-Saxon” reunion. Since arriving in the Republic as a teenager in 1848, Carnegie embraced his life in the New World and became one of the staunchest promoters of “Anglo-Saxonism”.⁷² He, along with others, believed that the English-speaking peoples of the world were destined to unite to create a grand “Anglo-Saxon” republic. Unlike his fellow advocates, however, Carnegie saw the amalgamation of Canada and the United States as the first step toward a pan-Anglo-Saxon union that also included Great Britain.

⁷¹Hunt, 77.

⁷²Nasaw, 48.

He best expressed this grand vision in his sweeping text *Triumphant Democracy*.

Carnegie extolled the virtues of the “Anglo-Saxon” people and the need for a reunion of the “race” for the betterment of the world.⁷³ This helps to explain Carnegie’s interest and financial contribution to the National Continental Union League.

While other American advocates were not as outspoken as Carnegie, Butterworth, or Sherman when it came to the notion of an “Anglo-Saxon” reunion, the importance of “race” was still present. Francis Wayland Glen, for example, afforded considerable attention to trying to convince the American people that French Canadians, despite being an “inferior race”, would make good republican citizens. Under the editorship of Charles Dana the New York *Sun* printed numerous articles exalting the virtues of American citizenship in an attempt to convince French Canadians that there was nothing to fear by joining the United States.⁷⁴ It was thus along “racial” lines that advocates supported forming a continental republic in North America.

The idea of “race” played a central role in the promotion of political union between Canada and the United States at the end of the nineteenth century. Due to the fascination with racial hierarchies and racial characteristics as developed through Darwinian theories of survival of the fittest and pseudoscientific examinations, the concept of “race” was easily identifiable for many people in the 1880s and 1890s. For its English-speaking supporters, political union was about more than simply uniting the two countries. It was about reuniting the “race” after over a century apart, which in turn would make the “Anglo-Saxons” of North America an overwhelming force. The sincere conviction that the English-speaking peoples were racially superior, and that Canadians

⁷³See Carnegie, *Triumphant Democracy*.

⁷⁴See the New York *Sun* 3, 6, and 22 January 1893; 26 February 1893; 12 March 1893; 30 July 1893; and 12 November 1893.

and Americans were connected by a shared racialism made political union necessary. French-Canadian supporters, meanwhile, were convinced that forming a continental republic with their American neighbours would best ensure *la survivance de la race française*. As a state in the Union, French Canadians would have more control over their destiny and would be able to thwart further attempts at assimilation. This “racial” argument in favour of union was also intricately linked with the other key idea: the superiority of republicanism.

IV

By the 1890s Canada was one of only a few New World nations that retained its political connection with a European power as the majority of other states in North and South America had declared independence and established republican governments. For supporters of political union in both Canada and the United States this was a situation that required change. Almost all of these key figures truly believed in the superiority of republicanism and republican institutions over monarchism, which was a motivating factor in the push to unite the North American continent under one flag.

It is essential to outline that the admiration of republicanism meant more than simply the organization of government, although that also played a role. As Gordon Wood explained, “Republicanism meant more for Americans than simply the elimination of a king and the institution of an elective system. It added a moral dimension, a utopian depth to the political separation from England – a depth that involved the very character of their society.”⁷⁵ Since the end of the American Revolution in the late eighteenth century, republicanism was an essential part of the American ethos, as it helped to define

⁷⁵Gordon S. Wood, *The Creation of the American Republic, 1776-1787* (New York: W.W. Norton & Company, Inc., 1969), 47.

the United States and its developing society. By virtue of their republican society, institutions, and ardent defence of liberty, Americans viewed themselves as the freest people on earth. For advocates of political union in the 1880s and 1890s, it was because of its republican character that the United States was able to develop into a political, economic, and cultural giant.

As the territorial boundaries of the Republic expanded westward in the nineteenth century, the American people believed they were charged with a special world mission to create an “Empire of Liberty”. The roots of this special mission trace back to the arrival of the Puritans in the 1620s and John Winthrop’s desire to create a “city upon a hill” in Massachusetts, which would become a shining light for all peoples of the world. This idea later encompassed the whole of the United States. An essential aspect of this was to create a new way of life that was deeply rooted in a republican ethos.⁷⁶

The massive territorial exploration and settlement in the first half of the nineteenth century led to John O’Sullivan’s famous theory of Manifest Destiny: that it was the destiny of the United States to one day control all the territory in North America, bringing all peoples of the continent under the Stars and Stripes under one republican government. In its simplest form Manifest Destiny meant that God had ordained that the North American continent belonged to the people of the United States and that Americans would one day control all of its territory. In so doing they would spread

⁷⁶For the intellectual roots of this idea see Albert K. Weinberg, *Manifest Destiny: A Study of Nationalist Expansionism in American History* (Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins Press, 1935); R.W. van Alstyne, *The Rising American Empire* (Chicago: Quadrangle Books, 1960); Ernest Lee Tuveson, *Redeemer Nation: The Idea of America’s Millennial Role* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1968); William A. Williams, *The Roots of the Modern American Empire: A Study of the Growth and Shaping of Social Consciousness in a Marketplace Society* (London: Anthony Blond, Ltd., 1970); and Niall Ferguson, *Colossus: The Rise and Fall of the American Empire* (New York: Penguin Books, 2004). The term “Empire for Liberty” was first presented by Thomas Jefferson even before the signing of the Declaration of Independence. See Richard Immerman, *Empire for Liberty: A History of American Imperialism from Benjamin Franklin to Paul Wolfowitz* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2010), 4.

American values, specifically democracy and liberty, as well as their perceived superior civilization.⁷⁷ Since O’Sullivan’s famous use of the term in the 1840s the people of the United States worked to fulfill their continental destiny. In the words of one contemporary in 1888, “the Stars and Stripes alone can rule as the banner of our republican identity and as the symbol of protection in the development of civilization and the elevation of mankind.”⁷⁸

By the 1880s and 1890s, with the United States stretching from the Atlantic to the Pacific Oceans, an old concern once again emerged. During its foundational years some worried that a republic could not expand too much and remain a republic. As Anders Stephanson explained, James Madison, the country’s fourth President, “in a stroke of genius, famously solved the [...] problem [of a large republic] by inventing a wholly indigenous American model based on inversion. For republics of popular sovereignty, vastness was not a problem, but a *blessing*, an insurance *against* corruption of virtue and decline.”⁷⁹ This American model enabled the United States to expand across the continent without falling prey to despotism and anarchy.

