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IMPORTING THE REVOLUTION:  
THE IMAGE OF AMERICA IN FRENCH-CANADIAN POLITICAL DISCOURSE  
1805-1837

by  
Louis-Georges Harvey

Thesis submitted to  
the School of Graduate Studies and Research  
in partial fulfilment of the requirements for the  
Ph.D. degree in history

Université d'Ottawa/University of Ottawa



Louis-Georges Harvey, Ottawa, Canada, 1990



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ISBN 0-315-60037-3



UNIVERSITÉ D'OTTAWA  
UNIVERSITY OF OTTAWA

ABSTRACT

IMPORTING THE REVOLUTION:

THE IMAGE OF AMERICA IN FRENCH-CANADIAN POLITICAL DISCOURSE  
1805-1837

Louis-Georges Harvey  
University of Ottawa, 1989

Supervisor:  
Professor Pierre Savard

Between 1805 and 1837, the image of America assumed very different meanings within French-Canadian political discourse. America, which had appeared as a globally negative model before 1815, came in the 1830's to serve as an inspiration for the establishment of a French-Canadian republic, resistance to colonial rule and eventually the necessity of rebellion against that rule. Essentially though, these changes were effected within the same pattern of political discourse, one emphasizing the continuing conflict between the forces of virtue and corruption. Indeed, it is this very pattern which can explain the prominent place of the American image. Once virtue was associated with North America and corruption with Europe, no other political image could acquire the meaning which was ultimately associated with that of the United States. The failure of the Rebellions and the survival of the French-Canadian identity under British rule should not obscure this important stage in the development of French-Canadian political discourse.

## ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

This thesis could never have been completed without the assistance and encouragement of many individuals and institutions. Research for the thesis and my doctoral course work was generously funded by four grants from the Ontario Graduate Scholarship programme, Graduate Fellowships granted by the School of Graduate Studies of the University of Ottawa, as well as by numerous assistantships made available by the History Department of the University of Ottawa. The Centre de recherche en civilisation canadienne-française, also of the University of Ottawa, provided additional research funds through its "bourses de recherche" programme. Bishop's University, while not directly funding the research for this thesis, did, however, provide me with employment over the last four years, as well as with funds which allowed me to further other research interests.

My research was facilitated by the assistance of numerous individuals. The staff of the National Archives of Canada, the National Library of Canada, the Archives nationales du Québec à Québec, the University of Ottawa library's newspaper section and the newspaper section of the Bibliothèque nationale du Québec à Montréal were all helpful

and patient. The Bishop's University Library facilitated my research by acquiring important period imprints through the inter-library loan system and making a fiche reader available. Professor Yvan Lamonde of McGill University allowed me to copy reproductions of early Montréal library catalogues in his possession. David DeBrou, a fellow doctoral candidate at the University of Ottawa now teaching at the University of Saskatchewan, shared information concerning period newspapers.

I have had the great fortune of studying with some of the finest minds in the profession both at the University of Ottawa and at the University of New Brunswick. At the master's level, courses in French-Canadian history with Fernand Ouellet, Jacques Monet and Pierre Savard provided an important grounding for my future research. I am especially indebted to professor Donald F. Davis, who directed a doctoral field in American history and gave me the tools not only to undertake the present study, but to make a living explaining the United States to Canadians. I also learned much from my fellow graduate students in the history programme at Ottawa. Of these my good friend, and partner on many projects, Mark Olsen provided me with much information on theoretical approaches to intellectual history in our numerous discussions of the subject.

The contribution of two individuals to the completion of this thesis deserves special mention. C. L. Porsild, a

friend and a fellow graduate student at the University of Ottawa now pursuing a doctorate at Carleton University, read the many drafts of this thesis and caught numerous stylistic errors and inconsistencies. The thesis simply would not have been as readable without her help, and may well not have been completed without her moral support. Last, but far from least, Professor Pierre Savard brought a rare combination of patience and enthusiasm to his supervision of this thesis. At times when I was prepared to throw my computer, research notes and manuscript out of the proverbial window, it was Dr. Savard who restored my confidence in the validity of the project and my ability to complete it.

In thanking all of the individuals mentioned above, and those I neglected to mention, I am in no way attributing any responsibility to them for any of the shortcomings in this thesis. For errors of style, interpretation or fact, I take sole responsibility.

L.-G. H.

September, 1989

Lennoxville, Québec

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## INTRODUCTION

In May of 1837 Louis-Joseph Papineau addressed a crowd of patriote supporters assembled at St. Laurent, just outside Montréal. Papineau, the movement's leader, was speaking before a meeting held to protest the British government's adoption of the Russell Resolutions which not only signalled the rejection of patriote demands for political reform, but also included measures which stripped the Assembly of its control over government revenues. The speech was an important one, and it would help set the tone for future meetings planned for the spring and summer of 1837. As one might expect, Papineau denounced the British measures as oppressive, condemning the British Parliament's aristocratic pretensions. A significant portion of his speech, however, dealt with the United States. The Lower-Canadian Speaker lauded American government as the best yet devised for a North American people. Further, on more than one occasion, he invoked the memory of the American Revolution as an example of how a colonial people might be freed from the oppressive measures of an unjust metropolis.

Papineau's remarks at St. Laurent, particularly those relating to the American Revolution, might be seen as the

result of his frustration with the British colonial administration. His harping on American institutions, and the Revolution which brought them into being, could be considered nothing more than an act of political bravado in the face of British intransigence. To adopt such a view, however, would be to strip his discourse of all meaning. For in utilizing the example of America, Papineau was appealing to an image which had acquired a distinct and precise meaning in French-Canadian political discourse, one which had evolved significantly in the past thirty years.

Indeed, Pierre Bédard, the leader of the parti canadien before the War of 1812, would never have invoked the image of America as a positive example. Given the tense political and international situation of the pre-war years, such allusions would have surely been regarded as treasonous. Further, the parti canadien was actively campaigning against the immigration of Americans to the Eastern Townships and, to that end, its adherents developed an image of Americans as unsuited to the political culture of the colony. Their view of the United States was also conditioned by the dominant idioms of French-Canadian political discourse in the period. Chief among these was the belief in the social balance established by the British Constitution, and the constantly recurring argument that the colonial constitution was modelled on that of the Mother Country. Consequently, the parti canadien invoked the British government as an

example of desired political reforms and used the American image as a counter-definition of what was politically desirable.

Although the image of America was radically different in these two periods, both representations helped give meaning to the dominant expressions of French-Canadian political discourse. Yet, despite its importance, no detailed study of the American image in French-Canadian political language before 1837 has appeared. Certainly, historians have consistently noted the impact of "American influences" on both the parti canadien and particularly the parti patriote, but the global image of America in the discourse of these movements has yet to be established.

The dominant concerns of English and French-Canadian historiography can partially explain this relative neglect. In the English-Canadian tradition the emphasis on the transition to Responsible Government within the British Empire in the 1840's was difficult to reconcile with the patriote's adoption of the American political model. In this view French-Canadian admiration of the United States became a temporary deviation from the correct path of British constitutional "evolution".<sup>1</sup> Similarly, English-

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1. On the importance of this theme in English-Canadian historiography see Carl Berger, The Writing of Canadian History. Aspects of English-Canadian Historical Writing since 1900 (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1986), chapter 2: "The Rise of Liberty".

Canadian portrayals of the French-Canadians as a conservative, agricultural and semi-feudal people underlined the superficial nature of the patriote reliance on the American image, while legitimizing the parti canadien's rejection of the American option.<sup>2</sup>

French-Canadian historiography up to the 1950's also saw the positive portrayal of the American image in patriote discourse as essentially deviant. In the traditional nationalist explanation, the patriote recourse to America appears as a dangerous aberration in the long struggle to ensure the survival of the French-Canadian nation.<sup>3</sup>

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2. A good example of this interpretation can be found in the works of Donald Creighton and A. R. M. Lower. Creighton noted that radicals in both Upper and Lower Canada drew inspiration from the Jacksonian Democrats of the United States. He maintains, however, that the radical movements in both provinces represented the "frontier and semi-feudal agriculture of the Canadas". See Donald Creighton, The Commercial Empire of the St. Lawrence (Toronto: Ryerson, 1937), p. 263. On Creighton's interpretation see Berger, The Writing of Canadian History, chapter 9. Although A. R. M. Lower was more sympathetic than Creighton to French-Canadian society, his view of that society, and consequently his interpretation of the role of the American image, is substantially the same. See his Colony to Nation (Toronto: Longmans, 1946), pp. 223-227.

3. Lionel Groulx's work is a good example of this tendency. Groulx's view is concisely outlined in his Histoire du Canada français (Montréal: Fides, 1978), first published in 1950. On foreign influences in patriote thought see tome 2, p. 95. Of course, Groulx's interpretation was elaborated long before this work was published. Earlier statements of his interpretation include "Une heure avec l'Abbé Groulx à propos de 37", Action nationale (June 1936) reprinted in his Notre maître le passé, 2e série (Montréal, 1936), pp. 69-88, which deals with the Rebellions. In fact, Groulx preferred to emphasize the British influences on the radicalization of patriote thought. On this theme see his "Le britannisme des

Although the neo-nationalist interpretation which emerged in the 1950's was less critical of patriote demands for political independence from Great Britain, it too minimized the importance of the American image in patriote thought.<sup>4</sup>

Since the mid-1950's the dominant concerns of French-Canadian historians dealing with the evolution of political discourse in Lower-Canada have gravitated toward a consideration of the relationship between nationalism and liberalism. In this context, American influences were reevaluated primarily as indicators of the progressive or traditional nature of French-Canadian nationalism before the Rebellions. Within this discussion, the global image of America in French-Canadian political discourse became largely irrelevant.<sup>5</sup>

New perspectives on the importance of the American image in French-Canadian political discourse before the

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Patriotes", Revue d'histoire de l'Amérique française (RHAF), V, 3 (Dec. 1951), pp. 416-425.

4. See for example, Maurice Séguin, L'idée d'indépendance au Québec: genèse et historique (Trois Rivières: Boréal Express, 1971), pamphlet from a paper first written in 1962. On the patriotes, see pp. 17-34.

5. Two good examples of this new emphasis are Jean-Pierre Wallot, "Frontière ou fragment du système atlantique: Des idées étrangères dans l'identité bas-canadienne au début du dix-neuvième siècle", Historical Papers (1983), pp. 1-29, which underlines the progressive impact of foreign ideas; and Fernand Ouellet's, Le Bas-Canada (Ottawa: Presses de l'Université d'Ottawa, 1980), first published in 1976, which in various places underlines the superficial nature of American ideological influences.

Rebellions have not emerged in recent years, although there have been suggestions that this might be a field worthy of further research. Guildo Rousseau's study of the image of the United States in French-Canadian literature, for example, noted the prominent place of the American image in Lower-Canadian poetry.<sup>6</sup> More recently, Jean-Paul Bernard, in the conclusion of a book he edited dealing with the Rebellions, noted the American origin of the very term "Patriote" and suggests that the rebellions and the political movement which brought them about should be analyzed further in the light of the American experience.<sup>7</sup> In an article written a few years later which dealt with the relationship between American and French-Canadian political ideologies, Bernard briefly outlined the important role of the American image in the evolution of patriote political thought.<sup>8</sup>

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6. Guildo Rousseau, L'image des Etats-Unis dans la littérature québécoise (1775-1930) (Sherbrooke: Editions Naaman, 1981), pp. 32-33.

7. Jean-Paul Bernard, ed., Les Rébellion de 1837-1838 (Montréal: Boréal express, 1983), pp. 341-342. Bernard had also briefly noted the importance of the American model in patriote thought in his Les Rouges: libéralisme, nationalisme et anticléricanisme au milieu du XIXè siècle (Montréal: Presses de l'Université du Québec, 1971), p. 15.

8. Jean-Paul Bernard, "Les idéologies québécoises et américaines au XIXè siècle", in Claude Savary, ed., Les rapports culturels entre le Québec et les Etats-Unis (Montréal: Institut québécois de recherche sur la culture, 1984), pp. 43-59, at pp. 43, 46-47.

The image of America in French-Canadian political discourse before 1837 can only be understood if it is analyzed for its own sake within the context of contemporary political language. The question that needs to be answered is, following Bernard's suggestion, how and why that image evolved between 1805 and 1837, and what meaning it provided to French-Canadian political discourse in the period.

This study proceeds from these preoccupations. It traces the evolution of the image of America from 1805 to 1837 and relates it to the development of French-Canadian political discourse. As a study of political discourse, it deals essentially with the political language of the French-Canadian professional elite and particularly with the dominant faction within that elite, that is, with the adherents of the parti canadien and the parti patriote. As such, it makes no claim of generalizing the discourse of this political elite to the people as a whole, although there is the suggestion that in the case of the Rebellions patriote discourse might have predisposed the habitants to expect American aid. These limitations are those of any study of political discourse based primarily on printed sources and correspondence.

The study can be divided into two broad sections. The first two chapters deal with the raw materials used in the construction of the American image. The assumption is that the representation of the United States which emerged in

this period was conditioned both by the particularities of French-Canadian political discourse in the period, and the information concerning the Republic which was available to members of the political elite.

In this light the first chapter examines the dominant idioms which characterized French-Canadian political discourse between 1805 and 1837. It argues that the "liberal" model used by most historians in their analysis of the period has clouded our understanding of the nature of French-Canadian political discourse before the Rebellions. In its place, it suggests the adoption of the "civic humanist" model used by Anglo-American historians to explain the evolution of political discourse in eighteenth-century Britain and that of early American republicanism. This model rests on the assumption that political writers continued to believe that land ownership conferred certain qualities on the citizen, most importantly the quality of civic virtue. It also posits a view of history which made the accumulation of capital and its connection to executive power a sign of political corruption and decline. In essence, in this political language, discourse is characterized by an emphasis on the ongoing struggle between the forces of virtue and corruption, representing largely a conflict between agricultural and mercantile interests. The chapter then goes on to show how the evolution of French-

Canadian political discourse between 1805 and 1837 might be explained in those terms.

This analysis is followed by a second chapter which studies the sources of information relating to the United States which were available in the colony. It underlines, throughout the period, the important role of the American press in providing materials to serve for the elaboration of an image of the United States. It also notes the contribution of foreign imprints to this process, particularly for the period after 1815. Indeed, after that date period imprints of French origin provided a substantial contribution to the French-Canadian understanding of the United States, in some cases reinforcing the themes which were emerging concerning social and political life in the Republic. After 1830, the importance of the American image was such that French-Canadians both increasingly turned to American imprints, and seem to have sought out sources dealing with specific themes which had become part of the debate over the nature of the Republic which raged in the colony.

The remainder of the study is dedicated to chronicling the evolution of the image of America in French-Canadian political discourse between 1805 and 1837. Before 1815, that image was globally negative. This is particularly true of the French-Canadian representation of the Americans as a corrupt and materialistic people. Combined with the dominant

idioms of political discourse, stressing the importance of political virtue within a society, this image of the American was extended to the analysis of political life and republican institutions.

Between 1815 and 1830, this negative representation of the United States gave way to one which was far more favourable. International circumstances and colonial policy in the period helped to produce these changes. On the one hand, relations between Great Britain and the United States improved, which in turn made references to the American model in French-Canadian discourse more politically acceptable. However, the change in the American image was influenced in an important way by the crisis over the Union Bill. In the midst of the reaction to this policy, French-Canadian political writers began to underline the North American nature of their society. In distinguishing themselves from Europe, and particularly Great Britain, they adopted the idea that North Americans were inherently virtuous because of the more equal distribution of wealth in the New World and its basis in more widespread landownership. In this context, the relevance of the British political model declined while that of the American model was enhanced. Between 1815 and 1830 then, French-Canadian political writers rehabilitated the American character, finding some aspects of republican government worthy of admiration, and increasingly invoked the example

of American institutions in their discussions of required improvements in the colony.

The image of America in French-Canadian political discourse between 1815 and 1830 was very much a transitional one. By the early 1830's, however, it was clear that a new representation of the United States was taking root. As the patriote movement adopted an openly republican political discourse, it came to rely exclusively on the American political model. Central to patriote demands for political institutions modelled on those of the Republic was the notion that the American system of government represented the only form of political organization acceptable to a virtuous North American people. In responding to allegations that American life was characterized by political upheaval, religious intolerance and sectional conflict, the patriotes most often attributed such problems to the continued influence of Europeans in the New World. In so doing they linked their struggle to that of contemporary American politicians, and gave it a continental dimension.

The idea that North American political virtue could only be preserved by eliminating European influence on the continent was one more argument for the rejection of British colonial rule. In a context where such an option seemed increasingly likely, the American image took on a new and more radical significance. The logic of patriote discourse

led the movement into a debate with its opponents over the political future of French Canada and the fate of the Canadiens were the colony to become part of the American union. More importantly, however, the rejection of European influence in the New World brought the image of the American Revolution to a central place within patriote discourse. Between 1834 and 1837, the Revolution was cited as a means of resisting colonial misrule both politically and economically. After the spring of 1837, the Revolution was increasingly invoked as a justification for a less peaceful separation from the Empire.

Between 1805 and 1837 then, the image of America assumed very different meanings within French-Canadian political discourse. America, which had appeared as a globally negative model before 1815, had come in the 1830's to serve as an inspiration for the establishment of a French-Canadian republic, resistance to colonial rule and eventually the necessity of rebellion against that rule. Essentially though, these changes were affected within the same pattern of political discourse, one emphasizing the continuing conflict between the forces of virtue and corruption. Indeed, it is this very pattern which can explain the prominent place of the American image. Once virtue was associated with North America and corruption with Europe, no other political image could acquire the meaning which was ultimately associated with that of the United

States. The failure of the Rebellions and the survival of the French-Canadian identity under British rule should not obscure this important stage in the development of French-Canadian political discourse.

CHAPTER ONE  
VIRTUE, CORRUPTION AND THE EVOLUTION OF FRENCH-CANADIAN  
POLITICAL DISCOURSE, 1805-1837

The idea of the triumphant ascendancy of liberalism is firmly rooted in the consciousness of historians. Indeed, a generation of Anglo-American historians once traced the rise of liberalism back to the Glorious Revolution and linked it with the rise of the English merchant class and the development of parliamentary supremacy. This interpretation stressed the shift from feudal to bourgeois values, the rise of "possessive individualism", to use C. B. Macpherson's term, in political philosophy and the appeal to natural rights theory. Here, this ascending, modern political ideology gained strength through the eighteenth century and achieved maturity in the revolutionary and reform movements of the nineteenth century.<sup>1</sup>

One of the more noteworthy developments in Anglo-American intellectual history in the past thirty years, however, has been the challenge mounted against this

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1. This view is discussed in J. G. A. Pocock, "Authority and property. The question of liberal origins" in his Virtue, Commerce, and History (Cambridge: University Press, 1985), pp. 51-71.

interpretation by the English historians J. G. A. Pocock, John Dunn and Quentin Skinner, and their American counterparts Bernard Bailyn, Gordon Wood, Lance Banning, and Daniel Walker Howe, among others. Pocock led the way in this re-evaluation, questioning the notion that liberalism rose uncontested in eighteenth-century British political culture. Specifically, Pocock argued that tracing the dominance of "possessive individualism", and thus bourgeois political theory in the Marxist sense, to Locke, ignored other important and perhaps dominant streams in Anglo-American political culture.<sup>2</sup> American historians have made essentially the same point in a number of seminal works dealing with republican ideology at the time of the Revolution and through the first decades of the early national period.<sup>3</sup>

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2. J. G. A. Pocock, The Machiavellian Moment. Florentine Political Thought and the Atlantic Republican Tradition (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1975). Pocock's approach was partially inspired by the work of Quentin Skinner. On the contextualist approach see Skinner's seminal article "Meaning and Understanding in the History of Ideas", History and Theory, VIII (1969), pp. 3-53.

3. Of these, Bernard Bailyn's Ideological Origins of the American Revolution (Cambridge, Mass.: Bellknap Press, 1967) is perhaps best known. Bailyn's book emphasizes that Locke was only a small part of the political and ideological heritage which combined in colonial minds to form the genesis of American republicanism. Gordon Wood made the same point for the constitutional period in his The Creation of the American Republic (New York: W. W. Norton, 1972), first published in 1969. More recently the re-evaluation has been extended to the Jeffersonian Republicans by Lance Banning in his The Jeffersonian Persuasion (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1978) and Forrest Macdonald in his The

This trend in American intellectual history, which has been termed "Republican Revisionism"<sup>4</sup>, has important implications for our view of the development of political discourse in French-Canada. For, like the historiography which this new school of historians sought to revise, much of that surrounding the development of political ideology in French-Canada is primarily concerned with the manifestations of liberalism in Lower-Canadian political discourse.

In the place of this liberal model, we might substitute one which emphasizes the persistence of patterns of discourse uncovered in the recent literature dealing with the evolution of Anglo-American political thought in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. A reading of period political texts and correspondence reveals that idioms which Pocock and others identified with "classical republicanism" or "civic humanism" were present in French-Canadian political discourse between 1805 and 1837. Following the contextualist theory developed by Pocock and Skinner, the presence of these forms and their use in the period's

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Presidency of Thomas Jefferson (Lawrence: University Press of Kansas, 1976). In the same vein, Robert Remini's Andrew Jackson and the Course of American Freedom (New York: Harper Row, 1981) and Daniel Walker Howe's The Political Culture of the American Whigs (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1979) both emphasize the continuity in American republican discourse through to the 1840's.

4. Isaac F. Krammick, "Republican Revisionism Revisited", American Historical Review, LXXXVII, 3 (1982): 629-664.

discourse can be explained by the particular context of the Lower-Canadian political situation. What is more, French-Canadian politicians and commentators modified that discourse to accommodate their specific situation, while retaining its essential characteristics.

Within this pattern of discourse images of external polities-- those of France, Great Britain and the United States-- acquired specific and important meanings which evolved over time. The British and American images seemed almost balanced in the French-Canadian consciousness, alternately symbolizing ideals worthy of imitation or examples of the most profound political decay. These meanings, however, are inexorably linked to a political language which cannot be adequately understood using a model which stresses the inevitable rise of liberalism.

### 1.1 Historians, Liberalism and the Evolution of French-Canadian Political Discourse Before 1837

In the introduction to a collection of articles published in 1969, Ramsay Cook stated that since Durham's Report, historians "have never ceased to argue about the relation of constitutionalism to nationalism in 1837..."<sup>5</sup>

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5. Ramsay Cook, "Introduction" in Cook, ed., Constitutionalism and Nationalism in Lower Canada (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1969), pp. vi-x, at p. vi.

Indeed, from Garneau on, the nature of political conflict in Lower Canada led to an emphasis on what Durham saw as the struggle between two nations within a single state, and the confrontation which pitted an elected colonial Assembly against appointed British officials. Unlike other constitutional struggles of the same nature, the Lower-Canadian experience was complicated by the important role of French-Canadian nationalism. Despite this, it remained possible for generations of historians to portray the parti canadien and the parti patriote as essentially democratic and liberal, primarily on the basis of the nature of their political struggle.<sup>6</sup>

That Cook opposed "constitutionalism" rather than "liberalism" to "nationalism" is an indication of the serious questions raised concerning the notion of French-Canadian political discourse as "liberal" by the late 1960's. Although the apparent contradictions between the "liberal" political discourse of French-Canadian politicians in the period and their "nationalism" were noted by earlier authors, Fernand Ouellet has most clearly delineated the nature of that conflict. Since the early 1950's Ouellet has been expounding the notion of French-Canadian nationalism as the creation of the professional class in the early

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6. See Carl Berger, The Writing of Canadian History. Aspects of English-Canadian Historical Writing since 1900 (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1986), chapter 2: "The Rise of Liberty".

nineteenth century. In his interpretation, this social group developed a nationalism which was fundamentally conservative, stressing the preservation of traditional social and economic structures. Upon this conservative social and economic outlook was superimposed a pattern of political discourse which sought the democratization of colonial political structures and, with it, the accession of the professional class to a position of political supremacy. Noting this contradiction in the thought of the parti canadien before 1815, Ouellet also maintains that it was not resolved by the "radicalization" of French-Canadian political discourse in the 1830's. Indeed, Ouellet sees the same social and economic conservatism in the thought of the patriotes, and with it the same essentially superficial nature of the movement's "liberalism".<sup>7</sup>

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7. The most concise statement of Ouellet's thesis concerning the conservative nature of French-Canadian nationalism and the superficiality of liberal thought before 1837 appears in his "Le nationalisme canadien-français: de ses origines à l'insurrection de 1837", Canadian Historical Review (CHR) XLV, 4 (Dec. 1964), pp. 277-292 reprinted in Ramsay Cook, ed., Constitutionalism and Nationalism in Lower Canada (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1969), pp. 1-16. The aspirations of the professional class were highlighted in his "Toussaint Pothier et le problème des classes sociales (1829)", Bulletin des recherches historiques (BRH), vol. 61, no. 4 (Oct.-Dec. 1955), pp. 147-159. On American influences in patriote thought, see his "Denis-Benjamin Viger et le problème de l'annexion", BRH, vol. 57, no. 4 (Oct.-Dec. 1951), pp. 195-205. With the exception of this article, most of Ouellet's work on patriote thought and the its American component centres on Papineau. Early works noting the influence of American ideas on Papineau include the introduction to a collection of the Speaker's writings published as Ouellet, ed., Papineau. Textes choisis (Québec: Presses de l'Université

Ouellet's definition of what constitutes "true" liberalism is indicated in his treatment of the "radical" wing of the patriote movement in the 1830's. In contrast to the leadership of the patriote movement, the radicals advocated abolition of the seigneurial system, a sign that they were open to economic and social change. In this sense, it is the concordance of views associated with a modern definition of liberalism which made the radicals "true liberals" in Ouellet's eyes.<sup>8</sup> Essentially, Ouellet's analysis of political discourse before 1837 proceeds from a model stressing a conservative/liberal, traditional/modern and feudal/bourgeois dichotomy.

Simultaneous with the development of Ouellet's interpretation, came another which saw no contradiction between the development of "liberalism" and the existence of French-Canadian nationalism. Jean-Pierre Wallot, both individually and in studies undertaken in collaboration with

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Laval, 1957); "Papineau dans la révolution de 1837-1838", Canadian Historical Association Report (CHAR) (1958), pp. 13-34, reprinted in Cook, ed., Constitutionalism and Nationalism..., pp. 75-94; and Louis-Joseph Papineau: un être divisé (Ottawa: Canadian Historical Association, 1960). Ouellet's economic and social interpretation of the period is fully exposed in his Histoire économique et sociale du Québec 1760-1850 (Montréal: Fides, 1971) first published in 1966. All the strands of Ouellet's interpretation come together in his Le Bas-Canada 1791-1840 (Ottawa: Presses de l'Université d'Ottawa, 1980), first published in 1976. On the American image in patriote thought also see Le Bas-Canada, pp. 337-340.

8. On the radicals see Ouellet, Bas-Canada, pp. 486-487.

John Hare or Gilles Paquet, emphasised the more progressive nature of French-Canadian political, economic and social discourse before 1837. Wallot denied that French-Canadian nationalism was the creation of the middle class and that its influence on economic and social thought was regressive. In his studies of the period before 1815, Wallot portrays a liberal and nationalist parti canadien struggling for the advancement of democratic control over the colonial government.<sup>9</sup>

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9. Wallot first noted the nationalist undertones of political conflict during the Craig administration in his doctoral thesis "La Bas-Canada sous l'administration Craig, 1807-1811" (Ph. D. dissertation, Université de Montréal, 1965). A nationalist interpretation of an earlier conflict appears in his "La querelle des prisons (1805-1807)", RHAF, 14 (1960-1961), pp. 61-86, 259-276, 395-407, 559-582. Wallot considers the impact of the French and American revolutions in "La pensée révolutionnaire et réformatrice dans le Bas-Canada (1773-1815)" in his Un Québec qui bougeait (Montréal: Boréal Express, 1973), pp. 265-292. An annotated bibliography of imprints in the colony to 1810 published with John Hare, Les imprimés dans le Bas-Canada (Montréal: Presses de l'Université de Montréal, 1967) considers the impact of foreign works as does an article published with Hare, "Les imprimés au Québec (1760-1820)" in Y. Lamonde, ed., L'imprimé au Québec. Aspects historiques (18è-20è siècles) (Montréal: Institut québécois de recherche sur la culture, 1983), pp. 77-125. Wallot attempts to show the impact of foreign imprints on political, social and economic thought in the colony in his "Frontière ou fragment du système atlantique: Des idées étrangères dans l'identité bas-canadienne au début du XIXè siècle", Historical Papers (1983), pp. 1-29. A brief analysis of French-Canadian political thought before 1837 appears in his book with Gilles Paquet, Patronage et pouvoir dans le Bas-Canada (1794-1812) (Montréal: Presses de l'Université du Québec, 1973), chapter III. Wallot and Paquet have recently restated their interpretation in Lower Canada at the Turn of the Century: Restructuring and Modernization (Ottawa: Canadian Historical Association, 1988).

Although most of Wallot's work has dealt with this period, he has extended this hypothesis to cover the period up to the Rebellions. In fact, his studies undertaken with Gilles Paquet argue that the French-Canadian political elite was proposing an alternate plan of economic and social development than that put forward by the British commercial elite in the colony. That plan, according to the Wallot-Paquet interpretation, was no less progressive than that of the British merchants and represented an attempt by the French-Canadian political elite to respond to changes in the Lower-Canadian economy. Although Wallot and Paquet, in their latest work, do not specifically label political discourse in the period liberal, their interpretation attributes liberal characteristics to that discourse and to the social and economic vision of the men who elaborated it.<sup>10</sup> In essence, although their view is diametrically opposed to Ouellet's, Wallot and Paquet use largely the same definition of liberalism in their work.

Other studies undertaken in the last decade further reflect the reliance on the liberal model in the analysis of political discourse in the colony. Denis Monière's work is a case in point. In both his Le développement des idéologies au Québec (1977) and his more recent Ludger

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10. This view is concisely summarized in Wallot and Paquet's recent pamphlet, Lower Canada at the Turn of the Nineteenth Century....

Duvernay, Monière portrays patriote discourse as "liberal".<sup>11</sup> The concern with the relationship between liberalism and nationalism in the debate is also reflected in a doctoral dissertation presented by Philippe Reid at Laval in 1979. Analysing political discourse in le Canadien from its inception to 1842, Reid argued that early French-Canadian nationalism was "liberal", becoming conservative only after 1840.<sup>12</sup>

It was André Vachet, a political scientist, who pointed to the problems associated with the liberal model in an article written in 1976. Although Vachet's research was conducted mainly on the period after 1850, he came to the conclusion that French-Canadian ideological development in the nineteenth century was marked by the absence of a coherently expressed liberalism. Vachet's interpretation proceeds from a view which stresses the unity of the social, economic and political tenets of liberalism. In the period he studied, Vachet never found all of these themes present in political discourse and thus concludes that liberalism as

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11. Denis Monière, Le développement des idéologies au Québec (Montréal: Québec/Amérique, 1977), see for example pages 115-116. Denis Monière Ludger Duvernay et la révolution intellectuelle au Bas-Canada (Montréal: Québec/Amérique, 1987), see chapter 4.

12. Philippe Reid, "Représentations idéologiques et société globale: le journal le Canadien (1806-1842)" (Ph. D. dissertation, Université Laval, 1979). See particularly the conclusion.

such was conspicuously absent from the French-Canadian political landscape.<sup>13</sup>

This notion of the absence of liberalism in nineteenth-century French-Canadian political thought was reexamined in a brief exchange between Vachet and Jean-Paul Bernard in 1984. This particular discussion is doubly significant to our analysis since it not only touched on the issue of liberalism in French-Canadian thought, but also on the influence of the United States in the formulation of that thought. Again, most of the discussion dealt with the 1840's and 1850's, but it is highly relevant to the previous period. Bernard argued for the legitimacy of Rouge liberalism, while largely accepting Ouellet's interpretation of the earlier period. Still, he saw the influence of the American tradition as globally "liberal", and the Rouge recourse to annexation in the 1840's and 1850's as an expression of economic and social, as well as political liberalism.<sup>14</sup>

In his rejoinder, Vachet maintained his position regarding the absence of a coherently expressed liberalism

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13. André Vachet, "L'idéologie libérale et la pensée sociale au Québec" in C. Panaccio and P. A. Quintin, eds, Philosophie au Québec (Montréal: Bellarmin, 1976), pp. 113-126.

14. Jean-Paul Bernard, "Les idéologies québécoises et américaines au XIX<sup>e</sup> siècle" in Claude Savary, ed., Les rapports culturels entre le Québec et les États-Unis (Montréal: Institut québécois de recherche sur la culture, 1984), pp. 43-62

in French-Canadian thought. In so doing, he specified that all democratic thought is not liberal, and that in associating democracy with liberalism, historians confounded two very different streams. Moreover, Vachet underlined once again the importance of the notion of "possessive individualism", seen by C. B. Macpherson as the core of liberal thought, and the absence of a definition of property in French Canada consistent with that notion. Further, Vachet questioned the essentially "liberal" heritage of the American Revolution, arguing that American influences may well have transmitted a "democratic" and "populist" model to French-Canadians rather than one associated with liberalism. Extending this distinction between "democracy" and "liberalism", Vachet argued that this may well be the essence of Ouellet's differentiation between "political liberalism" and "true liberalism".<sup>15</sup>

Vachet's hypothesis, although highly speculative and applied to a later period, is extremely relevant to our understanding of French-Canadian political discourse before 1837. The liberal/conservative dichotomy posited in existing historiography simply cannot adequately explain the particularities of political language in the period. If we adopt Ouellet's interpretation, social and economic

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15. André Vachet, "Post-scriptum à Jean-Paul Bernard Libéralisme ou pas...", in Savary, Les rapports culturels entre le Québec et les Etats-Unis, pp. 63-70.

discourse is divorced from political discourse, and a whole generation of French-Canadian political writers are condemned to having been in contradiction with themselves. Conversely, in adopting the Wallot-Paquet hypothesis, we run the risk of glossing over the continuing relevance of older, of more traditional components in patriote thought, those which, as Vachet points out, seem strangely discordant to our definition of liberalism.

In the face of such problems, Vachet's notion that the American Revolution may have provided an ideological heritage other than liberalism seems significant. In this vein, we may also question the heritage provided by the Anglo-American political tradition in general. Over the past thirty years, historians of Anglo-American political discourse have underlined the fact that the "liberal" stream was not the only tradition which persisted after 1688, and that the historical emphasis on the inevitable rise of liberalism from Locke forward ignores important patterns in political language which persisted through to the American Revolution and later. In as much as French-Canadian political discourse before 1837 was significantly influenced by both the British and American political traditions, the model used by these historians may well be more relevant to understanding its evolution than one based on mid-nineteenth century definitions of liberalism.

The analysis of French-Canadian political discourse which follows rejects the liberal model in favour of one which stresses the continued relevance of "civic humanist" and "classical republican" idioms in the political language of eighteenth-century Britain and early nineteenth-century America. In so doing, it adopts a contextualist approach to the analysis of political language, one which seeks to establish the meaning of political discourse through the examination of its dominant patterns. The main argument presented here is that notions of virtue and corruption consistent with the civic humanist model, as well as an understanding of the relationship between property of political personality which is the hallmark of that political language, were consistently exhibited in the discourse of both the parti-canadien and the parti patriote between 1805 and 1837. In turn, it is the persistence of these very idioms in French-Canadian political discourse which can explain the shape of the American image which evolved within it.

## **1.2 Virtue, Corruption and the British Constitutional Balance: French-Canadian Political Discourse, 1805-1814**

In establishing the presence of civic humanism in Anglo-American political discourse, J. G. A. Pocock challenged historical interpretations which stressed the

rise of liberalism as the principal component of that discourse from Locke forward. He argued that a liberal or modern political theory of property was in conflict with a more ancient understanding of the role of property in "determining the relations of personality to government."<sup>16</sup> The persistence of this "agrarian ideal" also shifted the focus of Anglo-American political theory toward a consideration of the struggle between "virtue and corruption" within society itself.<sup>17</sup>

Assuming, as Pocock does, that idioms in political discourse are adapted to situations where they can give meaning to a particular political context, it would be surprising to find that Lower-Canadian politicians were not speaking the language of civic humanism. There can be little doubt that this language was available to them. Historians have already noted the impact of British thought on early French-Canadian political leaders, and the American inspiration of later patriote thought. We also know that this first generation of politicians was classically trained and thus familiar with the elements of ancient history embodied in the civic humanist paradigm.

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16. Pocock, "The Mobility of Property and the Rise of Eighteenth-Century Sociology" in his Virtue, Commerce, and History, p. 108.

17. Pocock, "Authority and Property...", p. 48.

Most historians readily admit the predominant influence of British thought before 1815 and that the parti canadien operated within, what Pocock terms, the constitutionalist paradigm.<sup>18</sup> That is, they believed that the constitutional balance achieved between the three orders of society (monarchical, aristocratic and democratic) was the essence of the British constitution and the guarantee of their rights as British subjects. As J. F. Perrault wrote in the dedication to his translation of Lex Parliamentaria, which became the handbook of Lower-Canadian representatives, the three orders of society, by their nature antagonistic, were tied to the British Constitution and thus were "forcés de marcher d'un pas égal pour éviter de tomber tous trois dans le principe redoutable de l'anarchie."<sup>19</sup> Implicit in their adherence to this view was the belief that the Lower-Canadian Constitution was modelled on that of the Mother Country and should operate in the same way. While there were problems with the aristocratic element in Lower Canada, no member of the parti canadien suggested they be resolved

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18. See for example Lawrence A. H. Smith, "Le Canadien and the British Constitution, 1806-1810", CHR, XXXVIII, 2 (June 1957): 93-108; Jean-Pierre Wallot, "Le Bas-Canada sous l'administration Craig, 1807-1811", pp. 46-49; Ouellet, Bas-Canada, pp. 133-134.

19. J. F. Perrault, "Épître dédicatoire" in his translation of Lex Parliamentaria (Québec: P. E. Desbarats, 1803); the importance of this translation has been underlined by Wallot and Hare, Les imprimés dans le Bas-Canada 1801-1810, 48-51.

by the abolition of the Legislative Council, nor was there any argument made in favour of a unicameral house. Still, the parti canadien vehemently defended the rights of the Lower House, where they held sway, against encroachments from the other branches of the Legislature. This has led some historians to claim that the parti canadien was elaborating a theory of ministerial responsibility,<sup>20</sup> others that the movement merely sought to establish the dominance of the Lower House in their own national and class interests.<sup>21</sup>

The idea that the parti canadien's leaders were ahead of their time in demanding responsible government is difficult to accept if we consider another aspect of English thought which was constantly restated in the political discourse of the period: the idea of the separation of powers. Indeed, it is hard to imagine the parti canadien accepting that the Governor's councillors sit in the House and command a majority, given their consistent condemnation of the abuses of the executive power against the Lower House and the Constitution itself.

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20. See W. L. Morton, "The Local Executive in the British Empire, 1763-1828", English Historical Review, LXXXVIII (1963): 436-457; and Jean-Pierre Wallot and Gilles Paquet, Patronage et pouvoir dans le Bas-Canada (1794-1812), pp. 57-59; Wallot, "La querelle des prisons (1805-1807)", pp. 569-571.

21. Ouellet, Bas-Canada, pp. 134-135.

In advocating some form of control over the actions of the Governor's councillors, the parti canadien was not advancing the notion of responsible government in the modern sense.<sup>22</sup> Rather, canadien politicians argued for the existence of a "ministère" in order to avoid responsibility for executive acts from resting with the King's representative, the Governor. The concept of a ministry shifted responsibility to the Governor's councillors, in Lower Canada, the Executive Council. If the councillors could be made responsible for executive abuses, it followed logically that they could be prosecuted for their errors, in this case through the use of impeachment, a procedure which the Assembly claimed as part of its powers. This idea was fully exposed in a document dated 1814 and attributed to Pierre Bédard, the first leader of the parti canadien.<sup>23</sup>

Although this document seems to suggest that the parti canadien was advancing the notion of democratic control over

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22. Although Wallot argues that the parti canadien elaborated for the first time in British North America "l'essentiel de la doctrine de la responsabilité ministérielle, savoir: que le gouvernement devrait tirer ses conseillers parmi les chefs de la majorité élue à l'Assemblée..."(287), he goes on to say that in fact they advocated that only a portion of the councillors be chosen among the majority and that the party was not advocating the collective responsibility of ministers. See his "La pensée révolutionnaire et réformiste...", p. 277, 280.

23. "Mémoire au soutien de la requête des habitans du Bas-Canada..." (1814) reprinted in Robert Christie, A History of the Late Province of Lower Canada (Québec, 1848-53), volume VI, pp. 313-323.

the executive, it is interesting to note that the Assembly, while advancing these claims simultaneously continued to argue for the exclusion of office holders from the Lower House. Moreover, the Mémoire of 1814 states the Governor should chose some and not all of his councillors among individuals with "le plus d'influence sur la majorité de la Chambre d'Assemblée...".<sup>24</sup> In fact, what the document argues for is a channel of communication between the executive and the Assembly. The Executive Council it envisages would be populated by both members of the minority and the majority factions of the House and Council and would be "un lieu où les deux partis pourraient s'entendre et se concilier sur leurs plans et leurs projets...".<sup>25</sup> The Executive Council, then, would be a forum where the Governor might better be informed of the views of the Assembly. The point here is that the parti canadien did not envisage or even desire the intrusion of the executive branch into the Assembly, nor did it advance the idea of the collective responsibility of ministers sitting in the House. That they did not shows how crucial the concept of separation of powers remained to them.<sup>26</sup>

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24. Ibid., p. 321.