Some nineteenth century Americans still feared that by adding more territory to their already sizeable nation they would start down the path toward imperialism and despotism. Much like the Founding Fathers a century earlier, these Americans were influenced by Montesquieu’s evaluation “that republics could not extend themselves by conquest and expect to reproduce their constitutional system.”⁸⁰ Thus, the predicament of

⁷⁷Reginald Stuart, *United States Expansionism and British North America, 1775-1871* (Chapel Hill: The University of North Carolina Press, 1988), 88-89.

⁷⁸Charles S. Hill, *Economic and Sociologic Relations of the Canadian States and the United States: Prospectively Considered* (Toronto, 1889), 24.

⁷⁹Anders Stephanson, *Manifest Destiny and the Empire of Right* (New York: Hill and Wang, 1995), 17. Emphasis original.

⁸⁰*Ibid*, 17.

further expansion, as Stephanson again succinctly summarized, “was whether a vast territory could be compatible with a virtuous republic [...]”⁸¹ Maintaining the United States’ republican ethos was paramount.⁸²

During the 1880s and 1890s in the United States, much talk was made of annexing Canada – insinuating the use of force to acquire the Dominion – instead of uniting in a peaceful and honourable union. According to many public declarations, the annexation of Canada was viewed as the best way to fulfill both countries’ destinies, and the United States was certainly powerful enough to accomplish this. There was, however, a problem with the idea of annexing Canada. As one contemporary observer astutely remarked, “*A republic cannot annex. It can only accept propositions.*”⁸³ Annexing Canada would require an act of direct American interference into the affairs of the Dominion, which, according to the *Emporia Weekly News* (Emporia, Kansas), was “preposterous rot, ungenerous and un-American.”⁸⁴ It was generally agreed that the first step in the direction toward political union between the United States and Canada must come from the Canadian people without any semblance of coercion or force. Any coercive acts whatsoever would be in violation of the republican spirit of the United States that was so dearly cherished. This was most evident in the speeches in Congress by Henry Blair, Benjamin Butterworth, and John Sherman in 1888 and 1889.

The concern of violating the United States’ republican ethos was raised during the Spanish-American War (1898) and the subsequent acquisition of the Philippines, Cuba,

⁸¹Ibid, 16.

⁸²Hunt, 42. One cannot overlook that the argument in favour of spreading republicanism around the world also had distinct “racial” undertones, which in turn influenced those Americans that desired political union with Canada.

⁸³Toronto *Globe*, 15 November 1886. Emphasis in original. The same was outlined in an address by Charles S. Hill, later published as a pamphlet. See *Economic and Social Relations of Canada and the United States: Prospectively Considered* (Toronto, 1889).

⁸⁴*Emporia Weekly News* (Emporia, Kansas), 8 August 1889.

and Guam. In 1900, after the United States began an armed conflict with Filipino revolutionaries, Goldwin Smith, a staunch admirer of American republicanism, feared that the United States would alter its moral character and slip into despotism and imperialism. “Shall the American Commonwealth,” he asked in his essay *Commonwealth or Empire*, “remain what it is, follow its own destiny, and do what it can to fulfill the special hopes which humanity has founded on it, or shall it be turned into an imitation of European Imperialism and drawn, with the great military powers of Europe, into a career of conquest and domination, impairing at the same time its own democratic character, as all experience tells us that it must?”⁸⁵ It is important to note that Smith feared the United States was slipping into despotism by acquiring territory peopled by “inferior races”. Political union between Canada and the US, however, was not a violation of America’s republican ethos due to the “racial” similarities.

Unlike Smith, Andrew Carnegie was not concerned with the United States falling prey to imperialism and despotism. In his essay “Americanism versus Imperialism,” which appeared in *The North American Review* in 1899, Carnegie argued against American incursions into the Philippines but asserted that any action by the American Republic under the guise of “Americanism” was “not the desire of gain, as our European critics assert, nor the desire for military glory, which gives vitality to the strange outburst for expansion and the proposed holding of alien races in subjection for their good.”⁸⁶ Rather, spreading the blessings of American republicanism was not an act of imperialism whatsoever. Besides, America’s republican spirit, Carnegie believed, prohibited it from becoming an empire like the nations of the Old World.

⁸⁵Goldwin Smith, *Commonwealth or Empire* (Toronto: Wm. Tyrrell & Co., 1900), 3.

⁸⁶Andrew Carnegie, “Americanism versus Imperialism,” in *The Gospel of Wealth and Other Timely Essays* (New York: The Century Company, 1901), 191.

Despite the opposition afforded to acquiring Canada lest America's republican ethos be sullied, supporters of political union fervently believed in the need for Canada to embrace its New World character, forever rid itself of its monarchical institutions, and embrace the spirit of republicanism. As Philip Pettit explained, "republicans regarded all of those who are subject to another's arbitrary will as unfree, even if the other does not actually interfere with them; there [was] no interference [in Canada's case] but there [was] a loss of liberty."⁸⁷ In reality Canadians of the late nineteenth century enjoyed a considerable degree of freedom and liberty as British subjects. Imperialists, such as George Denison, argued that Canadians enjoyed more liberty because of the British connection. But Americans continued to believe that Canadians were unfree. As P.N. Facktz outlined in an 1889 study:

Americans, not personally acquainted with the institutions or people of Canada, have been led by [American newspapers] to think and speak of Canadians as though they were an inferior race, incapable of self-government, having no national character, no love of country, no attachment to their institutions, and, sooner or later, sure to become a dependency of the Republic.⁸⁸

The best way for Canada to embrace its North American ethos was through union with the United States. Besides, the Republic was rich; its citizens had access to countless consumer goods; Americans were free to speak as they pleased; and there was no aristocracy. All of these were deemed possible because of republicanism and republican society.

Some contemporary observers hoped to prove to their Canadian neighbours that it was because of America's republican society and institutions that the nation had grown

⁸⁷Philip Pettit, *Republicanism: A Theory of Freedom and Government* (Oxford Scholarship Online Monographs, 2003), 17.

⁸⁸P.N. Facktz, *Canada and the United States Compared: With Practical Notes on Commercial Union, Unrestricted Reciprocity and Annexation* (Toronto: The Toronto News Company, 1889), 12.

so considerably. Within his monumental study *Triumphant Democracy*, Andrew Carnegie praised the many virtues of republicanism. He argued that it was because of the United States' republican character that it had become a prosperous country. One reason for the nation's growth, as Carnegie thought, was the lure of republicanism. In 1890 the population of the United States reached sixty-two million, roughly twenty million more than Britain and its overseas Dominions combined, excluding India.⁸⁹ According to Carnegie this was because millions of people immigrated to the Republic seeking a new life, personal freedom, liberty, and economic security. To him, nowhere else in the world was this possible other than in the United States. Rather than living as a subject, Carnegie believed that American republicanism was the "‘gift of welcome’ to the newcomer. The poor immigrant cannot help growing up passionately fond of his new home, and, alas! with many bitter thoughts of the old land which has defrauded him of the rights of man; and thus the threatened danger is averted – the homogeneity of the people secured."⁹⁰ Carnegie and many other Americans fervently believed that it was the beacon of liberty that millions of immigrants chose the United States because of its democratic principles and republican ethos that eschewed any type of hereditary class system. This was also what made the United States a special nation on the world's stage. And it was for this reason that Canadians should desire political union.

As Senator John Tyler Morgan of Alabama argued, the "‘material interests [of Canada] are so bound up with us that a common government is a necessity for all alike."⁹¹ Francis Wayland Glen also extolled the financial advantages that would accrue

⁸⁹Andrew Carnegie, *Triumphant Democracy: Sixty Years' March of the Republic*, Revised Edition (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1893), 3.

⁹⁰Ibid, 20.

⁹¹Congressional Record, Fiftieth Congress, First Session, 8918.

from political union. In 1893 he wrote: “The gain to the people of Canada from political reunion can hardly be overestimated. They will share in all the advantages of our enormous and rapidly expanding home market for their surplus products and in the benefits to be derived from the great variety of our natural productions [...]”⁹² As citizens of a grand American republic Canadians would also share in the material and economic wealth.

There was some doubt as to whether or not Canadians could embrace the republican spirit. As *The National Tribune* (Washington, D.C.) averred in 1891, Canada was not ready for “annexation” because it did not possess the republican spirit. “They have some institutions,” it outlined:

which must be changed before we can admit the Provinces to the States. They must be entirely willing to remodel their political forms until they are truly republican as the present Government of the States. There must be an entire divorce of Church and State, and an abolition of many survivals of feudalism and aristocracy which still exist in Canada, before we can consent to receive her. It is therefore unlikely that, unless some great convulsion occurs, annexation will come for a quarter of a century.⁹³

The need for Canadians to embrace republicanism was an essential element to culminating a political union between the two North American countries. There was some doubt in the United States whether or not Canadians were willing or even able to adopt republican institutions. Advocates of political union, however, disagreed with this conclusion. Due to the similarities between the two peoples Canadians could easily adapt to republican institutions. As Francis Wayland Glen argued in 1893, “Personal observations for the past forty years justifies the statement that the Canadian people are

⁹²Francis Wayland Glen, *The Political Reunion of the United States and Canada* (New York: American Journal of Politics, 1893), 570.

⁹³*The National Tribune* (Washington, D.C.), 29 October 1891.

steadily becoming less English and more American in their tastes, habits, customs, sentiment, spirit, aspirations, institutions, and legislation,” all of which convinced him that Canadians would make good republican citizens.⁹⁴

Importantly, at no time during the period under study did anyone propose that Canada and the United States should join in political union that allowed the Dominion to retain its constitutional monarchy. All American supporters of political union agreed that however the continent was reorganized following union, it was essential that the new nation be a republic. Canadians, both for and against political union, agreed that if the two countries united the new nation would be a republic.

So long as Canada remained independent of the United States there was the need to maintain a standing army, which nineteenth century Americans loathed because it was a violation of the republican spirit.⁹⁵ Once the two countries were united, however, the need for a standing army would be removed as there would be no threat to the security of North America from any foreign power. Removing the threat of war in North America was essential for the United States, and a number of Americans had long been wary that another conflict would erupt against Britain due to the tumultuous relations with Canada. In the late 1880s Americans were suspicious of their northern neighbour because it continued to reject the republican principles that were now dominant in the New World. That Canadians were largely of the same “race” and yet desired to maintain its monarchical ties perplexed those Americans who gave the matter some thought. Some Americans also worried that Britain might even use Canada as a base from which to invade the United States, thus making a standing army necessary. In reality, the United

⁹⁴Glen, *The Political Reunion of the United States and Canada*, 570.

⁹⁵Bernard Bailyn, *The Ideological Origins of the American Revolution* (Cambridge: The Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 1992), 62.

States army was engaged in fighting various wars with Aboriginals in the west and did not worry about Canada. Forming one continental republic, however, would eliminate the British “threat” and ensure the safety and security of the United States.

The spirit and the power of American republicanism and its influence on the movement for political union was immense, a notion best expressed by Francis Wayland Glen in an interview with the *New York Sun* in December 1891. “Americanism,” he wrote:

is the strongest and most powerfully overcoming political leaven upon the earth, and as surely as the sun rises in the east and sets in the west and the rain descends on the just and on the unjust, so surely will the spirit of Americanism sever the political tie which unites Canada and Great Britain and consolidate the two great English speaking families on the continent of North America. When it shall have been consummated, the United States will have become the most potential nation on the earth.⁹⁶

It was this spirit of Americanism that motivated the advocates of political union to eliminate the border that separated Canada and the United States.