25. Ibid., p. 320.

26. Bédard also stated that the advice of the Governor's councillors under the system he envisaged would not be binding. See Ibid., p. 320.

This is an important point, since Pocock and others have argued that separation of powers was a key element in the opposition discourse of mid-eighteenth century England. The opposition view maintained that the Constitution was being subverted by the corruptive influence of the ministry which in turn was in the hands of the moneyed interests. Because political virtue was in the hands of the independent landowner, the virtuous element in the Constitution was the Commons. "Liberty" had to be protected from the corruptive influence of "power", exercised by the executive in the attempts of the ministry to corrupt the House of Commons or to subvert its rightful powers. The vigilance of the virtuous citizenry and its representatives was the guarantee of "liberty".<sup>27</sup> In the parti canadien's discourse we see the same emphasis on the need to be wary of executive influence, as well as an ardent defence of the rights of the Assembly.

Arguing that this civic humanist paradigm was operative in Lower Canada and that it was applied to the domestic political context first requires that we establish that the notions of virtue and corruption were present and applied to an analysis of society. Lower-Canadian political texts in the period prior to 1815 abound with such allusions. Indeed, it was easy for Lower-Canadian commentators to

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27. Pocock, Machiavellian Moment, chapter XIV.

identify the players in the classic struggle between liberty and power. For, this period was marked by the definition of the French-Canadian people as agricultural and virtuous. The threat to that virtue was also evident: the activities of English mercantile interests who exercised a corruptive influence through their control of the councils and their intimate relationship with successive governors.

At the theoretical level, Denis-Benjamin Viger's Considérations..., published in 1809, portrays the struggle between power and liberty, virtue and corruption, in distinctly civic humanist terms. Viger shows, in a number of examples, how the abuses of executive power led to the decay of virtue within societies and ultimately to tyranny or anarchy. Further, these examples are grounded in an allusion to Roman history, showing that the Empire fell apart after its citizenry lost its virtue through the corruptive influence of luxury.<sup>28</sup> Le Canadien also highlighted the threat to the virtuous nature of French-Canadian society posed by the rise of commerce in the

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28. Denis-Benjamin Viger, Considérations sur les effets qu'on produit en Canada... (Montréal: James Brown, 1809) reprinted in Viger Oeuvres Politiques (Montréal: Rééditions Québec, 1970). On the history of Rome, Viger writes: "Ce qu'il y a de plus surprenant dans le tableau de leur histoire; c'est que le tems de la dépravation fut celui des plus affreuses révolutions... Gangrénée intérieurement, elle [Rome] tomba pour ainsi dire d'elle même, affaisée par son propre poids... L'épicurisme moderne a produit les mêmes effets chez les nations qui ont eu le malheur de se laisser entraîner par leur exemple." See pp. 8-9.

colony. Few statements could be more categorical than that which appeared in its December 5th, 1807 issue, in a letter signed "Canadensis". Commenting the ruinous effects of the fur trade on an essentially agricultural people, the author writes:

Il résulte de ces observations qu'un peuple nouveau qui est nécessairement agricole ne doit pas être entraîné vers des habitudes et des moeurs qui tendent à détruire jusque dans la racine, tout ordre social.... Car si la propriété foncière est la base de la civilisation, un peuple même ancien, devient bientôt vagabond et sauvage, si, perdant par le commerce ou autrement ses idées morales, et méprisant les loix du bon ordre, il abandonne la culture des champs pour courir les bois.<sup>29</sup>

This passage, often quoted to establish the agrarian nature of early nationalist thought<sup>30</sup>, states quite succinctly the civic humanist notion of the agrarian basis of political virtue. For the author goes on to point out that the corruption of French-Canadian morality is "un phénomène politique", implying the political consequences of a loss of virtue.

Fortunately, in the eyes of the parti canadien's writers, the people's political virtue was protected by an indigenous institution: the seigneurial system. The system made land easily available to the young farmer, prevented speculation and thus ensured the perpetuation of a society

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29. Le Canadien, 5 December, 1807, the emphasis appears in the original text.

30. See Ouellet, Bas-Canada, p. 114.

of virtuous small landholders by encouraging the exploitation of new lands. In fact, canadien leaders argued forcefully against any change in the system of land tenure in precisely these terms. As "Observator" wrote in December of 1807, a change in the system of land tenure might force poorer farmers into becoming "... les esclaves des grands Capitalistes qui s'emparent déjà de toutes les terres dans les Townships."<sup>31</sup> Implicit in "Observator"'s comments is the notion that the dependence of the censitaire on the seigneur was far less odious than that of the freeholder indebted to a land speculator. The latter became "esclaves", a term which in period political discourse implies a loss of personal and political independence.

The mark of the civic humanist form of discourse in Anglo-American thought, however, is a concern with the corruptive influence of the executive power when it was linked to commercial or moneyed interests. This has been established quite clearly by Pocock for the eighteenth-century English opposition. In the American context, Lance Banning has argued that this was a fundamental trait of the Republican critique of Hamilton's economic policies.<sup>32</sup> In both cases the political writers assumed that mercantile interests had played this role throughout history,

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31. "Observator" in Le Canadien, December 12, 1807; cited by Reid, p. 104-105.

32. Banning, The Jeffersonian Persuasion, pp. 148-149.

subverting constitutions and corrupting otherwise virtuous societies. Statements on the corrupting influence of an alliance of the executive power with commerce were quite explicit in the period's discourse. In the first issue of Le Canadien, for example, "Caius" articulated this danger and provided examples which indicate an interpretation of history consistent with civic humanist forms. Commenting on the tribulations of the House of Assembly, he wrote:

Quelques personnes par leurs procédés, paroissent être d'opinion qu'aucune mesure ne doit être admise dans la Chambre à moins qu'elles ne les jugent convenables, et désirent, vraisemblablement, créer une aristocratie mercantile, le plus abominable, le plus pernicieux de tous les ordres, également préjudiciable à l'autorité de la couronne, aux intérêts des propriétaires, et aux libertés du Peuple. Elle ruina les premiers Etats d'Italie. La Grande Bretagne a plus à craindre de cette aristocratie, que de toute autre chose. La classe mercantile est très utile, la prospérité du pays naval [sic] dépend de son bien être, mais les usurpations de cette classe sont les écueils les plus dangereux qu'il ait à redouter, elle doit avoir son importance, mais on ne doit souffrir qu'elle domine....<sup>33</sup>

This analysis of the situation made the independence of the Assembly the last bulwark against the intrigues of the commercial class. Indeed, following the civic humanist tradition, the parti canadien's leaders insisted on the importance of securing the Assembly and its members from the influence of executive power. This they saw as the essence

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33. Le Canadien, 22 November, 1806, cited Reid, p. 80.

of the British Constitution and the guarantee of the people's liberty, a point made explicitly in the pages of le Canadien:

Le droit d'avoir une représentation libre de toute influence de la part des Officiers du Gouvernement, est l'essence de la Constitution britannique, c'est le droit qui assure au peuple la surveillance sur ceux qui, en qualité d'Officiers du Gouvernement, sont chargés de leurs intérêts...<sup>34</sup>

Hence what historians have sometimes seen as a call for responsible government might also be seen as a call for the protection of the Assembly from the corrupting influence of executive power allied to commercial interests. What the parti canadien's members were demanding was their right to censure the acts of government officers, and exercise some control over the purse strings in order to prevent corruption of the body politic.

Control of patronage was an essential part of the party's stand. Viewed in civic humanist terms, patronage was the instrument through which executive power corrupted. Accepting an appointment destroyed one's political independence, presumably making one the creature of the executive power. "Gens à place", a canadien term for their political adversaries, renders the image quite nicely. Thus, while political discussions of patronage appointments

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34. See Le Canadien, 26 March, 1808; cited by Wallot, "La Crise sous Craig...", p. 196.

pointed to the preference given to British over canadien subjects, a good deal of that discourse concentrated on the use of patronage to subvert the constitution by attaching a class of dependant creatures to the executive. Moreover, this process was seen as continual and degenerative. Pierre Bédard explained in 1808 how the "gens à places" had doubled the money they received in the last decade, to the point that agricultural property might have to be taxed with the result that "on emploira [*sic*] notre propre argent et l'influence qu'il donne à corrompre une partie des citoyens pour tenir l'autre dans l'esclavage..."<sup>35</sup> Nor was it inconceivable that the influence of the executive might reach into the Assembly itself, thus corrupting the virtuous element of the Constitution. Using the historical example of corruption and degeneration, the parti canadien's leaders warned of the dire consequences of unchecked executive power: the corruption of society as a whole. The process began with the choice of dishonest persons as government officers, but did not end there:

...lorsque le choix du Gouvernement tombe sur des personnes sans moeurs, alors la canaille lève la tête & le vice prend le dessus; le mauvais exemple qui a le champs libre familiarise avec les idées du vice; l'habitude de le voir accoutume à le trouver moins hideux, & les sentimens qui font distinguer l'honnête d'avec le deshonnête s'afoiblissent peu à peu & enfin s'effacent tout à fait. C'est alors qu'on peut dire que la nation est sans moeurs & qu'elle est tombé dans le

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35. Pierre Bédard in Le Canadien, 30 April, 1808; cited by Reid, p. 89.

mépris. On voit donc qu'il est facile à ceux qui ont l'administration d'un gouvernement d'avilir la nation qui leur est confiée en lui faisant perdre ses moeurs.<sup>36</sup>

Thus, the struggle between the Assembly and the executive was explained in terms of a conflict between the forces of corruption and virtue. Assuming that the parti canadien was speaking the language of civic humanism, it would be reasonable to expect that the images of external politics which developed in French-Canadian political discourse would also reflect those concerns. A society which was considered relatively free of corruption would be described as virtuous and politically stable, while others which were seen as politically undesirable were thought to have already degenerated.

In the decade before 1815, of course, Britain and France represented the two extremes of the political spectrum. Lower Canadians, as British subjects, would have been hard pressed to adopt a neutral or even favourable image of revolutionary France. Despite the cultural and emotional ties which may still have existed, politically France became the counter-definition of all that was desirable, and was continually contrasted unfavourably with Great Britain. Of the French Revolution itself Claude Galarneau writes: "Le Bas-Canada en a subi des influences

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36. "Un Observateur", in le Canadien, 24 October, 1807.

certaines, quoique globalement négatives, et il en a été profondément remué."<sup>37</sup> Wallot and Hare add that, in the pages of le Canadien, political writers sought constantly to glorify the British example while darkening the image of France.<sup>38</sup> Certainly Denis-Benjamin Viger, in his Considérations..., laid blame for much of the turmoil of contemporary Europe squarely at the feet of the French Revolution and the principles it brought forth. According to Viger, French thinkers had destroyed all the ties which linked men together in society and in so doing had brought about the destruction of their monarchy.<sup>39</sup> The result was that France had degenerated into political anarchy and ultimately into tyranny at the hands of Napoleon.<sup>40</sup> An anonymous writer made the point clearly in a piece of political propaganda prepared at the outset of the War of 1812. Commenting on the rumour that the French would join the Americans and attack Lower Canada, the author of Dieu et

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37. Claude Galarneau, La France devant l'opinion canadienne 1760-1815 (Québec: Presses de l'Université Laval, 1970), pp. 334-335.

38. Jean-Pierre Wallot and John Hare, Les imprimés dans le Bas-Canada, p. 325.

39. Viger, Considérations..., p. 9.

40. Galarneau writes that the French-Canadian press "...insiste sur le mécontentement des Français envers le régime napoléonien, vitupère contre le tyran abhorré qui vide le pays de ses hommes, qui fait souffrir le commerce, les affaires et les finances par les mesures du blocus et les impôts.", Galarneau, La France devant l'opinion canadienne..., p. 310.

Mon droit... pointed to the political degeneration of the French:

Les François d'à présent ne sont plus ce qu'ils étoient autrefois, et sois assuré que quand ils viendroient avec les Américains, ils seroient pire que les Américains même, et ne viendroient que pour vous réduire à la situation des esclaves...<sup>41</sup>

Canadien writers also considered that Britain was the last bastion of liberty in Europe, and that its ability to ward off the anarchy of the Revolution grew out of the strength of its form of government. Viger, for example, argued that the French Revolution might have threatened the political stability of Great Britain itself had it not been for "la sagesse d'un gouvernement attentif, la gravité et l'esprit de réflexion naturel au peuple anglois..."<sup>42</sup> That political discourse in Lower Canada before 1815 was unabashedly pro-British has already been established. All students of the period agree that the parti canadien drew on Great Britain as a model for their own political ambitions, and this in turn implies a highly favourable image of British politics and society. The political image of America, as it developed in the period, would be much closer to that of France than to that of the Metropolis.

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41. Anonymous, Dieu et mon droit: conversation qui eut lieu ces jours derniers entre un Canadien de la campagne et un Canadien de la ville (Montréal: Brown, 1812), pp. 13-14.

42. Viger, Considerations..., p. 15.

The very clear references to the historical cycle of corruption and degeneration in French-Canadian political discourse before 1815 do not reinforce an interpretation which stresses its liberal characteristics. While the battle over patronage and political influence in Lower Canada had nationalistic overtones, these could be and were blended with a civic humanist view of politics which insisted on the importance of civic virtue and patriotism. Historians have nevertheless maintained that the dominance of British forms and the absence of liberal discourse in the colony before 1815 can be explained by the strained political climate of these years, marked as they were by the international tensions between Great Britain and revolutionary France on the one hand, and the United States on the other.<sup>43</sup>

### 1.3 Corruption and the Imperial Connection: French-Canadian Political Discourse in Transition, 1815-1830

This explanation is certainly plausible for the period before the end of the War of 1812. It becomes less so, however, in the two decades following the war and leading up to the Rebellions of 1837-38. In those years French-

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43. See for example Jean-Pierre Wallot, "La pensée révolutionnaire et réformiste dans le Bas-Canada, 1773-1815" in his Un Québec qui bougeait (Montréal: Boréal Express, 1973), p. 293.

Canadian politicians came to openly criticize their Constitution, the parliamentary form of government in general, their successive governors and eventually adopted a discourse which was unabashedly republican. If we accepted the idea that early French-Canadian discourse was liberal and democratic in the modern sense, it would seem obvious that in these more permissive years that liberalism would be more fully developed. The events of those years and the seemingly radical rhetoric of the patriote movement would seem to suggest that this was the case. On the other hand, if the civic humanist forms observed prior to 1815 were a dominant part of that period's discourse we should expect to find them present in the later period. What is more, the abandonment of British constitutionalist thought in favour of the republican model does not necessarily imply a rejection of civic humanist political idioms, as the American historiography makes abundantly clear.

In the decade which followed the end of the War of 1812, the Union Bill and the conflicts between the Assembly and Lord Dalhousie's regime shook the belief in the sacrosanct nature of British institutions. Yet, these changes did not bring French-Canadian thinkers to reject essential aspects of their Anglo-American ideological heritage. Faith in the ideal of a balanced constitution remained intact and carried on into the 1830's, as did notions concerning the separation of powers and,

particularly, the corruptive influence of executive power allied with commercial interests. Moreover, a social analysis which stressed the danger of political and social degeneration as the inevitable result of such corruption remained operative.

For those, who like Jacques Viger in 1821, believed that the civic virtue of the Canadiens might lull into complacency once the bureaucrats were defeated, the events of the next few years would provide ample opportunity to test the population's vigilance and that of its representatives.<sup>44</sup> French-Canadian commentators, however, continued to believe that the nature of their society ensured that civic virtue would be present in the legislative process and would guard against the corruptive influence of the executive. There can be little doubt that this was Papineau's view. In the aftermath of the Union debate and in the midst of the final struggles against the Dalhousie administration, Papineau's address to the electors of Lower Canada in 1827 clearly delineated the source of this public spirit:

Nous vivons dans un état de société favorable à nourrir la moralité, la paix et l'union des citoyens. Nous ne voyons pas de ces fortunes colossales, génératrice de l'ambition et des vices perturbateurs de l'ordre social: nous ne voyons pas une extrême misère tenir une classe nombreuse

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44. Archives nationales du Québec (ANQ), Fonds Viger-Verrault, Ma Saberdache, vol. V, pp. 223-229, National Archives of Canada (NA), MG24, L8, microfilm, reel M-8, Jacques Viger to Hughes Heney, 15 February, 1821.

dans une servile dépendance. La distribution de la propriété est si égale et si générale que, de fait, nous avons les loix agraires que demandaient les Romains, sans les avoir conquises par des déluges de sang....<sup>45</sup>

Again we find a passage, written at the time that the patriote movement was ostensibly radicalizing its ideology, which points to the link between agriculture and virtue. What is more, this particular text is distinguished by an allusion to Roman history, pointing to the classical inspiration of this still operative notion of virtue.

This is not to say that ideas about the nature of civic virtue remained static through the period. Indeed, the notion of virtue was adapted to the needs of the discursive context. Thus, when the promotion of education became an important issue, the maintenance of the people's virtue was linked to the need for enlightened education. This trend was evident as early as 1817, when a correspondent to l'Aurore maintained that ignorance and virtue need not necessarily go hand in hand. In fact, this author argued that in certain circumstances "l'ignorance peut être la cause de la corruption de la morale, et je prétends que ç'a été le cas dans ce pays-ci". While the Romans had been able to maintain their virtue despite the relative ignorance of their population, they had done so in a context free from luxury and corruption, and in one where they were surrounded

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45. Papineau, Adresse à tous les électeurs du Bas-Canada (Montréal: Spectateur Canadien, 1827), pp. 3-4.

by nations equally uneducated. That was, obviously, no longer the case for the Canadiens.<sup>46</sup> The same argument was reiterated by a correspondent to le Canadien a few years later, and although the article was directed clearly at promoting education, the reference to the essential nature of virtue was clear:

Montesquieu a dit que la vertu est le principe, le soutien, la vie des gouvernemens libres [...] Voltaire disait qu'il fallait préférer l'intérêt du monde entier, à celui de son pays, l'intérêt de son pays à celui de sa famille, l'intérêt de sa famille au sien propre. Voilà en quelques lignes toute la vertu politique de l'homme, et je demande bien si elle s'accordera bien avec l'égoïsme, les vues basses et intéressés, toujours inséparables de l'aveugle ignorance et d'une intelligence raccourcie.<sup>47</sup>

Despite these pleas for a better educational system as a safeguard to the virtue of the population, commentators continued to believe that the Canadiens were virtuous almost by nature of their predominantly agricultural way of life. Thus an early article in la Minerve asserted that they were "un peuple frugal et vertueux...".<sup>48</sup>

It was also during the 1820's that canadien leaders came to identify reform of the Legislative Council as an important goal. The problem with the Council, as Pierre Bédard had noted in 1815, was that its interests were

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46. L'Aurore, 4 October, 1817.

47. "Un ami des enfants" in Le Canadien, 12 November, 1823; cited by Reid, p. 193.

48. La Minerve, 23 April, 1827.

constantly in opposition with those of the Assembly.<sup>49</sup> This did not lead canadien thinkers, however, to reject the validity of the Council's role within the constitutional balance. What was essential was that it be rendered independent of the executive and that its members be protected from the corrupting influence of the moneyed interests. Although François Blanchet had called for an elective council as early as 1824,<sup>50</sup> the movement's discourse continued to stress that its proper constitutional role was to balance both the power of the Assembly and the Governor. Thus Papineau, in recommending changes to the Council's composition in two separate letters written in 1826, argued that it needed to be elevated to the level of the Assembly through the admission of members who could be politically independent. That independence in turn was to be derived from the ownership of land, and presumably the political virtue it conferred. Specifically, Papineau called for the admission of "cinq à six propriétaires aisés et sans emplois..." to the Council.<sup>51</sup> Even when an elective

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49. NA, Neilson Collection, vol. 2, p. 427-429, Bédard to Neilson, 12 January, 1815; cited by Ouellet, Bas-Canada, p. 134.

50. See Blanchet's Appel au parlement impérial et aux habitants des colonies anglaises... (Québec: Vallerand, 1824).

51. NA, Fonds Famille Papineau, MG24, B2, vol. 1, pp. 669-674, Papineau to Sir Francis Burton, November, 1826; see also vol. 1, pp. 640-659, Papineau to Sir James Mackintosh, 25 April 1826.

Council was being discussed, as in Jacques Labrie's Les premiers rudiments de la constitution britannique, it was understood that it should be composed of rich landholders. Labrie even suggested that should the Council be rendered elective it remain " [un] ...conseil électif par et pour des citoyens d'un cens élevé".<sup>52</sup> Moreover, he argued that councillors only be eligible to sit "aussi longtemps... qu'ils seraient les propriétaires du revenu actuel qui les auraient qualifiés à occuper une place, et sous condition de ne pouvoir accepter aucun emploi lucratif pendant qu'ils voudraient la conserver."<sup>53</sup> Reform of the Legislative Council then, was discussed within the civic humanist paradigm of virtue and corruption and its implications to the separation of powers.

The Council's independence was made all the more imperative by the political developments of the 1820's. If the political troubles of the Craig administration had warned of danger posed to French-Canadian society by political and moral corruption, the Union Bill seemed a stunning example of how such subversion might operate. Consequently, the political discourse of those years bristles with references to corruption and its potential degenerative effects on society. Even before the Union

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52 Jacques Labrie, Les premiers rudiments de la constitution britannique... (Montréal: Lane, 1827) p. 42.

53. Ibid., pp. 38-39.

Crisis, Papineau predicted that Dalhousie's administration would be marked by electoral intrigues and the theft of public monies by the Governor and his councillors.<sup>54</sup> Not surprisingly, the Union Bill was seen as simply another act in the continuing history of bureaucratic attempts to corrupt the Constitution. In this regard, le Canadien's reaction to news of the bill was typical: "...il est entièrement conforme aux voeux et aux projets que les Anti-canadiens n'ont cessé d'entretenir et de tramer depuis 60 ans". What was different about this bureaucratic plot was that it had enlisted the support of the British Parliament. This indicated to le Canadien that the intrigues of the Canadian bureaucrats were also being carried out in London, where the Imperial government's only knowledge of the country was gleaned "par les représentations des gens remplis de préjugés et intéressés à vivre de nos dépouilles".<sup>55</sup>

The Union Bill, of course, was dangerous because it carried within it a policy of assimilation. Consequently much of the discourse deployed to combat the measure stressed the threat to French-Canadian institutions. Still, the spectre of corruption and social degeneration was never

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54. NA, Fonds Famille Papineau, vol. 1, p. 313-316, Papineau to Julie Papineau, 29 December, 1821.

55. Le Canadien, 21 August, 1822; cited by Benoit Bernier, "Les idées politiques d'Etienne Parent, 1822-1825" (D. E. S. thesis, Université Laval, 1971), pp. 33-34.

far from the surface, and this plot, like all those of the bureaucrats, was discussed in those terms. What is more the discussion did not end with the withdrawal of the Bill. Writing to his wife in 1826, Papineau expressed his concern for the ever present spectre of corruption, as something that all societies had to face. "Dans toutes les sociétés", he wrote, "la corruption directe des emplois ou l'appât d'y parvenir, ou les liaisons de vanité ou d'amitié avec ceux qui en ont y détruisent l'indépendance que devraient avoir les citoyens qui peuvent entendre les discussions qui sont conduites en toute liberté dans la chambre."<sup>56</sup> This was a point to which he returned in an the address to his electors cited above. For if the nature of French-Canadian society ensured its political virtue, there remained "un petit nombre, un très petit nombre d'hommes parmi nous [qui] veulent ... faire triompher les principes despotiques, établir l'ilotisme et la dégradation politique de tout un peuple..."<sup>57</sup> Degeneration, then, was possible if the virtuous citizenry let down its guard.

If many of the concepts central to civic humanism remained constant through to the 1830's, French-Canadian political discourse did evolve in one important way: it

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56. NA, Fonds Famille Papineau, vol. 1, p. 611-614, Papineau to Julie Papineau, 25 February, 1826; reproduced in Fernand Ouellet, ed., "Lettres de L.-J. Papineau à sa femme", *RAPO*, 34-35 (1953-55), p. 236-237.

57. Papineau, *Adresse*, p. 4.

became americanized. This evolution in turn has much to do with the images of Great Britain and the United States within French-Canadian political discourse, for the two images were inextricably linked and had served as counter-definitions of what was politically desirable and politically disastrous since the beginning of the parliamentary regime in Lower Canada. Before 1815 the image of British society and politics was extremely positive. It is important to realize that French-Canadian politicians not only believed in the theory of balanced government through the British Constitution, but that British society was capable of itself maintaining liberty within that balance. Indeed such a view was repeated even in the light of the political events of the 1820's.<sup>58</sup> The image of American society before 1815 was diametrically opposed to that of Great Britain. Not only were the "yankeys" presented as ungrateful subjects who had risen up against their rightful sovereign, their government was portrayed as institutionalized anarchy and Americans themselves were considered to have degenerated under the effects of political and social corruption.<sup>59</sup>

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58. See, for example, D. B. Viger's letter to John Neilson concerning the Union Bill. NA, Neilson Collection, vol. 4, p. 313-316, 29 October, 1823.

59. See chapter three.

The political events of the 1820's profoundly altered these views. First, the Union Bill and the successive crises which marked the Dalhousie administration convinced French-Canadian leaders that the bureaucratic plot had reached over to the Metropolis. The initial analysis of the situation stressed that the British ministry and Parliament had been duped by corrupt colonial administrators. But like that of American revolutionaries fifty years earlier, the patriote view eventually evolved into one which came to see the Mother Country as the source of the corruption. This analysis of the situation involved a reinterpretation of the nature of British society itself, and the contacts between canadien political leaders and British politicians during the decade provided opportunities to observe just how far British society in particular and European society in general had decayed. Papineau's oft-cited letters of 1823 are but one example of the revulsion which French-Canadian leaders felt on apprehending the social inequalities which marked British life.<sup>60</sup>

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60. Papineau to Julie Papineau, 27 June, 1823 cited in RAPO (1953-55); NA, Fonds Famille Papineau, vol. 1, pp. 486-489, Papineau to Julie Papineau, 23 September, 1823. Pierre de Sales Laterrière met Papineau while he was in London and reported that the latter's deception at the corrupt state of the Commons would make him more vigilant in the defense of the colonial Assembly, "vu que quand l'intrigue et la corruption se sont introduits dans cette branche, il est presque impossible de les faire disparaître." The civic humanist notion of corruption and degeneration is obvious in this reference and probably reflects the state of Papineau's thought at the time. See NA, Fonds Les Eboulements, MG 8, F 131, pp. 1310-1312, Pierre De Sales Laterrière to John

Public discussions of British politics had begun to point to the differences between the colony and the Mother Country fairly early in the period. By 1818, for instance, Michel Bibaud, in L'Aurore, touched on one significant political difference, the more limited suffrage in Great Britain. While the editorial was careful not to support the concept of universal suffrage endorsed by some British reformers, it noted that the restrictions on the franchise reflected poorly on the British people:

On n'aurait pas une bien bonne idée de la population de la Grande Bretagne, si l'on devait juger par le droit de suffrage, puisqu'on serait forcé de croire que sur une douzaine de million d'individus, il n'y en aurais guère qu'une centaine de mille qui fussent digne d'exercer le premier droit d'un peuple libre, celui de choisir ses représentants.<sup>61</sup>

The article went on to state that the British had given the colony the best of their constitution while eliminating flaws such as the restricted franchise. Significantly, Bibaud also added that the French, in copying the British Constitution under the Restoration, had imitated its worst feature in limiting the right to vote to a small minority. Riots in London the following year raised the issue again, this time in le Spectateur, and, once again, the author endorsed only limited reform of the franchise, rejecting the notion of universal suffrage. "Nous souhaiterions [...] que

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D'Estimauville, 25 August, 1823.

61. L'Aurore, 8 August, 1818.

la franchise électorale fut moins restreinte et mieux répartie [...]", wrote the author, "mais nous ne voudrions pas voir régner en Angleterre la licence que les Jacobins voulurent établir en France dans l'année 1793, sous le nom de liberté."<sup>62</sup> Clearly while Canadien writers early in the period were critical of the restricted franchise, they did not endorse the concept of universal suffrage. In this they were restating the civic humanist notion of the link between virtue and property, and the idea that property should remain the basis for participation in politics. They were also noting an important difference between the practice of politics in Europe and that in North America.

Despite the criticisms and occasional overt condemnations of the British government and politics in the colony's press, the British Constitution, in theory at least, remained a powerful model for canadien political writers. As late as 1827 Papineau still praised it as the basis for free government and argued that absolute monarchies and republics would eventually disappear from the face of the earth in favour of the British system of tempered monarchy.<sup>63</sup> An article in la Minerve the same year praised the British Constitution unreservedly, beginning

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62. Le Spectateur, 18 September, 1819.

63. NA, Fonds Famille Papineau, vol. 1, p. 733-736, 1827, "Adresse aux électeurs", unsigned but written in Papineau's hand.

with the statement "Plus on examine la Constitution Britannique, plus on la trouve digne de l'admiration qu'on pour elle toutes les nations civilisées..." The same author went on to make a list of the attributes of an ideal government and ended his enumeration with the comment "cet état si bien constitué, sera l'Angleterre."<sup>64</sup>

Yet, while the British Constitution was still much admired, many writers by 1830 were cautioning that theory and reality in Great Britain were two different things. Thus, when Robert-Anne D'Estimauville's tribute to the British Constitution appeared in 1827<sup>65</sup>, reaction to its unmitigated praise of the British form of government was not entirely favourable. Indeed, a critic, writing a few years later, pointed out in fairly sharp terms that all aspects of British politics were not worthy of imitation in the colony:

Une des grandes raisons de l'écrivain, c'est qu'il faut que tout se fasse ici comme en Angleterre. L'Angleterre est, selon lui, le pays de la perfection; et voilà pourquoi tout le monde y est si heureux. Il ne s'agit pas de savoir si toutes les circonstances sont les mêmes, ou si tout est fait ici pour aller, sans la moindre déviation, comme en Angleterre, en Ecosse et en Irlande; qu'on fasse en tout et par tout ici comme là, et tout ira le mieux du monde. Malheur à nous, par exemple, si notre parlement ne devient pas septennal; si nous n'avons pas un certain nombre de bourgs-pourris; si une partie de nos membres ne sont pas virtuellement à la nomination du conseil;

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64. La Minerve, 25 June, 1827.

65. Robert-Anne D'Estimauville, Esquisse de la Constitution Britannique (Québec: Carey, 1827).

si le gouvernement n'influe pas d'une manière marquée sur l'élection de plusieurs autres...<sup>66</sup>

The political image of France in the period press, at least until 1830, was overwhelmingly negative. In many cases references to France were, as they had been before 1815, used as a contrast to the state of liberty existing in Great Britain and in the colony. Thus, "Ami de la justice", writing in 1818, once again made the point that the Canadiens, in their political principles, were British rather than French: "...il faut être François pour pouvoir se soumettre à la tyrannie et j'ose me flatter que les Canadiens n'ont des François que l'origine..."<sup>67</sup> The same argument was made a few years later, in an article which maintained that if Great Britain gave the Canadiens their independence, they would surely not turn to France to assure their liberty.<sup>68</sup> In a later article, Etienne Parent wrote that France had believed that she would find her liberties "dans les bras de Louis XVIII; et le ministère est venu à bout de faire les élections, c'est à dire que la France n'a plus que l'ombre de sa liberté..."<sup>69</sup> A few months later,

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66. La bibliothèque canadienne, 21 August, 1830, pp. 105-107.

67. "Ami de la justice" in le Canadien, 1 August, 1818; cited by Reid, p. 175.

68. Le Canadien, 1 January, 1823; cited by Bernier, p. 45.

69. Parent in le Canadien, 12 November, 1823; cited by Reid, p. 193.

Parent would write of British principles being equivalent to liberty and equate French principles with despotism.<sup>70</sup> Significantly, in many of these citations, the distinction between North American and European was drawn.<sup>71</sup>

If it was increasingly difficult to imagine Great Britain or France as societies composed of independent and virtuous landowners, it still was possible to revise the image of the United States to fit the bill. In Lower Canada, the image of America which began to emerge in the 1820's was very much that of the agrarian republic composed of a population of virtuous small farmers. Such an image was not unusual for the period-- it was openly cultivated in America at this time-- and European images of the United States reflected many of the same characteristics.<sup>72</sup>

Eventually, as Fernand Ouellet states in his Bas-Canada, patriote discourse openly identified democracy as the natural state of America, and aristocracy as a product of European civilization that was incompatible with the New

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70. Parent in le Canadien, 31 March, 1824; cited by Bernier, p. 57.

71. See for example le Canadien, 1 January, 1823, where the author states that the Canadiens are "...natifs et habitants de l'Amérique..."; cited by Bernier, p. 45.

72. Of considerable significance to the evolution of the Lower-Canadian view, this was the dominant image of the United States in France up to 1830. See René Rémond, Les Etats-Unis devant l'opinion française 1815-1852 (Paris: Armand Colin, 1962), tome II, p. 489, who underlines the classical underpinnings of this arcadian image.

World and had to be banished from its shores.<sup>73</sup> Inexorably linked to this analysis, however, is its civic humanist underpinnings. For another component of the same argument was that luxury, vice and corruption were also of European origin, and that virtue was the natural state of the citizen living in North America. Allowing European influences to corrupt the natural virtue of North American society would be letting the serpent into the garden and, to the extent that this had already been done, that society had to be protected from further corruption.

#### 1.4 Republicanism and the Aristocracy of Talents and Virtue: French-Canadian Political Discourse, 1831-1837

The emergence of a form of discourse emphasizing the virtuous nature of North American society and contrasting it with the corrupt nature of European society was essential to the development of French-Canadian republicanism in the 1830's. The transition from British constitutionalist thought to an American inspired republicanism could thus be carried out within the civic humanist paradigm and, indeed, within the conventions which had dominated the parti canadien's analysis of the Lower-Canadian political context. An analysis of republican thought in the years leading up to

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73. Ouellet, Bas-Canada, pp. 338-339.

the rebellions underlines its neo-classical nature and reveals a civic humanist emphasis on virtue and corruption.

In as much as patriote discourse relied heavily on the American example and called for institutions modelled on those of the Republic, it is important to understand how these might be integrated into a civic humanist form of discourse. Gordon Wood has argued that although classical forms dominated in the years prior to the adoption of the Federal Constitution, the establishment of the new national government marked an end to the classical tradition and a transition to a new American science of politics. The classical republic had not materialized in the years following the Revolution, one particular failure having been the inability to properly define the role of upper houses in establishing the classical constitutional balance between the many and the few. The Founding Fathers, in vesting all power in the people, abandoned the idea that a natural aristocracy would develop to replace the, now unacceptable, hereditary aristocracy, and established a government which relied on balancing different interests within the constitutional apparatus. Pocock, however, maintains that the balance was implied in the distinction between the people and their representatives, and that deferential politics did not disappear in 1787. Furthermore, he argues that the classical concepts of the public good, of virtue

and corruption, continued to be important in the young Republic.<sup>74</sup>

This aspect of the American experience is important to the French-Canadian case, since a primary objective of the parti patriote was reform of the Legislative Council along lines compatible with American institutions. It is also relevant to note, however, that not having achieved that end the patriotes were not forced to deal with the impracticality of the notion of a natural aristocracy of talent and virtue. Indeed, that notion remained current in the movement's discourse right up to the outbreak of the Rebellions. Papineau, for example, in his famous speech at St. Laurent in May of 1837, affirmed that the government of the United States had allowed the natural aristocracy to take its place within society:

Toutes les charges y étant électorales, elles y sont exercées par l'aristocratie naturelle, celle que la Providence donne aux sociétés pour leur bonheur, l'aristocratie des vertus et du talent, tandis qu'en Europe et ici elles sont exercées par les aristocraties contre nature de naissance, de l'argent, de la bassesse intrigante, que l'enfer ou la folie ont données aux sociétés pour leur opprobre ou leur malheur.<sup>75</sup>

His description of that group and the contrast between it and European aristocracies, be they hereditary or moneyed,

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74. See Wood, Creation of the American Republic, chapter XV; Pocock, The Machiavellian Moment, pp. 513-552.

75. Procédés de l'assemblée des électeurs du comté de Montréal...le 15 mai 1837 (Montréal, 1837), p. 12.

clearly indicates the neo-classical underpinnings of his thought. Moreover this thought had been reflected in the official position of the party, expressed in the Ninety-Two Resolutions. For although a property qualification for membership to the Council was to be retained, the thirteenth resolution explained that this was not intended to provide representation for rich landowners, but rather to appease European interests. What was important was that an elective council would inevitably be composed of virtuous and talented men, the few of neo-classical theory:

... l'introduction artificielle de grands privilèges dans l'ordre public, en faveur de la grande propriété, ne pourrait se soutenir longtemps contre la préférence donnée, dans les élections libres, aux vertus, aux talens et aux lumières que la fortune n'exclut pas, mais qu'elle ne peut acheter et qui peuvent accompagner une pauvreté honnête, contente et dévouée, que dans le système électif.<sup>76</sup>

Similar statements can be found in editorials on constitutional reform printed in both le Canadien and la Minerve. In most of these discussions, the point was consistently made that legislative councillors thus elected would inject virtue into the Upper Chamber through their attachment to the public good.<sup>77</sup>

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76. See the text of the Ninety-Two Resolutions reproduced in T. P. Bédard, Histoire de cinquante ans (1791-1841) (Québec: Brousseau, 1869), thirteenth resolution, p.337.

77. See, for example, Le Canadien, 20 May, 1836; cited by Reid, p. 471.

While in America the constitutional equipoise assumed in British thought may have become irrelevant as Wood has argued, the patriote press maintained that the reforms it envisaged would indeed check the excesses of democracy.<sup>78</sup> More important to French-Canadian commentators in the 1830's, however, was the notion that a reformed Upper House, combined with a Lower House, both elected by a virtuous people would serve as a check on the power of the executive. Indeed, the understanding clearly was that this was the legislature's role in the American republic both at the federal level and in the states. In typically civic humanist fashion, French-Canadian newspapers interpreted this role as primarily aimed at eliminating, or at least controlling, the corruptive influence of patronage and preventing the use of a standing army by the federal executive.<sup>79</sup>

This was an interpretation of separation of powers not unlike that which marked American political discourse in the period of the Confederation and which persisted in the

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78. Speaking of the class of councillors which would be elected to the reformed council Etienne Parent wrote "...elle opposera une résistance invincible à tout mouvement factieux et révolutionnaire." See Ibid.

79. La Minerve, 29 January, 1835 notes that the congress's role prevented a headstrong president from entering into a war with France over reparations in 1834. La Minerve of 9 October, 1834 describes how the Congress prevents the president from establishing "la dictature" through the examination of public accounts.

language of Anti-Federalists and Jeffersonian Republicans.<sup>80</sup> This view, moreover, made the French-Canadian press highly receptive to the emerging Whig party's criticisms of Andrew Jackson, which were framed in essentially the same language.<sup>81</sup> The immediate problem for the patriotes though, lay in the fact that as long as the colonial Governors represented European interests, their influence would necessarily be corruptive. This is what Papineau understood when he wrote to Marshall Spring Bidwell, asserting that an Executive Council could never be responsible because they "must soon be bribed, or be tampered with as long as Downing Street send [sic] Governors with instructions."<sup>82</sup> The spectre of political and social corruption through excessive executive power was also raised several times in the Ninety-Two Resolutions.<sup>83</sup> The consequences of the unchecked power

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80. Wood, 157-159; Banning, p. 122-125, 202-203.

81. Howe, p. 87, writes that the Whigs believed "The usurpation of power by the executive was such a common cause of the recurring cycle of republican degeneration that it had to be forestalled if at all possible." See the full discussion of this theme in chapter five.

82. NA, Fonds Famille Papineau, vol. 2, p. 2162-2165, Papineau to Bidwell, 16 April, 1836.

83. See for example the 31st resolution: "... la majorité des Fonctionnaires Coloniaux combinées en faction et portés par l'intérêt seul à lutter pour le soutien d'un Gouvernement corrompu, ennemi des droits et contraire aux vœux du Peuple." (a fear of factions is also part of neo-classical theory); the 54th resolution mentions executive corruption of the constitution:

"54. -- Que toute combinaison, soit au moyen d'Actes du Parlement Britannique, obtenus en contravention à ses engagements antérieurs, soit au moyen d'une administration

of the executive would be the domination of a small and dependant class under its control. Its effect on society as whole seemed clear to Denis-Benjamin Viger:

...elle avait nécessairement l'effet, en les dégradant tous ensemble [the factions and the people they sought to dominate], de paralyser, de même, toutes leurs facultés[.] Les premiers pouvaient compter sur l'espoir assuré de parvenir à tout sans avoir besoin de talens plus que de vertus, qui n'étaient pas moins inutiles aux seconds, puisqu'ils ne pouvaient parvenir à rien. Ce régime humiliant et corrompueur étouffait tous les sentimens généreux. La justice et la science disparaissaient pour céder la place aux passions qui renversaient l'édifice de la civilisation, et de ses débris élevaient un trône à l'ignorance et à l'immoralité.<sup>84</sup>

The need to arrest political corruption through a check on the executive was made all the more urgent by the realization that European corruption also worked in North America in a number of different ways. North America's naturally virtuous society might be corrupted by European moneyed interests through their control of banks and land, through increased immigration of poor Europeans, as well as

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partiale et corrompue du système existant des lois et des constitutions..."; the fifth point of the 84th resolution mentions the corruption of free elections to the lower house: " 5. L'Immixtion des Conseillers législatifs dans les élections des Représentans du Peuple pour les violenter et les maîtriser, et les choix d'Officiers Rapporteurs souvent faits pour les même fins, dans des vues partiales et corrompues...." See the text of the Ninety-Two Resolutions reproduced in T. P. Bédard, Histoire de cinquante ans (1791-1841), pp. 334-362.