Opposition to republicanism and republican institutions in the 1880s and 1890s was quite strong in Canada as it had been throughout the nineteenth century. Both French and English Canadians maintained strong attachments to traditional and conservative systems of government and visions of society. Some scholars, such as Marc Chevrier, Janet Ajzenstat, Peter Smith, and Louis-Georges Harvey, however, have proposed that there was a republican spirit in Canada in the early nineteenth century as evidenced by the Upper and Lower Canada Rebellions. However, after 1850 it had waned considerably, especially since the British administrators, the clergy, and the colonial elites were all concerned with stopping the spread of republicanism in British North

⁹⁶*New York Sun*, 27 December 1891.

America.⁹⁷ Admiration of republicanism, however, was particularly strong amongst a select group of French Canadians in the early-to-mid nineteenth century. Most pronounced was the impact of the United States and its republican society on the ideas of the *Patriotes* and subsequently the *Rouges*. These radical French-Canadian liberals were ardent republicans who desired union with the United States; yet by the 1890s many of the original *Rouges* had died, and the more moderate wing of the Liberal party in Quebec had mostly reined in its radicals.

Indeed, *Rougeisme* was integral to the political unionism of Honoré Beaugrand, Louis-Honoré Fréchette, Jean-Baptiste Rouilliar, and Godfroy Langlois. With the exception of Langlois, the other three had spent part of their lives in the United States, which helps to explain their admiration for republicanism. However, as Pierre Bance made clear, Beaugrand and Fréchette “furent, en vérité, plus antimonarchiste que républicains. Tous deux détestaient la monarchie comme la peste.”⁹⁸ Within the pages of *La Patrie* there are several declarations of support for republicanism and the United States.⁹⁹ Beaugrand, Fréchette, and Rouilliar used this medium to explain how republican institutions would best serve their fellow French Canadians. In 1880, for example, Beaugrand printed an article in which he extolled the virtues of American republicanism. “C’est le 4 juillet 1783,” he wrote, “que le monde entier salua la naissance de cette vigoureuse nationalité qui a étonné l’humanité par les progrès qu’elle a accompli dans l’ordre social et politique. Le républicanisme seul peut produire les merveilles que

⁹⁷See Marc Chevrier, et al., *De la république en Amérique française: Anthologie pédagogique des discours républicains au Québec* (Québec: Les éditions du Septentrion, 2013); Janet Aizenstat and Peter J. Smith, eds. *Canada’s Origins: Liberal, Tory, or Republican?* (Ottawa: Carleton University Press, 1999); and Louis-Georges Harvey. *Le Printemps de l’Amérique française: Américanité, anticolonialisme et républicanisme dans le discours politique québécoise, 1805-1837* (Montréal: Les Éditions du Boréal, 2005).

⁹⁸Bance, 384.

⁹⁹See *La Patrie* 29 August 1892; 23 September 1892; 3 October 1892; 28 and 29 November 1892.

nos voisins déroulent sous nos yeux.”¹⁰⁰ Over a decade later in his speech in March 1893, Rouilliard praised the superiority of republicanism and pronounced how French Canadians could expect more freedom as American citizens under republican institutions than by remaining British subjects.

One reason for the appreciation of American republicanism was that, unlike their English-speaking counterparts, French Canadians simply did not have the same attachment to the British Westminster system of government. Many French Canadians, especially the Conservatives and the Catholic clergy, admired the British system because it enabled them to maintain their language, religion, and culture. Many French Canadians revered *nos institutions britanniques* but not to the same degree as expressed in English Canada.

Despite all that was said in favour of republicanism by these French-Canadian advocates of political union, the Church remained steadfastly opposed to changing Canada’s political institutions.¹⁰¹ The clergy preferred the monarchical system of government as it recognized the supremacy of God and the power that emanated through divinely-ordained hierarchies. In the United States with its republican institutions, power was vested in the people. This was not only dangerous to society, but according to Jules-Paul Tardivel, one of Quebec’s most outspoken critics of democracy, it was essentially a false system since government should not derive its powers from the consent of the

¹⁰⁰Quoted in Bance, 384.

¹⁰¹As Rainer Knopff explained, “that the secular and political realms were properly subject to the superintendence of the church, and [...] thus vigorously rejected modern notions of popular sovereignty and the separation of church and state, the very notions propounded by the *Patriotes* in the period leading up to the 1837 Rebellions, and by the Rouges after 1848.” Rainer Knopff, “The Triumph of Liberalism in Canada: Laurier on Representation and Party Government,” in *Canada’s Origins: Liberal, Tory, or Republican?* Janet Aizenstat and Peter J. Smith, eds. (Ottawa: Carleton University Press, 1999), 160.

people.¹⁰² In his 1893 article “The United States for French Canadians,” Louis Fréchette hoped to counter the disdain for republicanism amongst French Canadians by explaining that “the instinctive repugnance of the clergy for the word ‘Republic,’ which for them meant revolution, terror, and every ‘social disorder,’” had largely dissipated. Thus, “the clergy on their side have considerably altered their opinions in respect to the United States.”¹⁰³ Unfortunately for Fréchette, the Church continued to view the United States with outward hostility.

English-speaking advocates of political union in Canada such as Goldwin Smith, S.R. Clarke, E.A. Macdonald, and Elgin Myers were also ardent republicans, as witnessed in the preceding chapters. These figures argued that union with the United States was necessary so that the people of Canada could enjoy the same virtues of republicanism as their American neighbours. On this point Clarke was one of the most candid admirers of the American Republic. Within the Pronunciamento issued by the Continental Union Association in 1893, Clarke clearly elaborated his admiration of republicanism. He made clear that each new state added to the “Federated States of North America” must have a republican government, “thereby ensuring the election by the people of all presidents, governors, or rulers.” Moreover, “No title of nobility to be granted either by the national, provincial or state government; and all persons holding any office of profit or trust under them to be prohibited from accepting any present, emolument, office, or title, of any kind whatever from any king, prince, or foreign

¹⁰²Bélanger, *Prejudice and Pride*, 66.

¹⁰³Louis-Honoré Fréchette, “The United States for French Canadians,” *The Forum* (November 1893), 337.

state.”¹⁰⁴ Popular sovereignty was an essential idea for Clarke, especially since the decision to form a continental republic must come with the full support of the people of both Canada and the United States, as well as consent from Britain.

Myers and Macdonald also touched upon the virtues of republicanism and how they believed it would foster development in Canada, leading to general prosperity for Canada. Recall that Myers especially appreciated that Americans owed their loyalty to the land of their birth, and not to a single individual, as did Canadians and the British. This was outlined in his admiration for the American “national anthem”, “My Country Tis of Thee.”¹⁰⁵ Myers was also quite explicit about his preference for republicanism, as was revealed in the series of open letters between himself and Oliver Mowat in June 1892.¹⁰⁶ Macdonald’s best explanation about his preference for republicanism was in his speech at Faneuil Hall in Boston in 1892. Here he outlined his utter disdain for the monarchical system, particularly the aristocracy, while at the same time extolling the perceived virtues of American republicanism, albeit through rose coloured lenses.¹⁰⁷

Not all Canadian republicans, however, were hostile to the British connection. As Wade Henry observed, “a close examination of the thought of Canadian republicans reveals that several of them were anything but anti-British. In fact, they admired British culture and proudly asserted their Britishness.”¹⁰⁸ Goldwin Smith arguably best embodied this outlook. Although Smith was born in Britain and only spent a few years in the United

¹⁰⁴The full Pronunciamento can be found in the Sir John Sparrow Thompson Fonds, MG 26-D, LAC, Reel C-9261, 21939.

¹⁰⁵*Detroit Evening News*, 25 May 1893, found in the Walter Dymond Gregory Fonds, Queen’s University Archives, Box 12, Folder E, Continental Union Material 1.

¹⁰⁶*Toronto Globe*, 22 June 1892.

¹⁰⁷E.A. Macdonald, *Address by E.A. Macdonald, Under the Auspices of the North American Union League, 23 September 1892* (Toronto, 1892). See Chapter Two.

¹⁰⁸Wade A. Henry, “Severing the Imperial Tie?: Republicanism and British Identity in English Canada, 1864-1917,” in *Imperial Canada, 1867-1917*, Colin Coates, ed. (Edinburgh: University of Edinburgh Centre of Canadian Studies, 1997), 17.

States, he was a great admirer of the Republic, its people, and its institutions. In the introduction to his 1893 work *The United States: An Outline of Political History, 1492-1871*, Smith revealed that he regarded “the American Commonwealth as the great achievement of his race, and [one who] looks forward to the voluntary reunion of the American branches of the race within its pale [...]”¹⁰⁹ With its Anglo-Saxon people and republican institutions, Smith fervently believed that Canada’s destiny lay in union with the United States.

For the advocates of political union, republicanism was viewed as far superior to monarchism. Republicanism was more egalitarian and lent itself to mass democracy, which Americans thought was missing in Canada under the British Westminster system. But it was about more than simply the style of government and elections. Republicanism was part of the American way of life, and advocates of political union held a strong conviction that Canada needed to embrace its continental identity and join the United States to form one grand continental republic.

V

The movement for political union in Canada and the United States at the end of the nineteenth century was advanced by a core group of committed supporters. While they were an eclectic group, they also had many similarities beyond their conviction in the need to unite the Dominion and the Republic. It is clear that the Canadian advocates were political, religious, and intellectual outsiders, while their American counterparts were very much political, religious, and cultural insiders. They were not, as some previous studies have concluded, motivated by personal economic gain. Instead, English-

¹⁰⁹Goldwin Smith, *The United States: An Outline of Political History, 1492-1871* (New York: Macmillan and Co., 1893), v.

speaking advocates based their support on the notion of a shared “Anglo-Saxon” racialism, while French-Canadian supporters believed that political union would ensure *la survivance de la race française en Amérique*. They also all believed in the superiority of republicanism, not only as a form of governance, but as a way of life. It was these two ideas, racialism and republicanism, that drove the movement for political union; economic considerations were secondary.

Conclusion

The movement for political union that appeared in Canada and the United States between 1885 and 1896 was the third moment during the nineteenth century in which a fair number of Canadians and Americans considered eliminating the international border to form a continental republic. While the movement that burst onto the scene in the fall of 1849 was the closest that Canada has ever come to annexation, it proved very brief and was largely confined to the English-speaking business community in Montreal. Due to its intensity and the era in which it occurred it is understandable that a great amount of historical attention has been afforded to the movement of 1849. During the 1860s when a second wave of support for political union emerged, Canadians were focused on the Confederation plan and Americans were engrossed with the Civil War and Reconstruction. As such, continental union was not given serious consideration.

Unlike during these previous moments, as this thesis contends, the movement for political union during the 1880s and 1890s was a real, legitimate, and sustained movement to join the two nations together even though it remained small, disjointed, and geographically limited. It also generated considerable discussion and debate on both sides of the border, an element lacking in the previous “annexationist” moments. It also had significant short- and long-term impacts on the Canadian-American relationship, thus making this period fascinating and worthy of further study.

This dissertation adds to the historiography on Canadian-American relations in several ways. It provides an in-depth examination of the emergence, growth, and decline of the movement for political union, as well as its key figures and the core ideas upon which it was based. Many previous studies have examined political unionism as an

offshoot of the movement for commercial union and have concluded that the two were synonymous. This dissertation, challenging that conclusion, instead presents the movement for political union as separate and distinct. Unlike previous studies, which have also focused heavily on the economic element of political unionism, this dissertation shows that it was about more than improving Canada's economic prospects. It was mainly based upon two core ideas, racialism and republicanism, with economic considerations being a secondary concern. In so doing, this dissertation offers a more complete examination of political unionism in Canada and the United States at the end of the nineteenth century.