84. Denis-Benjamin Viger, Observations de l'Honorable D. B. Viger... (Montréal: Duvernay, 1835), p. 33-34.

by the introduction of European prejudices. The first case was quite prominently discussed in the period's discourse. Moreover, there were strong precedents for the attack on the moneyed interests' corruptive influence exercised through control of banks, and these precedents employed the language of civic humanism. Pocock identifies the origins of this form of discourse in eighteenth-century England.<sup>85</sup>

Jeffersonian Republicans had attacked Hamilton's bank as an attempt to create a moneyed aristocracy and subvert the republican principles of American government.<sup>86</sup> Similarly, Jackson's war against the Second Bank of the United States was predicated on that institution's role in creating artificial distinctions within American society and its promotion of foreign interests.<sup>87</sup>

The patriotes integrated all of these arguments into their critique of banks in the hands of European interests. Banks had been the means of introducing privilege and monopoly in Lower Canada, and through their control of credit they could corrupt both society and politics. Moreover, the struggle against the undue influence of banks was being waged throughout the continent and the parties were the same in both Lower Canada and the United States.

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85. Pocock, Machiavellian Moment, chapter XIV.

86. Banning, 192-207.

87. Remini, pp. 368-371.

In both cases, as la Minerve pointed out in 1834, the unregulated emission of unbacked paper money and the manipulation of credit endangered political stability.<sup>88</sup> The spectre of such corruption in Lower Canada was even more immediate because it was assumed that the Bank of the United States had already established a moneyed aristocracy in the United States, which was now challenging the power of the government. In fact, Etienne Parent believed that the "parti de la Banque" was even stronger in the United States than it was in Lower Canada, since it had penetrated Congress.<sup>89</sup> The source of such corruption was distinctly identified as European, and in this la Minerve restated Jackson's warnings of foreign influence at work in the Bank.<sup>90</sup> The condemnation was not of banks per se, rather one of those using their power to create social inequality and political dependence through the manipulation of credit. Patriote leaders saw no contradiction in establishing their own bank, the Banque du peuple, which presumably would abstain from such practices. Moreover, this bank would not be controlled by European interests.<sup>91</sup>

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88. La Minerve, 22 December, 1834.

89. Le Canadien, 1 December, 1834.

90. La Minerve, 24 August, 1835.

91. This question is dealt with extensively in chapters four and five.

Another source of European corruption was immigration. No doubt the opposition to continued immigration, particularly that of British origin, was motivated by the fear of assimilation and the competition of new migrants for lands and jobs, not to mention the cholera epidemics of the 1830's. On the other hand the political consequences of immigration were explained in terms of a threat to the virtuous nature of Lower-Canadian society. In the first place these migrants were assumed lacking in the moral and virtuous qualities of the Canadiens. Their education might in some cases be adequate, but as the Comité central de Montréal pointed out in 1834, these destitute immigrants were not "habitués par l'administration de leurs biens à un esprit de calcul, d'économie et de réflexion...", all traits which marked the virtuous Canadien landholder.<sup>92</sup> A significant problem then, was that immigration might swell the landless class and thus diminish the virtue of the citizenry. Not having the independence conferred by landownership, this class would create political instability. Again this was a process which was also at work in the United States and it was presented in the patriote press as an explanation of political unrest in that country.<sup>93</sup>

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92. Comité Central de Montréal, Observations sur la réponse de Mathieu Lord Aylmer... (Montréal, 1834), p. 27.

93. See chapter five.

Fortunately, in the eyes of patriote leaders, French-Canadian society had not yet been severely corrupted by European influences. In some ways it even seemed that Lower Canada, because it was less developed than American society, was more virtuous. Political stability in Lower Canada then, depended on the maintenance of a society of small landholders and the prevention of political and social corruption through patronage, combinations of moneyed interests and the introduction of a foreign, landless proletariat. The continued equal distribution of property was considered essential. Writing in 1835, Amury Girod commented: "La propriété est une des causes premières de tout bien et de tout mal dans la société. Si elle est également distribuée, les connaissances et le pouvoir le seront aussi..."<sup>94</sup> A correspondent to l'Echo du pays argued that men could only truly participate in politics if they had a stake in society, a stake conferred by property. Moreover, this author was clear on what he considered to be property: "J'entends par ce mot propriété des biens durables et non des possessions amovibles ou usufruitières dont l'usage a été réprouvé par les hommes éclairés..."<sup>95</sup> At about the same time, la Minerve was theorizing that only in

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94. Amury Girod, Notes diverses sur le Bas-Canada... (Village Debartzch: Imprimerie de J. P. De Boucherville, 1835), p.63.

95. L'Echo du pays, 5 June, 1833.

a small country with an equal distribution of wealth could the public good be easily identified and stable government maintained, a stance entirely consistent with classical republican theory.<sup>96</sup>

The most comprehensive text on virtue and property published in the period appeared in le Canadien in 1835. Published over the pseudonym "Le Vieux de la Montagne", the article discussed the importance of maintaining the virtue of a people. The author linked the process of social degeneration to the accumulation of property, and the appearance of excessive wealth and luxury. "Si le luxe s'applique à une nation...", warned the author, "il y produit... les mêmes ravages... Tous les citoyens étant avides de jouissances se mettent dans une lutte pour se les procurer; tous se nuisent ou sont prêts à se nuire: et de là des actions et des habitudes qui composent ce que l'on appelle la corruption morale, guerre intestine de citoyen à citoyen."<sup>97</sup>

In the neo-classical view of history, all societies must eventually degenerate. The "Machiavellian Moment", as described by Pocock, was the point where men became conscious of that degeneration and sought to prevent it, retaining political virtue and stability. In Anglo-American

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96. La Minerve, 25 July, 1833.

97. "Le Vieux de la Montagne" in le Canadien, 31 July, 1835.

discourse, the rise of commerce and its link with government was considered an omen of decline, one which had troubled both eighteenth-century English opposition groups and the American revolutionary generation. For Jeffersonians and Jacksonians, it was clear that commerce could not be eliminated from society, indeed that commerce was bound to expand. Pocock argues that an American variant of civic humanism diverged at this point, stressing the dynamism of virtue, embodying the myth of the frontier and the belief in the apparently limitless supply of land it contained. The perpetuation of virtue through expanding agriculture, might thus check the expansion of commerce, or at least continue to control its degenerative influence on politics.<sup>98</sup>

The patriotes argued for a dynamic development of agriculture, based on a continuing supply of land, in similar terms. Indeed, they believed the availability of land would prevent the type economic development so ruinous to virtuous societies. The Comité central de Montréal made that point in 1834:

Aussi longtemps qu'un pays contiendra une grande quantité de terres fertiles et d'un accès et d'une acquisitions faciles, il est impossible qu'il s'y accumule d'autres propriétés mobilières. Dans ces circonstances, l'entraînement est universel vers l'exploitation agricole, et le louage du travail est trop élevé, pour qu'aucune autre exploitation puisse venir en compétition avec

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98. Pocock, Machiavellian Moment, chapter xv, "The Americanization of Virtue".

celle des industriels, dans les pays où les terres sont rares et les bras nombreux.<sup>99</sup>

If this was implying, in Jeffersonian terms, that Lower Canada's workshops would remain in Europe, the patriotes nevertheless believed that agriculture was the basis of a prosperous and expanding economy. Agriculture must have the predominant role in the economy, wrote A. B. Papineau in la Minerve, because...

Quand l'agriculteur est encouragé, qu'il vend bien ses grains, le journalier trouve de l'emploi; l'ouvrier et l'industriel en tout genre perçoivent aussi leur part du gain; en effet l'agriculture est la première source de toutes les richesses; c'est une grosse artère qui se divise en mille autres petites, qui s'insinue et vivifie toutes les autres parties du corps, <sup>100</sup> alimente toutes les classes de la société.

This patriote view of economic development and its emphasis on agriculture has been well established by historians of Lower Canada and so need not be further elaborated here. However, it is important to note that it is consistent with the civic humanist critique of emerging commercial capitalism, and its Jeffersonian inspiration cannot be doubted. In Lower Canada, as it had been in Virginia, "those who labour[ed] the earth

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99. Observations sur la réponse..., p. 28.

100. La Minerve, 21 September, 1837; cited by Lucie Blanchette-Lessard and Nicole Daigneault-St Denis, "Groupes sociaux patriotes et les Rébellions de 1837-1838: idéologies et participation" (M. A. thesis, University du Québec à Montréal, 1975), pp. 65-66.

[were] the chosen people of God", politically and economically.<sup>101</sup>

All the strands of patriote political discourse in the 1830's point to a fear of political corruption which would endanger the virtuous nature of French-Canadian society and isolate the source of potential degeneration in the activities of Europeans in the colony. As the tone of patriote discourse grew more anti-European, the American model was increasingly invoked. In turn, the higher profile of the United States in period discourse contributed to the emphasis on North American society and the need for institutions in harmony with its particular nature.

While this tendency in French-Canadian political discourse implied a rising appreciation of the American Republic, it also signalled a decline in the images of European political systems and societies in general. The two most important European models, France and Great Britain suffered greatly. For although in specific instances and at specific times the patriotes praised French or British reforms, ultimately they were pessimistic about the opportunities for political

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101. The citation is, of course, from Jefferson's Notes on the State of Virginia, "Query XIX"; cited by Pocock, Machiavellian Moment, p. 532.

regeneration in both their political and cultural metropolis.

This aspect of political discourse is particularly evident in the French example. Many historians have noted the enthusiasm of the patriotes at the news of the Revolution of 1830 and the hopes of political reform it brought with it. Indeed, the patriotes demonstrated that enthusiasm by wearing the red, white and blue of the revolutionary movement, founding political clubs modelled on the French example, and beginning subscriptions in aid of the French revolutionaries. La Minerve, for its part, celebrated the achievements of the Revolution as a triumph for humanity in general, and for the French people in particular.<sup>102</sup>

Still, although many historians have seen the Revolution of 1830 as one of the primary stimuli to the radicalization of patriote discourse, it is clear that the movement soon came to reject the French example as irrelevant to the North American, and hence Lower-Canadian experience. By 1835 Lower-Canadian papers, so optimistic on the opportunities for reform in France a few years earlier, now saw in French politics the same old corruption so common to European societies. An attempt on the life of the French King in that year

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102. Monière, Ludger Duvernay, pp. 75-77.

prompted l'Echo du pays to observe how little the Revolution of 1830 had changed the nature of French politics:

La révolution de juillet n'a presque rien fait pour ce beau pays. Les hommes qui y ont été appelés au timon des affaires l'ont étouffée à sa naissance, et nous avons tout lieu de craindre qu'il ne faille une autre tourmente pour tirer de nouveau la nation des embarras où l'a jetée Louis-Philippe...<sup>103</sup>

A few months later the same paper lamented the slow pace of reform both in France and in Great Britain compared to that in the American Republic.<sup>104</sup> The same theme was reiterated in la Minerve, where the author made the point that despite the many political upheavals in France, reform had not been achieved:

La France travaille depuis 40 ans à se donner un gouvernement plus libéral; mais jusqu'aujourd'hui ses révolutions lui ont valu peu de chose. Toujours il s'est rencontré des hommes adroits, pour s'emparer de la révolution et la maîtriser... Sont venues enfin les trois immortelles journées de juillet, qui placèrent Louis-Philippe sur le trône. La France en est-elle plus heureuse? non. Elle a encore laissé échapper l'occasion de rendre son gouvernement stable, en étendant le principe électif... Il faudra une nouvelle révolution à la France pour sortir de l'abaissement où l'a mise Louis-Philippe.<sup>105</sup>

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103. L'écho du pays, 17 September, 1835.

104. Ibid., 31 December, 1835.

105. La Minerve, 14 January, 1836.

By the end of the same year the paper was arguing that Lower Canada was in fact more advanced in the path of reform than was France:

...les habitans de la "Nouvelle France" ont laissé derrière eux, ceux de leur ci-devant mère-patrie, en fait de la lutte pour la liberté et pour des institutions libres... Ce que la révolution de 1830 a produit, c'est un changement d'hommes, et encore ce changement est-il suivi de plus de tyrannie et de persécution que même l'imbécile Charles X ne s'est rendu coupable...<sup>106</sup>

By 1836 then, the principal patriote organs saw the Revolution of 1830 as an abject failure, one which had not really brought about any significant change in the political condition of the French people. More often than not the failure of reform in France was contrasted with the vigour and success of the American form of government.

Equally pronounced in the period was the decline in the image of British society and politics. In 1831 there were still those who expressed confidence in the British government's ability to treat the colony fairly and who continued to blame local administrators for the colony's political troubles.<sup>107</sup> Simultaneously, however,

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106. La Minerve, 7 November, 1836.

107. Denis-Benjamin Viger for one still believed that the British ministry would do justice to the Canadiens; see his Considérations relatives à la dernière révolution de la Belgique (Montréal, 1831), p. 25. The same sentiment was expressed, albeit more cautiously in a letter signed "Le peuple" which appeared in la Minerve of 7 March, 1831.

other writers strove to highlight the differences in social organization between the colony and the Mother Country, deducing from this that the British Constitution was not wholly relevant to the North American experience. These authors, of whom Papineau was the most prominent, dwelt particularly on the political role of the British aristocracy and underlined the absence of such a caste in the North American colonies. To the Speaker, the British aristocracy had become a costly irrelevance.<sup>108</sup> Such statements inevitably led him and others to ask whether the colony should look south of the border rather than to the Mother Country for models of political institutions.<sup>109</sup>

By the time the Ninety-Two Resolutions were adopted, the idea that the British political model was inappropriate to the colony was firmly entrenched in patriote discourse. Indeed, this was made clear in the Resolutions themselves, specifically in the 43rd:

43. -- Que la Constitution et la forme de gouvernement qui conviendrait le mieux à cette Colonie, ne doivent pas se chercher uniquement dans les analogies que présentent les institutions de la Grande Bretagne, dans un

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108. La Minerve, 24 March, 1831.

109. See for example Papineau's speech in the Assembly recorded in la Minerve, 2 February, 1832. See also an editorial on reform of the Legislative Council printed in la Minerve, 3 January, 1833.

état de société tout à fait différent du  
 nôtre...<sup>110</sup>

The resolution goes on to say that the institutions given to the American colonies and modified after their independence were more relevant to the present situation of Lower Canada. Still, the tone of the criticism of British government remained relatively restrained until 1837. After the Russell Resolutions, however, not only the aristocracy but the British Parliament itself became the target of stinging attacks. For his part, Papineau in May of 1837 spoke of "l'orgueil aristocratique du Parlement anglais" and saw no difference between Whigs and Tories as far as corruption was concerned.<sup>111</sup>

Significantly, factions which split with the movement's leadership became less critical of British institutions. Etienne Parent, whose le Canadien broke with Papineau in 1836, suddenly began to see the wisdom inherent in the slower pace of reform adopted by the British.<sup>112</sup> By this time, however, it was too late.

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110. See the text of the Resolutions in Bédard, Histoire de cinquante ans..., p. 346.

111. Papineau, Procédés de l'Assemblée..., (1837) p. 11.

112. This although he had never been as critical of the Mother Country as other elements in the movement. The change in his editorial stance after breaking with the party was pronounced, however. For an example see an editorial on the pace of change in Great Britain and France published in le Canadien, 16 May, 1836.

Since the Union Crisis of the early 1820's the logic of French-Canadian political discourse had been leading to a rejection of European, and specifically, British political institutions. With the Russell Resolutions the process was completed, and those who like Parent now sought to praise the British, or at least minimize their criticism of British institutions, found themselves in contradiction with their earlier statements as well as with the dominant paradigms of patriote discourse.

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In his study of the American Whigs, a party which developed at roughly the same time as the patriote movement, Daniel Walker Howe explains how the politics of the Jacksonian Era might be seen within the civic humanist paradigm:

Classical theorists had long identified two kinds of threats to republics, one economic and the other political. The first took the form of excessive 'luxury', which sapped the energies and corrupted the pure morals necessary to republics. The second was the decay of institutional arrangements, leading to anarchy, tyranny, or, what was most likely, both in sequence...  
 ...Democrats saw the chief threat coming from the emergence of a plutocratic elite...  
 ...The most secure safeguard against the kind of degeneration the Whigs feared... was the time honored device of 'mixed government'.  
 The objective was to introduce such balance into the political system that it could remain

poised indefinitely in a state of equilibrium,  
with further motion suspended.<sup>113</sup>

Howe adds that the fear of conspiracies which would hasten the corruption of the Republic was an idea of classical inspiration with particular relevance to both Democrats and Whigs in Jacksonian America.

The similarities between these patterns of political language and those exhibited in the discourse of French-Canadian politicians before 1837 are striking. Like the Whigs and Democrats, the patriotes sought to restore balance to their political system. In arguing that political institutions had to reflect the particular social conditions of the New World, they conceived of a political order where the natural aristocracy of talents and virtue might play a role in maintaining the political balance. For them the chief source of corruption in the body politic came from the Imperial connection, which helped to perpetuate a moneyed aristocracy, the "plutocratic elite" of the Jacksonians.

In French Canada such notions were not new. At roughly the same time Jeffersonian Republicans were denouncing the activities of Hamilton's Federalists, Pierre Bédard and the parti canadien were warning against the corruptive activities of the colony's

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113. Howe, p. 76.

nascent "aristocratie mercantile". After the crisis over the Union Bill in the 1820's, however, French-Canadian politicians came to realize that the threat to virtue and liberty came from the Metropolis itself. Developing a dynamic vision of an expanding agricultural economy which would perpetuate the virtuous nature of their North American society, the patriotes evolved their own brand of republicanism.

That French-Canadian republicanism drew on the American model for inspiration is hardly surprising. The political culture of both peoples was very similar, and in Whig and Democratic discourse the patriotes found a concern with virtue and corruption which was very close to their own preoccupations. The image of America which emerged in French-Canadian political discourse can only be understood in these terms. In both the negative representation of America before 1815 and the globally positive vision of the United States which marked the patriote discourse of the 1830's, that image gave meaning to a definition of the local political context. The Americans represented, as it were, a reference point on the scale of political corruption in historical time, one with which French-Canadians could judge the imminence of their own encounter with the inevitable cycle of political degeneration.

## CHAPTER TWO

### THE CHANNELS OF INTERCULTURAL COMMUNICATION

The changes in the image of the United States in French-Canadian discourse between 1805 and 1837 were partially determined by the sources dealing with the Republic which were available in the colony. Before 1815 information regarding the United States was limited. While American newspapers circulated in the colony, American imprints and European studies of the United States were difficult to obtain. As access to foreign imprints became less restricted in the period after 1815, Lower-Canadians could and did draw increasingly on foreign sources. Of particular significance were works published in France which were generally very favourable to the United States. In addition, American newspapers and political documents flowed into the country at an ever increasing rate.

The importance of the American image in patriote discourse after 1830 was reflected by the increased citations of American papers in the Lower-Canadian press and in the acquisition of works which dealt with key issues in the French-Canadian debate over the nature of America. Consequently, citations from newspapers published in Louisiana appeared frequently in the period, and works

dealing with the state found their way onto the shelves of the Assembly's library.

The changing sources of information used by French-Canadians in their fashioning of the American image form a backdrop to our study of its evolution. The analysis which follows demonstrates that, even in the period where sources were extremely limited, French-Canadian political writers drew on foreign information in their analysis of the United States. Clearly, both European and American views of the United States combined with the particularities of domestic political discourse to produce the French-Canadian image of America.

### 2.1 The Federalist Connection, 1805-1814

The sources of information concerning the United States available to Lower-Canadian commentators between 1805 and 1814 were far more limited than they would be in later periods. This was due, in part, to the tense international situation which existed between the United States and Great Britain and that which existed between the Mother Country and France. In the latter case these years are distinguished from those which followed by the almost total absence of citations taken from French works concerning the United States, despite the fact that such works, including translations of major political documents and the state and

federal constitutions, had been published in great number in post-revolutionary France.<sup>1</sup> The same is largely true of American authors themselves who, with a few exceptions, were notably absent in Lower-Canadian commentary on the United States.

Jean-Pierre Wallot's study of the diffusion of books in the colony, while it does not deal specifically with foreign books but rather with all books sold by John Neilson, confirms that the influence of French books dealing with the United States must have been minimal. Of the books Neilson sold which were published in the French language, 91% were of a religious nature or were school books. Moreover, Wallot explains that the dominant place of these two genres probably reflects the fact that such works were republished in the colony, because they were difficult to obtain from France. One must assume that if religious works were difficult to get into the colony, French political works dealing with the United States must have been almost entirely excluded.<sup>2</sup> The only example of a French work dealing with the United States being cited in the newspapers surveyed was Talleyrand's "Mémoire sur les relations

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1. On French literature pertaining to the United States before 1815 see Durand Echeverria, Mirage in the West (New York: Octagon Books, 1966), chapters IV and V.

2. Jean-Pierre Wallot, "Frontière ou fragment du système Atlantique: Des idées étrangères dans l'indentité bas-canadienne au début du XIXe siècle" in Historical Papers (1983), 1-29, at p. 11.

commerciales des Etats-Unis" (1797), which emphasized Britain's ability to dominate American trade.<sup>3</sup>

The diffusion of American works in the province is difficult to document. Wallot's analysis of Neilson's book trade, for example, simply divides the books sold by language, without reference to the origin of the author. He does, however, mention the presence of works by Franklin and Paine, although the precise titles are not indicated.<sup>4</sup> Franklin's name also appears in a list of authors cited in the conservative Courrier de Québec compiled by Wallot and John Hare.<sup>5</sup> The Quebec Gazette did cite Jefferson's Notes on Virginia, but the citation was designed to show the contradiction between the president's embargo policy and his philosophical advocacy of free trade, and the piece was lifted from an American newspaper.<sup>6</sup>

The surviving records of libraries underline the paucity of American works. Yvan Morin's study of private libraries in Québec city between 1800 and 1819 found no

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3. Cited in the Quebec Gazette, April 30, 1807. On Talleyrand's "Mémoire..." see Echeverria, pp. 204, 206 and 218.

4. Wallot, "Frontière ou fragment...", p. 28.

5. Jean-Pierre Wallot and John Hare, Les imprimés dans le Bas-Canada 1801-1810 (Montréal: Presses de l'Université de Montréal, 1967), p. 335.

6. The citation appears in the Quebec Gazette, 28 January, 1808.

American authors worthy of mention.<sup>7</sup> In fact relatively few American titles were listed in advertisements of books for sale in Lower-Canadian papers. One notable exception is John Marshall's Life of Washington, which was a highly partisan biography of the first American president written from the Federalist perspective.<sup>8</sup>

Still, as Wallot and Hare have shown, Lower-Canadian political writers were not isolated from the rest of the North Atlantic world and many of the newspapers in the colony gave predominance to international affairs within their columns.<sup>9</sup> While American news did not figure as prominently as European, American events nonetheless received extensive coverage, particularly in Neilson's Quebec Gazette. Information on the United States was in turn, gleaned from American newspapers received in the colony. Wallot found that Neilson exchanged subscriptions

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7. Yvan Morin, "Les bibliothèques privées à Québec d'après les inventaires après décès (1800-1819)" in Yvan Lamonde, ed., L'Imprimé au Québec: Aspects historiques (18e-20e siècle) (Québec: Institut québécois de recherche sur la culture, 1983): 147-165.

8. The advertisement appears in the Quebec Gazette, 26 December, 1811. John Marshall was, of course, a Federalist appointed Chief Justice by John Adams in one of his last acts as president and a formidable foe of the subsequent Republican administrations. Leonard Baker has written that Marshall's biography was "party propaganda at its most sophisticated". See Baker, John Marshall. A Life in the Law (New York: Macmillan, 1974) p. 442.

9. Jean-Pierre Wallot and John Hare, "Les imprimés au Québec (1760-1820)" in Lamonde, ed., L'Imprimé au Québec..., p. 97.

with "une vingtaine de journaux de la Nouvelle Angleterre..." and affirms " [qu'] il faudrait encore tenir compte de l'arrivée massive des nouvelles politiques via les périodiques anglais et américains."<sup>10</sup>

Assuming, as Wallot does, that American newspapers were an important conduit of information concerning the United States in the decade before 1815, a study of the diffusion of American press opinion in Lower-Canadian papers can help determine the role which this information played in forming the American image dominant in those years. To that end a survey of American newspaper citations was conducted in three Lower-Canadian papers: The Quebec Gazette (1805-1815), le Canadien (1806-1810) and le Spectateur (1813-1815). As the goal of the survey was to establish long term trends in the gathering of American news, citations of different American titles were recorded to a frequency of once a month. Thus, each American title could have a maximum frequency of 12 citations per year, per Lower-Canadian paper. The titles of American newspapers cited were then searched through bibliographical indices and works dealing with the party press of the period in an attempt to establish their city and state of origin, publication dates and political affiliation. With this information it was possible to analyze the source and bias of American

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10. Wallot, "Frontière ou fragment...", p. 8, 28.

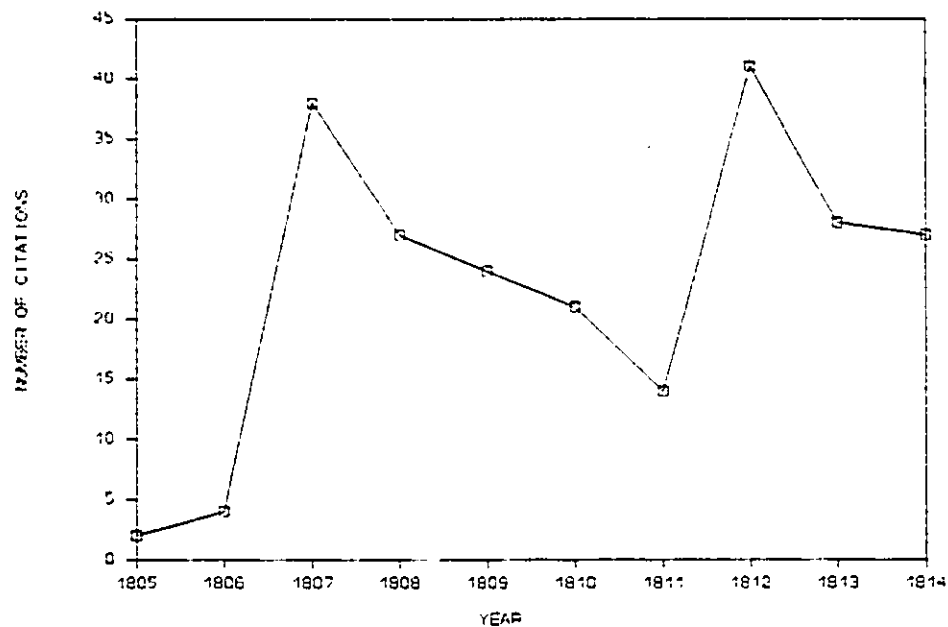
newspaper opinion reaching Lower Canada in the decade before 1815.

The most prominent feature of the sample is the very limited number of American newspaper citations in the French language papers surveyed. This, of course, is partially due to the fact that these papers did not publish through the whole period. Still, even for the periods where le Canadien and le Spectateur published full runs for a given year, the number of American citations registered was only a fraction of that in the Quebec Gazette. Thus in 1807, 1808 and 1809, le Canadien recorded only 14, 5 and 1 citations, while the Quebec Gazette accounted for 24, 22 and 23. Similarly, le Spectateur recorded 3 citations for 1814, against 24 for Neilson's paper. This indicates more of a concern for international and, specifically, American affairs in the Quebec Gazette than in the French language press. The difference may also be attributed to Neilson's contacts with American booksellers and the fact he exchanged subscriptions with a number of American editors. A sample based largely on citations in the Quebec Gazette nevertheless, can still tell us much about the information concerning the United States reaching the French-Canadian political elite. For most of the articles reproduced in the paper were

translated, and a significant percentage of Neilson's subscribers were French-Canadians.<sup>11</sup>

The rhythm of citations over the years studied reveals, as one would expect, that the periods of greatest tension between Great Britain and the United States were those when Lower-Canadian editors cited American newspapers most frequently. Figure 1 shows the number of citations in the

**Figure 1: Citations of American Newspapers 1805-1814**



sample on an annual basis. The first peak occurs in 1807,

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11. Wallot and Hare estimate that French-Canadians made up from 42 to 46 percent of the subscribers between 1805 and 1812; "Les Imprimés...", p. 91.

the year of the Chesapeake-Leopard incident, when even le Canadien recorded 14 citations. From 1807 on the number of citations remained higher than it had been for the first two years of the sample, but rose dramatically in 1812 with the declaration of hostilities between the United States and Great Britain. One would have expected the number of citations to decline sharply after 1812. Neilson himself seemed to believe his sources of information would dry up, announcing in August of 1812 that American papers were no longer being received in Québec. Yet, by the end of September of the same year, the Quebec Gazette reported receiving papers from Boston which were less than two weeks old.<sup>12</sup> Thus, Neilson was able to chronicle the war partially on the basis of American despatches and, in fact, when news of the Treaty of Ghent reached the colony in February 1815, the source cited was an "extra edition of The New York Evening Post."<sup>13</sup>

That the Quebec Gazette was able to maintain its sources of information in the United States while the colony was at war with that country underlines the alienation of the American northeast from the Republican war effort. Yet,

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12. In its August 20, 1812 issue the Quebec Gazette indicated that mail and newspapers from the United States had been interrupted since August 8. The September 24, 1812 issue, however, notes that papers from Boston dated 14 September had been received.

13. Quebec Gazette, 26 February, 1815.

this region had always been the source of most American information reproduced in the papers surveyed. Table 1<sup>14</sup> examines the state of origin of the American papers cited and indicates that 63% of the citations were drawn from

Table 1: American Newspapers Cited 1805-1814  
State of Origin

State	Freq.	Perc.
New York	70	31%
District of Columbia	53	23%
Massachusetts	39	17%
Pennsylvania	23	10%
Maryland	15	7%
Vermont	11	5%
Virginia	8	3%
Kentucky	3	1%
Connecticut	2	.8%
South Carolina	1	.4%
Maine	1	.4%
Total	226	

newspapers published in New York, Massachusetts, Pennsylvania and Vermont. The exception to the dominance of the northeast as a source of information is the large number of citations from newspapers published in the District of Columbia, which in turn reflects the significant number of

14. This table and those that follow are based on the sample drawn from the Quebec Gazette (1805-1814), le Canadien (1806-1810) and le Spectateur (1813-1815). Publication dates, precise titles and location of the American newspapers cited were compiled using Clarence S. Bingham, History and Bibliography of American Newspapers 1690-1820 (Worcester, Mass.: American Antiquarian Association, 1947).

official despatches, speeches and proclamations emanating from the capital which were republished in Lower-Canadian papers.

Within the northeast, Lower-Canadian editors cited papers from the major urban centres, as well as a number of towns closer to the border. Table 2 lists the 20 cities of origin of the American newspapers cited in the period.

**Table 2: American Newspapers Cited 1805-1814  
City of Origin**

City	Freq.	Perc.
Washington	53	23%
New York	52	23%
Boston	38	17%
Philadelphia	22	9%
Baltimore	15	6%
Albany	13	5%
Burlington (Vt.)	9	4%
Richmond (Va.)	5	2%
Buffalo	3	1%
Norfolk (Va.)	3	1%
Hartford	2	.9%
Lexington (Ky)	2	.9%
Troy (Ny)	2	.9%
Charleston	1	.4%
Portland (Me.)	1	.4%
Louisville (Ky)	1	.4%
Wilkesbarre (Pa)	1	.4%
Danville (Vt)	1	.4%
Salem (Ma)	1	.4%
Windsor (Vt)	1	.4%
Total	226	

Washington D. C. was the most frequent city of origin, again

reflecting the importance of information flowing out of the American capital. Then come the major cities of the Northeast, New York, Boston and Philadelphia. Along with these, but of lesser importance, are a number of cities closer to the border such as Burlington Vermont, as well as Buffalo and Albany in New York state. From the Southeast, the major port city of Baltimore also ranks highly.

In some ways these results are not unexpected. Lower-Canadian newspapers naturally gathered American news from areas which were in the closest proximity to the province. Still the choice of newspapers within the region, and indeed, within some of the major urban centres is significant. For not only was the Northeast the area most accessible to the Lower-Canadian press, it also happened to be the stronghold of the Federalist party both on the state and federal levels. Moreover, the Federalist position in American national politics and particularly the party's view of foreign affairs was more ideologically compatible to the inhabitants of a British colony.

Accordingly, the newspapers cited in the Lower-Canadian press were predominantly of the Federalist persuasion. This is illustrated in Table 3 which lists the most frequently

Table 3: Most Frequently Cited American Newspapers  
1805-1814

Title	Freq.	Perc.	Affiliation
<u>National Intelligencer</u>	47	21%	Republican
<u>New York Evening Post</u>	26	11%	Federalist
<u>Boston Gazette</u>	14	6%	Federalist
<u>Bost. Centinel</u>	12	5%	Federalist
<u>Vermont Centinei</u>	9	4%	Federalist
<u>Boston Repertory</u>	9	4%	Federalist
<u>Baltimore American</u>	9	4%	Republican
<u>New York Gazette</u>	8	3%	Federalist
<u>Political Register (Phil.)</u>	6	2%	Unclassified
<u>New York Spectator</u>	6	2%	Federalist
<u>U. S. Gazette (Phil.)</u>	6	2%	Federalist
<u>New York Columbian</u>	5	2%	Republican
<u>Albany Register</u>	5	2%	Federalist
<u>N. Y. Merc. Advertiser</u>	5	2%	Independent
<u>Albany Gazette</u>	5	2%	Federalist
<u>Richmond Enquirer</u>	5	2%	Republican
<u>Philadelphia Gazette</u>	5	2%	Unclassified
<u>Washington Gazette</u>	4	2%	Republican
<u>Albany Argus</u>	3	1%	Republican
<u>Philadelphia Aurora</u>	3	1%	Republican
<u>Baltimore Whig</u>	3	1%	Republican
<u>Buffalo Gazette</u>	3	1%	Federalist
Total:	198	88% of the sample	

cited papers and their party affiliation.<sup>15</sup> At first glance

15. As there is no single source which can be used to establish party affiliation for American newspapers in this period, several studies were consulted. They include: David Hackett Fischer, The Revolution of American Conservatism (New York: Harper & Row, 1965); Marshall Smelser, The Democratic Republic 1801-1815 (New York: Harper Row, 1968); Brigham, *op. cit.*; Frederic Hudson, Journalism in the United States from 1690 to 1872 (New York: Haskell House, 1968, reprint of the 1873 edition); James Melvin Lee, History of American Journalism (New York: Garden City Publishing, 1923); Frank Luther Mott, American Journalism, A History, 1690-1960 (New York: Macmillan, 1962); Edwin Emery, The Press and America (Englewood Cliffs N. J.: Prentice Hall, 1962); Robert Rutland, The Newsmongers (New York: Dial Press, 1973); Bernard A. Weisberger, The American Newspaperman (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1961).

the table seems to indicate a strong Republican influence, since the most frequently cited newspaper was the National Intelligencer, a strong supporter of both the Jefferson and Madison administrations, published in Washington. This paper was far more than a party organ, however. The National Intelligencer was the most widely cited newspaper in America because it reproduced congressional debates, presidential addresses, proclamations and new statutes. In a sense the National Intelligencer fulfilled the same function in Washington as the Quebec Gazette did in Québec, that of official gazette.<sup>16</sup>

That is not to say that the National Intelligencer, and indeed, other Republican papers were never cited for their editorial opinions. The Quebec Gazette occasionally printed selections from the American "government papers" in order to show the administration's position on matters such as the Embargo.<sup>17</sup> More often than not, however, these selections were followed by a rebuttal from Neilson's own pen, or those of Federalist editors south of the border.

More common, as the Table 3 clearly shows, were citations drawn from Federalist papers. In fact, the list of titles cited in the Lower-Canadian press contains some of

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16. On the National Intelligencer's official role see Weisberger, p. 78-79; Emery, p. 160.

17. See for example the selections reprinted in the Quebec Gazette, 8 November, 1808.

the most fiercely partisan opponents of the Republican party. The New York Evening Post, the second most frequently cited American paper, had been Alexander Hamilton's political organ until his death in 1804, and defended the Federalist position in politics well into the 1820's.<sup>18</sup> The Boston Gazette's stance against the War of 1812 earned it the appellation of "arch-Tory" from its opponents, a label also applied to the New York Gazette which also fiercely opposed the Republican war policy.<sup>19</sup> Similarly, the Boston Columbian Centinel waged war against the Republicans until 1816 and the paper's editor, Benjamin Russell, is said to have, during one furious debate, "spat in the face of a Republican state legislator and willingly paid damages of twenty shillings for the privilege."<sup>20</sup> The incident reflects the fierce partisanship of the Federalist papers cited in the Lower-Canadian press. Not only did these papers oppose the Republican regimes at Washington, they saw them as a threat to the very survival of the Constitution. In their pages Republican politicians became dangerous and intriguing demagogues, thirsty for power at any price.<sup>21</sup>

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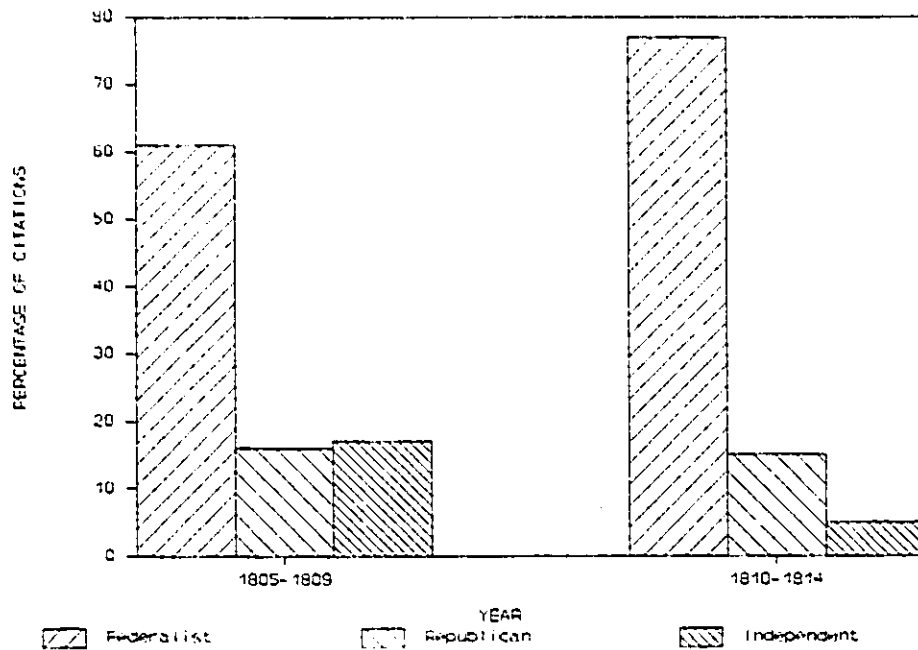
18. Emery, 166, 169; Lee, 137-138.

19. Lee, p. 141; Hudson, p. 160-161.

20. Weisberger, p. 37.

21. On this theme see Fischer, p. 156.

**Figure 2: American Newspapers Cited 1805-1814  
Political Affiliation**



As tensions between Great Britain and the United States escalated, Lower-Canadian editors turned increasingly to the Federalist press for analysis of the American political scene. The Federalists, in turn, grew more vocal in their opposition to Republican foreign policy as the war approached. These trends translated into an almost exclusive use of Federalist information by the Lower-Canadian press in the years leading up to the war. Figure

2<sup>22</sup> illustrates this tendency by splitting up the period under study into five year blocks and breaking down the sample by political affiliation. We have also removed the National Intelligencer from the sample, since it was cited primarily as a source of official information.<sup>23</sup> Although Republican and even independent political opinion from the United States was tolerated until 1810, the pro-British and anti-war views of the Federalist press were almost the only source of American information after that date. Since the sample in the latter years is almost exclusively drawn from the Quebec Gazette, one can conclude that Neilson found it safer politically to give exposure to the American administration's detractors and to views which emphasized the divisions within American society. Moreover, Hare and Wallot have already noted that Neilson's domestic political stance became far more cautious after 1810, a development which is reflected in his choice of American political opinion.

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22. All but 2 percent of the citations were classified according to party affiliation. Some newspapers were classified as "Quid", a splinter group within the Republican party which broke away after 1808 in opposition to the government's anti-British policy. The citations from Quid papers never amounted to more than 1% of the sample.

23. Even with the National Intelligencer restored to the sample the Federalist press is dominant, although by a smaller margin. From 1805-1809 the Federalist press accounts for 48% of the citations, while Republican papers make up 34%; for the later period, 1810-1814, the totals are 61% and 33% respectively.