Political unionism in French Canada has also largely been overlooked within the existing historiography, as most historians have focused almost exclusively on the movement in English Canada and the United States. While active participation amongst Francophones was not to the same degree as Anglophones, there was some degree of support for political union amongst French Canadians in Quebec. Five of the fourteen leading Canadian advocates identified in this thesis were French Canadian, and they were vocal in support for creating a continental republic with the United States. There was also some serious discussion about Canada's future in Quebec, as witnessed by the debates in the public discourse throughout the province. The conference on Canada's future held at Sohmer Park in Montreal in November 1892 was one of the largest such meetings, and political union received a considerable measure of support amongst those in attendance. This dissertation has shown that the movement for political union was not solely an English-speaking endeavour, adding a much-needed analysis to the historiography.

Another area in which this dissertation adds to the historiography is by providing a more thorough explanation of political unionism in the United States. American historians have not paid much attention to the movement for political union of the 1880s and 1890s largely because the US was occupied with internal issues and overseas expansion in the Pacific and the Caribbean. Moreover, most Americans were not interested in forming a continental republic with Canada. This dissertation shows that there was a sincere attempt to peacefully join the Dominion to the Republic amongst a small group of Americans. The existence of the National Continental Union League (NCUL) proves that some Americans seriously contemplated political union with Canada, and that it became an important part of the political discourse.

This dissertation is also unique for its use of the term political or continental union. Previous studies have tended to use the term “annexationism” and the “annexation movement” to describe what occurred at the end of the nineteenth century. This is somewhat understandable considering that it was the term most used during the period itself. Conservative-nationalist historians such as Donald Creighton and P.B. Waite purposefully used the term annexation, complete with its pejorative connotations, as means of presenting the movement for political union as a nefarious plot to remove Canada from the British Empire and its advocates as a group of pessimists that had turned their back on the Dominion. In reality, advocates of political union eschewed the term “annexation” because it did not reflect what they desired. The use of the term political or continental union herein was a deliberate and thoughtful decision as it not only offers a different perspective and interpretation of the movement for political union at the end of the nineteenth century, it better reflects the sentiment of its staunchest supporters.

The idea of forming one continental republic re-emerged in Canada in the 1880s amidst an atmosphere of economic malaise, “racial” tension, and strong regionalism, while in the United States this was an era of economic growth and territorial expansion. According to some Canadians, Confederation, not yet twenty years old, had failed to produce a strong and unified country, capable of promoting economic growth and forming a distinct Canadian nationality. For much of the 1870s Canada was mired in a deep recession, and prospects for improvement were bleak. This eventually necessitated the implementation of the National Policy in 1879 in an attempt to stimulate the economy, with mixed results. At the same time, “racial” tensions amongst English and French Canadians seemingly continued unabated. The execution of Louis Riel in 1885 exacerbated this animosity, which also led to a renewed interest in joining the United States. Meanwhile, discontent in Atlantic Canada, particularly in Nova Scotia, persisted over the perceived shortcomings of Confederation, and calls for annexation to the United States endured. Due to these troubles some Canadians were convinced that the Dominion could not survive as a distinct political entity in North America. In the US, by comparison, as the economy continued to grow thanks in large part to industrialization, the end of Reconstruction many Americans once again looked to expand the territory of their country. Amongst a small group, Canada was viewed as an ideal candidate for admission into the Union, a step that would also fulfill America’s Manifest Destiny. However, most Americans were more interested in expansion in the Pacific and in the Caribbean and not in North America.

The re-emergence of political unionism at the end of the nineteenth century, therefore, was not altogether surprising. As in the past, when confronted with economic,

political, and cultural anxieties some Canadians supported the idea of forming a union with the United States as a means to solve these problems. While this was a natural reaction, at no point was it shared amongst the majority of the people. Interestingly, despite the many troubles in Canada, much of the initial impetus for political union originated from the United States amongst a small group that desired closer commercial relations between the Dominion and the Republic.

As this dissertation has shown, the movement for political union evolved differently in Canada and the United States. Although not perfectly, it can be divided into two distinct periods. The first was between 1885 and 1890 when the two nations were engaged in serious discussions about fishing rights, plus a renewed push for free trade. Both of these issues helped to put the idea of continental union squarely in the public discourse. Interest in the United States came in the form of three bills presented in Congress as well as an investigation by the Senate Committee on Relations with Canada which explored the idea of uniting the continent under one flag. In Canada, however, supporters of political union remained relatively quiet during this period. They correctly believed that an open declaration in favour of political union would harm the establishment of a new free trade treaty with the United States. This six-year period is important and unique in the history of political unionism because the main impetus to unite the two countries originated from the US.

The focus shifted after 1891, ushering in the second period of the movement for political union. Before the election of 1891 the idea of forming a continental republic was not discussed or debated much in Canada. But thanks to the use of the “loyalty cry” by the Conservatives, political union with the United States became an important element in

the public discourse. Following the election, the movement for political union rapidly expanded in Canada. Numerous meetings were held, several speeches were delivered, many pamphlets were written, and the *de facto* political union organization, the Continental Union Association (CUA), was created in Toronto in 1892. By late 1893, there was also renewed support for political union in the United States, thanks to Francis Wayland Glen, Charles Dana, and Andrew Carnegie who founded the NCUL in New York. Despite the additional attention the movement for political union remained geographically limited and at no point did it become a mass or popular movement. It seemed all but dead until the Venezuela Crisis of 1895 revived the idea for one last gasp. Rather than fostering strong support for union, however, the Crisis ultimately helped to improve Canadian-American relations and helped lead to a grand rapprochement between the United States and Great Britain. By 1896 support for political union was all but gone and the movement essentially had collapsed. Although the idea of forming a continental republic remained, it was no longer being seriously discussed or debated in either country. Much like in the past, it remained dormant until it was revived once again. For example, in 1901 after several years of inactivity, the NCUL was re-invigorated with a new mandate to promote political union, and the annexation bugbear was utilized again during the 1911 Canadian election.