Even British newspaper citations reflected the Federalist position to a certain extent. Bradford Perkins, who chronicled the state of political opinion in Great Britain in the years leading up to the War of 1812, found that American news reaching that country came overwhelmingly from Federalist sources and adds that "One-sided news helped confirm England's unfavourable portrait of the Americans."<sup>24</sup> The Federalist bias of the British press was in turn reflected in Lower Canada. One of the most frequently cited British papers on Anglo-American affairs was Cobbett's Political Register, whose editor, William Cobbett, had a career in the United States as a Federalist newspaperman.<sup>25</sup> Similarly, as Jane Errington has recently pointed out, Upper-Canadian editors also came to rely heavily on the Federalist press as a source of American news.<sup>26</sup> Thus, in whatever manner news and political opinion on the United

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24. Bradford Perkins, Prologue to War. England and the United States 1805-1812 (Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1963), pp. 10-11.

25. See the citations from Cobbett's Political Register in the Quebec Gazette February 6, 1806 and a series of articles reprinted in October and December 1807. Cobbett's American career as a newspaperman lasted from 1797 to 1800 and his activities contributed mightily to escalation in rhetorical violence which came to mark the period's press; see Weisberger, p. 46-48.

26. Jane Errington, "The Eagle, the Lion and Upper Canada", (Ph. D. dissertation, Queens University, 1984), p. 97.

States reached the colony, it was more than likely tinged with a Federalist bias.

In the period of high international tension between Great Britain and the United States, the sources available to French-Canadian and, indeed, Lower-Canadian political writers were limited. Of these, American newspapers played a significant role in transmitting information concerning the Republic to Lower Canada. To the extent that the colony was part of an empire in conflict with the United States, it is understandable that Lower-Canadian editors, and John Neilson in particular, chose to rely on the views presented in that country's opposition press, a press which was on the whole far less hostile toward Great Britain than that supporting the Republican administrations. Still, intercultural communication is a two-way street, and in accepting the Federalist analysis of American politics as more compatible with their own, Lower-Canadians, and French-Canadian political writers, internalized some aspects of the Federalist critique of American politics. When political writers in le Canadien spoke of factious demagogues and mob rule as facets of American political life, they demonstrated the extent to which Federalist discourse had penetrated their own political culture.

## 2.2 America Seen from New York and Paris, 1815-1830

The same change in international circumstances which favoured the elaboration of a domestic discursive context more critical of British institutions and society helped to further open the colony to foreign influences. In terms of the evolution of the American image this meant that the sources of information concerning the United States were more numerous as well as more varied. Before 1815 the main source of information on the Republic came from within America itself in the form of newspapers received in the colony. While American newspapers remained a primary channel of information between 1815 and 1830, new sources, such as political documents from the United States, found their way more easily into the colony. One important new source of information appeared in the form of French works concerning the American Republic. As René Rémond has shown, French literature dealing with the United States was, in this period, abundant and overwhelmingly positive.<sup>27</sup> In addition, British works touching on the United States, of course, also made their way into the province, although they were not always as favourable as those produced in France.

There exist no comprehensive surveys of the impact and

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27. René Rémond, Les Etats-Unis devant l'opinion française 1815-1852 (Paris: Armand Colin, 1962), tome II, "troisième partie".

circulation of foreign works in Lower Canada for the years under study here. Unlike the earlier period, however, a number of sources exist which provide an indication of what imprints concerning the United States were available in the colony. In fact, some of these indicate books that were directly available to members of the Assembly both in their library and that of the Legislative Council. The Assembly's Journals began publishing lists of books acquired by its library in 1819 and it produced a full catalogue of its holdings in 1825.<sup>28</sup> The Legislative Council published its own catalogue in 1822.<sup>29</sup> In addition, the Montreal Library issued a catalogue of its collection in 1824.<sup>30</sup> These catalogues, supplemented by citations from works reproduced in Lower-Canadian papers, provide an overview of the nature of foreign works dealing with the United States available in the colony.

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28. These appeared in the Appendix to the Journals of the House of Assembly of Lower Canada (JHALC), vols. 29-39 (1819-1830). A catalogue of the library's holdings was published separately as Catalogue of the English Books in the Library of the House of Assembly/Catalogue des livres françois appartenant à la bibliothèque de la Chambre d'Assemblée (CLHA) (Quebec, 1825).

29. Catalogue of the English Books in the Library of the Legislative Council/Catalogue des livres françois dans la bibliothèque [sic] du Conseil Législatif (CLLC) (Quebec, 1822).

30. Catalogue of the Books, in the Montreal Library (Mont. Lib.) (Montreal: Herald office, 1824).

The books uncovered in our survey might be broadly divided into five categories. First, political documents and works of political theory emanating from the United States were crucial to an understanding of that country's political system. Included in this category are constitutional documents, statutes and laws, and political commentaries. Most of these were transmitted directly from the United States, although a few French translations appeared in the period. Second, geographic and statistical information on American territorial and population expansion, as well as on trade were contained in what Rémond terms "Aperçus et tableaux", that is, books which undertook a broad and often statistical overview of the United States. These originated from the United States itself, as well as from Great Britain, but most often from France. The most popular genre in the period was probably the travel account, which forms the third category. A number of these were published both in Great Britain and in France. Fourth, historical works were in evidence in this period, although in significantly smaller number than the other genres, and most were rather dated. Finally, we find compilations of the four genres in the form of encyclopedic works dealing with the United States in a very broad fashion. Such publications came almost exclusively from France.

Although not extensive, the collection of American political documents in period libraries provided an

excellent basis for understanding the American political system. In fact, the Assembly's library was actively acquiring constitutional documents and the statutes of selected American states in the period. Thus, we find the Laws of Massachusetts in the list of books received in 1819 and the catalogue of 1825 shows that the Assembly's library also contained the laws of Pennsylvania and New York. Revised statutes from the latter state were acquired in 1830.<sup>31</sup> The Assembly's library also added an official copy of the United States Constitution to its collection the same year.<sup>32</sup> The library already possessed a French translation of the Constitution in the form of Delacroix's Constitutions des états de l'Europe et des Etats-Unis de l'Amérique, which, however, was unofficial and somewhat dated.<sup>33</sup> American constitutional and political documents were also occasionally translated and reproduced in other French books dealing with the United States.<sup>34</sup>

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31. JHALC, vol. 29 (1819), App. B; CLHA (1825), p. 8; JHALC, vol. 39 (1830), App. A.

32. JHALC, vol 39 (1830), App. A.

33. CLHA (1825), p. 28; the book was also available at the Montreal Library, see Mont. Lib. (1824), p. 95. Delacroix's translation dates from 1791 and the book contains extremely favourable comments on the American Constitution; see Echeverria, p. 194.

34. Two of these appear in library records of the period, both translations of statistical accounts first published in English. Adam Seybert, a congressman, published his Statistical Annals of the United States in 1818. The book was translated and published as Annales statistiques des Etats-Unis (Paris, 1820) and acquired by

Political commentaries and works of American political theory also appear in the records. Several important figures, however, are not represented. Thus, none of the documents consulted included works by Jefferson or Paine.<sup>35</sup> Benjamin Franklin, the majority of whose works were dedicated to moral rather than political philosophy, was, on the other hand, very well represented.<sup>36</sup> The Montreal Library nevertheless held a copy of John Adams' Defense of the Constitution of the United States (1788)<sup>37</sup> and, at the

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the Assembly's library in 1823; see JHALC, vol. 33, App. A and CLHA (1825), p. 30. The translator added the full text of the Constitution and the Declaration of Independence as a preface to the work; see Rémond, tome I, p. 363. John Bristed, a British traveller, published his own account in 1818. It too was translated as Tableau de l'agriculture, du commerce, des manufactures... du peuple Anglo-Américain (Paris, 1826). Although the French version appears in none of the library catalogues, excerpts from the work appeared in le Spectateur, 4, 7 and 14 April, 1827. Here again the translator included the full text of the Constitution in the preface to his translation, as well as the state constitutions of Pennsylvania and Maine for a total of 111 pages of documents; see Rémond, tome I, p. 363.

35. Louis-Joseph Papineau's library did contain Jefferson's Notes On Virginia and Paine's Age of Reason, although it is impossible to determine when he acquired them; see Roger Le Moine, La bibliothèque de Louis-Joseph Papineau (Ottawa: Centre de recherche en civilisation canadienne-française, 1982).

36. Franklin's Memoirs were acquired by the Assembly's library in 1820; see JHALC, vol. 30 (1820-1821), App. A and CLHA (1825), p. 15. Excerpts from the same work appeared in the Quebec Gazette 14 June, 1819. Franklin's Works are listed in Mont. Lib. (1824), p. 29. La Minerve, 19 June, 1828, published an advertisement listing Franklin's Tracts for sale. On Franklin's popularity in Lower Canada see the sections which follow dealing with the American character.

37. Mont. Lib. (1824), pp. 10.

end of the period the Assembly's library acquired what is arguably the most significant piece of American political theory ever produced, The Federalist.<sup>38</sup>

Most of the major statistical and geographic studies of the United States published in the period were available in Lower-Canadian libraries and were frequently cited in the colony's papers. Some of these were rather dated, but continued to be cited, both in France and Lower Canada. Thus Talleyrand's Tableau de la société américaine, a work extremely critical of American manners, was cited by le Spectateur as late as 1828.<sup>39</sup> The study with the longest and most far reaching impact, however, was Volney's Tableau du climat et du sol des Etats-Unis, first published in 1803. The book was widely read in France and was republished in 1821 along with Volney's Oeuvres. It remained an authoritative work on American geography into the late 1820's.<sup>40</sup> Although he rejected theories of American degeneration current in eighteenth-century France and praised certain aspects of American society, Volney was also highly critical of American manners and deplored the effects

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38. JHALC, vol. 39 (1830), App. A. The Federalist Papers were, of course, written by Hamilton, Madison and John Jay during the ratification debates for the federal Constitution.

39. Le Spectateur, 13 August, 1828.

40. On the first edition of Volney's Tableau see Echeverria, pp. 190-193. On the subsequent publications see Rémond, tome I, pp. 250-254.

of materialism. While these views were less popular in the 1820's, Volney's geographical observations retained a great deal of authority; and it was these that were extensively reprinted in la Bibliothèque canadienne in 1828.<sup>41</sup> The book, as volume seven of Volney's Oeuvres, was acquired by the Assembly's library in 1825.<sup>42</sup> A copy of the English translation was available at the Montreal library.<sup>43</sup>

Less charitable than Volney's Tableau was Louis-Félix-Auguste De Beaujour's Aperçu des Etats-Unis (1814). De Beaujour had been a French diplomat at Washington from 1805 to 1810 and his observations on the United States were less than flattering. In true aristocratic fashion, De Beaujour condemned American materialism as the ruin of political virtue, while predicting the dissolution of the Union, and supporting the institution of slavery. His work was, however, a turning point in the genre as French treatments of American society became more positive after 1815.<sup>44</sup> Ironically, the only mention of this aristocratic

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41. La Bibliothèque canadienne, June 1828, pp. 17-23.

42. JHALC, vol. 35 (1826), App. B and CLHA (1825), p. 24.

43. Mont. Lib. (1824), p. 71.

44. On De Beaujour's view see Rémond, tome I, pp. 316-317, and tome II, pp. 511, 539, 733.

condemnation of American society and politics appears in the catalog of the Legislative Council's library.<sup>45</sup>

The second phase in the publication of statistical and geographical overviews of the United States in France began in the early 1820's and was marked by the translation of favourable works on the republic from their English originals. The first of these was Adam Seybert's Statistical Annals of the United States, published in Philadelphia in 1818.<sup>46</sup> The English edition was acquired by the Assembly's library in 1821.<sup>47</sup> In 1820 a French translation was published in Paris and this too was added to the Assembly's library in 1823.<sup>48</sup> An American member of Congress, Seybert's view of the United States was naturally more positive than those of Volney or De Beaujour. Moreover, the book's French translator created an almost idealized vision of the American Republic, likening it in his preface to ancient Rome; touting the American Constitution as the method through which the country's citizens preserved their virtue; and portraying the United

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45. CLLC (1822), p. 41.

46. Rémond, tome I, p. 319.

47. JHALC, vol. 31 (1821), App. A, and CLHA (1825), p. 13.

48. Rémond, tome I, p. 266; JHALC, vol. 33 (1823-1824), App. A and CLHA, p. 30.

States as an asylum for the world's poor and oppressed.<sup>49</sup> This was the type of characterization of American society and institutions which would mark French publications in the 1820's. Similar impressions recorded by John Bristed, an English traveller, were translated and published in Paris in 1826.<sup>50</sup> The following year several excerpts from the book appeared in le Spectateur.<sup>51</sup>

Travel accounts published in both languages were highly favourable to the United States early in the period. The French, in fact, relied heavily until the late 1820's on translations of British travel accounts, and amongst these they chose the most favourable. Morris Birbeck, an English radical who travelled to the United States and settled in the Illinois territory published his impressions and these were in turn translated as Lettres sur les nouveaux établissements qui se forment dans les parties occidentales des Etats-Unis (Paris, 1819). Birbeck's disdain for aristocracy translated into a highly favourable analysis of American democracy which Rémond calls an idealized guide for immigrants.<sup>52</sup> Excerpts from Birbeck's work appeared under

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49. Rémond, tome II, pp. 520, 556, 561.

50. Bristed, op. cit.. Rémond, tome I, pp. 264, 266, 379, notes the extremely positive view of Bristed's comments.

51. Le Spectateur, 4, 7 and 14 April, 1827.

52. Rémond, tome I, pp. 274, 348-349.

the title "Notes sur un voyage en Amérique" in la Bibliothèque canadienne in 1826.<sup>53</sup> Similarly, Mrs. Frances Wright's View of Society and Manners in America (London, 1821) noted with approval the improved position of the working class in America. Her book in turn was translated and published in 1822, while excerpts in translation appeared in the colonial press as early as 1822.<sup>54</sup> The Assembly's library had acquired another of these highly favourable travel accounts by 1825, Lt. Francis Hall's Travels in America (London, 1825).<sup>55</sup> By the late 1820's British travellers tended to be more negative and their works were rarely translated. French travel accounts, conversely, were marked by glowing descriptions of the American Republic, but few of them seem to have found their way into the colony in this period.<sup>56</sup>

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53. La Bibliothèque canadienne, May, 1826, pp. 217-218.

54. Allan Nevins, America through British Eyes (New York: Oxford University Press, 1948), p. 22; Rémond, tome I, p. 275. The first mention of the book in the colony is in the Quebec Gazette, 18 March 1822, probably from the English version. Wright's book is also listed in Mont. Lib. (1824), p. 10.

55. CLHA (1825), p. 13. Nevins, pp. 69-70, 510.

56. The trend toward a more negative view in British travel accounts is exemplified by Capt. Basil Hall's Travels in North America (London, 1829); see Nevins, pp. 85, 88. Hall's book was also acquired by the Assembly's library in 1829; see JHALC, vol. 39, App. A. Chateaubriand's Voyage en Amérique (1827) considered by Rémond one of the most important books in the idealization of the American image in France was not listed in the records surveyed.

Works dealing with American history in the records surveyed were, for the most part, quite dated. The most recent were J. B. Gordon's History of America (Dublin, 1820), acquired by the Assembly in 1825, and John Marshall's biography of George Washington, translated and published in Paris in 1808, and added to the same library in 1820.<sup>57</sup> These were exceptions, however. Lower-Canadian tastes in American history seemed to have gravitated toward the colonial period, as evidenced by the presence of such classics as Robertson's History of America (1797), which dealt with the period before 1688, and Thomas Hutchinson's History of Massachusetts Bay, written from the Loyalist or Tory perspective and ending in 1765.<sup>58</sup> The Montreal Library also possessed two state histories dating from the revolutionary period.<sup>59</sup>

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57. JHALC, vol. 35 (1826), App. B, and CLHA (1825), p. 5. Gordon's history is listed in Nevins' bibliography of British books dealing with the United States; see Nevins, p. 510. John Marshall's Life of Washington (1807 edition) is listed in Mont. Lib. (1824), p. 45. The French translation Vie de Washington appears in JHALC, vol. 30 (1820-21), App. A, and CLHA (1825), p. 21. On the translation and publication of the book see Echeverria, p. 234.

58. Robertson's 1780 edition is listed in Mont. Lib. (1824), pp. 11, 62, and in CLLC (1822), p. 27. Rémond, tome I, p. 351, considers the book a classic on colonial history. Hutchinson's famous History is listed among the acquisitions in JHALC, vol. 38 (1828-29), App. A and in Mont. Lib. (1824), pp. 10, 35.

59. They were Williams, History of the State of Vermont (1779 edition), and History of Carolina and Georgia (1779 edition); see Mont. Lib. (1824), pp. 74, 18.

There were, of course, other sources which could both satisfy the interest in American history and provide general information about the United States. These compilations, as Rémond terms them, were an amalgam of information drawn from all of the genres discussed above. Rémond cites Nougaret's Beautés de l'histoire des Etats-Unis (Paris, 1816, 1824) as the most famous of these. The information presented in this particular work was not always reliable and the image of the United States which it presented was that of a classical republic, replete with Cincinnatus-like citizens who left their ploughs to preserve their liberty.<sup>60</sup> The book was being offered for sale in Lower Canada in 1828, and excerpts appeared frequently in la Bibliothèque canadienne the following year.<sup>61</sup> The other compilation worthy of notice is the Abbé De Pradt's L'Europe et l'Amérique en 1821, 1822 et 1823 (Paris, 1824), which was extremely positive on America's future role in the world, and which was available in the Assembly's library both in the original French and in an English translation.<sup>62</sup>

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60. Rémond notes the deformations and mistakes in this work, such as the assertion that Senators served ten year terms. On this and the classical myth see Rémond, tome I, pp. 393-397, tome II, pp. 490, 506, 543.

61. The book was advertised in la Minerve, 19 June, 1828. Excerpts in la Bibliothèque canadienne were frequent, see, for example, the December, 1829 issue, pp. 214-215, 233-235.

62. CLHA (1825), pp. 14, 22. On the book itself see Rémond, tome II, pp. 614, 878.

Although this brief survey can in no way account for all the published works dealing with the United States in circulation within the colony, it nevertheless demonstrates that contemporary European and American imprints were available to Lower-Canadian political writers. Of particular interest here are the works of French origin. Not only were these more accessible to French-Canadian political writers because they were published in their language, but the image of America emerging in the French literature of this period presented a highly idealized view of the American republic which was consistent with their civic humanist ideals. Rémond's study describes a French image of America which was marked by the belief that the Golden Age of the classical republics was being reborn in the New World. The old classical theme lent credence to a socio-political analysis which increasingly contrasted the New World to the Old, setting its young and simple agricultural societies against the more developed and consequently more stratified social orders of European states. "La vision d'une Arcadie américaine est un thème primitiviste", concludes Rémond, one drawing on myths long established in the European secular consciousness.<sup>63</sup>

While European sources clearly became more important after 1815, Lower-Canadians continued to rely

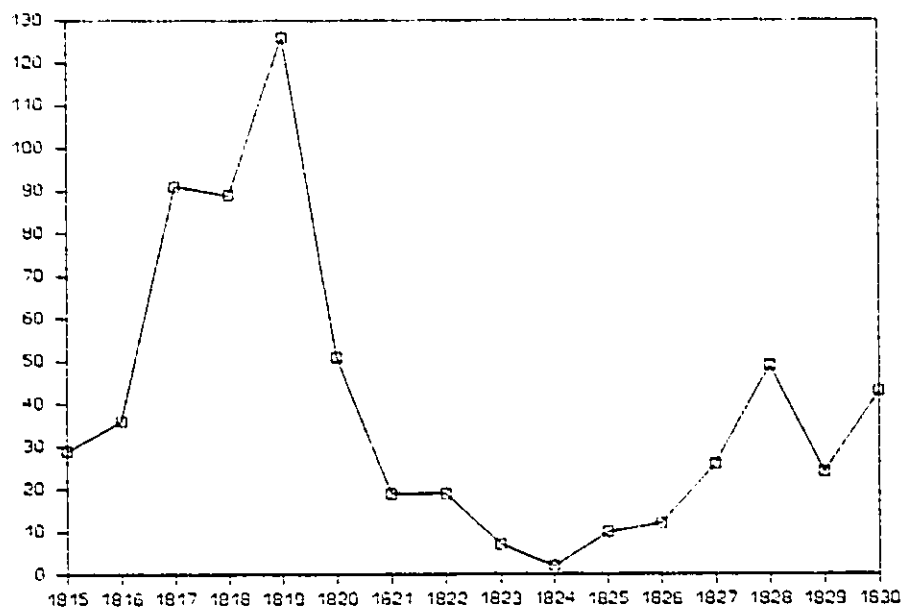
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63. Rémond, tome II, p. 497.

primarily on reports drawn from American newspapers in shaping their view of the Republic. There were, however, some important changes in the republication of American news in the colony. At a very basic level there were more newspapers in Lower Canada between 1815 and 1830 than there had been before the war, and more of them were published exclusively in French. Still, many of these papers had a very short life and this makes tracing the impact of American newspapers in the colony more difficult over the whole period. Despite this problem, two trends emerge quite clearly in the period. Before 1820, the expansion of the French-Canadian press was accompanied by an increase in the number of citations from American papers. Second, after 1826, the Quebec Gazette was displaced by the new patriote organ la Minerve as the paper recording the greatest number of such citations. Indeed, la Minerve relied more on American newspaper reports than had any previous French-Canadian paper.

Figure 3 illustrates the frequency of citations on an annual basis from 1815 to 1830. It shows quite clearly that most of the citations occurred early in the period: 460 of 663 before 1823. No doubt American events in these years, including the Seminole War, the capture and cession of Florida, the various treaties with Spain and Great Britain, and the Panic of 1819, captured the interest of Lower-Canadian editors. The dramatic decline in the number of

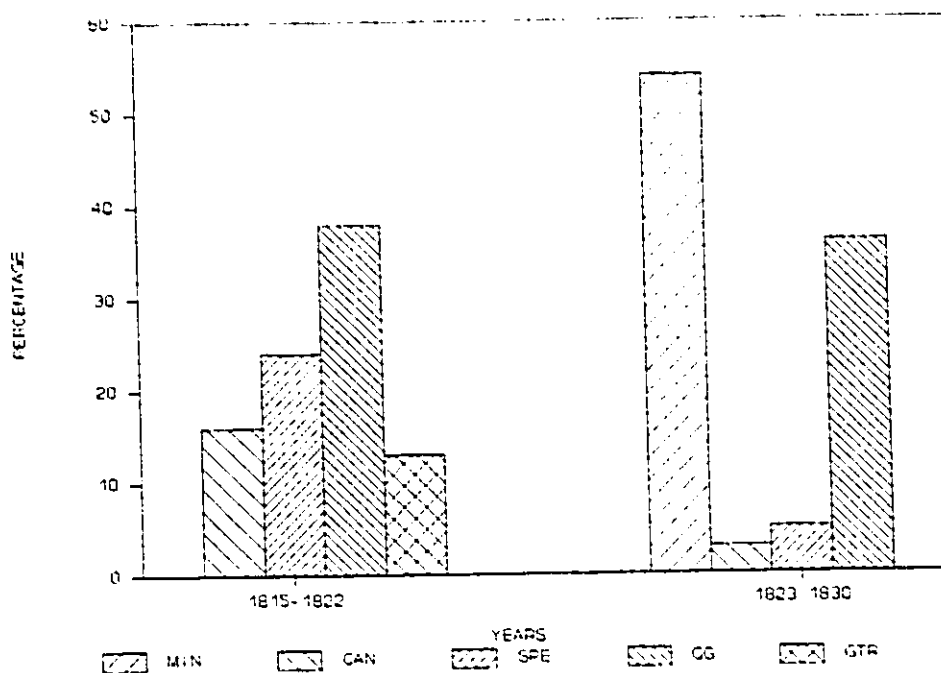
Figure 3: Citations of American Newspapers 1815-1830



citations from 1822 to 1826 might be attributed to the relative lack of interest in American politics during the Era of Good Feelings and the colonial press' obsessions with questions of imperial policy, particularly the issue of the Union Bill. The number of citations increases to a second, but lesser, peak in 1828, the year of a hotly contested American presidential election which marked a return to partisan politics in the Republic.

Although the fluctuations in the number of citations might be partially explained by the relative interest for American affairs in the colony, the extent of those

Figure 4: American Newspaper Citations 1815-1830  
Distribution of Sample in Lower-Canadian Papers



fluctuations is an illustration of the changing composition of the group of Lower-Canadian papers included in the sample. Figure 4 illustrates this by breaking down the sample into two eight year periods and evaluating the relative importance of the different Lower-Canadian papers from which it was drawn. Before 1823 the Quebec Gazette still accounts for 38% of all citations recorded, but clearly the French-Canadian papers active in the period, some of which only published for a few years, collectively reproduced more attributed American articles than Neilson's paper. Indeed, in 1819, the peak year in the sample, the

number of citations was spread fairly evenly across five different papers. Two titles dominate the latter period: la Minerve, with 54% of the citations recorded, and the Quebec Gazette with 36%. By this time many of the papers of the earlier period, such as the Gazette des Trois-Rivières had disappeared. Moreover, la Minerve, almost from its inception, paid a great deal of attention to American affairs, reflecting the shifting orientation of the patriote movement as a whole. Overall, the period between 1815 and 1830 was marked by an increased interest in American affairs by the French-Canadian press and this is demonstrated by the extent to which they now relied on American papers for information concerning the Republic.

Despite the increased frequency of citations from American papers in the colonial press, Lower-Canadian editors continued to draw their information mainly from the northeast. Table 4<sup>64</sup> examines the state of origin of American newspapers cited in the sample and shows that within the northeast American news was being drawn increasingly from the state of New York (39% of all citations for the period). Conversely, citations from papers located in Massachusetts and the District of Columbia

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64. Publication dates, precise titles and the location of the American newspapers cited were established using Bingham, History and Bibliography of American Newspapers and, for the years after 1820, Winnifred Gregory, American Newspapers 1821-1936. A Union List of Files available in the United States and Canada (New York: H. W. Wilson, 1937).

Table 4: American Newspapers Cited, 1815-1830  
State of Origin

State	Freq.	Perc.
New York	248	39%
Dist. of Columbia	108	17%
Massachusetts	77	12%
Pennsylvania	52	8%
Maryland	49	7%
Louisiana	20	3%
Virginia	16	2%
South Carolina	10	1%
Georgia	10	1%
Missouri	9	1%
Michigan	9	1%
Connecticut	6	.9%
New Jersey	2	.3%
Maine	2	.3%
Kentucky	2	.3%
Ohio	2	.3%
Alabama	1	.1%
Tennessee	1	.1%
Rhode Island	1	.1%
New Hampshire	1	.1%
Delaware	1	.1%
Unknown	1	.1%
Total:	634	

declined as did those from Virginia and Maryland. One noteworthy development is the appearance of citations from Louisiana, a state of obvious interest to French-Canadians because of its French speaking population which by this time had developed some French language papers.

The increased use of New York State papers as a source of information regarding the United States is also reflected in the list of cities from which these citations were drawn. Table 5, which ranks cities of origin by frequency, shows

Table 5: American Newspapers Cited, 1815-1830  
Cities of Origin

City	Freq.	Perc.
New York	195	31%
Washington D. C.	108	17%
Boston	73	11%
Philadelphia	49	8%
Baltimore	49	8%
Albany	43	7%
New Orleans	12	2%
Charleston	10	2%
Richmond	9	1%
St-Louis	9	1%
Detroit	9	1%
Norfolk	7	1%
Total	573 of 634	90%

that almost one third of the citations in the sample came from papers published in New York City. This in turn reflects the growing importance of New York City as a centre for newspaper publication in the United States and its equally dominant role in the dissemination of European news. Washington D. C., which had dominated the period before 1815 now lagged far behind New York, as did Boston. Within New York State itself, the other major centre represented in the sample was Albany, the state capital, and therefore the source of information concerning state politics and particularly developments relating to the construction of the Erie Canal. The appearance of New Orleans in the top ten cities of origin reflects the new interest in Louisiana

already noted. The most evident trend in the period, however, is the concentration on New York.

Not surprisingly, given this geographic concentration in the origin of the papers cited, the most frequent titles are also largely drawn from New York State. What is most striking about the newspapers cited in the period, however, is the large number of different titles. Citations from 110 different American papers appeared in the colonial press surveyed. Moreover, no one paper dominated to the extent that a few titles had before 1815. Still, some things remained the same, with the official National Intelligencer continuing to be the most frequently cited American paper in the colony during this period. Yet, as Table 6 shows, reliance on New York City as a source of information did not lead Lower-Canadian editors to cite exclusively from any one paper. Indeed, the citations were fairly evenly drawn from a number of the city's papers, which seems to indicate that a greater number of titles was reaching the colony than was the case before 1815.

The list of the top thirty titles also reveals the presence for the first time of newspapers published in French in the United States. Two appear for this period, the Abeille américaine, which was published in the first half of the period, and the Courrier des Etats-Unis, established in 1828 and almost immediately cited in the Lower-Canadian press. The latter paper would become a major

Table 6: Most Frequently Cited American Newspapers  
1815-1830

Title	Freq.	Perc.	Affiliation
<u>National Intelligencer</u>	94	15%	Republican
<u>New York Evening Post</u>	26	4%	Fed./Democrat
<u>Albany Argus</u>	25	4%	Rep./Democrat
<u>N. Y. Daily Advertiser</u>	24	4%	Fed./Nat. Rep.
<u>N. Y. Comm. Advertiser</u>	24	4%	Fed./Nat. Rep.
<u>Bost. Daily Advertiser</u>	20	3%	Fed./Nat. Rep.
<u>Boston Centinel</u>	19	3%	Fed./Nat. Rep.
<u>L'Abeille Américaine</u>	17	3%	Unclassified
<u>N. Y. Merc. Advertiser</u>	15	2%	Independent
<u>New York Gazette</u>	15	2%	Fed./Nat. Rep.
<u>Philadelphia Gazette</u>	15	2%	Rep./Democrat
<u>New York Spectator</u>	13	2%	Fed./Nat. Rep.
<u>Courrier des Etats-Unis</u>	12	2%	Nat. Rep.
<u>Balt. Federal Gazette</u>	12	2%	Unclassified
<u>Washington Gazette</u>	12	2%	Rep./Nat. Rep.
<u>New York Columbian</u>	9	1%	Republican
<u>Detroit Gazette</u>	9	1%	Unclassified
<u>Democratic Press</u>	9	1%	Republican
<u>Boston Gazette</u>	9	1%	Federalist
<u>Richmond Enquirer</u>	8	1%	Rep./Democrat
<u>Niles Register</u>	8	1%	Ind./Nat. Rep.
<u>Boston Palladium</u>	8	1%	Federalist
<u>Albany Daily Advertiser</u>	8	1%	Fed./Nat. Rep.
<u>Baltimore American</u>	8	1%	Republican
<u>N. Y. Jour. of Commerce</u>	8	1%	Nat. Rep.
<u>Balt. Federal Republican</u>	7	1%	Federalist
<u>Baltimore Patriot</u>	7	1%	Unclassified
<u>Boston Patriot</u>	7	1%	Republican
<u>Albany Gazette</u>	7	1%	Federalist
<u>St-Louis Enquirer</u>	7	1%	Rep./Democrat
Total	477 of 634 (75%)		

source of information on the United States in the 1830's.

As the list of titles in Table 6 demonstrates, the political affiliation of American newspapers evolved over

the period.<sup>65</sup> Indeed, the Era of Good Feelings was characterized by the disintegration of the first American party system which had opposed the Federalist and Republican parties. Although some newspapers are considered by historians to be Federalist well into the 1820's, most of these might be categorized as National Republican during Monroe's administration. For the purposes of this survey, newspapers labelled Federalist after 1815 were considered to have remained so until 1825 unless otherwise indicated in the sources consulted.<sup>66</sup> In rare instances Federalist papers switched hands and joined the ranks of Jackson's followers who called themselves Democrats.<sup>67</sup> More commonly Federalist papers, particularly those in the northeast, came to support the administration and policies of John Quincy Adams and so, after 1825, might be categorized as National Republican.

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65. Political affiliation for Table 4-3 and Figure 4-3 was established using Brigham, op. cit.; Gregory, op. cit.; Hudson, op. cit.; Lee, op. cit.; Mott, op. cit.; Emery, op. cit.; Rutland, op. cit.; Weisberger, op. cit.; Shaw Livermore, jr., The Twilight of Federalism (New York: Gordian Press, 1972); and Arthur M. Schlesinger, jr., The Age of Jackson (Boston: Little, Brown and Company, 1946).

66. On the persistence of some Federalist papers see Livermore, op. cit.

67. This was the case with the New York Evening Post which had been a staunch Federalist organ but which switched owners and became Democrat after 1829; see Emery, pp. 166, 169.

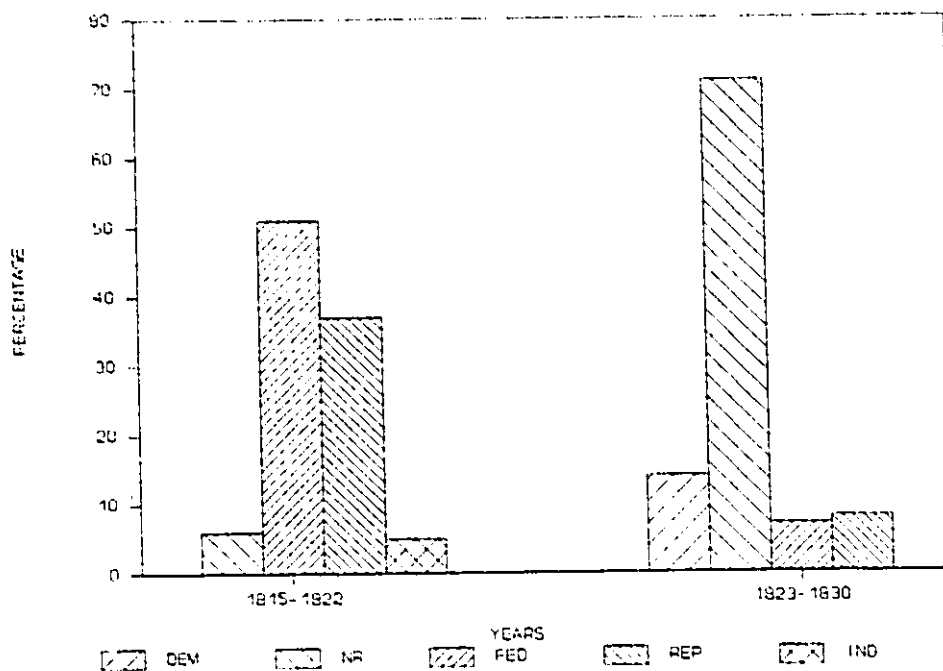
The evolution of the Republican press after 1825 poses similar problems. Indeed, the old line Republicans supported the caucus candidate William Crawford in the election of 1824, while many southern and western Republican papers swung in behind Jackson's candidacy. Still other Republican editors supported John Quincy Adams. This confused situation was clarified somewhat with the election of 1828. Here Jackson's supporters might be clearly labelled as Democrats and those backing the presidency of John Quincy Adams as National Republicans. Although the Whig party did not formally evolve until the mid-1830's, the political divisions of 1828 sowed the seeds of the second American party system. As a result of the many changes in political affiliation of the American newspapers cited, a larger proportion of them remain unclassified in our analysis. The sources available nevertheless made it possible to identify the political affiliation for the great majority of American papers cited in the Lower-Canadian press.

Figure 5 illustrates the party affiliation of the American newspapers cited, dividing the period in half at 1823.<sup>68</sup> In the years 1815 to 1822 Lower-Canadian editors continued to cite the Federalist press more frequently.

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68. As was the case with our analysis in the previous section the official administration paper, the National Intelligencer was removed from the sample on the assumption that it acted mainly as a conduit of official information.

Figure 5: American Newspapers Cited 1815-1830  
Political Affiliation



Still, the gap between Federalist and Republican was smaller than it had been before 1815. The picture changes somewhat from 1823 to 1830. Here we observe a clear choice in favour of newspapers classified as National Republican, that is, those supporting John Quincy Adams in 1828. Although Democratic papers comprised only 14% of the sample for this period, they accounted for over 20% of the citations in 1826, 1827 and 1830. Significantly, the Democratic proportion of the sample was lowest in 1828, an election year, when it accounted for only 2% of the total against 63% for papers with a National Republican affiliation, with 30%

unclassified. French-Canadian papers such as la Minerve were far more sympathetic to Adams than to his Democratic rival Andrew Jackson. Consequently, they reported the election from a National Republican viewpoint.

These changes in the political affiliation of the American newspapers cited in the Lower-Canadian press point to the transitional nature of the period. It seems clear that more American papers were being received in the colony and that these were being cited more frequently. Of particular interest is the large number of citations in la Minerve, a paper generally associated with the increased radicalization of the patriote movement. Clearly, part of the reorientation in patriote discourse involved more frequent recourse to the example of the United States. In addition, American papers published in French, originating from both New York and Louisiana, made their appearance in this period and would play a major role as a source of information on the United States in the 1830's.

If we assume that the shape of a foreign image within a culture is partially conditioned by the sources of information at its disposal, we should not be surprised that there was a significant evolution in the image of the United States within French-Canadian political discourse in the period under study here. As restrictions on foreign imprints entering the colony eased, new sources, such as French imprints, provided different perspectives on the

American Republic. At the same time American newspapers continued to flow into the colony and were more frequently exploited by Lower-Canadian editors. These changing patterns in the intercultural transfer of information coupled with the evolution of the domestic discursive context underlay the evolution of the American image between 1815 and 1830.

### 2.3 Fuelling the Debate, 1831-1837

The image of America which was being fashioned between 1831 and 1837 both reflected and contributed to the large number of sources dealing with the United States available in the colony. Books and reports of French and American origin appear frequently in period records, and it seems clear that the Assembly's library actively sought to enhance its American collection. In addition the colony's French language press increasingly cited American newspapers. All these sources fuelled the discussions of American political and social life which marked the period.

Surviving records of period libraries and newspaper citations testify to the presence of an increasing number of works dealing with the United States. France, which had been an important source of information concerning America, continued to supply Lower-Canadians with diverse materials. French travel accounts, political commentaries and histories

touching on American life appeared in lists of books received by Lower-Canadian libraries, in reports of books ordered or were cited in the colonial press. Further, orders of American books indicate that the colonial political elite now saw a basic American library as indispensable.

The Assembly's library continued to be active in acquiring all manner of American legal and political documents. Collections of the laws of Massachusetts and New York begun in the 1820's were supplemented and updated in the period. In addition, the library received a complete set of the laws of Vermont and Maine to 1836.<sup>69</sup> To these were added revised statutes of Massachusetts, New York and Pennsylvania, in some cases with special volumes and amendments relating to common schools.<sup>70</sup> A catalogue of the Assembly's library published in 1831 also lists a number of American legal reports covering the period 1801 to 1829.<sup>71</sup> The library also added to its collection a number of commentaries and collections of documents dealing with the

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69. JHALC, vol. 46, 23 September, 1836, p. 17.

70. The 1829 edition of the Revised Statutes of New York received by the Assembly's library included a volume on Common schools; see JHALC, vol. 41 (1831-32), App. B. An updated version of the New York statutes is listed in the librarian's report for 1836, along with the revised statutes of Pennsylvania and Massachusetts; see JHALC, vol. 46, 23 September 1836, p. 17.

71. CLHA (1831), p. 24.

Constitution.<sup>72</sup> An eight volume set of American diplomatic papers was available to those with access to the Montreal Library.<sup>73</sup>

The Assembly's library also sought to obtain studies of specific American institutions and reforms which were relevant to the colonial political situation. Thus, just as Lower-Canadian commissioners left to study the American penitentiary system, the library ordered Beaumont and Tocqueville's Du système pénitentiaire aux Etats-Unis (Paris, 1833).<sup>74</sup> Similarly, at a time when the Assembly complained bitterly of plans to give a monopoly on crown lands to a private company, the library ordered a copy of the regulations governing the disposal of public lands in

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72. The catalogue of the Assembly's library for 1831 lists three commentaries on the American Constitution. Two are of American origin: The American Constitutional Guide (Philadelphia: 1828) and State Papers and Public Documents of the United States from 1789 to 1818 (Boston: 1819). See CLHA (1831), pp. 4 and 49 respectively. A French commentary, Dufau, Duvergier and Guades, Collection des constitutions des peuples de l'Europe et des Amériques (Paris: 1823) is listed in CLHA (1831), p. 5. Joseph Storey's Commentaries on the Constitution of the United States was added in 1836; see JHALC, vol. 46, 23 September, 1836, p. 17.

73. Mont. Lib. (1833), p. 24.

74. JHALC, vol. 43 (1834), App. C, Part B. Rémond, tome II, p. 749, notes the generally favourable tone of Beaumont and Tocqueville's analysis.

the United States.<sup>75</sup> Reform of the system of penal law in Louisiana according to a new code conceived by Edward Livingston in 1825 also attracted the attention of Lower-Canadians, and the Assembly's library acquired a copy of the code in 1836.<sup>76</sup>

In terms of American political theory and philosophy, the Assembly's library seems to have been most concerned with acquiring the works of Thomas Jefferson. In 1831 the librarian's report noted that a copy of Jefferson's Writings, Papers and Correspondence had been received.<sup>77</sup> By 1834 the library was ordering a French translation of Jefferson's works and, a year later, its catalogue included a listing for the French translation of Jefferson's Notes on Virginia.<sup>78</sup> The Assembly's library also ordered a new

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75. United States Government, Regulations on the Survey and Sale of the Public Lands of the United States, listed among the books on order in JHALC, vol. 43 (1834), App. C, Part B.

76. Edward Livingston, A System of Penal Law for the State of Louisiana (1825). The Assembly also acquired a French translation of the code. Both are listed in JHALC, vol. 46, 23 September, 1836, p. 18. Rémond, tome II, pp. 364-365, notes that the code gained Livingston recognition in France as well as admission to the Académie des sciences morales et politiques.

77. See JHALC, vol. 40 (1831), App. A and CLHA (1831), p. 4.

78. The French edition of Jefferson's works ordered was Mélanges politiques et philosophiques extraits des mémoires et de la correspondance de Thomas Jefferson, translated by L. P. Conseil (Paris: 1833). The book was listed among those ordered in 1834; see JHALC, vol. 43 (1834), App. C, part B. Conseil's translation was also the object of a review, probably of French origin, published in

edition of Franklin's works in 1834.<sup>79</sup> Indeed, Franklin was popular enough in the colony to incite the publishers of l'Echo du pays to print a Lower-Canadian edition of his writings.<sup>80</sup>

The most significant piece of political commentary on the American government in the period, however, came not from the United States itself but from France. Alexis De Tocqueville's De la démocratie en Amérique was published in Paris in 1835. The book was undoubtedly the most complete study of American government by a foreigner to that date, and its fame soon spread outside the borders of France. The library of the Assembly of Lower Canada acquired a copy in 1836, and the book was available for sale in Montreal book

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l'Echo du Pays, 17 October, 1833. It is listed in Rémond's list of American works published in France, tome II, p. 882. The translation of Jefferson's Notes on Virginia received was titled Recherche sur les Etats-Unis (Paris, 1788) and is noted in CLHA (1835), p. 30.

79. The collection is titled Posthumous Works of Benjamin Franklin and appears among the books on order listed in JHALC, vol. 43 (1834), App. C, Part B.

80. Ecrits populaires de Franklin appropriés aux lecteurs français (St. Charles: Echo du Pays, 1834). The pamphlet contained extracts from Poor Richard's Almanac and was copied from a French edition of 1829. Many of the excerpts also appeared in l'Echo du pays. See, for example, the paper's 10 April and 24 April editions.

stores by 1837.<sup>81</sup> Moreover, excerpts from De la démocratie en Amérique appeared frequently in the colonial press in 1835 and 1836.<sup>82</sup> Clearly, Tocqueville's work had a significant impact on Lower Canadians, and was available to them in their discussions of the United States and its political system.<sup>83</sup>

Statistical and geographical overviews of the United States were not as well represented among the new titles acquired in this period. When the Assembly's library ordered statistical surveys in the period it seemed more concerned with specific areas of economic development. Thus, it acquired a report on Railway and Canal construction in the United States early in the period, and ordered a book

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81. Tocqueville's book is listed as received by the Assembly's library in JHALC, vol. 46, 23 September, 1836, p. 18. It also appears in a catalogue of books for sale at E. R. Fabre's book store in 1837; see E. R. Fabre et Cie., Catalogue général de la librairie canadienne d'Edouard R. Fabre (Montréal, 1837), p. 12.

82. Le Canadien, in fact reproduced a good deal of the book beginning with four sections published in its 18 September, 1835 section. Additional excerpts appear in the paper's 30 September, 2 October, 5 October and 7 October issues. Most of these excerpts dealt with the American political system. As Parent became more critical of the United States, he highlighted Tocqueville's comments on the impact of religion in American politics. See the papers' 20 May and 4 July, 1836 issues. L'Echo du Pays also published an excerpt from Tocqueville in its 12 November, 1835 issue. Two excerpts from De la démocratie en Amérique also appeared in la Minerve, 10 October and 16 November, 1835.

83. The patriotes' use of Tocqueville is discussed in Chapter Five.

dealing with the growth of banking in 1834.<sup>84</sup> To these very specific reports were added books of general scientific and geographical interest, including Lewis and Clarke's Travels to the Source of the Missouri River and Zebulon Pike's, Pike's Exploratory Voyages.<sup>85</sup>

If statistical and geographical surveys were less in demand after 1830, the accounts of foreign travellers and settlers in the United States remained popular. The most famous of these was Chateaubriand's Voyage en Amérique, which, as Rémond notes, had a significant impact on the image of the United States. Although published in 1828, Chateaubriand's account very much reinforced the existing notion of America as an agricultural republic where virtue continued to reign. Chateaubriand's Voyage was available in the colony, but was not ordered for the Assembly's library.<sup>86</sup> Still, the Assembly did order other important works by French travellers including Murat's Lettres sur les Etats-Unis (Paris, 1830), which presented a very pro-

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84. William Strickland, Reports on Canals, Railways and Roads (Philadelphia) appears among the books listed in CLHA (1831), p. 31. The library ordered A Short History of Paper Money and banking in the United States in 1834; see JHALC, vol. 43, App. C, Part B.

85. Both works are listed as ordered in JHALC, vol. 44 (1835), App. D, Part B.

86. The book was listed in Fabre's Catalogue... (1837), p. 59. On Chateaubriand and the agricultural republic see Rémond, tome II, p. 483.

southern point of view.<sup>87</sup> More in the tradition of Chateaubriand was Théodore Pavie's Souvenirs Atlantiques, voyage aux Etats-Unis et au Canada (Paris, 1833), received by the Assembly's library in 1836.<sup>88</sup> Pavie also perpetuated the image of the United States as essentially an agricultural republic, while stressing the independence of the states and predicting the eventual dissolution of the Union into smaller federations.<sup>89</sup> In these works, the French vision of America as Arcadia persisted, and spoke directly to Lower-Canadian notions of North American exceptionalism.

The acquisitions made by the Assembly's library also indicate a new interest in American history. The library continued to acquire works dealing with the colonial period, including William Smith's History of New York, written very much from the Loyalist perspective.<sup>90</sup> The more noteworthy trend in the period, however, was the acquisition of a number of books dealing with the American Revolution, and this, mainly in 1836 and 1837. Some of these were general in scope, such as Arnold Scheffer's Histoire des Etats-Unis

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87. See JHALC, vol. 43 (1834), App. C, part B. Excerpts from Murat's Lettres... appeared in le Canadien, 22 October, 1832. On Murat's point of view see Rémond, tome I, pp. 372-374.

88. See JHALC, vol. 46, 23 September, 1836, p. 18.

89. On Pavie's work see Rémond, tome II, pp. 490, 711.

90. JHALC, vol. 45 (1835-36), App. A.

(Paris, 1825).<sup>91</sup> Scheffer had been La Fayette's secretary and his history of the United States was very much inspired by the French general's triumphant return to America in 1824.<sup>92</sup> Rémond notes that his was a very positive account of the Revolution and that Scheffer saw the Constitution as the perfection of human government.<sup>93</sup> The library also acquired books dealing with particular revolutionary battles, as well as figures from the revolutionary era.<sup>94</sup> Jared Sparks' The Diplomatic Correspondence of the American Revolution (Boston, 1830), a collection of Revolutionary documents, was added to the library's collection in 1837.<sup>95</sup> In addition to these the Assembly's library also received a number of more dated books on the Revolution in this period.<sup>96</sup> Clearly, the tastes of French-Canadian politicians in the late 1830's for American history focused on the American Revolution.

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91. JHALC, vol. 47 (1837), App. A.

92. Rémond, tome I, p. 355

93. Rémond, tome II, p. 515.

94. In 1836, for example, the library received a copy of Hugh Moore's Memoir of Ethan Allen (1834 ed.); see JHALC, vol. 46, 23 September 1836, p. 15. In 1837 it acquired S. Swett, History of Bunker Hill Battle (Boston, 1826); see JHALC, vol. 47 (1837), App. A.

95. JHALC, vol. 47 (1837), App. A.

96. For example, Jonathan Boucher's A View of the Causes and Consequences of the American Revolution (London, 1797) listed as received in JHALC, vol. 47 (1837), App. A.

As the works listed so far indicate, acquisitions made by the Assembly's library tended to deal with more specific areas of interest than was the case before 1830. This trend is also reflected in the small number of compilations acquired in the period. Only one of these can be truly classed with the genre of the large compilations so popular in the 1820's: D. B. Warden's A Statistical, Political and Historical Account of the United States of North America (Edinburgh, 1819).<sup>97</sup> This was essentially an encyclopedia of Americana, which again emphasized the agricultural nature of the American people and the government of reason established by the Constitution.<sup>98</sup> By the 1820's, of course, the Americans themselves were publishing compilations of Americana, and two of these were acquired by the Assembly's library in the 1830's, including the thirteen volumes of the Encyclopedia Americana.<sup>99</sup>

The trend in the acquisition of books dealing with the United States was away from general surveys and toward more

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97. JHALC, vol. 47 (1837), App. A.

98. Warden's book had a significant impact in France and was translated in 1820. On his view see Rémond, tome I, pp. 237, 316, tome II, pp. 510, 553.

99. A Complete Historical, Chronological and Geographical American Atlas (Philadelphia, 1822) is listed in CLHA (1831), p. 41. The Encyclopedia Americana (Philadelphia, 1829) was acquired over a number of years. See JHALC, vol. 40 (1831) App. A, vol. 41 (1831-1832) App. B, vol. 42 (1832-1833), App. B, and vol. 43 (1834), App. C, part B.

specific areas of interest. A prominent example of this development was a marked propensity for the acquisition of materials dealing with the state of Louisiana, its history and its people. This tendency was most evident in 1835 when the Assembly's library received copies of Barbé-Marois' Histoire de la Louisiane (Paris, 1829) and an anonymous work titled Journal historique de l'établissement des Français à la Louisiane (Paris, 1831).<sup>100</sup> Barbé-Marois had helped negotiate the cession of Louisiana to the Americans, was an intimate of American presidents and an ardent admirer of the United States. His history praised American government unreservedly, and noted the religious tolerance of the American people.<sup>101</sup> The library added four more general descriptions or histories of Louisiana to its collection in the period.<sup>102</sup> The acquisition of these books came at a time when Lower-Canadian papers were beginning to discuss the fate of the state's French population, a point which was in

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100. JHALC, vol. 44 (1835), App. D, part A; CLHA (1835), pp. 31, 32.

101. On Barbé-Marois' work see Rémond, tome I, pp. 238, 242, tome II, pp. 547, 551.

102. Two of these Description de la Louisiane and Relation de la Louisiane et du fleuve Mississippi were acquired in 1831. See JHALC, vol. 41 (1831-1832), App. B. Duprat's History of Louisiana and Perin Du Lac's Voyages dans les deux Louisianes et chez les nations sauvages (London, 1807) were ordered in 1835 and received in 1837. See JHALC, vol 44 (1835), App. D, part B, and vol. 47 (1837), App. A.

turr related to the fate of the Canadiens should the province be annexed to the United States.

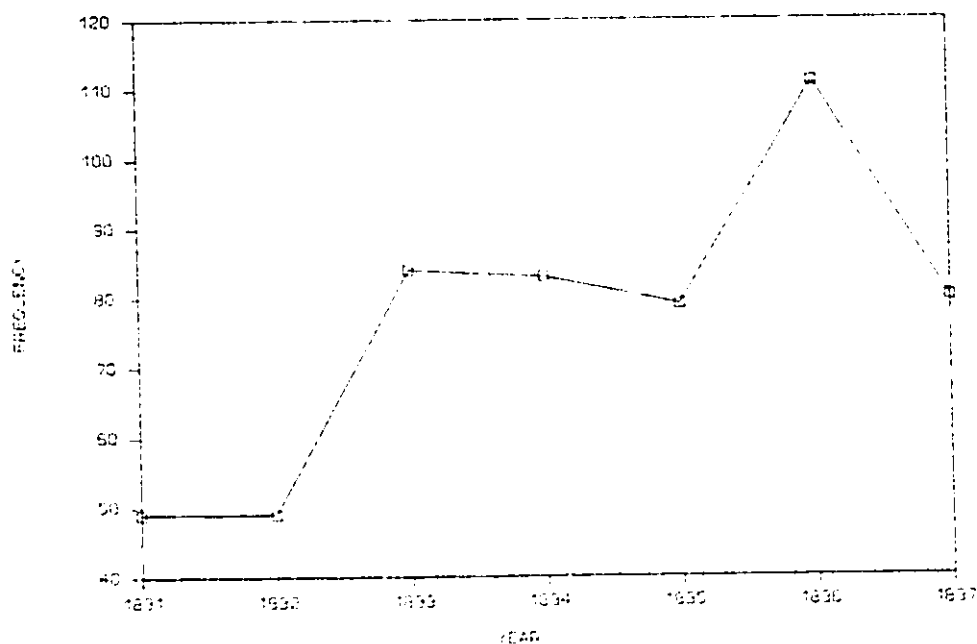
The titles acquired by the Assembly's library after 1831 reflect the fact that the American image had become central to Lower-Canadian political discourse. Books on Louisiana could be used by the patriotes in rebutting the argument that the Canadiens would be assimilated if they joined the Union. Histories of the American Revolution illustrated the results of Imperial misrule, and pointed to an example of successful colonial resistance. The writings of French travellers emphasized the democratic destiny of the New World, a theme which had by the early 1830's become a central part of patriote discourse. American political documents chronicled the operation of the model government south of the border, and offered a contrast to the corruption and abuse of power which characterized the colonial administration. Taken together these sources of information about the United States helped reinforce the glowing image of America which had come to dominate French-Canadian political discourse in the 1830's.

Not surprisingly, citations from American newspapers became more frequent in the Lower-Canadian press as the patriotes turned to the United States as a political model. On the one hand this meant that patriote papers themselves increasingly drew on the American press in order to bolster their political message. In turn, those

newspapers critical of the American model searched the pages of the American press for evidence of its shortcomings. The transmission of American news was also further facilitated by the expansion of the French language press in the United States. Thus, the Courrier des Etats-Unis, published in New York, and a number of papers published in Louisiana were regularly cited in the years leading up to the Rebellions.

Figure 6, based on a sample drawn from five French

Figure 6: Citations of American Newspapers, 1831-1837



language Lower-Canadian papers, illustrates the frequency of

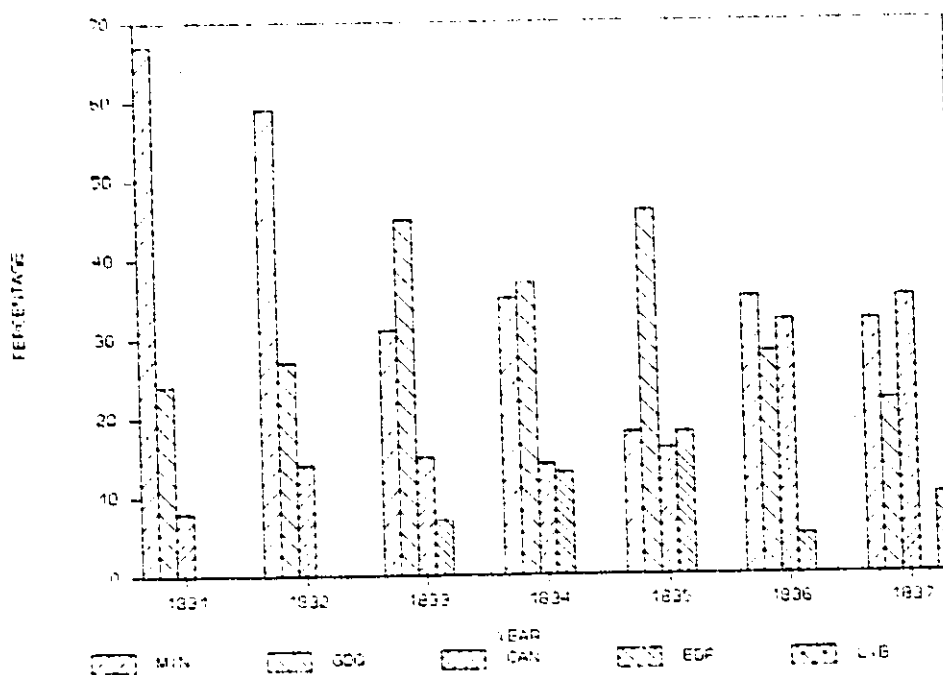
citations on an annual basis from 1831 to 1837.<sup>103</sup> As the patriotes rejected the British constitutional model, and called for institutions modelled on those of the United States, the number of American newspaper citations in the colonial press rose dramatically. The increase clearly corresponds to the shift in the patriote program, which was marked by the call for a constitutional convention, early in 1833, and the passage of the Ninety-Two Resolutions in February of 1834. The trend peaked in 1836, a year when colonial politics reached an impasse. The decline in 1837 can, of course, be attributed to the outbreak of violence in the fall, and with it the destruction of the patriote press.

As Figure 7 demonstrates, la Minerve continued to account for most citations of American newspapers early in the period. However, once it was clear that the patriotes had linked their fate to the American model, other newspapers increasingly turned to the American press. In fact by 1835, the Gazette de Québec accounted for almost half of all citations, with the remainder fairly evenly distributed across la Minerve, le Canadien and l'Echo du pays. By this time, of course, the French edition of Neilson's paper was engaged in a bitter fight against the patriote leadership, and invoked examples of civil and

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103. The sample consists of 535 citations drawn from la Minerve, the Gazette de Québec, Le Canadien, l'Echo du pays, and le Libéral.

Figure 7: American Newspaper Citations, 1831-1837  
Distribution of Sample in Lower-Canadian Papers



political disorders in the United States in order to tarnish the American image. It was eventually joined in this endeavour by le Canadien, which in 1836 broke with the movement's leaders. Significantly, le Canadien cited American papers more than twice as frequently in 1836 than it had in 1835, matching la Minerve in both 1836 and 1837. Le Canadien's defection had sparked a polemic between it and la Minerve which revolved largely around the idea of political union with the United States. In exposing the threat to French-Canadian institutions which such a move would imply, the paper's editor, Etienne Parent, abundantly

cited the American press. For both patriote papers and those opposed to the movement, American newspapers had become indispensable.

American newspaper citations in the French language

Table 7: American Newspapers Cited, 1831-1837:  
State of Origin

State	Freq.	Perc.
New York	300	56.1%
Louisiana	103	19.3%
Dist. of Columbia	32	6.0%
Pennsylvania	28	5.2%
Massachusetts	19	3.6%
Maryland	16	3.0%
Michigan	4	.7%
Ohio	4	.7%
Vermont	3	.6%
Maine	3	.6%
Missouri	3	.6%
Virginia	3	.6%
Alabama	3	.6%
Georgia	2	.4%
Rhode Island	2	.4%
South Carolina	2	.4%
Connecticut	2	.4%
North Carolina	1	.2%
Wisconsin	1	.2%
Illinois	1	.2%
Unknown	3	.6
Total:	535	

press continued in this period to be drawn chiefly from New York State. Table 7 shows that just over half of all

American papers cited were published there.<sup>104</sup> This figure, of course, reflects the fact that New York had come by the 1830's to lead all other states in the number of newspapers published, and that those papers were easily available in the colony. In addition New York City was home to the

Table 8: American Newspapers Cited, 1831-1837  
City of Origin

City	Frequency	Percentage
New York	277	51.8%
New Orleans	98	18.3%
Washington	32	6.0%
Philadelphia	28	5.2%
Albany	21	3.9%
Boston	19	3.6%
Baltimore	16	3.0%
Baton Rouge	5	.9%
Total:	496 of 535	92.7%

Courrier des Etats-Unis, which became the principal source of American news in the period. The most significant shift in the origin of American newspapers cited in the period, however, is the prominent place given to those published in Louisiana. As the debate over the annexation of Lower Canada to the United States became a central part of political discourse, colonial papers turned to the French

104. Publication dates, precise titles and the location of the American newspapers cited were established using Gregory, op. cit..

language press in Louisiana. The state contained a sizable population of French origin, and their fate under American government became a point of contention in the debate over a possible political union with the Republic. Both trends, that is, the continuing reliance on New York State papers and the rise of Louisiana, are reflected in the cities from which American newspapers originated. As Table 8 shows, New York City and New Orleans alone accounted for almost 70% of all citations in the sample.

Clearly, as Lower-Canadian papers reproduced more American news, the French language press in the United States became an important source of information. Table 9 lists the 22 most frequently cited American newspapers, which together account for 81.5 % of all citations in the sample.<sup>105</sup> French language papers accounted for over 40% of all citations, with the Courrier des Etats-Unis alone representing almost a quarter of the sample. These papers were attractive mainly because they eliminated the need for Lower-Canadian editors to translate articles before publishing them. Reliance on the French language press in the United States, however, meant that American news reproduced in the colony also incorporated the bias of

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105. Political affiliation for American newspapers cited was established using Gregory, op. cit.; Hudson, op. cit.; Lee, op. cit.; Mott, op. cit.; Emery, op. cit.; Rutland, op. cit.; Weisberger, op. cit.; Schlesinger, op. cit.; and Daniel Walker Howe, The Political Culture of the American Whigs (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1979).

Table 9: Most Frequently Cited American Newspapers  
1831-1837

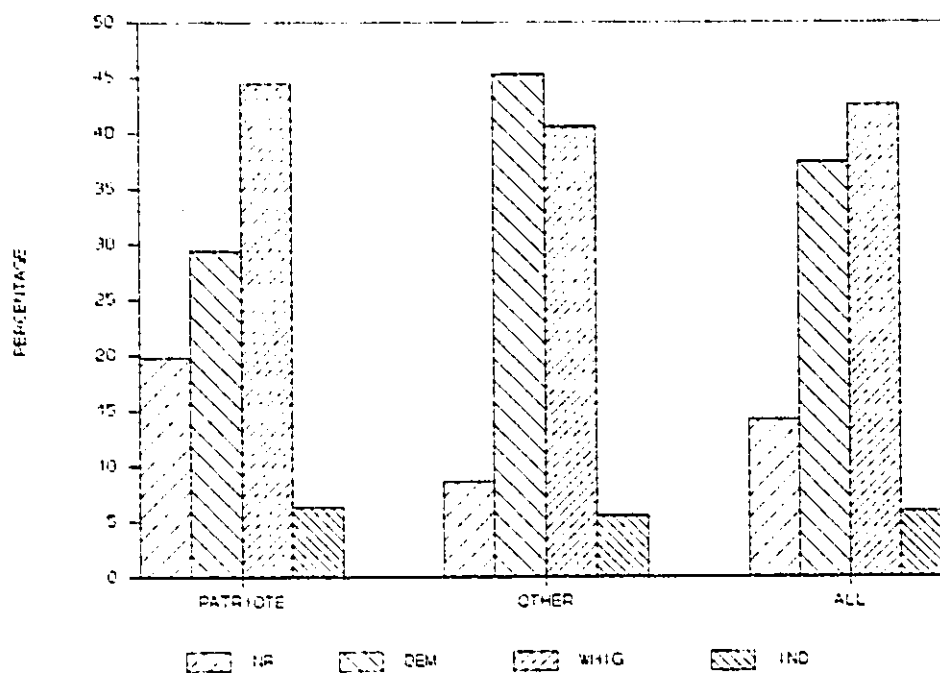
Title	Freq.	Perc.	Affiliation
<u>Courrier des Etats-Unis</u>	132	24.7%	Nat. Rep.
<u>Abeille de la Nouv. Orléans</u>	59	11.0%	Unclass.
<u>New York Enquirer</u>	23	4.3%	Democrat
<u>New York Daily Advertiser</u>	23	4.3%	Nat.Rep/Whig
<u>New York Daily Express</u>	17	3.2%	Whig
<u>Courrier de la Nouv. Orléans</u>	17	3.2%	Unclass.
<u>New York Commercial Advert.</u>	15	2.8%	Nat.Rep/Whig
<u>National Intelligencer</u>	14	2.6%	Nat. Rep.
<u>New York Evening Star</u>	14	2.6%	Whig
<u>New York Evening Post</u>	13	2.4%	Democrat
<u>National Gazette (Phil.)</u>	13	2.4%	Nat. Rep.
<u>Washington Globe</u>	11	2.1%	Democrat
<u>Albany Argus</u>	11	2.1%	Democrat
<u>Echo de la Louisiane</u>	11	2.1%	Unclass.
<u>Baltimore American</u>	9	1.7%	Unclass.
<u>New York American</u>	8	1.5%	Nat. Rep.
<u>United States Gazette</u>	8	1.5%	Whig
<u>New York Times</u>	8	1.5%	Whig
<u>New York Journal of Commerce</u>	8	1.5%	Whig
<u>Baltimore Gazette</u>	8	1.5%	Unclass.
<u>New York Mercantile Adver.</u>	7	1.3%	Independent
<u>Boston Daily Advertiser</u>	7	1.3%	Whig
Total:	436	81.5%	

Franco-American editors. In fact, la Minerve, which used the Courrier des Etats-Unis extensively, publicly repudiated the American newspaper's stance as too conservative, while continuing to rely its reports of American politics.<sup>106</sup>

The importance of the French language press makes it more difficult to interpret data dealing with the political affiliation of the American papers cited. In order to

106. See la Minerve, 9 October, 1837.

Figure 8: American Newspapers Cited, 1831-37  
Political Affiliation



correct for the inordinate weight of the Courier des Etats-Unis, the paper was removed from the sample for the analysis of political affiliation. Figure 8 illustrates the political affiliation of other American titles cited in the Lower-Canadian papers surveyed. The sample is also further broken down by the political affiliation of Lower-Canadian

papers.<sup>107</sup> Although some historians have pointed to the influence of Jacksonian Democracy on the patriote movement, that influence was certainly not reflected in the American newspapers cited by patriote editors. In fact, they clearly cited Whig and National Republican papers far more frequently than they did those affiliated with Jackson's Democrats. Ironically, the proportion of Democratic papers cited was far higher in papers opposed to the movement, which showed no real political preference in their choice of American sources.

These results can be explained in a number of different ways. First, it is clear that the American influences working on the patriote movement were far more complex than has been formerly imagined. As the discussion in chapter five makes clear, the patriotes integrated elements of both Whig and Democratic discourse in their analysis of American politics and its relevance to colonial affairs. In some ways Whig discourse was most attractive to the patriotes since it emphasized the role of the Congress in curbing executive influence and power, a role not unlike that which Lower-Canadians sought for their Assembly. In addition, as

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107. Newspapers classified as patriote include la Minerve, l'Echo du Pays, le Libéral, and le Canadien until March of 1836. The Gazette de Québec makes up the bulk of the citations of other papers and is supplemented by le Canadien after March of 1836. Le Canadien, of course became extremely critical of the movement's leadership early in 1836.

we have seen, Jackson was not always popular in Lower Canada. Still, the patriotes did accept the Democratic interpretation of the Bank War.

Alternately, the results might also be caused by the influence of the French language press in the United States and particularly of the Courrier des Etats-Unis. For although it is possible to remove all citations to this important paper from the sample, it is impossible to even estimate how many citations of other American papers first appeared in translation in the Courrier des Etats-Unis. Since the Courrier des Etats-Unis was opposed to Jackson and his Democrats, it is logical that it would have more frequently cited National Republican and Whig papers, and that these citations might have found their way indirectly into the pages of la Minerve, le Canadien and l'Echo du pays. Such an explanation is further supported by the fact that the Gazette de Québec showed little preference for papers of either orientation. The Gazette's French edition, of course, could draw on American citations reproduced in the paper's English edition, which obviously did not rely on the American French language press.

Political affiliation then, does not seem to have been a determinant factor in the choice of American papers cited in the Lower-Canadian papers surveyed. The main characteristic of the period was a significant increase in the number of citations for all colonial papers.

Additionally, the origin of American papers was slightly modified from the previous period with the addition of numerous citations from the Louisiana press. That this was so attests to the great interest of Lower-Canadian editors for the fate of the French population in that state, an issue which gained new relevance in a context where patriote discourse increasingly invoked the American political model, and with it, the possibility that Lower Canada would one day become a state in the American federation.

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It is, of course impossible to delineate precisely what influence foreign imprints exercised on the creation and evolution of the American image in French-Canadian political discourse between 1805 and 1837. The foregoing discussion, however, makes clear that the nature and quantity of materials available to Lower-Canadian political writers in the period changed in important ways. As French-Canadian commentators redefined their vision of America in the 1820's and 1830's, the materials available to them no doubt meshed with the dominant idioms of political discourse to create the image of America described in the subsequent pages of this study.

Before 1815, the materials available to Lower-Canadians in their study of the United States were limited. The

extremely positive works which characterized French writing on the United States in the period appear to have been absent from the colony altogether. One source that was exploited, American newspapers, imparted a very specific vision of American society. Drawing mostly on Federalist papers, Lower-Canadian editors found evidence in support of their view that the Republic was politically unstable.

From 1815 to 1830 foreign imprints flowed into the colony at an increased rate. Among those dealing with the United States, French studies occupied an important place. Almost all of the most important French works which characterized the very positive representation of America in the period documented by Rémond found their way into Lower Canada. In a discursive context where, as we shall see, French-Canadians were defining themselves as North American, the French vision of the United States bolstered the idea of North American society as inherently democratic. Further, more American newspapers were arriving in the colony and these were amply cited in its French language press. With the end of the War of 1812, the old reliance on the Federalist press began to break down, and with it the vision of America as a corrupted society.

This transformation was completed in the 1830's. By the time the patriotes were drawing up their Ninety-Two Resolutions, the image of America had become central to the movement's political discourse. Not surprisingly, the

French-Canadian press, both pro and anti-patriote, drew heavily on American newspapers in their discussions of American society and politics. That task was facilitated by the development of a French language press in the United States, which eliminated the need to translate articles before publishing them. Indeed, the Courrier des Etats-Unis, published in New York, became the most frequently cited paper on American affairs.

The importance of the American image in the 1830's was such that the nature of foreign imprints flowing into the colony reflected the themes which were current in the discussion over the nature of the Republic. Significantly, at the same time that the fate of Louisiana and the American Revolution became hotly debated issues in the colony, imprints relevant to both topics appeared more often in the period's records. Thus, in the mid-1830's the Assembly's library acquired a number of works dealing with both Louisiana and the American Revolution. Simultaneously, citations from papers published in Louisiana increased dramatically.

René Rémond referred to the printed sources of information he examined in his study of the American image in France as "les matériaux de la connaissance."<sup>108</sup> The term renders nicely the importance of foreign imprints in the

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108. Rémond, tome I, p. 245.

elaboration of a external image within a society's cultural consciousness. Their contribution to the evolution of the American image in French Canada is underlined by the fact that the timing of the change in the nature of materials dealing with the United States available in the colony corresponded perfectly with the shift in French-Canadian perceptions of the Republic.

### CHAPTER THREE

#### "LES SANS-CULOTTES DU NOUVEAU MONDE":

#### THE IMAGE OF THE UNITED STATES, 1805-1815

The negative image of the United States and its citizens which developed in French Canada between 1805 and 1815 was largely conditioned by the particularities of domestic political discourse. Dominant idioms of political language were applied to the analysis of American society and politics and it is these idioms which best explain the shape of that image. That French-Canadian commentators drew such a caricature of their neighbours to the south, does not, however, imply that they were shut off from information about American society. On the contrary, the United States itself remained, even during the war, a primary source of that information. Further, there were elements within American society which painted a picture not so different from that elaborated in Lower Canada, and this view, transmitted mainly through American newspapers received in the colony, provided materials for the construction of a hostile image of the United States.

In order to grasp the shape of the American image in French-Canadian political discourse, one must understand the

circumstances within which it evolved between 1805 and 1815. This decade, so essential to the elaboration of French-Canadian political discourse, was marked by an almost constant tension between Great Britain and the American Republic. This tension had its origin in American grievances going back to the end of the Revolution, which included the question of British impressment of American sailors and American demands for the free navigation of neutral vessels. Although there were negotiations between Great Britain and the United States throughout this period, the two countries were unable to come to any agreement. From the first restriction of British imports in the spring of 1806, to the full scale embargo imposed in 1807 as a reaction to the Chesapeake-Leopard affair, the two countries seemed locked in a inevitable progression toward armed conflict. The repeal of the Embargo and the adoption of other measures of "economic coercion" only drove the wedge deeper, so that by 1811, with the discovery of British munitions in the camp of Tecumseh's warriors at Tippecanoe, a declaration of war seemed merely a formality.<sup>1</sup>

French-Canadians, living in a British colony perched on the American frontier, could not help but be affected by the course of international events. A war between the United

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1. On the diplomatic tensions between Great Britain and the United States see Bradford Perkins, Prologue to War. England and the United States 1805-1812 (Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1963).

States and Great Britain would most certainly imply the invasion of the Canadas, and Lower Canada was on alert against any such possibility for years before the actual declaration of war in 1812. The Canadian militia was mustered in 1807 when the two nations seemed on the brink of war over the Chesapeake-Leopard incident and in the five years that followed the Lower Canadian population watched nervously until the call came again in the spring of 1812. The French-Canadian political elite was certainly aware of the diplomatic manoeuvring going on between the Mother Country and the Republic to the south. Lower-Canadian papers were filled with each new diplomatic despatch, whether it emanated from London or Washington. Not surprisingly, given the constant rumours of war with the Americans, French-Canadian political writers came to think of the United States as an aggressor nation. Consequently, the presentation of that country in the period's discourse is overwhelmingly negative.

One might surmise from the foregoing that the Lower-Canadian press merely adopted the British position on these matters and echoed British condemnations of the Americans as an aggressive and vulgar people. It is significant to note, however, that throughout the period and even through the course of the War of 1812, the American press remained the privileged source of information regarding the United States. Moreover, the American press in this period did

not present a united front in defense of its government's actions in international affairs, nor, indeed, did it display such unanimity with regard to the domestic policies of Thomas Jefferson and James Madison's Republican regimes. The years of the Republican domination at Washington were marked by fierce battles waged by a highly partisan press, and foreign policy, particularly American policy toward Great Britain, was one of the most controversial issues. While Republican papers supported the position of the Jefferson and Madison administrations as essential to the maintenance of American independence, their Federalist opponents seized every opportunity to point out that Republican demagogues were leading the nation down the road to ruin through the needless alienation of a natural ally. In short the Federalist press was extremely critical of the Federal government and the society it saw emerging under Republican rule.<sup>2</sup>

The other significant fact about the Federalist press is that it was concentrated in the north, most notably in New England and New York. Federalist papers, then, were readily available to Lower-Canadian editors and presented

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2. A general treatment of the political history of the Republican regimes can be found in Marshall Smelser, The Democratic Republic 1801-1815 (New York: Harper Row, 1968). On the Federalist press see David Hackett Fischer, The Revolution of American Conservatism. The Federalist Party in the Era of Jeffersonian Democracy (New York: Harper Row, 1966).

them with a point of view to which they were largely sympathetic. The image of America which developed in French-Canadian political discourse from 1805 to 1815 owed as much to Federalist propaganda as it did to British propaganda, and it should be noted that the former was no less scathing in its analysis of American society than was the latter. Jane Errington's recent study of the image of the United States in Upper Canada before 1828 underlines the importance of the Federalist press as a source of information.<sup>3</sup> Our study indicates a very similar pattern for the lower province, at least for the period before 1815.

Specific political issues and debates within the colony in these years also contributed to the formation of a globally negative image of the United States in general and of Americans as a people in particular. One such issue, which dominates the period press, is the immigration of American settlers into the Eastern Townships. French-Canadian political leaders considered this immigration an infringement on land which should be reserved for their descendants. Much of the negative image of Americans presented in this period, then, was aimed directly or indirectly at pointing out the unsuitability of Americans as migrants to the colony.

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3. Jane Errington, The Lion, the Eagle and Upper Canada (Montreal: McGill-Queens Press, 1987), pp. 38-39.

This period was also marked by an extended battle between the Assembly, dominated by French-Canadian members of primarily rural origin, and the councils, dominated by merchants of British or American origin. John Hare has noted that the enemies of the canadien majority, most often termed "anti-canadiens" were also identified as "yankeys".<sup>4</sup> The use of this term by the parti canadien to identify its political enemies is significant to our understanding of the American image which became dominant in the movement's discourse during this period. For the image of the American, or "yankey", came to possess all of the attributes ascribed to the immoral and corrupt merchant aristocracy, as it was termed, of Lower Canada. Canadien commentators suggested that the anti-canadiens-- the Canadian "yankeys" - were in league with the "yankeys" south of the border. Their treasonable objectives were nothing less than the cession of the colony to the Americans, after which, it was presumed, they would join their American cousins in the plunder of the former colony, all at the expense of the canadien majority.

The image of America which developed between 1805 and 1815, then, was a combination of all these factors. Shades of American political opinion ideologically palatable to

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4. John Hare, La pensée socio-politique au Québec 1784-1812 (Ottawa: Presses de l'Université d'Ottawa, 1977), p. 33.

Lower-Canadian editors, merged with their concern over international tensions and their fears of internal intrigue. While the French-Canadian habitant appeared in the period's discourse as the embodiment of all that was politically virtuous, as the essential and incorruptible pillar of a stable and lasting political society, the American, both within and without the colony's frontiers, became the archetype of political man corrupted, a slave to his baser passions and completely devoid of the disinterested virtue so essential to political stability. Americans lived in a state of anarchy and their government was little more than the collective expression of the nation's degraded and avaricious appetite for material gain.

### 3.1 The Americans: A Corrupted People

The image of the American which developed in French-Canadian political discourse between 1805 and 1815 was framed in terms which highlighted his moral and political degeneration and facilitated a contrast with the still virtuous and moral nature of the Canadien. The image which emerged in le Canadien differed greatly from that which appeared in the pages of the Quebec Mercury. The Mercury, for most of the period, favoured American immigration into the province and, to that end, pointed to the virtues of would-be American settlers and the prosperity they would

bring with them. John Neilson's Quebec Gazette took a stance somewhere in between, less critical of American society and manners, while extremely critical of the Federal government's policies. This tone changed abruptly, however, as war between Britain and the United States became increasingly likely. Neilson, who had always been careful to distinguish between the Americans as a people and their government, began to match the criticisms which had appeared le Canadien.

We should note, at the outset, that much of the French-Canadian discourse dealing with Americans was marked by a distinctly defensive tone. Partially this was a result of the prevailing tensions between Great Britain and the United States in the period. More importantly, French-Canadian commentators writing mostly in le Canadien found themselves reacting to the Mercury's calls for increased American immigration and its consistently unfavourable comparisons of Canadiens to Americans. The leaders of the parti canadien then had to counter the charges that American settlers made better farmers and would increase the prosperity of the colony.

In looking at the United States, French-Canadian commentators did not try to disprove that the Americans were a prosperous and populous people. Rather, they described an American society in which prosperity was fleeting and dependant on the goodwill of the great powers. A letter to

le Canadien published in 1808, for example, while admitting the prosperity of the American republic, predicted that the current international tensions were a sign that the good times were over:

Oui ce peuple peut être riche, quand on le laisse paisiblement faire le commerce du monde entier et qu'il est protégé par les étrangers. Mais que va-t-il devenir actuellement? Rien du tout: les beaux jours de sa prospérité sont passés, et chacun sera d'accord pour le restreindre sur sa liberté de commerce; on va lui faire une juste rétribution pour les faveurs passées.<sup>5</sup>

Canadien writers did not deny either that the "yankeys" had a talent for commerce. Indeed, time after time, the natural inclination of Americans toward commerce was restated. An anonymous writer posing as a visiting American under the pseudonym "Un Yankey" explained that "Depuis le fameux acte de notre indépendance, toutes nos vues, toutes nos actions sont portés vers le commerce."<sup>6</sup> "Canadensis" in his letter to le Canadien affirmed that the American was "né dans le sein du commerce..."<sup>7</sup> The same author in an earlier letter denied the claim that the Americans had not yet developed a national character arguing that "... si le caractère d'une nation résulte des inclinations similaires du plus grand nombre d'individus qui la composent, il s'ensuit que si ces inclinations se portent plutôt vers le

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5. Le Canadien, 9 April 1808.

6. "Un Yankey" in le Canadien, 26 December, 1807.

7. "Canadensis" in le Canadien, 28 November, 1808.

commerce que du côté des armes, il sera plutôt mercantile que militaire..."<sup>8</sup>

To Canadien political writers, however, the American inclination for commerce was more a liability for that society than an asset. For, in classically civic humanist terms, they associated the domination of commercial interests with a loss of political virtue. Moreover, the American's penchant for commerce was transformed by French-Canadian writers into a lust for the material which knew no bounds. In essence, the "Yankey" lived for profit. "Le grand objet pour un Américain est toujours d'acheter et de revendre...", wrote "Canadensis".<sup>9</sup> Elsewhere the same author spoke of "l'avidité et l'esprit d'accaprement des Américains" and added that "l'Américain est prêt à tout entreprendre pour atteindre son but".<sup>10</sup> What is more, American laws reflected this thirst for profit. As "Un Yankey" explained, an American could even put the security of his family at risk in the pursuit of riches if he liked:

Les loix qui ici protègent les femmes & les enfans sont nulles parmi nous: de sorte que le mari peut engager tout ce qu'il a entre les mains sans que la femme y puisse mettre aucun obstacle, parce qu'il n'y a point de douaire. Voilà pourquoi une [sic] homme de bonne conduite, et qui n'a rien trouve toujours du crédit, tandis que, par vos loix Canadiennes, un homme qui paroitra avoir quelque chose, aura de la difficulté à trouver

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8. "Canadensis" in le Canadien, 8 November, 1807.