Because the movement for political union developed at different times there was a distinct lack of cooperation amongst its supporters. Besides the shared belief in the superiority of republicanism, English Canadians desired union for radically different reasons than their French Canadian counterparts. Many Anglophones wanted to assimilate the French-Canadian community, partly to stave off what some considered

“French domination”, as they were convinced that union with the United States was the only way to achieve this. Interestingly, French-Canadian proponents argued that union with the US would avert assimilation and would enable the continued growth of the Francophone community. Many Americans, however, were hesitant to reach out or make overt calls for political union with Canada for fear of having to integrate the French Canadians. They believed that any move in the direction toward political union must originate from Canada with the full support of not only the Canadian people but also Great Britain in order to avoid violating the republican spirit of their country.

The movement for political union failed for several important reasons. First, it never became a mass or popular movement. Much was said and written in promotion of political union throughout the period of 1885 and 1896. But for all the attention it garnered the majority of Canadians and Americans firmly rejected the idea. In English Canada the attachment to the British Empire and to British institutions, which were essential aspects of their identity, proved insurmountable. It was not that English Canadians hated Americans or the United States, although some certainly did, it was that they did not want to lose their cherished connection with the Mother Country. In French Canada there was a prevailing sense that joining the United States would ultimately end in the assimilation of *la race française en Amérique*. The Catholic clergy was most prominent in disseminating this notion, and a majority of French Canadians agreed. The potential loss of *nos institutions* was enough for most French Canadians to reject joining the United States.

Meanwhile, most Americans were simply indifferent to political union in particular and to Canada more generally. The 1890s was an era of American expansion,

but the focus was on securing more territory in the Pacific and the Caribbean and not annexing Canada. A survey of American popular opinion shows that interest in union with the Dominion was quite weak, and that more Americans were committed to overseas expansion. Moreover, further south of the border interest in the Dominion waned significantly. It is also important to note that there also existed overt hostility to forming a continental union with Canada. Despite what some conservative-nationalist historians have presented in the past, however, Americans were not constantly plotting the annexation of their northern neighbour. Canada had its own “racial tensions” and many Americans did not think that Canadians would make good republican citizens as they continually eschewed republicanism for monarchism. Additionally, there was concern about disrupting the uneasy political orientation of the nation by adding a number of new states, which had in part led to the Civil War thirty years previously.

Secondly, the movement for political union was too geographically limited as most of the support came from the American North East and from Central Canada. The unofficial Canadian organization, the Continental Union Association, was formed with hopes of opening regional chapters throughout Ontario. This did not occur as support for political union remained weak. CUA Membership was also made up exclusively of English Canadians, and there does not appear to have been any concerted effort to create branches in Quebec or Atlantic Canada. In the United States, though expressions of support for political union could be found throughout the country, the most sustained support emanated from New York; the National Continental Union League was headquartered there. Although it initially received support from across the North East, as

time progressed interest quickly disappeared. Moreover, Southerners were generally hostile to expansion that would increase the power of the North.

Finally, it failed because of the inability of its advocates to create a mass movement in order to promote political union. There was a distinct lack of cooperation amongst the core group of political unionists, which ensured that this movement would not succeed. Despite its limited nature, the movement was actually well funded, with Goldwin Smith and Andrew Carnegie using their own personal wealth to further the cause. It, however, could have been better financed. For example, Carnegie gave \$600 to the NCUL in 1893, by far the largest contribution, but that was a paltry sum considering his vast fortune. While there was some communication between members of the CUA and the NCUL, at no point was there a determined effort to join forces to better promote the scheme of political union. The Canadian and American supporters were working independently instead of combining their time and resources. More importantly was the fact that there was very little coordination amongst the Canadian advocates themselves. Besides the conference at Sohmer Park in November 1892, no attempt was made to create a pan-Canadian organization to direct the movement for political union. This is understandable since the movement was hostile to Quebec, as evident within the pages of Goldwin Smith's *Canada and the Canadian Question*, which spoke of the need to assimilate French Canadians. Such attitudes made French Canadians hesitant to join and cooperation between the two linguistic groups quite difficult.

As this dissertation has made clear, the movement for political union likely would have dissipated much quicker had it not been for the vocal and energetic opposition that it encountered. As demonstrated, by actively debasing the idea of forming a continental

republic opponents indirectly provided political union with a further degree of legitimacy. The movement was relatively minor before 1891 because only a small group of American advocates had come out publicly in favour of uniting the continent. With the use of the “loyalty cry” during the 1891 election, however, it had made political union a “live” issue in Canada. At no point were a majority of Canadians in sympathy with continental union, but Oliver Mowat believed that it was necessary to counter its growth every step of the way.

Active opposition to continental union also served political purposes in Canada. The Conservative party, the imperialists, and the *nationalistes* all used the annexation bugbear to promote their vision of Canada’s future, one that was rooted in traditional expressions of loyalty. The use of the “loyalty cry”, especially during the 1891 election, proved to be particularly effective. The Conservatives were highly successful in labelling members of the Liberal party “annexationists”, which at the time was synonymous with “traitor”. These accusations, for the most part, were false. Yet the desired impact was achieved, so much so that the Liberals were forced to drop unrestricted reciprocity as their economic platform in 1893 lest the bogey remain over their heads.

The movement for political union had several important short- and long-term impacts on Canadian-American relations, both positive and negative. For most of the nineteenth century Canadians and Americans eyed each other with suspicion. Amongst Canadians, the belief that their much larger southern neighbour was poised to attack at any moment caused a distinct anti-American feeling to propagate. Meanwhile, Americans distrusted the Dominion as they feared that Britain might use it as a staging ground to threaten the safety and security of the Republic. By the end of the century, however, these

attitudes began to change somewhat. In the aftermath of the Venezuela Crisis many Americans began seeing Canada in a different light. Rather than being a continental rival Canada was viewed as part of the “Anglo-Saxon brotherhood” and the grand rapprochement that occurred between Britain and the United States. In a paradoxical way the movement for political union ultimately helped to bring Canadians and Americans closer together because of the shared racial rhetoric, and sense of shared racialism, that was evident in both countries. “Anglo-Saxonism” was being used amongst both supporters and opponents of closer continental relations, which helped to reduce some of the long-standing tensions. This also helped to create a closer continental friendship, which continued for much of the twentieth century.

The use of the “loyalty cry” and the annexation bogey during the movement for political union also negatively impacted Canadian-American relations. The use of the “loyalty cry” may have been a brilliant move by the Conservatives during the 1891 election to ensure another victory, as it convinced most Canadians that closer economic relations with the US, of any kind, would ultimately lead to annexation and the elimination of the cherished British connection. But by doing so, it stymied rational discussions about trade relations between Canada and the United States. It was nearly impossible to remove the fear of annexation when discussing any degree of reciprocity with the American Republic.

This was evident two decades later during the 1911 election in which the Liberal Party once again supported closer trade relations with the United States. The Conservatives, this time with Robert Borden in charge, utilized the “loyalty cry” to successfully win the election. Much like in 1891 many Canadians in 1911 were

successfully convinced that annexation to the United States would result from a reciprocity treaty, and they had a good reason. For example, on 14 February 1911 during the debate on reciprocity in the House of Representatives, Missouri Democrat Representative James Beauchamp “Champ” Clark supported extending free trade with Canada because he believed it would lead to the Dominion joining the United States. “I am for it,” he declared, “because I hope to see the day when the American flag will float over every square foot of the British North American possessions clear to the North Pole. They are people of our blood. They speak our language. Their institutions are much like ours.” When asked if Clark hoped that reciprocity would lead to union, he stated candidly, “I do not have any doubt whatever that the day is not far distant when Great Britain will joyfully see all of her North American possessions become a part of this Republic. That is the way things are heading now.”¹ Much like in 1891, Canadians believed that Americans were plotting to annex their country, and Clark’s statement provided direct evidence of this plan. While Clark’s attitude may have been in the minority, it was enough to convince Canadians to reject reciprocity and instead elect the Conservatives, who once again championed loyalty to Britain.

In spite of its failure, the movement for political union of the 1880s and 1890s stands out because it had a committed group of advocates in both countries. The men that supported and sustained the movement for political union at the end of the nineteenth century were convinced that forming a continental republic in North America was the best option for Canadians and Americans. They yearned to unite the continent under one flag in order to build the strongest, freest, and most prosperous nation on the planet,

¹*Reciprocity with Canada*, 61st Cong., 3rd sess., *Congressional Record*, vol. 46, pt. 3:2520-2521. For a discussion of the impact of the 1911 election in Canada, see R.C. Brown and Ramsay Cook, *Canada, 1896-1921: A Nation Transformed* (Toronto: McClelland and Stewart, 1974).

thanks in large part to the idealized concept of “racial” unity, the superiority of republicanism, and the belief that material prosperity would accompany such union. They were an eclectic group, coming from different generations, regions, educational backgrounds, and religious denominations. In Canada, they were generally political outsiders and religious non-conformists. French-Canadian advocates of political union were especially considered outsiders since they supported an idea that was vehemently rejected by the Catholic Church. In an era when the Church played a role in almost every facet of life in Quebec, supporting political union drew the ire and backlash from the clergy. Despite this, French-Canadian supporters, most of whom had been influenced by *Rougeisme*, were defiant and continued to promote the perceived benefits of union with the United States to ensure *la survivance*.

The situation was markedly different in the United States. Whereas political union was a bugbear in Canada, it was received with greater support in the American Republic. Those that advocated political union in Congress and as members of the NCUL were by no means political outsiders. They advanced an idea that had roots dating back to the American Revolution when the British North American colonies were asked to join in the rebellion against the Crown. They spoke about America’s Manifest Destiny, that one day the United States would encompass everything north of the Rio Grande and see the Stars and Stripes fly as the lone flag of the continent. Although the idea failed to shatter the indifference of most Americans, proponents did not face social or political ostracism that their Canadian colleagues faced.

Supporters of political union viewed the border as an impediment to freer trade relations and believed that economic and material prosperity would follow the formation

of a continental republic. However, this was a secondary objective. More importantly, they were influenced by nineteenth century pseudoscientific theories of “race” and racial hierarchies which in turn impacted how they viewed the future of the people of North America. For English-speaking Canadians and Americans, they rooted their support for union in terms of “Anglo-Saxon” superiority and a shared racialism. They saw English Canadians and Americans as one people on account of their common “Anglo-Saxon” heritage: they spoke the same language, had a similar culture and political system, and a common religion. Thus, the border inhibited growth and that only through political union could the “race” truly thrive and become the strongest people on the planet. French-Canadian advocates also based their support for union along “racial” lines. Most importantly was ensuring *la survivance* in North America, which meant protecting the French language, French-Canadian culture, and French-Canadian institutions. Interestingly, it did not necessarily mean the protection of the Catholic Church since most of the French-Canadian advocates of political union were staunch anti-clerical intellectuals. They were convinced that French Canadians would have more freedom and protection as American citizens where state secularism was official and States’ Rights would promote French-Canadian values.

Intricately connected with the “racial” aspect was the common belief in the superiority of republicanism. All of these men believed that republicanism was superior to monarchism and that as a New World nation Canada should adopt republican institutions. Americans of the nineteenth century erroneously believed that because Canada retained its ties with the Crown that Canadians somehow possessed less liberty. Only by becoming a republic, as Americans had in the aftermath of the War for

Independence, could Canadians achieve the same level of liberty as they had. Yet it is very important to note that republicanism to these advocates meant more than simply electing one's representatives. To these men republicanism was part of the identity that was rooted in egalitarianism and the New World ethos. It was a way of life and it represented a superior form of governance and society to all others around the world. By creating one unified continental republic the people of North America would become the freest, strongest, and most prosperous on the planet.

As this dissertation argues, the leading advocates supported political union between Canada and the United States largely for positive reasons. Certainly, while economic malaise and "racial" tension in Canada exacerbated their opinions on the country's future, at no point were they sell outs or traitors as some have contended in the past. Rather, they had a profound conviction that continental union was in the best interest for Canadians and Americans alike. On both sides of the border, these figures called for a peaceful and mutually beneficial union, one based upon the full consent of the peoples of Canada and the United States, plus the British government. War to acquire Canada was out of the question, despite vociferous declarations by some American statesmen. In short, this core group did not want annexation; they desired a true political union.

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