9. Ibid.

10. "Canadensis", le Canadien, 28 November, 1807.

quelqu'un qui lui avance, parce que la femme est toujours privilégiée pour son douaire aux autres créanciers: et c'est précisément ce que nous n'aimons point...<sup>11</sup>

As a rule, le Canadien simply spoke of the Americans as a monolithic group. In one letter "Canadensis" did recognize the cultural diversity of the American people but added that the immigrants from many nations which had settled in the United States "... forment une classe sans but fixe ou déterminé."<sup>12</sup> For his part Denis-Benjamin Viger admitted that some American settlers had come to the province to escape "... la persécution de l'anarchie contre les bonnes moeurs et l'attachement aux bons principes..."<sup>13</sup> Similarly, the seigneur William Berczy on a visit to the United States only months before the declaration of war in 1812 found that, despite his initial contact with "a damned set of low raw yankees...", there was a class of educated people in New England whose company was agreeable, although they did tend too much to partisanship in political matters.<sup>14</sup>

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11. "Un Yankey" in le Canadien, 26 December, 1807.

12. "Canadensis", in le Canadien, 8 November, 1808.

13. Viger, Considérations sur les effets qu'on produit en Canada la conservation... (Montréal: James Brown, 1809), p. 31.

14. NA, Baby Collection, MG24, L3, vol. 26, pp. 16549-16557, William Berczy to his son, 27 May, 1812 (from Burlington Vermont); pp. 16558-16563, William Berczy to his wife, June 1812 (from Middlebury Vermont).

For the most part, however, Americans were considered to be naturally avaricious and unscrupulous in business. Such characteristics made their presence in the Townships extremely dangerous in the eyes of canadien writers. It was assumed that the American settlers would not be content with occupying a plot of land and developing it, but rather, the Americans, once they gained a foothold, would seek to control the best lands throughout the province. "Un Yankey" outlined in clear terms the results of a permanent American population in the province:

... mais je suppose que les Townships soient tous peuplés d'Américains et qu'il se forme dans cette partie autant de comtés que dans le reste de la province [...] Vous auriez beau crier à la supplantation, à la subversion des loix, s'ils sont les plus forts ils ne vous écouteront point. Le sort des anciens établissemens sera alors à la merci d'un peuple jaloux et intéressé [...] c'est dans ces tems de la calamité publique que vous verrez la province inondée de capitalistes qui achèteront à vil prix les terres des habitans que le malheur ou le désordre auront ruinés.<sup>15</sup>

The presence of a group of settlers of American origin was one thing, but, as "Canadensis" warned during period of great tension which followed the Chesapeake-Leopard incident, the cession of the colony to the United States would bring about the same calamities in shorter order:

Si malheureusement le Canada passoit, dans la suite des tems, sous la domination américaine, on ne tarderoit pas à sentir l'avidité et l'esprit d'accaparement des Américains, nés dans le sein du commerce et avides de toutes espèces de puissances...

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15. "Un Yankey", in le Canadien, 16 January, 1808.

Nous serions bientôt inondés d'Américains spéculateurs qui, sous de belles promesses, soit réelles ou factices, chercheroient à envahir toutes les plus belles propriétés canadiennes...<sup>16</sup>

"Canadensis"' comments lead us to consider another common trait of the American profile drawn in period discourse: the fundamental dishonesty of Americans, particularly of those with designs on Lower Canada. Le Canadien's writers constantly put their readers on guard against the unscrupulous practices of Americans. Indeed, this is evident in the pejorative qualifications used to describe them. The Americans of the Townships, for example, were "une horde de brigands prêts à nous assaillir à la première occasion favorable."<sup>17</sup> Again "Canadensis", certainly no friend of the American settlers, wrote that they were "... poussés par une avidité insatiable... [et] ... cherchent à s'accaprer de tout."<sup>18</sup> "Observator", in turn, likened the American's ability to plunder to those of the barbarians and warned that their "irruptions seront aussi à craindre en Canada que celles que firent autrefois les Goths et les Vandales en Italie..."<sup>19</sup> Again these

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16. "Canadensis", in le Canadien, 28 November, 1807; cited by Philippe Reid, "Représentations idéologiques et société globale: le journal le Canadien (1806-1842)" (Ph. D. dissertation, Université Laval, 1979), p. 131.

17. "O. E. D." (Pierre Bédard) in le Canadien, December 24, 1808; cited by Reid, p. 135.

18. "Canadensis" in le Canadien, 8 November, 1807.

19. "Observator", in le Canadien, 12 December, 1807.

traits were considered to be, if not bred into the national character, at least so much the usage in the United States that Americans could not or would not act otherwise. Thus, "Un Yankey", in describing how "his people" would take over the province, made the point that Americans were accustomed to the use of subterfuge:

Mais, n'en soyez point surpris, si vos tenures ont changé et attiré beaucoup d'Américains dans votre pays, c'est que, comme voisins, nous aurons pris sur nous de vous donner des conseils à cet égard. Vous sentez bien que ce n'étoit pas tant l'envie que nous avons de vous favoriser, que pour nous favoriser nous-mêmes. Vous direz, peut-être, que ce n'est pas un procédé trop honnête; mais que voulez-vous, nous sommes accoutumés à de telles ruses (Tricks). Nous voulions nous établir en Canada et nous n'avions que ce moyen pour y réussir.<sup>20</sup>

In their economic life, then, Americans were motivated primarily by greed and used unscrupulous methods to attain their goals. In civic humanist discourse, the type of individual the American had become was most dangerous to political stability, since his baser passions overwhelmed his dedication to the common good. The polar opposite of the avaricious individual within the civic humanist model was the virtuous small farmer. Frugal, productive and self-sufficient, the small farmer was the ideal citizen because he did not covet his neighbour's possessions and had enough of his own to have an interest in government. Of course, the vast majority of Americans in the first decade of the

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20. "Un Yankey" in le Canadien, 26 December, 1807.

nineteenth century were small farmers, and the same was true of most American migrants to the Townships. In fact, the Mercury's campaign which aimed at introducing more American settlers into the province underlined their desirability because of their superiority in agricultural pursuits. French-Canadian politicians, however, did not see things in the same light. For, the true sign of the American people's degeneracy was their failure in the honest labour of working the land. Thus, when the Mercury trumpeted the virtues of the American farmer, le Canadien felt obliged to respond. An article the paper published in January of 1810 not only refuted the assertion that Americans were better farmers than the Canadiens, but also made the link between the agricultural character of the habitant and his physical and moral attributes:

C'est une opinion généralement reçue ici que les Américains sont beaucoup plus industrieux et bien meilleurs agriculteurs que les Canadiens. J'en doute: que l'on compare le champ d'un agriculteur Américain à celui d'un agriculteur Canadien, et l'on verra que celui du dernier est bien mieux cultivé. Qu'on ne vienne pas nous dire ici que, parce que le bled du premier est meilleur que celui de l'autre, il cultive mieux son terrain [sic]. Cette différence dans la qualité du bled est due entièrement à la différence du climat. Que l'on compare actuellement les bâtiments de l'un et de l'autre. Les maisons des cultivateurs Américains ne sont pour la plupart que de misérables cabanes, tandis que celles des cultivateurs canadiens annoncent généralement l'opulence et les commodités sociales. Si elles pèchent par quelque chose, c'est qu'elles sont trop chauffées en hiver et que celles des Américains sont beaucoup trop froides, quoiqu'exposés à un climat moins dur. Que l'on visite à présent la bourse de l'un et de l'autre,

et l'on verra laquelle des deux est la mieux remplie. Il faut avouer que sous tous les rapports, les Canadiens sont infiniment supérieurs aux Américains; et c'est ce peuple dont on nous cesse de vanter l'industrie et que l'on voudroit voir habiter nos terres.

Quant aux Moeurs, les Canadiens en ont beaucoup plus que nos voisins. Le libertinage est très rare ici parmi les jeunes gens de la campagne; là il est devenu une habitude: il n'y a pas de frein à cet égard. Ici on se prête souvent de l'argent sur simple parole. Il y a des personnes qui se trouvent offensés de ce qu'on leur offre un écrit. Ainsi on peut donc avoir de la probité, sans savoir ni lire ni écrire...

...D'après ces considérations succinctes, il est impossible de croire que les Canadiens soient aussi immoraux et aussi méprisables que nous les représentent les écrivains du Mercure [sic]; au contraire on doit conclure qu'ils sont laborieux, économes, sobres, courageux et propres à endurer les fatigues les plus dures.<sup>21</sup>

This passage illustrates the contrast that was being drawn in French-Canadian political discourse between the ideal citizen, the Lower-Canadian habitant, and the undesirable alien, in this case the American settler. Moreover, the passage is important because it links the desirable qualities in that citizen to the successful pursuit of agriculture. As the final paragraph itself indicates, this was a piece of political rhetoric deployed in a campaign waged against American immigration into the province. The text also demonstrates a considerable amount of chauvinism and a relative ignorance of the condition of the American farmer. It is nonetheless important because it makes a

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21. Le Canadien, 20 January, 1810, the emphasis is the author's.

clear link between the agricultural basis of French-Canadian society and the virtue and morality of the habitant. Moreover, it points to the fact that the threat to that society came not only from the appetite of Americans for Lower-Canadian lands, but also through the introduction of a degenerated people into the colony. Corruption, in the civic humanist world, was contagious.

We have already seen in our discussion of civic humanist elements in French-Canadian discourse, that political writers in this period considered their society to be virtuous. One threat to that virtuous society came in the nature of the machinations of the commercial class within the colony itself. Another came from the efforts of that same class to introduce American settlers into the colony. There was little doubt that the presence of this group would have a negative effect on the French-Canadian population. As "Canadensis" warned:

La population actuelle n'a point du tout dégénéré & l'ancienne valeur dont les Canadiens ont été autrefois si renommés, bout [sic] encore dans leurs veines. Le grand mal pour le pays est d'y avoir donné entrée à une certaine classe d'Américains encore à demi sauvages. Car, quels sont les defricheurs des Townships qui avoisinent les Etats-Unis. Ce sont des gens, pour la plupart, sans moeurs, vagabonds & ne voulant souffrir aucune domination sociale...

...comment vivre en paix avec des gens, qui se livrent déjà à la fougue de toutes les passions & sans moyens de les contenir, commettent déjà des

déprédations sur les plus foibles ou les moins méfiants parmi eux.<sup>22</sup>

The Americans were a people without virtue or morality and their manners could not but corrupt the honest yet ignorant canadien population. The most striking statement of this kind came from the pen of Pierre Bédard himself, writing over the pseudonym "O. E. D.". The passage which follows is remarkable, not only for its strident attack on the character of the Americans as a people, but also because of its distinctly anti-democratic tone. Bédard condemns Americans not only for their lack of manners and religious morality, but also for their lack of deference to their social superiors. Clearly, he also fears that these bad habits will be communicated to the otherwise docile habitants:

...Mais ce qu'il y a de plus abominable c'est qu'une bonne moitié de ces hommes [the American settlers], qui tous les jours viennent chercher un asile dans notre Province, pour s'échapper aux punitions que leur attirent leurs crimes, sont infectés du poison de l'infidélité, (une autre bénédiction, la fille de l'indépendance) et n'ont pas honte à la ruine de la Religion et de la Morale, d'aller de famille en famille, de taverne en taverne prêcher, avec le front de Satan, à un peuple ignorant, la Bible d'Allen et l'Age de raison de Paine. -- Le Gouvernement a sagement commencé à établir des Ministres dans les villes, et il est à désirer que le nombre en soit augmenté annuellement, sans considérer (comme la justice commune l'ordonne) s'ils sont épiscopaux ou presbitériens [sic], pourvu qu'ils ne soient pas citoyens des Etats-Unis, infectés du poison de l'égalité; car toutes les fois que cette maladie domine, le peuple au lieu de devenir poli et

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22. "Canadensis", in le Canadien, 8 November, 1807.

d'acquérir des manières douces, devient brut tout ensemble avec le Ministre et le Monsieur que les circonstances peuvent forcer à s'établir avec lui, et qui pour l'amour de la paix sont obligés d'adopter ses manières, et de devenir sauvages pour vivre en sûreté parmi de tels Hottentots, l'habit des premiers, ni l'éducation supérieure des derniers ne pouvant les mettre à l'abri du fouet. Les Canadiens sont une preuve frappante de mon argument. Il n'y a pas au monde de peuple si ignorant qu'eux, mais aussi comme l'esprit de liberté et d'égalité n'a pas trouvé de place encore chez eux, ils continuent d'être jusqu'à ce jour un peuple poli et civil au milieu de l'ignorance...--Pour vous donner une idée passable de l'état de la société dans ces nouveaux Townships, imaginez-vous, Mr Cary, une légion de brutes appelées Athées, polissons, ivrognes, rustres, avocats-errans, aventuriers &c. &c. &c. ayant par coutume, par réglemens et par impudence Yankée le droit d'entrer, quand il leur plaît, chez tous les Messieurs et tous les bons et honnêtes habitans, vomissant des blasphèmes mettant tout en désordre et frappant à droite et à gauche.<sup>23</sup>

Bédard's tirade represents the most striking example of a string of articles in the pages of le Canadien which linked offensive American manners to a decline in their religious morality. These writers were particularly concerned at the presence of itinerant American preachers in the Townships. On the one hand, and Bédard's comments make this clear, American preachers were no better than the degenerate population they sprang from. More importantly, these individuals were considered a political danger, and certain correspondents to the paper believed that American interests, if not the American government itself, had

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23. "O. E. D." (Pierre Bédard), in le Canadien, 17 December, 1808.

sponsored their activities. Thus "O." commented in October of 1808 of an American preacher named Samson: "...Il y a lieu de croire que cette personne est payée pour cette oeuvre par une société établie dans les Etats-Unis."<sup>24</sup> Another article published a month later was even clearer on the moral and political danger the presence of American missionaries in the province represented:

...il est étrange qu'on permette à des Républicains d'envoyer parmi nous la lie de leur peuple, pour prêcher l'Évangile aux sujets de Sa Majesté. même [sic] empoisonner le pain de vie et les sources du bonheur politique. Il est encore étrange que des imposteurs si ignorans ayent même l'ombre de support des gens dont le devoir est d'épier leur conduite. N us exhorterions cette société de missionnaires de ne plus nous infecter de leur race corrompue...<sup>25</sup>

The Americans then were a corrupt people, tainted through their love of money, and this was true even of American missionaries. One also finds in these articles the implication that the Americans had allies in the province, presumably the merchants, who fostered and promoted their intrigues.

If we view period discourse in terms of the civic humanist paradigm, it is clear that this degeneration must have severe consequences for the stability of political life. These writers believed that the domination of man's baser passions destroyed his virtue and political

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24. "O." in le Canadien, 15 October, 1808.

25. Le Canadien, 12 November 1808.

independence and that as this corruption reached into the political system, the degeneration became continual and, presumably, irreversible. Commentators such as Denis-Benjamin Viger certainly believed this had already occurred in the United States and the danger posed by the American presence in Lower Canada would be that it would recur in the colony. This was one argument Viger used against those who urged the anglicization of the Canadiens:

...[la langue anglaise] formera un point de réunion de plus avec nos voisins, surtout avec ceux des basses classes, qui sont plus immoraux par comparaison avec ceux du même rang en ce pays, dont les moeurs sont infiniment meilleures. C'est un moyen pour communiquer aux Canadiens cet esprit de vertige et d'indépendance dans lequel les Américains sont nourris dès leur plus tendre enfance. Ce sentiment tient aux passions, c'est celui vers laquelle la nature humaine penche le plus aisément, c'est celui aussi que les hommes sont toujours disposés à accueillir dans un changement de moeurs. L'expérience de toutes les révolutions que les nations ont éprouvées prouve invinciblement cette proposition dont on pourrait faire un axiome politique et moral.<sup>26</sup>

Here Viger expresses the theoretical implications of the image which French-Canadian writers were drawing of the American in their political discourse. Americans, in their economic life, their social manners, and even their religious life were a corrupted people. The results of that corruption are political: the American, as a political being, had lost his virtue and therefore American political society must be unstable.

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26. Viger, Considérations..., p. 42.

### 3.2 American Politics: The Corrupted Republic

While French-Canadian political writers produced a good deal of commentary dealing with American manners, they had far less to say when it came to American political institutions and the practice of politics in the United States. In part, this reflects the dominant concern of the period press with domestic political issues, European affairs, and, where the United States was involved, international tensions. Moreover, given the political climate in the colony, American institutions were a poor choice for comparison's sake, and indeed favourable comment on the state of American politics and political institutions might be seen as akin to treason. After all, we should keep in mind that this period's most pervasive feature is the constant threat of war with the Republic to the south, a threat which, no doubt, silenced any sympathy there might have been for the republican form of government.

We should guard, however, against assuming that silence on American affairs meant ignorance on the part of Lower-Canadian editors. On the contrary, although commentary on American political affairs was relatively rare, reports of political events and American political documents gleaned from the American press were frequently reproduced in almost all Lower-Canadian papers. The most common American

political document to appear in the press of those years was the President's annual address to Congress in December of each year, which usually appeared in Lower-Canadian papers two to three weeks after it was delivered. Of the newspapers surveyed, Neilson's Quebec Gazette was the most consistent in reproducing these messages, and continued to do so through the War of 1812.<sup>27</sup> Only in rare circumstances, however, did Neilson comment on the content of the messages.<sup>28</sup>

The Quebec Gazette also published a number of other documents and state papers issued by the Republican administrations at Washington. Financial statements prepared by the American treasury were occasionally reproduced and, at least once, used by Neilson to claim that the United States could not afford a war with Great

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27. See for example the Quebec Gazette, 19 November, 1807; 1 December, 1808; 14 December, 1809; 20 December, 1810; 26 November, 1812; 28 December, 1813.

28. One rare case was Madison's message of 1810 which dealt with American claims to Florida. On those claims Neilson commented: "It is expediency; and it would answer equally well for adding any part of the British colonies to the United States". See the Quebec Gazette, 20 December, 1810.

Britain.<sup>29</sup> Of course, the most common type of document after these were despatches and official proclamations relating to the state of relations between the United States and Great Britain. The Chesapeake-Leopard incident and the President's messages to Congress, culminating in the Embargo Act of December 1807, received considerable press in the colony. The Gazette for its part published an account of the incident and the text of Jefferson's first proclamation on the matter three weeks after it occurred.<sup>30</sup> There followed a long editorial on the incident a week later published along with the French text of the despatch and proclamation.<sup>31</sup> Subsequent declarations of the American government were republished in the fall of 1807, with the text and news of the Embargo Act appearing three weeks after it came into effect, followed in April of 1808 by the publication of the correspondence exchanged between the American and British governments.<sup>32</sup>

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29. See the Quebec Gazette, 10 January, 1805; 19 January 1809; 19 December 1811; and 14 January, 1813. These reports were usually a statement of finances for the previous year. In 1809 Neilson deduced from the American Secretary of the Treasury's report for 1808 that the United States could not afford a war with Great Britain without resorting to direct taxation of its citizens. See the Quebec Gazette, 19 January, 1809.

30. Quebec Gazette, 16 July, 1807.

31. See the Quebec Gazette, 23 July, 1807.

32. See Jefferson's message to Congress of October 27 published in the Quebec Gazette, 19 December, 1807 (translated into French in the December 26, 1807 issue); the text of the Embargo Act appears in the January 28, 1808

The Chesapeake-Leopard affair also evoked a response from le Canadien. The newspaper reported the incident two days after the Gazette, adding a commentary that war was not likely given the importance of commercial interests in the American government:

...Quelque soit la disposition actuelle des Américains envers l'Angleterre, on ne doit néanmoins en augurer rien de bien sinistre. Le parti démocratique voudra sûrement la guerre, mais les négocians qui auroient tout à perdre dans un évènement semblable, feront sans doute tous leurs efforts pour empêcher toute mesure hostile contre nous.<sup>33</sup>

Although this represented the sum total of the newspaper's direct comment on the incident, the anti-American tone of its articles became ever shriller in the late summer and fall of 1807, and warnings of the dire consequences of an American invasion were multiplied.<sup>34</sup>

The Embargo Act was not a popular measure throughout the Union. By 1809 the Republican administration was forced to pass the Enforcement Act authorizing the use of federal troops in enforcing the law. Resistance to and evasion of

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issue, which also contains extracts from Jefferson's Notes on Virginia arguing in favour of free trade, an attempt by Neilson to show that the President was in contradiction with himself; diplomatic correspondence exchanged between January and March 1808 appears in the April 28, 1808 issue of the paper.

33. Le Canadien, 18 July, 1807; the newspaper also reproduced Jefferson's October message in its 21 December issue.

34. This aspect of the American image is discussed at length below.

the Embargo was concentrated in the New England states. Indeed, the region had the most to lose from the measure, since its prosperity was closely tied to trade with Great Britain and its North American possessions. In political terms, opposition to the Embargo was translated into an opportunity for the renewal of waning Federalist fortunes. Throughout New England the Federalist press attacked the administration without mercy. The application of the Embargo also alienated certain groups within the Republican party, most notably the Quids, led by John Randolph, who came also to oppose the nomination of James Madison to succeed Jefferson in the White House.<sup>35</sup>

These acrimonious political and regional confrontations within the American body politic were not lost on Lower-Canadian editors. Indeed, the attacks of the Federalist press on first the Jefferson, then the Madison, administrations made good copy for the colony's papers. Neilson's Gazette, which up to 1807 had often tried to present both sides of political issues in the United States, now found the views of pro-British Federalist editors more to its liking.<sup>36</sup> Thus Federalist texts which stressed the

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35. See Spivak Burton, Jefferson's English Crisis (Charlottesville: University of Virginia Press, 1979).

36. Of course with the exception of the National Intelligencer, most of the Gazette's information came from Federalist papers, even for the period before 1807. Randolph, too, was a favourite of Neilson's from the moment he expressed his opposition to Republican foreign policy. See for example his speech arguing against the conquest of

infringement on civil liberties occasioned by the Embargo found a place in the Gazette's columns as did Randolph's speech of December 1808 attacking the application of the measure.<sup>37</sup> As the Embargo grew intolerable, New England legislatures passed Resolutions condemning the measure which were reproduced in the Gazette, while the Tory Courrier de Québec noted that closer to home the inhabitants of Burlington Vermont had petitioned against the closing off of trade with Lower Canada.<sup>38</sup>

These events, as seen in Lower Canada through the eyes of Federalist editors, prompted reactions which varied from the belief that the Republican administration would be forced out of office, to that which held that the Union was on the brink of destruction through armed insurrection. The former view was more common. Neilson, while noting the excited tone of protests against the Enforcement Act in Boston, simply added that "... if there be anything like unanimity amongst the people of the Northern States, the

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Canada because of the difficulty of integrating a French and Catholic population, reprinted in the Quebec Gazette, 17 April, 1806.

37. See the article from the Luzerne Federalist reprinted in the Quebec Gazette, 4 August, 1808; the text of Randolph's speech appears in the 5 January, 1809 issue of the same paper.

38. The Quebec Gazette of 2 March, 1809 reproduces the resolutions of the legislatures of Connecticut (January 28), New Hampshire (January 26), Vermont (February 9) and Massachusetts (February 15); Courrier de Québec, 4 May, 1808.

ruly [sic] party in Congress, which is primarily made up of Southern representatives, must yield..."<sup>39</sup> Similarly, le Canadien noted with glee that state elections in Rhode Island, New Hampshire and Vermont had gone against the administration party and added caustically: "...Le résultat de ces élections fait honneur au caractère Américain pour la constance dans les souffrances. Quelques personnes d'ici commencent à espérer que l'embargo continuera une autre année."<sup>40</sup> The Courrier de Québec, however, predicted that the crisis would escalate into something more serious: "Tout semble annoncer une crise terrible dans les Etats; il est très probable qu'une guerre civile n'est pas très éloignée, et que le moment de leurs élections en sera le signal."<sup>41</sup>

Lower-Canadian newspaper opinion then, when it considered American politics at all, dwelt on the sectional tensions which existed within the Union. Reports from the Federalist press in New England, most often reprinted in Neilson's Gazette, reinforced the view that the United States was undergoing an internal political crisis. Other aspects of the Federalist interpretation of American politics also surfaced in Lower-Canadian papers. One traditional aspect of Federalist discourse was its equation

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39. Quebec Gazette, 2 February, 1809.

40. Le Canadien, 24 September, 1808.

41. Courrier de Québec, 23 April, 1808.

of government under the Republicans as mob rule, or to use their term "mobocracy". In this view Republican administrators became dangerous demagogues, playing on the passions of the people in the hope of furthering their own factious interests. David Hackett Fischer, in his study of Federalism in the Republican period, stresses the fact that Federalists learned to draw a distinction in their rhetoric between the "mob" and the "people". This allowed them to pose as democrats, while continuing to condemn the demagogic principles of their opponents.<sup>42</sup>

The theme of the Republican as demagogue and that of mob rule also surfaced in the French-Canadian press. What French-Canadian editors did not do, however, was draw the distinction between the "mob" and the "people". As we have already seen the description of Americans as a people was very negative, and assuming, as many Lower-Canadian writers did, that the American people were slaves to their baser passions, it followed quite naturally that the factious demagogues must eventually destroy the Republic. One of the few direct commentaries on the American Constitution and the system of government it inaugurated, which appeared in le Canadien, made the point that the weakness of that government was precisely its susceptibility to the activities of intriguing politicians. The passage,

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42. David Hackett Fischer, The Revolution in American Conservatism (New York: Harper & Row, 1965), pp. 157-159.

published in the spring of 1808, was included in an article which asked the question "Qu'a-t-on a craindre des Etats-Unis d'Amérique?". In his answer to this question the author dwelt on the weakness of the American Constitution:

...qu'a-t-on a craindre des Etats-Unis d'Amérique?  
Rien du tout: il ne faut qu'un ou deux brigands pour renverser cette Constitution enfantée, dit-on, par la sagesse. Il n'y a pas dans le monde un gouvernement plus faible et plus facile à renverser. Il y a dans ce gouvernement une multiplication de rouages qui ne peuvent jamais mouvoir en unisson et sans courir risque de se briser; et c'est ce gouvernement que nous devons craindre!

Il ne faut pas être grand politique pour prévoir que cette Constitution, ce chef d'oeuvre de la sagesse humaine, tire à sa fin, et qu'avant six mois cette nation si sage et si éclairée va devenir la proie soit de la France ou de l'Angleterre.

If the Constitution was considered ineffective because of an apparent lack of clear authority in the government it instituted, the real weakness of American political life was exposed a few paragraphs later when the author dealt with the corrupt nature of the American people, and the even more corrupt nature of their political leaders:

Quant à sa population qui est actuellement, on peut dire nombreuse, c'est un cahos [sic] qu'aucun de leurs politiques ne pourra débrouiller de sitôt. En effet, que peut-on faire d'une multitude aveugle, lorsque chacun se croit en droit de commander, ou lorsque ses chefs sont à la discrétion du plus haut enchérisseur.<sup>43</sup>

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43. "Lettre d'un M. à un ami" in le Canadien, 9 April, 1808.

The only other text in a French-Canadian paper to deal directly with the American constitution appeared during the War of 1812 in the pages of le Spectateur. In this case a correspondent warned that one of the disadvantages of living under the federal form of government inaugurated by the Constitution was having to pay taxes to both levels of government.<sup>44</sup>

The importance of corruption and degeneration as themes in the civic humanist paradigm has already been established for Lower-Canadian political discourse. In terms of domestic politics this corruption was associated with the activities of English merchants within the colony. What is more, it was assumed that those merchants furthered their intrigues through some sort of affiliation with factions in the United States. Le Canadien, for example, assumed that the "Anti-Canadiens" were supplying American editors with information about the colony.<sup>45</sup> Another article explained that there existed "un parti Anti-canadien dans cette province; que ce parti prenoit aussi le nom de Yankey, suivant qu'il avoit plus ou moins de rapport avec les Yankeys des Etats-Unis."<sup>46</sup> This brings up another aspect of

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44. "Un Canadien" in le Spectateur, 1 July, 1813.

45. "Les informations que les Editeurs de ces papiers [American newspapers] reçoivent viennent des Anti-Canadiens, qui ont intérêt à nous dénigrer..." Le Canadien, 31 October, 1807.

46. Le Canadien, 13 February, 1808.

the civic humanist model, one very relevant to American discourse in the period, the idea that corruption and faction could also be fostered by an outside power. Thus, one of the most prominent features of American political discourse between 1790 and 1815 was the Federalist accusation that Republicans were in league with France, and the Republican counter-charge that Federalists were the puppets of the British.<sup>47</sup>

The idea that the Republican regime in Washington was somehow in league with France in the years preceding the war of 1812 was certainly a dominant theme in Federalist rhetoric.<sup>48</sup> It was also a widespread belief in Lower Canada, and one which cut across party lines. The secret French alliance was used by the editors of the Québec Mercury, for example, in order to associate revolutionary designs with a "French faction". The author could then make the argument that the same faction existed in Lower Canada and had operated, with the support of the French government, through the recently shut down newspaper, le Canadien:

It has created just cause of alarm in the neighbouring States, that a restless French faction has been nourished in the heart of their country who were, without ceasing, urging them up to a war with G. Britain; and if a French faction

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47. On this theme see John R. Howe, "Republican Thought and the Political Violence of the 1790's", American Quarterly, 19 (1967), pp. 147-165; Lance Banning, The Jeffersonian Persuasion (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1978); and Fischer, The Revolution Of American Conservatism.

48. Fischer, p. 160.

exists here do not all these circumstances encourage a belief that French agents, paid by French money, are dispersed among us, who, by the arts of insidious falsehood and disorganization, endeavour to overthrow that government which France cannot subdue by arms?<sup>49</sup>

The conservative Courrier de Québec, for its part, had no problem in associating the American administration with the Napoleonic regime in France:

Thomas Jefferson, Président des Etats-Unis et James Madison, Secrétaire, ont, chacun d'eux, accepté secrètement le titre de membre de la légion d'honneur de Bonaparte. Comment doit-on entendre la 9ème section du 1er article de la Constitution américaine? "Aucune personne ayant un office de profit ou charge sous eux [les Etats-Unis] ne pourra sans le consentement du Congrès accepter aucun présent, émolument, ou titre de quelque manière que se soit, d'aucun Roi, prince ou état étranger."<sup>50</sup>

Obviously the same line of argument could not be used by members of the parti canadien. The association of France with America was made more implicitly by the party's writers, as two countries whose peoples had degenerated politically, thus the expression applied to Americans of "sans-culottes du Nouveau Monde".<sup>51</sup> Still there were occasionally references to the American government which likened it to that of France under Bonaparte. Denis-

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49. Quebec Mercury, 19 March, 1810.

50. Courrier de Québec, 12 October, 1808.

51. Le Canadien, 24 December, 1808; cited by S. F. Wise, "Colonial Attitudes from the Era of the War of 1812 to the Rebellions of 1837" in S. F. Wise and R. C. Brown eds., Canada Views the United States (Seattle: University of Washington Press, 1967), p. 26.

Benjamin Viger, for example, referred in 1809 to the American president as "l'empereur de l'Amérique du Nord."<sup>52</sup> The parti canadien's strategy was rather to argue that the Americans were as bad as the French, then associate their political enemies in the colony with the Americans, equating "Anti-Canadien" with "yankey".

There were, of course, other examples of the corrupt and precarious nature of American politics which French-Canadian political discourse could draw on. To Americans one of the most traumatic events of the period was the Burr conspiracy. The conspiracy involved the former vice-president of the United States and the American governor of the Louisiana territory united, with Spanish support, in a plot to detach the western portion of the United States through the force of arms. The conspiracy itself was little more than a comedy of errors, but it led to Burr's spectacular trial for treason in 1807 and his eventual acquittal. In Lower Canada, the Quebec Gazette in November of 1806 reported the Burr Conspiracy and announced that a portion of the United States west of the Alleghanies had separated from the Union.<sup>53</sup> The event did not attract a great deal of attention in the French-Canadian press. However, a poem published by le Canadien in January of 1808

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52. Viger, Considérations..., p. 37.

53. Quebec Gazette, 27 November, 1806.

shows that Burr had become somewhat of a symbol of the corrupt and intriguing American politician.<sup>54</sup> No doubt the allusion to "un ou deux brigands" in the passage cited above in reference to the Constitution owes something to the example of the Burr Conspiracy.

The image of American politics and political institutions in French-Canadian political discourse for this period grew essentially out of the characterization of Americans as a degenerate and corrupt people. In describing American political life Lower-Canadian papers, particularly the Québec Gazette, drew heavily on their Federalist counterparts in New England. In turn French-Canadian commentators assimilated elements of Federalist discourse which were compatible with their political rhetoric, as well

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54. The poem deals with the attempts of the Anti-Canadiens to instruct the Canadiens in "true English political principles". The reference to Burr occurs in the fourth verse:

En vrais Anglois,  
 Instruisez-les,  
 Peuple fidèle,  
 Dans nos leçons  
 Nous vous proposons  
 Pour modèle;  
 Et qui se révoltera  
 Aaron Burr le punira  
 Car jamais cet homme là  
 Ne fit grâce au rebelle...

See le Canadien, 10 January, 1807; cited by Monique Vachon et Maurice Carrier, Chansons politiques du Québec 1765-1833, tome 1 (Ottawa: Léméac, 1977), p. 118.

as their goal of discrediting the United States and its people.

### 3.3 The American Rebels and the Loyal Canadiens

Given the tense situation in Lower Canada in the years under study here, the constant threat of war with the United States and the domestic concerns of French-Canadian politicians interested in discrediting the Americans as a people, one should not expect to find favourable references to the American Revolution in public political discourse. Indeed, references to the period of the Revolution are dominated by the political necessity of underlining the loyalty of the Canadiens. To that end French-Canadian political writers developed a myth of the loyal Canadien defending the colony against the American rebels in 1775. In the pages of le Canadien as in Viger's Considérations..., for example, references to the revolutionary period completely ignored French-Canadian sympathy for the Americans in 1775, arguing that it was the French and Catholic population of the province which had preserved the colony for the crown. Once again French-Canadian political writers contrasted their loyal role to that of their political enemies, the "anti-canadiens", who, implicitly at least, were described as having been in league with the American invaders.

The extent to which any favourable reference to the American Revolution was proscribed can be gleaned from an article on George Washington reproduced in the Québec Gazette. The piece, evidently taken from an American paper, contains a passage from a letter written by Washington to a friend, where the revolutionary leader expresses the regret he felt at the thought of rebelling against his king. The excerpt's intention is clearly to show Washington's inherent morality and strength of character. Neilson recognizes this in his preface to the document, but nevertheless feels obliged to precede it by the following caveat: "Quelques disposés que nous soyons à condamner l'exemple du Général, en lisant cet extrait, nous devons approuver la droiture générale de ses intentions."<sup>55</sup> This at a time when Washington's international reputation, even in Great Britain, was beyond reproach, provides an indication of just how cautious Lower-Canadian editors felt they had to be.

There were no such references to American revolutionary figures in le Canadien. Writing at a time of mounting tensions between Great Britain and the United States, French-Canadian authors preferred to ignore the Revolution or, when they did mention it, condemn the motivation of the Americans. This attitude is evident even at the level of the terms used to characterize the American people.

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55. Quebec Gazette, 21 February, 1805.

"Yankey", the most popular of these pejorative epithets, is, of course, a French-Canadian version of "Yankee", which originally had been a term of derision used by British soldiers to describe American Patriots during the Revolution.<sup>56</sup> John Hare, in his analysis of French-Canadian political language from 1784 to 1812 discovered a number of other terms used by political writers to characterize Americans which once again indicate a condemnation of American motives in the Revolution. Among these we find "enfants ingrats" and "sujets rebelles".<sup>57</sup>

Indeed, the Revolution itself was an example of the degeneration of the Americans as a people, and in these pejorative terms we find a hint that the actions of the American colonists in 1775-1776 were somehow criminal and

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56. This term first appeared in the early eighteenth century and was used to denote New Englanders. It became popularized, however, through its use in the song "Yankee Doodle" which British soldiers used to mock American patriots during the Revolution. See Thomas H. Johnson, ed., The Oxford Companion to American History (New York: Oxford University Press, 1966), p. 883.

57. Hare, pp. 32-33. Hare goes on to cite a reference from le Canadien to the Americans as "peuple démocrate" (p.33). It is important to note, however, that the adjective démocrate is not considered positive in this instance. Rather, and this is consistent with the general tendency in period texts, the label is pejorative as a more complete citation makes clear:

O toi peuple Democrat [sic],  
Américain Rebelle!  
Vois! le crime de tes états  
Animer notre zèle...

The reference is from le Canadien, 26 December, 1807.

unjustified. In keeping with the theme that Americans were motivated in all things by greed, Viger, in his Considérations..., spoke of the Americans "qui déchiroient alors [in 1776] le flanc de leur mère pour le prix de ses bienfaits..."<sup>58</sup> There is one example in the period's discourse, however, which, in a very subtle way, admitted that some legitimate complaints lay behind the actions of the American Patriots. Louis Plamondon, in a speech to the Société littéraire de Québec in 1809, implied that the conduct of British ministers at the time of the Revolution was "trop opiniâtre". What is more, Plamondon admits that political abuses existed in colonial America while maintaining that such abuses were corrected in Lower Canada by the Constitution of 1791. Had the Americans had a similar constitution they never would have rebelled:

...n'oublions pas que si l'Amérique, à qui sa liberté devient déjà à charge, eût joui du bonheur dont nous jouissons; que si la Constitution de l'Amérique eût été celle sous laquelle nous vivons, elle n'aurait jamais essayé <sup>59</sup>[sic] d'obtenir une meilleure condition...

It is important to note, however, that Plamondon's comments were part of a larger tribute to the British crown which was

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58. Viger, Considérations..., p. 14.

59. See the report of Plamondon's speech in Séance de la société littéraire de Québec, tenue samedi, le 3 juin 1809 (Québec: J. Neilson, 1809).

marked by a condemnation of both the American and French revolutions.<sup>60</sup>

If discussion of the political causes of the Revolution remained muted in the period, French-Canadian political writers made no bones about what side their people had taken in 1775-1776. In the years preceding the War of 1812, the myth of French-Canadian resistance to the invasion of the American revolutionaries in 1775 was aggressively developed. Obviously the purpose of this myth in the period's political discourse was to underline the loyalty of the Canadiens at a time of renewed tensions between the United States and Great Britain. Thus references to 1775 were almost always coupled with an affirmation of the will to bear arms again in defense of the colony against the Americans. "Un Canadien Sujet Britannique", complaining of the suspicious attitude of Royal officials toward the French-Canadian population, reminded his readers of 1775: "Quelle étoit notre conduite en 1775? Celle de loyaux sujets combattans pour leur Roi et leur pays jusqu'à la dernière goutte de leur sang..."<sup>61</sup> Indeed, le Canadien maintained that Canadien volunteers had

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60. Plamondon's cautions in discussing the Revolution has led historians to disagree over whether he actually criticized the British government; see Claude Galarneau, La France devant l'opinion canadienne (1760-1815) (Québec: Presses de l'Université Laval, 1970) p. 288-289.

61. Le Canadien, 22 August, 1807; cited by Reid, p. 119.

been the only ones to come to the aid of British regulars in 1775:

Les Canadiens sont accoutumés à se battre à côté des troupes Britanniques. Il n'y avait que des Canadiens avec les troupes Britanniques pour défendre le fort St. Jean en 1775. On vit sur les frontières à la rencontre de l'ennemi, les Canadiens de la ville de Montréal et des paroisses du district qui s'y rendirent volontairement....<sup>62</sup>

Even death notices noted the role of their subjects during the American invasion, such as that for Juchereau Duchesnay, which included the following passage: "...En 1775 après un siège dangereux il fut fait prisonnier avec nombre de ses compatriotes, qui comme lui avoient marché volontairement à la défense de la Province contre l'invasion des Rebels."<sup>63</sup>

French-Canadians had also participated in the defense of Québec. In this case, as Denis-Benjamin Viger explained:

...Ce fut dans ce collège de Québec, dans cette jeunesse respectable, qu'on accuse de recevoir une éducation Française, qu'on trouva des sujets qui, mettant en pratique les leçons de leurs respectables précepteurs, contribuèrent avec la garnison et les citoyens de Québec, en laissant leurs classes pour faire le service militaire dans la saison la plus rigoureuse...<sup>64</sup>

The other aspect of the myth of 1775 which emerges clearly from period discourse is the theme that while loyal French-Canadians rushed to the defence of the province, certain English subjects refused to fight and some even

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62. Le Canadien, 20 December, 1806.

63. Ibid.

64. Viger, Considérations..., p. 14-15.

encouraged the Americans. This element of the image was clearly designed to establish the lineage of the "anti-canadien" or "yankey" faction. A correspondent to le Canadien, while praising the loyalty of his people, openly accused some English subjects of cowardice in 1775: "...ceux qui parlent la langue angloise... se cachoient et fuyoient les ennemis..."<sup>65</sup> Similarly, "Canadensis" reminded the "anti-canadiens" that French-Canadians "... vous ont défendu malgré vous en 1775..."<sup>66</sup> The same theme reappeared in 1807 when the paper affirmed "...En 1775 ils [les Canadiens] ont conservé, malgré les Anti-Canadiens, le pays à Sa Majesté..."<sup>67</sup> The emphasis on the role of the "anti-canadiens" also formed one of the items in a enumeration of their intrigues in the province which was on the presses of le Canadien when the paper was seized in 1810.<sup>68</sup>

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65. "Un Sujet Canadien Britannique" in le Canadien, 22 August, 1808.

66. "Canadensis" in le Canadien, 6 December, 1806; cited by Reid, p. 83; also cited by Wallot, "La Querelle des Prisons (1805-1807)", RHAF, 14 (1960-1961), p. 564.

67. Le Canadien, 31 October, 1807.

68. The sixth item in the enumeration reads: "6e 1775-1176--Item. Efforts faits pour corrompre les Canadiens et les livrer aux Bostonnais." The transcript of this last issue appears in the minutes of the Executive Council. See NA, RG1 E1, vol. 33 (microfilm reel C-92), Lower Canada, Executive Council, Minutes, 19 March, 1810.

### 3.4 The American Threat

It should be clear from the foregoing that the United States and the Americans as a people were considered a threat by French-Canadian political writers. The danger took various forms. Internally, Americans already in the province might compete aggressively for land and in this competition defraud the Canadiens of their birthright. Additionally, the very presence of a corrupt people within Lower-Canadian society was a threat to political and religious morality. These internal dangers were made all the more urgent by the suspicion that the Americans had allies in the province in the form of the "anti-canadiens", the Lower-Canadian "Yankeys".

In addition to all that there was the very real threat posed to French-Canadian society by the United States as a potential aggressor power. The Republic to the south, presumably dominated by power hungry factions made up of unscrupulous and greedy politicians, seemed bent on expansion and conquest. Indeed, French-Canadian political writers made this the central theme in their discussion of the Americans as neighbours and fully developed the idea that the United States as a political and military power coveted the British North American colonies. The idea that Americans were bent on expansion in turn was supported by developments within the United States itself. For not only

was this a corollary of the increasingly hostile attitude of the Republican administration toward Great Britain, but, after 1808, a faction of the Republican party dominated by western interests and identified as the "War Hawks" openly called for aggressive American expansion and specifically pointed to British North America as a highly prized area.<sup>69</sup>

In 1807 the spectre of war with the Americans led some Canadiens to ponder the motivations of an American conquest. A poem published in December of that year left no doubt that the Americans sought the province for its good lands and deduced that this must say something about the Americans as a people:

Quel est le caractère  
 Pour vouloir ravir de nous  
 Quelques morceaux de terre?  
 Oui! je suis soldat moi &c. &c.<sup>70</sup>

Of course, as we have seen, French-Canadian political writers spilled a good deal of ink in describing precisely what kind of character the Americans had, and these characteristics were never more acutely drawn than when the possible conquest of the province was being discussed. The fate of the Canadiens in the case of American control over the province was most often described as "esclavage". An article discussing the implications of American domination in 1807 concluded that "...les Américains, en prenant le

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69. Perkins, Prologue to War, chapter VIII.

70. Le Canadien, 26 December, 1807.

Canada, envahiroient la plupart des propriétés Canadiennes, & reduiroient par là les Canadiens à la triste condition d'esclaves."<sup>71</sup> The same theme reappeared two years later when an author in the same paper affirmed that: "...Il n'y a pas de doute que la domination Américaine ne serait qu'un état d'esclavage le plus affreux. Le Canada serait bientôt inondé de Yankés qui ruinaient en peu de temps les propriétaires Canadiens."<sup>72</sup> "D.P.", writing in the immediate aftermath of the Chesapeake-Leopard incident, painted an even bleaker picture of life under the Stars and Stripes:

Que deviendrons-nous, je vous demande, si nous passions de ce gouvernement à celui d'Amérique? C'est à vous, Canadiens, [...] que s'adresse ceci, vous deviendrez, si un tel malheur arrive, le peuple le plus misérable de l'univers: chargés d'impôts & molestés dans vos personnes & vos propriétés de jour en jour par des conquérans vils & intéressés, vous serez en peu d'années réduits à la plus affreuse des conditions;...<sup>73</sup>

Although most of these citations deal with the results of an American invasion, they nevertheless tell us a great deal about what French-Canadian political writers thought about the motivation for such an invasion: American conquest would be driven by the appetite for new lands. Moreover, the

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71. Le Canadien, 28 November, 1807.

72. Le Canadien, 4 February, 1809; cited by Jean-Pierre Wallot, "Le Bas-Canada sous l'administration Craig, 1807-1811" (Ph.D. dissertation, Université de Montréal, 1965), p. 248.

73. "D. P." in le Canadien, 22 August, 1807.

reference to slavery is clearly political as well as economic, for the loss of land implies the inability to participate in politics and in the long term a loss of political virtue. The concept of political slavery, in turn, is well rooted in the civic humanist form of discourse.

Period texts give the impression that an American attack on the colony was almost a certainty, although it seemed more likely during periods of great international tension. Thus, most discussions of the American threat appeared in 1807 and 1808, sparked by the fear of war over the Chesapeake-Leopard affair. The passing of that crisis, however, did not mean that Lower Canadians could let down their guard. Some political writers believed that the Americans were simply waiting for the right opportunity to strike. This was Viger's view, which he expressed in his Considérations... . The Americans would strike, he warned, when it was in their best economic interest, therefore they should never be trusted:

Qui d'ailleurs ne voit évidemment, pour parler des Américains comme nation, sans prétendre faire aucune réflexion sur eux comme individus, qu'ils ne sont attachés à la Grande Bretagne par aucun lien? Les évènements anciens l'ont prouvé d'une façon formelle: ce qui se passe maintenant sous nos yeux, ne démontre-t-il pas qu'il n'ont pas changé de sentiments plus que de conduite? Les circonstances qui les rendroient nos amis un jour, pourroient en faire demain nos ennemis... Qui ignore que l'impuissance seule où ils sont de déclarer la guerre à la Grande Bretagne, les a engagés à rester neutre dans cette grande querelle qui divise les deux grandes puissances de

l'Europe, et les a empêchés de tremper de nouveau leurs mains dans le sang de leurs frères? L'intérêt seul qui les a retenus jusqu'à ce moment, jusqu'à un certain point dans la dépendance de la Grande Bretagne, peut changer à toute heure, et produire de même un changement de mesures, qui peut les armer subitement contre nous...<sup>74</sup>

The passages cited thus far clearly indicate that French-Canadian political writers took the American threat seriously. If exposing the danger of the American threat was a necessary part of political discourse before 1812, as war with the United States became increasingly inevitable it was also essential that the enemy's weaknesses be exposed. Again many of the texts dealing with aspects of the American character and the weakness of American political institutions implicitly made that point. When French-Canadian political writers discussed the possibility of war, however, they focused their analysis on weaknesses which would directly hamper any American campaign against Great Britain in general and the British North American provinces in particular.

The weakness of the United States as a military power was usually underlined by pointing to divisions within American society and the relatively poor status of the American army. The latter theme was driven home as early as 1808 in one of le Canadien's articles which commented: "...que peut faire une nation foible qui compte à peine

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74. Viger, Considérations..., p. 32.

3,000 hommes de troupes, dispersés sur un territoire immense, contre le souverain des mers...".<sup>75</sup> The small American regular army meant that the United States would have to raise a volunteer army if it intended to conquer Canada, and this, as a correspondent to the Québec Gazette pointed out on the eve of the war in 1812, would put them on an equal footing with Lower Canadians:

Il est bien clair que s'ils nous attaquent ce sera avec une armée composée de nouvelles levées, car ils n'ont point de troupes dont ils peuvent disposer à présent. S'ils faut qu'ils lèvent et disciplinent leur troupes pour l'invasion et le pillage du Canada; n'avons-nous pas même tout les avantages sur eux en ce point?<sup>76</sup>

The author went on to point out that since Lower-Canadians enjoyed "une liberté réelle" and had not degenerated, Canadien volunteers must inevitably be superior to those raised by the Americans. Nor were French-Canadians more impressed with the American volunteers when they encountered them during the war.<sup>77</sup>

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75. Le Canadien, 9 April, 1808.

76. "Un Canadien" in the Québec Gazette, 9 January, 1812.

77. Naturally the state of war made observers emphasize the disarray of the American troops. Canadien officers such as Jacques Viger, however, painted a particularly pitiful picture of the American volunteer army as one that was hungry, in rags and disillusioned. See Viger's letter to J. D. Mermet, ANQ, Fonds Viger-Verreault, Ma Saberdache, vol. IV, pp. 32-44, 4 February, 1814.

Privately, some Canadien observers feared that preparations for war would pull American society together.<sup>78</sup> Others felt that once the Americans had organized they must inevitably overwhelm the province if it did not receive British support.<sup>79</sup> A Lower-Canadian traveller to the United States in 1812 wrote that his compatriots might well be surprised to find out just how prepared the Americans actually were to go to war.<sup>80</sup> By 1812, however, public political discourse could show no such doubts. Even John Neilson, who had in previous years made the careful distinction between the American government and the American people, now saw war preparations as a sign of the degeneracy of American society. Two months after the declaration of hostilities, Neilson reported a riot in Baltimore which had

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78. See for example Joseph Papineau's comments in a letter to his son, Louis-Joseph Papineau, written in 1810. "...Quant à la Grande Bretagne", wrote the elder Papineau, "elle gagne plus en laissant le gouvernement américain se dégrader lui même aux yeux de ses propres citoyens que d'en venir à une guerre ouverte qui concentreroit les forces désunies de ce corps désorganisé." The letter, dated 22 February, 1810, is reprinted in Fernand Ouellet, ed., "Correspondance de Joseph Papineau (1793-1840)", Rapport de l'archiviste de la province de Québec, (RAPO), 32 (1951-1953), p. 174-176.

79. This was Louis Perrault's view, expressed in a letter to J. O. Perrault: "... car sans son [Great Britain] secours nous devons malgré toute notre loyauté, succomber; mais je ne crois pas encore l'ennemie [sic] pret de nous attaquer." See NA, Baby Collection, MG24 L3, vol. 15, pp. 8625-8626, Perrault l'ainé à J. O. Perrault, 27 April, 1812.

80. NA, Baby Collection, vol. 26, p. 16533-16537, William Berzcy to his son William Berzcy, 1812 (undated but evidently before the declaration of war).

destroyed the offices of a newspaper critical of the war in order to show how American politics had degenerated into chaos:

The horrid proceedings at Baltimore show the kind of liberty which is enjoyed in the United States. The offence which has brought upon so many citizens of that country the dreadful barbarities of the mob, is nothing more than that of publicly expressing their opinions in opposition to the measures of the Government. Such a system must soon end in the establishment of the most odious and oppressive of all despotisms...  
 ...whilst the government of the Metropolis is enlightened, and the British people, virtuous and free...<sup>81</sup>

Clearly a nation rent by such internal strife was in a poor position to prosecute a war.

The theme of internal division which cropped up in Lower-Canadian political discourse as a weakness of the American enemy grew naturally out of the analysis of American society which had been underway at least since the tense summer and fall of 1807. With the adoption of the Embargo Act, Lower-Canadian newspapers had noted the opposition of New Englanders to the Federal government's policies. Once war was declared, these divisions were obvious targets for criticisms. In this vein, a pamphlet inciting the Canadiens to defend the province against the Americans used the theme of American disunity to minimize the strength of the United States. To the usual theme of

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81. Quebec Gazette, 13 August, 1812. The event was extensively reported by the Federalist press as an example of mob rule; see Fischer, p. 157.

sectional discord and political strife, the author of Dieu et mon droit added a new wrinkle, the division between slaveholding and non-slaveholding interests:

...mais admettant qu'ils [the Americans] aient dix fois le nombre d'hommes que nous avons, ils occupent vingt fois plus de terrain [sic]. Premièrement, dans un tiers de leur pays, il y a dix esclaves noirs pour un maître blanc, donc il n'y a pas trop de blancs dans cette partie pour garder les esclaves qui sont toujours prêts à se révolter; ce tiers là est par conséquent incapable d'envoyer un homme contre nous. Deuxièmement, un autre tiers ne veut point se mêler de cette guerre, parce qu'elle a été déclarée contre nous injustement et malgré eux, et le dernier tiers est divisée en grande partie...<sup>82</sup>

By the time the war was a year old, at least one Canadien writer argued that the American administration's imposition of additional taxes to finance the war would devastate agriculture in that country, setting agricultural and commercial interests at odds.<sup>83</sup>

The course of the war no doubt confirmed much of the impressions created by the press. While the Americans made some headway in Upper Canada, their advances on Lower Canada proved abortive. The canadien victory at Chateauguay in October of 1813 seemed to confirm all that had been said about the military weaknesses of the Americans. It also

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82. Anonymous, Dieu et mon droit: conversation qui eut lieu ces jours derniers entre un Canadien de la campagne et un Canadien de la ville. (Montréal: Brown, 1812), pp. 8-9. This is one of the few texts to mention slavery in this period.

83. "Un Canadien" in le Spectateur, 1 July, 1813.

provided substantiation for the other component of the same argument, the virtue and valour of the canadien volunteer. In Chateauguay the image of the American which had developed in the past years reached its apotheosis, and French-Canadian political writers found the substance of another myth with which to reinforce the image of their own people as virtuous and loyal.

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Although the negative image of the United States in French-Canadian political discourse has been noted by certain historians, most students of the period have focused rather on the reasons for French-Canadian loyalty in the War of 1812. Of course, French-Canadian participation in the War on the side of Great Britain presupposes to a certain extent that the opinion of the United States, among canadien leaders at least, was relatively negative. Given the scope of the condemnation of the Americans as a people and their government described above, we may well ask, along with other students of the period, just what that image meant. Jean-Pierre Wallot, for his part, sees canadien resistance before the American invaders as a choice between the lesser of two Anglo-Saxon evils, one clearly elaborated from a

nationalist perspective.<sup>84</sup> On this point Fernand Ouellet seems to agree, citing nationalist reasons for French-Canadian participation in the war. Ouellet, however, also considers that resistance as politically motivated. That is, in his view, canadien leaders such as Pierre Bédard were unconditional opponents of the republican form of government.<sup>85</sup> The theme of the Americans as a menace to the French-Canadian was also underscored by S. F. Wise in an insightful article on colonial attitudes towards the United States before 1837. French-Canadian fears of the United States, argued Professor Wise, "were cultural rather than political."<sup>86</sup>

Certainly the image of the United States outlined in these pages underlines the merit of the cultural argument. Clearly, the Americans were seen as a menace to French-Canadian survival. Yet our analysis also points to the political dimension of the American image, and here we must disagree with the views set forth by Wise and Wallot. The American as he appeared in French-Canadian political discourse before 1815 was not only a foreigner, but one with marked political as well as cultural characteristics. More

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84. Jean-Pierre Wallot, "La pensée révolutionnaire et réformiste dans le Bas-Canada (1773-1815)" in his Un Québec qui bougeait (Montréal: Boréal Express, 1973), p. 281.

85. Fernand Ouellet, Le Bas-Canada 1791-1840 (Ottawa: Presses de l'Université d'Ottawa, 1980), pp. 155-156, 133.

86. Wise, "Colonial attitudes...", p. 26.

precisely, within the discursive context which dominated French-Canadian political discussions, the American's cultural traits were of extreme political significance. Indeed, the image of the United States was a central part of that the period's discourse, for the American was the best and most immediate example of political man corrupted. Thus political opposition to the American was not only centred on anti-republicanism, as Ouellet suggests, but on a vision of politics which revolved around the themes of virtue and corruption in both society and politics.

This is not to say that the choice of Americans as a contrast to the virtue of the canadien farmer was not influenced by other factors. Clearly the dominant issues of the day, including the international tensions between Great Britain and the United States, the subsequent need for French-Canadian leaders to underline the loyalty of their people to the crown and the issue of American immigration to the Townships helped shape the image of the Republic which emerged in the period. In that sense, we would be inclined to agree that the image of the United States in this period was a response to a particular set of circumstances, a view which is given some credence by the fact that once those circumstances changed after 1815, the image of the United States in French-Canadian political discourse underwent fairly radical and rapid change in some key respects.

Still, whether that image was sincere or not, its shape and the materials used to construct it tell us much about the evolution of French-Canadian political discourse in the decade before 1815. It tells us that French-Canadian politicians were plugged into the Atlantic world, and, indeed, into the North American world, as Jean-Pierre Wallot has long maintained. For while the American appeared largely as a grotesque caricature of reality in the Lower-Canadian press, his image drew some of its outlines from within American society itself. Clearly, the opposition press, that of the Federalist party, furnished a good deal of material to the elaboration of that highly negative image. The images of faction, mob rule and disunity which poured out of Boston and New York through the pages of their Federalist papers were grist for the mills of Lower-Canadian editors predisposed by cultural and political circumstance to find those attributes within American politics and society. Rather than see the image of America as proof of French-Canadian isolation from the Republic to the south, we may see it as a testimony to a very specific form of American influence.

To the polemics of the Federalist press were added the particular features of domestic political discourse. In a society where merchants were seen as a threat to political stability, the description of the Americans as a people consumed by commerce became an integral part of the American

image. The Canadian merchants, in turn, could then be associated with the "yankeys", which became an effective countercharge against the English party's condemnation of "French influence" within the ranks of the parti canadien. Here the American image clearly played a vital role in the deployment of period political discourse.

Discussion of American political and social institutions were relatively rare in the period before 1815. The image of American political life which emerged in these years was one which flowed directly from the discussion of the American character, rather than from any in-depth analysis of republican political institutions. That this was so indicates the impact of diplomatic tensions between the United States and Great Britain in the period and the difficulty of publicly addressing American politics in any objective way within such a context. In this climate the American Revolution was also a topic largely too hot to handle, except to underline the loyalty of the Canadiens and question that of their political enemies.

All of these factors highlighted the threat posed by the danger of American invasion. The image of the United States as a potential military aggressor was pervasive, and as both Wallot and Ouellet have noted, struck a responsive nationalist chord. Of all the elements of the American image elaborated before 1815, this would be the most lasting. Indeed, discussion of the Americans as a threat to French-

Canadian culture would persist in political discourse right down to the 1830's, and for certain elements within the French-Canadian political elite until the rebellions themselves. That was the exception to the rule though, for in the two decades which followed the peace of Ghent the image of the United States was thoroughly overhauled, a process through which the American, among other things, regained his political virtue.

## CHAPTER FOUR

"LES PLUS LIBRES HOMMES DE TOUTE LA TERRE...":

### THE AMERICAN IMAGE, 1815-1830

The years between 1815 and 1830 were marked by a significant evolution in the nature of the image of the United States in French-Canadian political discourse. Before 1815 that image was unquestionably negative. American manners, morality and politics were uniformly criticized in the Lower-Canadian press. Conversely, the image of the United States which became part and parcel of patriote discourse after 1830 was akin to an idealization of the American republic as the model for free societies everywhere. The period under study here then, must be considered as one of transition between these two extremes. The nature and timing of the transformation in the role and shape of the American image in French-Canadian political discourse can only be understood through an examination of these crucial years.

Of course, the change in the image of the United States both influenced and was influenced by the evolution of political discourse within the colony. Before 1815 one of the primary motivations of French-Canadian politicians and

political writers was to demonstrate the loyalty of their people and, through this, counter the charges of disloyalty made by their political enemies. This feature of the discursive context was conditioned by the tense international situation and the constant threat of war and invasion from the United States before 1815 . As these fears abated in the years following the Peace of Ghent, French-Canadian political writers acquired a certain freedom of action which allowed them to become more critical of the imperial and colonial administrations, and eventually, of British political institutions in general.

This change in the colony's political atmosphere was amply demonstrated in the French-Canadian reaction to the Union Bill of 1822. The bitterness and severity of the public discourse which issued forth in opposition to the measure would have been unthinkable in the years of the Craig administration. One important aspect of the previous period's discourse was preserved, however: the emphasis on commerce and executive influence as sources of political corruption and degeneration. Conversely, French-Canadian political writers still maintained that theirs was a virtuous, agricultural society which had to be protected from the intrigues of the merchants and bureaucrats. In short, the civic humanist paradigm so clearly elaborated in the earlier period remained alive and operative through the 1820's.

Other aspects of political discourse evolved significantly. Admiration for British political models was shaken by the crisis over Union. Increasingly, French-Canadian political writers and politicians expressed their criticisms of the British constitution openly. Eventually, some even argued that British political institutions were no longer appropriate for the colony, at least not without extensive modifications. Yet, those same commentators continued to favour political arrangements which maintained the social balance established in British political practice, rejecting only the aristocratic basis of the Upper House. Thus, while the patriote movement came to identify reform of the Legislative Council as a primary political goal, it did not reject the idea of an upper house altogether.

These developments in political discourse were driven by the concept that North American society was different in its social organization from that of Europe. After 1822 this became a dominant theme in French-Canadian political discourse and it altered the way politicians and political commentators viewed both British society and politics. European degeneration, however, was not limited to Great Britain. France suffered equally in the period press and, indeed, its society and government was considered even more corrupt than that of the Mother Country.

America's fortunes changed when French-Canadians began to think of themselves as North Americans and realized they had much in common with their republican neighbors. In part, the changed perception of the United States grew out of a change in what French-Canadians saw when they observed the Republic. The divisive partisan and sectional conflicts of the pre-war era had disappeared and in their place the United States projected the confident, stable and prosperous glow of the "Era of Good Feelings". A renewed nationalism reaffirmed what the Americans had always known: that they were the beacon of liberty in the New World, a chosen people in the political sense. Amidst a nostalgia for the revolutionary era, American imprints flowing into the colony now boasted of the young Republic's accomplishments in economic and political life.

While the image projected from America itself no doubt helped alter the negative perceptions of French-Canadians, European views of the United States further reinforced the trend. Both British and French works dealing with the American Republic were readily available in the colony and were occasionally reprinted in the colonial press. While British works were divided on the nature of American society and politics, the image of the United States in France was extremely positive and emphasized the link between virtue and liberty in the North-American republic. As French-Canadian commentators began to evolve a more favourable

image of the United States, the sources of information they possessed, both European and American, confirmed their beliefs in the particular nature of North-American society and helped accelerate the change in attitude toward American society and politics.

Still, before 1830, the American political model did not become the basis for patriote social and political discourse. The movement continued to praise parliamentary institutions until the end of the period, and did not become avowedly republican until the early 1830's. The years between 1815 and 1830 were nevertheless important to the evolution of French-Canadian political discourse and the place of the American image within it. In the years immediately following the war, the American character was rehabilitated in public political discourse and changed from being the archetype of political man corrupted to a model of civic virtue. Similarly, American achievements were held up as examples of desired changes in the fields of education and economic improvements. American politicians evolved from villains to statesmen and political life in the republic was no longer considered chaotic. Perhaps most significantly, the American Revolution and the men who made it found new favour in French-Canadian eyes. In the midst of the Union crisis the grievances of the American colonists who had met in Congress fifty years earlier seemed more

justified than they had before 1815 and warned of the dangers of imperial maladministration.

All of these changes pointed to a new political role for the image of America in French-Canadian political discourse. Where the image before 1815 had served as a counter-definition of what was politically desirable, it now acted as a gauge of what French-Canadians, as North Americans, should expect; although for the moment, it was assumed that desirable political reforms might be achieved within the empire. At the same time, the increasingly positive image of the United States was becoming an attractive alternative to the British political model. In essence, the image which developed between 1815 and 1830 laid the foundations for an idealized representation of the American Republic which would inform the more radical designs of patriote discourse in the 1830's.

#### 4.1 Virtue Becomes North American

The evolution of the American image in French-Canadian political discourse between 1815 and 1830 was substantial. As is the case with most external images within a culture, change in the representation of the external polity corresponded to a change in self-perception. French-Canadians in the 1820's were far more sensitive to the differences between the British society and their own.

Implicit in that view was a redefinition of Lower-Canadian society as distinctly North American. The argument that the colony was different in its social organization from European models was made first in light of the Union Crisis, when it seemed that Great Britain was interfering in the colony's internal affairs without its consent. In time, however, the same pattern of discourse would serve as a rationale for demanding change in the very constitution the Canadiens had sought to protect in 1823. Lower-Canadian political institutions, it was argued, had to conform to North American society, where disparities in wealth were less pronounced because of widespread land-ownership and where aristocracies had failed to take root. In short, North American political institutions had to reflect the democratic ethos of the New World.

This pattern in French-Canadian political discourse will certainly be familiar to students of the early national period in American history. Indeed, since the early moments of the Revolution, Americans had believed in their particular destiny as a North American nation to preserve liberty from the corrupt governments of the old world. It was in this vein that Thomas Paine, for example, had proclaimed America the final asylum of liberty and that

Jefferson had dreamed of an empire for liberty stretching across the continent.<sup>1</sup>

This element in American discourse, argues J. G. A. Pocock, accounted for the continued relevance of civic humanist forms in the new Republic. The dream of North American liberty was tied up with the concept of land ownership as a basis for political virtue and the vision of a vast agricultural republic.<sup>2</sup> The democratic and republican destiny of the United States and of the continent as a whole was rarely more evident in American discourse than in the years following the end of the War of 1812. Most historians consider the "Era of Good Feelings", as one marked by the rise of American nationalism and as one where dreams of Manifest Destiny took root.<sup>3</sup> Indeed, defending the particular character of North American politics even became official policy with the proclamation of the Monroe Doctrine in December of 1823. For Monroe's message was more than a warning that new European military incursions would not be tolerated in the western hemisphere, it also

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1. Lance Banning, The Jeffersonian Persuasion (Ithaca N. Y.: Cornell University Press, 1978) pp. 82-83.

2. Pocock, The Machiavellian Moment (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1975), chapter XV.

3. On this theme see Fred Somkin, Unguarded Eagle: Memory and Desire in the Idea of American Freedom, 1815-1860 (Ithaca N. Y.: Cornell University Press, 1967); and George Dangerfield, The Awakening of American Nationalism, 1815-1828 (New York: Harper Row, 1965).

proclaimed that European political systems were no longer suitable to the New World.

Significantly, French-Canadian discourse began to emphasize the distinctively North American nature of Lower-Canadian society at about the same time that Monroe was reading his message to the American Congress. Indeed, a pronounced shift occurred in 1823-1824, as more and more French-Canadian political texts made the link between North American society and democratic institutions. Still, intercultural transfers are rarely so mechanistic as the timing here might suggest, and, while Monroe's speech was fully reprinted in the colony, many French-Canadian allusions to the same theme predated it.

In some ways, canadien political writers were already predisposed to agree with the President's analysis of the hemisphere's destiny and the contrast he drew between the New World and the Old. This is testimony to the impact of the same international events in both countries, and to discrete local circumstances operating to alter the discursive context in the colony. French-Canadians, like their neighbours to the South, were aware of the political unrest which swept over Latin America early in the period. Indeed, the Latin American revolutions were reported extensively in the Lower-Canadian press, although before 1822, reaction to them was not entirely favourable. Le Canadien, for example, reported the formation of Latin

American republics in 1820 with little enthusiasm. The editor remarked that Europe had gone through a republican stage twenty years earlier and that the experiment had failed. "Voilà que les républiques naissent par douzaine en Amérique;" the article read, "[elles]... n'annoncent pas une santé bien vigoureuse. Il faut se hâter d'en parler, de peur d'avoir à annoncer à la fois leur naissance et leur mort."<sup>4</sup>

This attitude toward the political upheavals in Latin America changed dramatically after the news of the Union Bill reached the colony. While le Canadien still predicted that some republics would not survive, it nevertheless now noted that the revolutions "ont tous été couronnés du succès", and added, "...c'est ainsi que l'Amérique verra des gouvernements divers qui concourront ensemble par leurs relations mutuelles à augmenter les lumières et la civilisation."<sup>5</sup> These comments, less than a month after news of the Union Bill reached the colony, point to that event as a prime motivation in altering discourse. The offensive legislation was, after all, European in origin, and presumably urged on the British government by Europeans living in the colony. Even John Neilson, who was no republican and never would be, saw the division in

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4. Le Canadien, 1 March, 1820.

5. Le Canadien, 21 July, 1822.

principles between the supporters and critics of the new measure as one between Europeans and North Americans.<sup>6</sup> Public discourse was by then also making the social argument for the inapplicability of European models to the New World. The contrast between Europe and America was vividly drawn, again in le Canadien, in the early months of the struggle against the Union:

En Europe il y a une dépendance continue depuis le plus grand jusqu'au plus petit. En Amérique il y a des forêts immenses qui attendent un maître ou des bras pour les cultiver; il n'y a ni lord, ni seigneur; le mérite individuel est ce qui forme la règle de conduite pour la masse du peuple. La force n'y fait rien, parce que tout homme qui travaille est toujours à même de s'y soustraire. Ainsi donc, tout système de gouvernement qui n'a pas pour but le bien être général, ne peut durer longtemps.

By 1823 an article in the same paper stated that the Canadiens were "descendants de Français, mais ils sont natifs et habitants de l'Amérique; ils ne veulent plus être entraînés dans les guerres de l'Europe contre l'Amérique."<sup>8</sup> Later the same year the paper commented that "il y a encore

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6. NA, Neilson Papers, MG 24 B 1, vol. 12, pp. 179-182 (a transcript of the same letter appears in vol. 15, pp. 4-7), John Neilson to Louis-Joseph Papineau, 22 June, 1822.

7. Le Canadien, 28 August, 1822; cited by Philippe Reid, "Représentations idéologiques et société globale: le journal le Canadien (1806-1842)" (Ph.D. dissertation, Université Laval, 1979), pp. 209-210, and Benoit Bernier, "Les idées politiques d'Etienne Parent, 1822-1825" (D.E.S. thesis, Université Laval, 1971), p. 36.

8. Le Canadien, 1 January, 1823.

dans le vieux continent des millions d'hommes sans existence politique; selon moi ce ne sont que des troupeaux de bétails, destinés à porter le joug."<sup>9</sup>

It was also in 1823 that Papineau, writing from Europe, commented on the social inequality and degeneration which marked life in Britain and France. The implication of his analysis was that North American society was free of those abuses. For although Papineau found that England had maintained a free government despite these social ills, he noted that "le peuple n'est ni aussi heureux ni aussi content comme il l'est en Amérique."<sup>10</sup> Pierre de Sales Laterrière, living in Great Britain at the time, expressed the contrast in terms of the cycle of corruption and degeneration so common in the civic humanist view of history: "On voit [...] l'Amérique régénérer et en imposer par la libéralité qui existe dans toutes ses institutions, à toutes ces vieilles machines européennes...", he wrote in August of 1823.<sup>11</sup> Inevitably, such a view led commentators to predict that the United States would rise to become a great nation. Papineau expressed that view in one of his

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9. Le Canadien, 12 November, 1823; cited by Reid, p. 193.

10. RAPO (1953-1955), pp. 205-210, Papineau to Julie Papineau, 27 June, 1823.

11. NA, Fonds Les Eboulements, MG8 F131, pp. 1313-1317, Pierre de Sales Laterrière to Paschal de Sales Laterrière, 25 August, 1825.

letters from London: "A quel degré de prospérité ne sont donc pas appelés les Etats-Unis qui avec le même caractère d'industrie et d'activité de ce pays sont affranchis de presque tous les abus qui règnent ici."<sup>12</sup>

Despite these private predictions that the American form of government would combine with the natural state of North American society to surpass the political achievements of Europe, America did not immediately become a positive political model in French-Canadian discourse. The notion of democratic or representative government as the form most appropriate to North America, however, made significant inroads into that discourse before 1830. Increasingly, as reform of the Legislative Council became an important topic of discussion, canadien political writers rejected the Upper Chamber's aristocratic underpinnings. An early and radical statement of that view came in a pamphlet attacking the Council from the pen of François Blanchet. Blanchet's argument rested squarely on the notion that North American society differed essentially from that of Europe and that, as North Americans, the Canadiens could never accept a landed aristocracy. The pamphlet even provided a historical backdrop for the argument, maintaining that the Canadiens had acquired a different character from the French long before the Conquest. In New France the habitants had been

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12. NA, Fonds Famille Papineau, MG24 B2, vol. 1, pp. 486-489, Papineau to Julie Papineau, 23 September, 1823.

able to get the tithe reduced, the censitaire had become as prosperous as the seigneur, and the church had been democratized through the role of elected syndics. As a North-American people the Canadiens had evolved to a point where European institutions were no longer acceptable:

Le continent d'Europe diffère essentiellement de l'Ancien Continent sous presque tous les rapports. Le climat, la nature du sol, les productions naturelles, les végétaux, les animaux, tout y diffère. Les hommes y sont aussi différemment modifiés, et vouloir leur faire trouver bon en Amérique, ce qu'ils trouvent bon en Europe, est une absurdité complète.... Croit-on que lorsque l'opinion publique dans tout le vaste continent de l'Amérique est en faveur des gouvernements représentatifs, il soit bien facile d'établir et de maintenir en Canada une noblesse dégénérée. L'idée est vraiment des plus ridicules. Telle est la tournure de l'esprit humain qu'il semble qu'il faille tout le contraire dans le nouveau monde. En Amérique il suffit de travailler pour être heureux.<sup>13</sup>

The rejection of degenerate European aristocracies in Blanchet's argument did not mean that the emerging patriote party's philosophy was wholly dedicated to democratic institutions in the modern sense. Indeed, as we have seen, Papineau himself argued in 1826 for an appointed Council, modified by the admission of rich landholders. Suggestions for reform of the Council were made within the framework of a social analysis which stressed the egalitarian nature of North American society.

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13. François Blanchet, Appel au Parlement impérial et aux habitants des colonies angloises... (Québec: Vallerand, 1824), p. 11. Blanchet discusses changes to French-Canadian society before Conquest on pages 34-35.

Jacques Labrie's constitutional discussion of 1827, for example, argued for change in the Council along these same lines. Labrie made the point that English politicians debating the Lower-Canadian constitution's merits in 1790 had seen the need for institutions more in keeping with conditions in the New World. According to Labrie, Fox and other opposition critics,

...suggérèrent que l'on pourrait confier à un peuple de pères de familles, tous propriétaires, et qui en conséquence auraient des habitudes morales et paisibles, et souvent étrangères à des prolétaires, une action plus directe dans sa législation, que ne s'était réservé même le peuple le plus libre des nations européennes; ils souhaitèrent que le Conseil Législatif, qui en Canada devait tenir lieu de la Chambre des Lords, fut électif à vie.<sup>14</sup>

The distinction made here between "prolétaires" and "propriétaires" is significant. The discourse of canadien political writers still assumed that landownership conferred qualities consistent with the virtuous practice of politics, and North America was a society of landholders. Papineau in an address to his electors made the point in more lyrical, and distinctively Jeffersonian, language:

Nous avons tous une mise à peu près égale dans le fonds social, nous ne devons pas souffrir que des sociétaires privilégiés emportent tous les profits à discrétion et sans être tenus de nous rendre compte de leur administration. La nature, ou plutôt le Dieu de la nature, en donnant aux hommes à une époque où ils sont aussi éclairés qu'en la présente, les terres fertiles et d'une étendue illimitée de l'Amérique, les appelle à la liberté,

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14. Jacques Labrie, Les premiers rudiments de la Constitution britannique... (Montréal, 1827), p. 39.

à l'égalité des droits aux yeux de la loi, sur toute l'étendue de plus vaste des continents, depuis les rives de la Baie d'Hudson, jusqu'à la terre de feu.<sup>15</sup>

Such an emphasis on the political destiny of the North American continent inevitably implied a re-evaluation of the image of the United States. Indeed, by 1827, Papineau's admiration for the American Republic, expressed in the same document, was clear:

Il n'y a pas sur la surface du globe une société plus belle, mieux réglée, plus prospère où les peuples soient aussi contents, aussi universellement admirateurs de leurs institutions politiques, comme ils le sont dans toute l'étendue de cette puissante confédération. Elle fait en Europe l'admiration des plus grands hommes d'état. [...] Elle est appelée, même avant cette génération passe, à devenir le plus utile des alliés ou la plus formidable des rivales de l'Angleterre.<sup>16</sup>

Such comments marked an important transition in Papineau's thought. For although the Speaker's public utterances still occasionally praised the British Constitution, the political crises of the 1820's were pushing him closer to openly advocating republican government. Before 1830, however, the patriote movement had not progressed to that point and consequently the image of the United States had not yet become a central part of its discourse. Still, the changes in that discourse,

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15. Louis-Joseph Papineau, Adresse à tous les électeurs du Bas Canada (Montréal: Spectateur Canadien, 1827), pp. 3-4.

16. Ibid., pp. 18-19.

particularly the distinction between North America and Europe, were accompanied by the elaboration of a far more favourable image of the United States than that which had existed before 1815. The rehabilitation of the American, his society and his institutions took place in a piecemeal fashion, particular aspects of American society and government being presented as examples to be imitated rather than the American system as a whole. It was this reinterpretation of American life, however, which laid the basis for the central place which the image of the United States would occupy in the years leading up to the Rebellions.

#### 4.2 Rehabilitating the American Character

The most prominent feature of the American image in French-Canadian political discourse before 1815 was the extremely negative representation of the American, his manners and his morality. Although expressions of this kind occasionally surfaced in the press and correspondence examined for the fifteen years after the end of the War of 1812, positive characterizations of the American were far more common. This although some of his cultural eccentricities, particularly those linked to religion, continued to puzzle and occasionally dismay canadien travellers and political writers.

Although Papineau would eventually become a staunch admirer of everything American, his early contacts with American society, reported in letters to his wife, hardly left a glowing impression on him. During a trip to London in 1823, Papineau's travels took him through upstate Vermont, where he found farms in disrepair and farmers at the mercy of the elites in the small towns. Papineau was astonished to discover, however, that despite their poverty, Vermont farmers were as ostentatious in their Sunday dress as their town cousins. This the Lower-Canadian Speaker attributed to American pretensions of perfect social and political equality, which led poorer members of society to imitate their betters. Thus, Papineau wrote to his wife, "... du moment où un fou sacrifie à l'ostention une partie de son aisance, les autres croiraient perdre de leur égalité par rapport à lui, s'ils ne devenaient pas aussi fou que lui et chacun fini par vivre au dessus de ses moyens."<sup>17</sup> More common were travellers' references to the rather sober manners of the Americans, which were usually linked to their religious practices.<sup>18</sup>

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17. NA, Fonds Famille Papineau, vol. 1, p. 412-415, Papineau to Julie Papineau, 19 January, 1823.

18. Thus Papineau spoke of the "silencieux et froid rigorisme des dévots de Burlington...", *Ibid.*; Louis Guy writing to Papineau during the same trip referred to the latter's inability to travel on a Sunday and attributed it to "la grande dévotion des Américains...", NA, Fonds Famille Papineau, vol. 1, p. 394-399, January, 1823, Louis Guy to Papineau. Similarly a *Canadien* teaching school at Utica, New York wrote that in his new home "l'ennui se fait

Such remarks rarely made it into the period press. Still, a few political writers clung to the old image of the American as the archetype of political, social and moral degeneration. Two such references appeared in La Gazette canadienne in 1822. The first was a derogatory piece concerning the variable morality of Americans during the Revolutionary era.<sup>19</sup> The other published a few months later spoke more explicitly of the spread of intrigue, corruption and the debasement of public morality in the United States and, in a way reminiscent of articles published before 1815, contrasted the sorry state of American society with that in Lower Canada where virtue continued to reign.<sup>20</sup>

These were exceptions to the rule, however. For only a few years after American and Canadien had met in battle, French-Canadian papers began to rehabilitate the American character. In 1817, le Spectateur published a speech given by a member of the Assembly in February of the previous year which, although it dealt with education, addressed the negative image of the American which had prevailed in the province and called for its revision. Speaking of the United States, he stated:

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toujours sentir et les gens quoique bons, ne sont pas des plus divertissans-- Vive les Canadiens." See, NA, Baby Collection, MG 24 L 3, vol. 18, pp. 10670-10671, Pierre Laviolette to Jos. Labroquerie, 11 June 1828.

19. La Gazette canadienne, 22 August, 1822.

20. La Gazette canadienne, 21 November, 1822.

J'ai souvent entendu dire que l'immoralité et l'irreligion y avoient établi leur empire et y régnoient souveraines. J'avourai aussi que les tableaux que l'on a faits de quelques parties de ce pays et de quelques classes particulières ne sont peut-être que trop fidèles: mais ce ne sont pas sur des données vagues qu'on peut juger des moeurs d'une nation. Ce seroit aussi une erreur étrange de croire que la contagion s'étende sans distinction dans toutes les classes des habitans de cette contrée, et à tous les pays qui sont soumis à son gouvernement.

The author went on to note that the Americans were penetrated by religious sentiment and dedicated to the education of their people. These characteristics, in a country with no established religion, had produced "ce reste d'amour de l'ordre et des antiques vertus [et] d'attachement enfin aux principes qui assurent la tranquillité publique."<sup>21</sup> This was a far cry from the image of the American presented a decade earlier in the aftermath of the Chesapeake-Leopard incident.

This tendency toward revision of the negative image of Americans in French-Canadian political discourse is most evident in a particular series of articles which appeared in different papers throughout the 1820's. The structure of the articles is that of a travel account, and they were usually published under titles such as "Lettre d'un Canadien voyageant dans les Etats-Unis", or "Extrait d'un voyage manuscrit". Portions of these texts were also republished in the 1830's and 1840's. Fernand Ouellet, apparently

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21. Le Spectateur, 1 November, 1817.

unaware of the earlier publications, has attributed them to Denis-Benjamin Viger and claims they grew out of notes taken during a trip to the United States in 1819.<sup>22</sup> While this theory is plausible, the first article in this genre appears in February of 1818, although its tone is somewhat different from the later pieces. Another explanation may be that these articles were modified versions of French travel accounts which were numerous in the period.<sup>23</sup>

The first article in this genre dealt with the political differences between the United States and Lower Canada, repeating the old view that "il n'y a pas de pays où l'on trouve plus d'éléments de discorde et d'anarchie que dans les Etats-Unis." This the author attributed to the composition of the American population and the system of frequent elections in that country.<sup>24</sup> In an article published the following year, however, the manners of the

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22. Fernand Ouellet, "Denis-Benjamin Viger et le problème de l'annexion", Bulletin des recherches historiques, 57, no. 4 (oct-déc 1951): 195-205. Ouellet's source are clippings from articles in la Minerve and l'Aurore des Canadas for the 1830's and 1840's respectively. However, the citations in Ouellet's article are textually identical to at least one article published in 1819. Compare, for example, the citation Ouellet reproduces on pp. 196-197 with the article published in le Courrier du Bas-Canada, 23 October 1819.

23. René Rémond has indicated the importance of the genre in his Les Etats-Unis devant l'opinion française 1815-1852 (Paris: Armand Colin, 1962), tome I, pp. 322-345.

24. "EXTRAIT D'une lettre d'un Canadien voyageant dans les Etats-Unis..." in le Spectateur, 14 February 1818.

Americans appeared to have considerably improved. This travel account is significant for a number of reasons. The editor's preface, for example, notes that the manners of New Englanders, which the article describes, were markedly superior to those of other Americans. The article describes a trip to the New England countryside and a dinner with a leading family in a small village. The host appears refined and well cultured in the account, and these manners are generalized to the population at large.<sup>25</sup> The same text appeared in le Canadien in 1823 and once again in la Minerve in 1827.<sup>26</sup> Another piece, apparently from the same series of letters, appeared in la Bibliothèque canadienne in 1827, this time dealing with the Americans' support of culture through the example of the New York Museum.<sup>27</sup>

Another sign that the manners of Americans in general terms were being rehabilitated was the growing number of citations from American authors on moral questions. Particularly popular in this period were citations from Benjamin Franklin. Franklin's stature as a moral

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25. Le Courrier du Bas-Canada, 23 October, 1819.

26. Le Canadien, 23 July, 1823; cited by Reid, p. 202; and la Minerve, 4 June, 1827.

27. "Le Museum de New York, &c. extrait d'un voyage manuscrit" in la Bibliothèque canadienne, October 1827, pp. 170-173.

philosopher in France has been documented by René Rémond.<sup>28</sup> The availability of his works in translation no doubt accounted for some of his popularity in French Canada. Thus an excerpt titled "Règle de conduite suivie par Franklin, pour s'exercer aux habitudes morales" appeared first in L'Abeille canadienne in 1818, and again the following year in le Spectateur.<sup>29</sup> Another of Franklin's memorable texts, one arguing in favour of the adoption of the turkey as the American national symbol, appeared as early as 1817, and was republished again in 1826.<sup>30</sup> Excerpts from Franklin's autobiography appeared in 1818 and 1828, and a short synopsis of his life in 1826.<sup>31</sup> Franklin's moral lessons were also considered proper reading for children, as "Un ami de l'éducation" wrote in le Canadien.<sup>32</sup>

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28. Two French editions of Franklin's correspondence were published in 1817, and 32 editions of Poor Richard's Almanac were published in France under the title of La science du bonhomme Richard between 1815 and 1852. The French particularly valued Franklin as a source of moral instruction. See Rémond, tome II, pp. 572-574, 579.

29. L'Abeille canadienne, 15 October, 1818; le Spectateur, 2 January, 1819.

30. L'Aurore, 4 October, 1817; la Bibliothèque canadienne, July 1826, pp. 76-77. Franklin must have been a favourite of Michel Bibaud, who edited both papers.

31. Le Spectateur, 19 September, 1818; la Minerve, 20 October, 1828; and la Bibliothèque canadienne, March 1826, pp. 132-134.

32. La science du bonhomme Richard heads a list of recommended readings. See "Un ami de l'éducation" in le Canadien, 1 October, 1823.

If certain members of the elite considered that Franklin was an appropriate moral guide, this indicated that Americans in general were now considered far more moral than they were before the war. Indeed, in articles discussing the American character and the propensity of Americans for encouraging education, writers even affirmed that in the United States "la masse du peuple [...] est profondément pénétrée du sentiment de la religion, quelque soit la secte dont il suive les dogmes."<sup>33</sup> Still, religious habits and practices were one area of the American character which continued to worry French-Canadian observers. At one extreme, members of the Catholic hierarchy in the province found American religious indifference troubling to say the least, while admirers of American society were worried by the very strength of religious sentiment in the republic.

The former view is well documented in the correspondence of Bishops Plessis and Lartigue. Indeed, these two prelates and their successors maintained extensive contacts with the American Catholic hierarchy and even travelled to the United States in the period. What they found, with few exceptions, was a Catholic church undergoing a difficult period of transition. Closest to the French-Canadian bishops were a generation of American clerics of French origin. Indeed, these French bishops began the

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33. Le Canadien, 22 November 1817; cited by Reid, pp. 141-142.

difficult process of building the church on sometimes hostile American soil. Their experiences, related in letters and reports to Plessis and Lartigue, were less than encouraging on the prospects of American catholicism.

The Canadien bishops clearly saw the United States as an area of missionary activity rather than one where the church was firmly established. For although Plessis believed that the Constitution's guarantee of religious freedom might lessen the Americans' propensity for fanaticism, the successive crises of the 1820's which shook the church in that country convinced him that governing a republican diocese was no easy task.<sup>34</sup> In fact, Plessis was fully informed of a particularly bitter struggle for control of the diocese of Philadelphia which pit its bishop against

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34. This comment on the Constitution was made during a trip to the United States. See J.-O. Plessis, Visites pastorales de 1815-1816 par Mgr Joseph-Octave Plessis (Québec: Imprimerie Franciscaine missionnaire, 1903) , p. 146.

parish trustees. Similarly divisive struggles took place in other American cities, including New York.<sup>35</sup>

For his part, Lartigue found nothing good to say about the United States, its people or its form of government, and these views were only confirmed by the troubles of the American church. During a trip to the United States he wrote in his travel journal that there were three million Americans who belonged to no church and somehow concluded that half the population had never even been baptized.<sup>36</sup> In New York City he found the church horribly understaffed and recorded in his journal that "la division du clergé et des laïcs est affreuse parmi les Catholiques & donne un grand scandale". Writing from Philadelphia a few days later the canadien prelate observed that "les trustees font ici aussi la loi à l'Evêque et aux prêtres."<sup>37</sup>

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35. Plessis' role in these controversies is described in detail in Laval Laurent, Québec et l'Eglise aux Etats-Unis sous Mgr Briand et Mgr Plessis (Montréal: Librairie Saint-François, 1945), pp. 170-178. Plessis' correspondence is also filled with questions relating to the American church in those years. See for example his analysis of the situation in letters to Mgr Poynter in London, 30 April, 1821 and 23 March, 1822 as well as to M. John Power of New York 7 January, 1822. Précis of the foregoing with extensive citations appear in "Inventaire de la correspondance de Mgr Joseph-Octave Plessis, Archevêque de Québec 1797-1825", RAPO 9 (1928-29), pages 141, 154 and 150 respectively.

36. NA, Archives de l'Archevêché de Montréal (copies), MG 17 A 5, vol. 7, "Journal de Mgr Lartigue", 13 July, 1820.

37. Ibid., 23 and 24 July, 1820.

These comments on the part of the province's Catholic hierarchy are perhaps not surprising. Naturally, both Plessis and Lartigue sympathized with the plight of their American colleagues and with an American church in turmoil during the 1820's. Other members of the canadien elite, however, were more troubled by the effervescence of American protestantism in the period. This was after all, the heyday of the Second Great Awakening, a movement which spread rapidly across the country and was characterized by its evangelical fervour. The evangelical style was entirely foreign to French-Canadian travellers, and while the canadien clergy worried about the effect of an excess of democracy on Catholicism, more than one lay observer noted the danger which overbearing protestantism posed to the democratic ideals of the republic.

It was in this vein that Papineau described his own experience at a revival style service during his trip through the United States in 1823. In Burlington, the Lower-Canadian Speaker had the opportunity of hearing a Methodist minister thunder against the evils of excessive wealth and loose morality. His conclusion on the whole event was that "le méthodisme dont le zèle de prosélitisme est très ardent, n'est pas aussi tolérant que la raison et les loix de l'état demandent..." Converts to the faith, he

added, were likely to persecute those less ardent in their beliefs.<sup>38</sup>

These reservations on the nature of the American revival were rarely repeated in public discourse, and then only in addressing a specific issue. Thus, when the editor of the New York Advocate stated that most of the members of the Lower-Canadian Assembly were illiterate and that the colony's populace was fanatical and ignorant, Michel Bibaud of l'Aurore took up the gauntlet and produced his own critique of American religious practices. The Americans, Bibaud argued, were poorly placed to cast aspersions on the religious life of their neighbours, since they were fanatic enough to enact laws prohibiting all manner of activities on the sabbath, and since their political parties were often religious in inspiration. The editor went as far as to claim that in Connecticut "la population se divise en deux partis, celui de la tolérance et celui de la religion".<sup>39</sup>

No commentary on American manners in the period even came close to the Bibaud's scathing critique. Still, it was clear that the religious zeal of evangelical protestants was considered a strange if not dangerous characteristic of American society. Moreover some of the reform movements which grew out of the revivals, the most prominent before

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38. NA, Fonds Famille Papineau, vol. 1, pp. 412-415, Papineau to Julie Papineau, 19 January, 1823.

39. L'Aurore, 5 June, 1819.

1830 being the temperance movement, appeared curious to French-Canadian observers. The first report of temperance agitations in the United States appeared in French-Canadian papers in 1823.<sup>40</sup> It was not until 1830, however, that a newspaper in the colony produced an extensive editorial on the subject. It was la Minerve which in October of that year commented on the, by now extensive, temperance movement which existed in the United States. Although the article agreed with the movement's goals and even urged Lower-Canadians to follow the American lead and drink with moderation, the paper's editorial writer clearly believed that things had gone too far south of the border. "Dans plus d'une occasion", he wrote,

le zèle s'est changé en fanatisme. [...] Dans certains lieux, on n'en est venu jusqu'à ne pas ôser, dans des familles honnêtes, offrir un verre de ces espèces de boissons. On s'est vu en quelque sorte forcé de les bannir, ou de les tenir absolument cachées, de peur d'exciter contre soi des préjugés que l'esprit de parti, la malveillance, ou la haine, auraient pu mettre à profit. Des marchands ont fini par se trouver obligés de cesser d'en débiter dans leurs boutiques...

The author goes on to state that this "système de rigorisme" was not compatible with canadien manners. Indeed, he maintained that alcohol abuse was not a problem in the colony since the Canadiens remained virtuous because of the

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40. See la Gazette canadienne, 26 February, 1823.

egalitarian nature of their society, ensured by a more equal distribution of property.<sup>41</sup>

In the years after 1815 the image of the American underwent substantial change. American manners were considerably improved in the travel accounts of the 1820's and American farmers, particularly those of New England appeared to have regained their political virtue. Still aspects of the American character related to religion remained too foreign to rehabilitate. The zeal and rigor of American protestants involved in the revival and the temperance movement were a problem for the Catholic French-Canadian elite, while for the church hierarchy in the colony the democratic ethos of American life itself seemed to pose a serious threat to Catholicism.

#### 4.3 Education: the Source of American Enlightenment?

This re-evaluation of the American character was closely related to political developments in the colony. Many of the travel accounts published in the 1820's pointed to the enlightened nature of American citizens and attributed this trait to the excellence of American educational institutions. These could then be used as a point of comparison in demanding reform of the educational

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41. La Minerve, 14 October, 1830.

system in Lower Canada. Indeed, educational reform was an important issue in the province between 1815 and 1830. Bills promoting a new form of organization for the province's schools were introduced in the Assembly on almost an annual basis from 1816 to 1824, when one was finally passed. This act was in turn amended by a more controversial bill in 1829 which gave the Assembly more control over schools at the expense of the church.<sup>42</sup>

Two of the travel accounts mentioned above deal directly with the theme of education, describing in glowing terms its positive effect on the American people. Not only were the signs of learning evident in the elite, but they were spread throughout the population. A travel account published in 1819 cited education as the "principe de vie" of the Americans, the basis of their social and political stability. Thus, the article continued, "...On peut observer combien les personnes qui se trouvent dans les rangs les plus bas de la société parlent avec facilité, et, pour ainsi dire, avec une espèce d'élégance." This was true of the New England farmer who, because of his elementary education in mathematics, was "en état de tenir un compte exact du revenu de ses fermes et de ses travaux..." and whose ability to read allowed him to keep abreast of

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42. On these measures see Louis-Philippe Audet, Le système scolaire de la province de Québec, tome V (Québec: Editions de l'érable, 1955), pp. 48-120.

developments in agricultural techniques published in the various journals devoted to such subjects. Even workers in America had some basic education, and this often allowed them to improve their lot in life. The author then compared this to the situation in Lower Canada where workers while honest and well mannered, remained illiterate.<sup>43</sup>

Similarly, the travel account which described the New York Museum a few years later, attributed the existence of such an institution to the fact that "l'éducation est si commune aussi, et si généralement répandue dans la masse du peuple, qu'il se trouve dans toutes les classes des hommes disposés à seconder [...]. les efforts des amateurs pour étendre les connaissances en tout genre...". Here the author makes the suggestion that such a state of public learning would be desirable in Lower Canada, but suggests that the education law passed by the Assembly in 1824 was perhaps too conservative.<sup>44</sup>

Less extensive references to the advanced state of educational institutions in the United States punctuated the debate over schools in the colony through the period. In 1817 Michel Bibaud, in l'Aurore, insisted that education was essential in free countries such as Great Britain, the

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43. Le Courrier du Bas-Canada, 23 October, 1819.

44. La Bibliothèque canadienne, October 1827, p. 171.

United States and Canada.<sup>45</sup> The following year le Canadien reprinted an article from a New Hampshire paper dealing with education and commented that

...les sentiments des habitans de ce pays sont nobles et élevés quand à ce qui regarde l'éducation [...] On voit des Américains sortant du milieu des bois savoir lire et écrire, tandis que la plupart des riches habitans de nos paroisses sont dans la nécessité de confier leurs affaires entre les mains des étrangers faute de savoir lire et écrire.<sup>46</sup>

The issue continued to occupy the paper's attention in the months to follow. In December of 1818 it published a breakdown of the number of college graduates in the United States by college, and in April of 1819 the paper cited the report of New York State on education to show that the state operated over 4,000 schools at a cost of \$140,000.<sup>47</sup> Two years later it was the Quebec Gazette's turn to teach by example, again citing the report of New York state's superintendent of education and specifically citing figures it contained relating to common schools.<sup>48</sup> By 1823 le Canadien, again brandishing the American example, warned

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45. Michel Bibaud ("M. B.") in l'Aurore, 7 April, 1817.

46. Le Canadien, 19 September, 1818.

47. Le Canadien, 30 December, 1818; and 28 April, 1819. The first article also appeared in le Spectateur, 2 January, 1819, and that paper also reproduced the New York state report for the following year in its 8 January, 1820 issue.

48. Quebec Gazette, 2 April and 11 June, 1821.

that public support for education was a general trend in North America and that "Ce serait vraiment une honte si le Canada restait en arrière."<sup>49</sup>

#### 4.4 Agriculture and Economic Growth

Agriculture was another aspect of the American image which was evolving in this period. Before the war, while French-Canadian writers had acknowledged the American's talent for commerce, that talent was not deemed a desirable character trait and was contrasted with the decline in the farmer's agricultural virtues. The image of the American emerging in this period reversed the old emphasis on political and moral corruption and rehabilitated the American farmer. In essence the American farmer as he appeared in the 1820's was prosperous, educated and enlightened.

Obviously, there were some limits to how far the American farmer could be praised. Indeed, even the most positive comments on the nature of American agriculture still maintained that French-Canadian farmers were superior in certain areas. In addition, some travellers remained singularly unimpressed with the state of the American

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49. Le Canadien, 12 November, 1823.

countryside in their private correspondence.<sup>50</sup> Still, throughout the period public discourse was overwhelmingly favourable to the American farmer. The articles dealing with education cited earlier, particularly that published in 1819 in the Courrier du Bas-Canada, noted that a superior education had allowed the American farmer to prosper.<sup>51</sup> A few years later le Canadien pointed to the political virtue of the American farmer.<sup>52</sup>

The most prominent example of an article praising American agricultural practices as superior to those of Lower Canada appeared in la Minerve in 1827. Published over two issues, it described in detail American practices in the raising of livestock and demonstrated how these were superior to those used in the colony. "Il n'est pas besoin que j'entre à ce sujet en aucun détail", wrote the author, "pour mettre le lecteur en état d'apprécier la supériorité du cultivateur Américain." Once again this particular piece

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50. Bishop Lartigue's comments during a trip to New York in 1820 were perhaps to be expected. Of the countryside he wrote "je n'ai jamais vu... de terres aussi sauvages et incultes." See NA, Archives de l'archevêché de Montréal (copies) vol. 7, "Journal de Mgr Lartigue", 4 August, 1820. More surprising are Papineau's comments a few years later while travelling through Vermont where he spoke of the "détresse des cultivateurs". See NA, Fonds Famille Papineau, vol. 1, p. 412-415, Papineau to Julie Papineau, 19 January, 1823.

51. Courrier du Bas-Canada, 23 October, 1819.

52. Le Canadien, 23 July, 1823.

pointed to education as a source of the American farmer's prosperity.<sup>53</sup>

This rehabilitation of the American farmer in French-Canadian political discourse mirrors the generally positive image appearing in other countries at the same time. In France, for example, the image of the United States which evolved until 1830 was built on the myth of the small farmer and his political virtue.<sup>54</sup> One finds a similarly positive views in Upper Canada for the same period. Jane Errington, who has studied the American image to 1828 in the upper province, comments that agricultural improvements in the United States was what colonial leaders "found most interesting and useful".<sup>55</sup> Occasionally these foreign commentaries found their way into the Lower-Canadian press and buttressed the positive image of American agriculture which was emerging.<sup>56</sup>

René Rémond in his study of the American image in France for this period underlines the paradox which grew out of the simultaneous representations of America as Arcadia

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53. La Minerve, June 18 and 21, 1827.

54. Rémond, tome II, pp. 508-520.

55. Jane Errington, "The Eagle, the Lion and Upper Canada" (Ph.D. dissertation, Queens University, 1984), pp. 293-294.

56. See for example the article "Characteristic portrait of a Yankee Farmer", presumably of British origin published in the Quebec Gazette, 15 October, 1821.

and the land of progress. According to Rémond, the two themes coexisted until 1830, when a more negative image of the United States developed which in turn, reinforced the latter perception.<sup>57</sup> In Lower Canada, before 1830, neither one of the themes had reached maturity. That is, since the theme of the virtuous small American farmer had not yet become central to French-Canadian political discourse, the theme of economic progress did not yet represent an important contradiction to the political utility of the image.

French-Canadian commentators were certainly aware of the important economic progress taking place to the south of the border. Early in the period the most powerful example of American initiative was the construction of the Erie Canal. Of course, the canal was particularly relevant to the Lower-Canadian situation since it threatened to drain trade passing through the province. Rumours of a canal project were reported as early as 1816 in the Quebec Gazette, and in 1818, the year construction on the Erie Canal began, the same paper published a long excerpt from a pamphlet praising the project's virtues with the editor arguing energetically that the colony should itself embark on similar projects.<sup>58</sup> With the project well underway,

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57. Rémond, tome II, pp. 508-520.

58. Quebec Gazette, 18 January, 1816 and 8 October, 1818.

fears of American competition for trade began to surface. Thus, L'Aurore reported in 1819 that "les Américains de l'état de New York s'occupent à faire des canaux les plus propres à nous enlever une partie du commerce qui aviverait le pays..", while it noted that Lower-Canadian legislators ignored economic improvements in favour of projects aimed at building hospitals.<sup>59</sup>

The most common attitude toward American economic progress was the belief that the rate of development in the United States was far more rapid than in the colony, or than anywhere else for that matter. In 1826 Denis-Benjamin Viger spoke of the rapid economic progress of the United States adding that the country was walking "à pas de géants dans la route de la prospérité."<sup>60</sup> Rapid transformation of the economy was one aspect of American economic life which struck canadien travellers. The best example of this in the period is a series of letters written by Pierre-Dominique Debartzch to Jacques Viger in 1830. Debartzch's trip took him along the Erie Canal then back down to Pennsylvania. In western New York he was extremely impressed with the rapid growth of cities such as Buffalo and Rochester. Of the latter Debartzch wrote:

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59. L'Aurore, 2 January, 1819.

60. Denis-Benjamin Viger, Analyse d'un entretien sur la conservation des établissements du Bas-Canada (Montréal: Lane, 1826), p. 37.

Quoique le terrain [*sic*] de cette ville étoit encore une forêt en 1812 ou 1813, pourtant on assure que sa population se monte au delà de 18,000 âmes. Je crois qu'il y a 30 ou 40 machines qui vont par le pouvoir de l'eau, à l'aide d'une chute de 50 pieds qui se trouve dans le coeur de la ville, sur la rivière Genessee. Je les ai presque toutes visitées avec un plaisir enchanteur. Tu auras une bonne idée de ce pouvoir d'eau extraordinaire, quand je t'aurai dit que j'y ai remarqué un moulin avec 16 paires de meules, bluteaux & cribles & ci, le tout allant ensemble et pouvant manufacturer entre 700 et 800 quart de fleur en 24 heures...

Continuing his journey to Pittsburgh, Debartzch found that city to be comparable to major industrial centers in Europe and described in detail the landscape of a town busy with iron and coal production, as well as textile works.<sup>61</sup> We find similar observations in François-Xavier Garneau's account of a trip to the United States in 1828.<sup>62</sup>

French-Canadian commentators viewed some aspects of American economic development with a certain amount of suspicion. The growth of the American banking system, for example, was reported most often in times of crisis. Opposition to banks and paper money was by 1815 well established in American political discourse and had grown out of the Republican opposition to Hamilton's plan for a federal bank in the 1790's. That bank was, of course,

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61. ANQ, Fonds Viger-Verreau, Ma Saberdache, VIII, pp. 335-341, P. D. Debartzch to Jacques Viger, 7 July, 1830.

62. See Garneau's comments on American economic growth in his Voyage en Angleterre et en France dans les années 1831, 1832 et 1833 (1855), Paul Wyczynski, ed., (Ottawa: Presses de l'Université d'Ottawa, 1968), pp. 112-115.

established and a second bank chartered by the Republican regime in 1816. Still, many Americans saw the growth of banks as dangerous both economically and politically, which made them targets of criticism in times of economic crisis.

These criticisms were often reproduced in Lower-Canadian papers. Thus the post-war economic decline which seized the United States in 1815-1816 was blamed partially on the banking system, and reports in this vein found their way into the Quebec Gazette, which in turn attributed the crisis to the generalized use of unbacked paper money and the corruption of bank administrators.<sup>63</sup> The so called "Panic of 1819" was explained by the Gazette in the same terms, with the paper reproducing reports on the banking situation in Connecticut, New York and Pennsylvania.<sup>64</sup> Neilson's Gazette also published extracts from the speeches of anti-bank politicians, such as the Governor of South Carolina's message to the legislature of that state in 1820.<sup>65</sup>

The early 1820's saw an abatement in American criticism of banks and paper money which corresponded to "Era of Good Feelings", when party politics in general became far less

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63. Quebec Gazette, 9 November, 1815; the paper also reproduced an article on the "Banking Mania" from the Baltimore Federal Republican on November 18, 1815.

64. Quebec Gazette, 8 July, 1819.

65. Quebec Gazette, 30 December, 1820.

bitter. The rise of sectional discord in the mid 1820's and the early organization of the Democratic party around the person of Andrew Jackson revived anti-banking sentiment. Indeed, Jackson's accession to the presidency in 1828 marked the beginning of a death struggle between the Democrats and the Bank of the United States, which reached a crescendo in the President's Bank Veto and the election of 1832.

Jacksonian anti-bank sentiment found its way into the patriote press as early as 1829. Indeed, la Minerve's stance was made clear in that year when it reported that the question of regulating banks was the most important issue facing the individual American states. "Le système de crédit factice est porté au plus haut degré dans plusieurs des états...", wrote the paper's editor, "...cependant les faillites, les faux nombreux, et les abus considérables qui sont résulté de ce système, commencent à faire ouvrir les yeux aux Législateurs."<sup>66</sup> Despite the new vigilance it noted, la Minerve was dismayed to find those same legislators voting charters for new banks less than a year later. Commenting on new banks in New York state the editor remarked that too many banks operating in rural areas ruined farmers through foreclosures and bankruptcies, asking: "Le bon sens américain n'ouvrira-t-il jamais les yeux?"<sup>67</sup>

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66. La Minerve, 13 July, 1829.

67. La Minerve, 3 May, 1830.

Between 1815 and 1830 Americans appeared in the Lower-Canadian press as prosperous people. Further, the American penchant for commerce and industry was no longer considered entirely negative. Indeed, the positive image of the American farmer seemed to indicate that the character of the society in general had not totally degenerated through contact with commerce. Yet, like the Republicans and Democrats in the United States who echoed the civic humanist fear of paper money as an artificial form of wealth, Lower-Canadian commentators remained suspicious of the development of the banking system.

#### 4.5 Slavery and the Missouri Compromise

If economic development created somewhat of a paradoxical image of the United States in the Lower-Canadian mind, the same was true of certain aspects of American society. Slavery was, of course, the most glaring paradox of American life. Still, the question of slavery did not become central to the discussion of the United States in the Lower-Canadian press before 1830. It was only in the 1830's, when the American image became central to patriote discourse, that slavery became an important weapon in the arsenal of the United States' critics in the colony.

The limited attention given to slavery in Lower-Canadian papers before 1830 was also a reflection of the

uneasy consensus on the issue which was achieved in the United States in the 1820's. Indeed, the question of slavery in the territories was raised in 1820 upon Missouri's application for entry into the Union as a slave state. Politically, the crisis over slavery was defused by the Missouri Compromise of that year, which established a northern boundary for future slave states at 36,30 degrees latitude, while exempting the new state of Missouri from this rule and simultaneously admitting Maine as a free state in order to preserve the sectional balance in the Senate. Although the agreement held through the decade, other events, such as slave conspiracies and rebellions in the South and the abolition of slavery in many of the northern states, sowed the seeds of future discord.

Lower-Canadian papers noted these developments most often without noting their significance to the future of the American union. Thus, L'Aurore reported in 1817 that the New York legislature had abolished slavery in the state without commenting on the event.<sup>68</sup> In 1822 la Gazette canadienne republished news of a slave rebellion in South Carolina without attributing any particular importance to it, and later reports in la Minerve of similar incidents in Louisiana seem not to be taken very seriously.<sup>69</sup> Similarly,

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68. L'Aurore, 21 April, 1817.

69. La Gazette canadienne, 2 August, 1822; la Minerve, 3 January 1828.

the colony's papers regularly reported census figures which showed the large number of slaves in the southern states, and treasury reports detailing the rich bounty of cotton they produced.<sup>70</sup>

The threat which slavery posed to the future of the American union was exposed during the Missouri Crisis. The Quebec Gazette reported the events of 1820 in the most detail, and its coverage included the publication of a letter from a Congressman to a Georgia paper which predicted the danger of bringing the issue of slavery into national politics. The paper also reported news of the bill finally admitting Missouri to the union.<sup>71</sup>

Indeed, the Missouri Crisis seems to have spurred some antislavery sentiment in the colony. In the midst of the crisis the Quebec Gazette chose to publish an antislavery poem titled "The Negro's Complaint".<sup>72</sup> It was le Canadien, however, which provided the only direct comment on the contradiction between American democratic ideals and the continued existence of slavery. The comment came during the Missouri Crisis and followed a republished report of the execution of three slaves in Georgia. The event moved the

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70. See, for example, la Minerve, 12 July, 1827 and 3 December, 1827.

71. See the Quebec Gazette, 24 February, 6 March and 16 March 1820.

72. Quebec Gazette, 9 March, 1820.

paper's editor to comment: "Qui pourroit-croire que, dans cette terre de liberté et de civilisation, il s'exerçât des cruautés si horribles? Qui pourroit seulement en lire le récit sans frémir? Funeste esclavage! Tu en es la cause!"<sup>73</sup>

Other papers presented the antislavery view by reprinting documents drawn from the growing British antislavery movement, which itself focused heavily on the slave trade as a particularly inhuman aspect of American slavery. Letters and "narratives" on the slave trade and slave auctions appeared in le Spectateur in 1821 and in the Quebec Gazette the following year, both apparently of British origin.<sup>74</sup>

This was the extent of the antislavery sentiment recorded in the Lower-Canadian press in this period. Still, it is clear that Lower-Canadians were aware of the existence of slavery, its confinement to the states of the south and that the issue had the potential to divide the union. This was a question which would be hotly debated by the patriote press and its opponents in the next decade.

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73. Le Canadien, 1 March, 1820.

74. See a letter describing a slave auction in Richmond, Virginia published in the London Observer which appeared in translation in le Spectateur, 7 July 1821; and "The Slave Trade: A Dreadful Narrative" reprinted in the Quebec Gazette, 18 April, 1822.

#### 4.6 Federalism and Republican Institutions

Although there still were blemishes on the American national character after 1815, the view which held that political life in the United States was marked by corruption, intrigue and anarchy almost completely disappeared between 1815 and 1830. This led to a more thorough consideration of politics and political institutions in the Republic, subjects which were discussed in favourable and sometimes glowing terms.

American news continued to pour into the colony in this period and thus permitted its newspapers to record the course of political life in the United States. As in the earlier period, one important indicator of the place of American politics in the colonial consciousness was the number of official documents emanating from Washington which found their way into Lower-Canadian papers. Once again the most common American political documents republished in the period emanated from the White House itself. As was the case before 1815, the President's annual messages, delivered to Congress, were usually reprinted in French in the Lower-Canadian press. Again, the Quebec Gazette led the way, publishing all but three of the addresses, either in part or

in their entirety, from 1815 to 1830.<sup>75</sup> Although the unilingual French language papers in the colony did not reproduce these documents with the same regularity, the presidential message to Congress did appear in l'Aurore in 1817, la Gazette canadienne in 1822, le Spectateur in 1828, and in la Minerve in 1828 and 1830.<sup>76</sup> Two inaugural addresses were also published in the period, that of John Quincy Adams in the Quebec Gazette, and the full translation of Jackson's first inaugural in la Minerve.<sup>77</sup> Other presidential documents, usually dealing with foreign affairs appeared sporadically during the period in various papers.<sup>78</sup>

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75. The message was not published in 1821, 1822 and 1824, years where very little American news was reported in the paper. The other messages appear in the Quebec Gazette, 21 December, 1815; 19 December, 1816; 20 December, 1817; 3 December, 1818; 23 December, 1819; 30 November 1820; 15 and 18 December 1823; 19 December, 1825; 18 December, 1826; 20 December, 1827; 15 December, 1828; 17 December, 1829; 16 December, 1830.

76. l'Aurore, 27 December, 1817; la Gazette canadienne, 18 December, 1822; le Spectateur, 20 December, 1828; and la Minerve, 18 December, 1828 and 16 December, 1830.

77. Quebec Gazette, 28 March, 1825; la Minerve, 16 March, 1829.

78. See for example Monroe's message to Congress regarding the Seminole war published in l'Aurore, 18 April, 1818; Monroe's message to Congress regarding negotiations with Great Britain published in le Constitutionnel, 29 June, 1824; John Quincy Adams' message to Congress urging the establishment of a national university published in the Bibliothèque canadienne, January 1826; and Adams' proclamation closing trade between the United States and British colonies published in the Quebec Gazette, 23 March, 1827.

A number of other federal government documents were published in the period. Reports of the United States Treasury were often reproduced in their entirety by the Quebec Gazette, although frequently the newspaper merely extracted their figures on trade or the public debt.<sup>79</sup> The same paper also published extracts from the United States census of 1821 which broke down the Republic's population by state and established the total at 9,625,734.<sup>80</sup> Congressional documents received far less attention in the period press. Exceptions to this rule were debates of the House of Representatives dealing with trade with the Canadas, which appeared in several papers in 1823-1824.<sup>81</sup>

A significant trend in the reproduction of American political documents in this period, however, was an increased coverage of state politics, particularly those of New York. Indeed, political documents from the individual states were used as a point of comparison with the colony, a task to which the large size of the federal government was unsuited. At one level this was reflected by the publication of the Governor of New York's annual messages to

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79 See the Quebec Gazette, 6 and 13 January, 1820; 22 January and 29 October, 1821; 8 April, 1824; 12 June and 29 December, 1828.

80. Quebec Gazette, 21 January, 1822.

81. These appear in la Gazette canadienne, 19 February, 1823; the Quebec Gazette, 25 March 1824; and in le Canadien, 14 April, 21 April and 19 May, 1824.

the state Congress, again primarily in the Quebec Gazette.<sup>82</sup> Often these messages contained information relevant to the colonial political context. In the case of New York, reports on the progress and operation of the Erie Canal, on the state's educational system and on its system of finances appeared in many of the Governor's addresses. These were supplemented, in the case of education, by other official documents.<sup>83</sup> The only time that official documents from other states were reprinted was when they touched on issues of interest in the colony. In the period, these were drawn from states as far away as South Carolina and dealt with the issues of banking, the penitentiary system, revision of criminal law and the Maine-New Brunswick boundary dispute.<sup>84</sup>

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82. See the Quebec Gazette, 9 February, 1818; 18 January, 1819; 20 November, 1820; 17 January, 1822; 12 August, 1824; 9 January, 1826; and 19 January, 1829. See also le Canadien, 30 January, 1822 (probably reprinted from the Quebec Gazette)

83. See for example the reports of the New York state superintendent of education published in le Canadien, 28 April, 1819; le Spectateur, 8 January, 1820; and the Quebec Gazette, 2 April and 11 June, 1821.

84. See the Governor of South Carolina's message condemning banks republished in the Quebec Gazette, 30 December, 1820. The same paper published reports of the South Carolina and Massachusetts legislatures on the adoption of the penitentiary system on 1 October, 1818 and 10 January, 1820 respectively. It also published the Governor of Massachusetts' speech to his assembly on the Maine-new Brunswick boundary question in its 16 January, 1826 issue. La Minerve printed excerpts from a report on reform of the Louisiana penal code on 12 April, 1827.

With the exception of the President's annual address to Congress, then, American political documents were most often used to make a point about a particular issue which was of concern, be it educational reform, prison reform or banking. The same was largely true of commentary dealing with American political institutions. Since the patriotes had not yet adopted an openly republican stance in their calls for reform of the Lower-Canadian Constitution, it was not necessary to praise the American Republic in general theoretical terms. Similarly, the party's opponents did not feel obliged, as they would in the 1830's, to criticize the American system of government. Indeed, in the late 1820's both Papineau, who was becoming an ardent admirer of the Republic, and his more moderate followers, who remained attached to the British tradition, could use the United States selectively in pointing to desired reforms.

The extent to which the United States as republic was not yet used overtly as a desirable model is indicated by the small number of articles dealing with the Constitution itself and the state constitutions. Indeed, there were few citations from the Constitution, although le Canadien in 1824 did reproduce an article documenting the adoption of the Articles of Confederation.<sup>85</sup> Further, although six new states joined the Union between 1815 and 1830, only two of

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85. Le Canadien, 30 June, 1824.

the new state constitutions were reprinted in the colony, that of Mississippi (1817) and that of Missouri (1821).<sup>86</sup>

One aspect of the Constitution that was touched on during the period was the system of federalism it instituted. The discussions of American federalism before 1830 were not extensive, and were triggered by calls for federation of the British North American colonies, which accompanied the attempts at uniting Upper and Lower Canada. At one level, Denis-Benjamin Viger argued against tighter control over the colony by the Mother Country by showing that a comparison to the federal government's control over the states was not appropriate. In the American system, Viger argued, the federal government was not as far removed from the people as the Imperial parliament was from the lives of the colonists. In addition, because the people sent representatives to Washington to present their point of view, the information the national government in the United States received on conditions in the individual states was

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86. The six new states all joined before 1822: Indiana, 11 December, 1816; Mississippi, 10 December, 1817; Illinois, 3 December; Alabama, 14 December, 1819; Maine, 3 March, 1820; Missouri, 10 August, 1821. The constitution adopted by the Mississippi territory and submitted to Congress was reproduced with a commentary in the Gazette des Trois-Rivières, 30 September, 1817 and in le Spectateur, 4 October, 1817. The Missouri constitution was reproduced in the coverage of the Missouri Crisis; see the Quebec Gazette, 6 and 16 March, 1820.

more likely to be reliable than that which the metropolis received from its appointed officials in the colony.<sup>87</sup>

While it was assumed that the Federal government was well informed of conditions in the individual states, French-Canadian political writers also saw Washington's power over the states as limited. Indeed, Papineau, in a letter written in 1826 which condemned the concept of British North American federation, argued that the states had already developed as independent political entities before entering into the federation. This was the essential difference between the position of the Anglo-American colonies in 1776 and that of Lower Canada fifty years later. The American colonies, wrote Papineau, "étaient libres et forts et éclairés beaucoup plus que nous le sommes et ce qui était pour eux un moyen d'affranchissement deviendrait pour nous, dans le principe du moins un moyen d'asservissement."<sup>88</sup>

The idea that the federal government's power was limited also appeared in la Minerve a few years later. In an article dealing with banking, the paper's editor began by detailing how the federal government had assumed responsibilities for matters of external affairs, defense and commerce, leaving the states with the responsibility for

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87. Viger, Analyse d'un entretien..., pp. 24-25.

88. NA, Fonds Famille Papineau, vol. 5, pp. 418-420, Papineau to John Neilson, 11 December, 1826.

regulating institutions within their borders, such as banks.<sup>89</sup> The notion that the Federal government was merely a compact between the states was, of course, part and parcel of American political discourse in the period. The evolution of the state rights doctrine can be traced back to the Kentucky and Virginia Resolutions adopted by the Republican party in response to the Federalists' use of the central government's power to enact what was considered repressive legislation. The same discourse re-emerged in the late 1820's as part of a new states' rights campaign, which culminated in the Nullification Crisis of the early 1830's. Thus the idea of the United States as a decentralized federation of independent republics was not unique to French Canada. Although this theme was not fully developed before 1830, there are indications this was the view of American federalism which was emerging in patriote discourse. Indeed, at the very end of the period, la Minerve reported that Jackson's annual address had been delivered to the "Congrès National des Républiques Américaines".<sup>90</sup>

Few comments dealing with the advantages of republican institutions appeared in this period. Aside from the general observations on the representative nature of the

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89. La Minerve, 13 July, 1829.

90. La Minerve, 16 December, 1830.

American government discussed above, the Republic was used as a point of comparison only in very specific instances. One theme that did emerge emphasized that republican government was more economical than that which existed in the colony. American political documents reproduced in the colonial press, often containing budget statements, seemed to prove this. In one instance a correspondent noted the discrepancy between the costs of republican and royal government and added that Lower-Canadians should not be placed in a position to envy their neighbours.<sup>91</sup> A few months later an anonymous letter to la Minerve explained that one area where Americans had lowered the cost of government was in the salary of the executive, a situation which was of particular relevance to the colony:

Cette petite province paye annuellement à son gouverneur une somme beaucoup plus considérable que celle que reçoit le Président des Etats-Unis: que l'on compare l'étendue du territoire, l'état de la population, des richesses et des ressources commerciales, et aussi la manière dont s'occupent M. Adams et le Comte Dalhousie; on pourra alors juger s'il existe point ici des abus auxquels il est nécessaire de remédier.<sup>92</sup>

Two particular aspects of the republican form of government were also worthy of comment. The executive in

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91. See "Yankee Notions" in the Quebec Gazette, 3 January, 1828. The correspondent notes that the cost of operating the government of the state of Vermont was only \$50,000 (12, 500 lbs sterling) which would barely cover the cost of a few of the colony's royal officials.

92. "X" in la Minerve, 24 March, 1828.

republican governments was viewed as fairer, as well as more economical it seems. Thus, in 1819, "Gracchus", writing in l'Aurore, stated that unlike the situation in the colony, the executive in the United States, both at the state and federal level, was above party politics.<sup>93</sup> At the end of the period we find la Minerve reproducing articles from American papers in order to show the independence of the judiciary in the United States and the respect for justice which was evident even in frontier areas. The paper suggested that such examples were relevant to the Lower-Canadian situation.<sup>94</sup>

#### 4.7 Politics and Presidents

One area which received more attention in period discourse was the practice and nature of American politics. Before 1815 the extremely negative view of American society dictated that politics in the United States was characterized the activities of greedy and ambitious politicians, supported by a corrupted population. This view evolved significantly in the period. In general terms American politics were now considered inherently democratic because of the state of society in that country.

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93. "Gracchus" in l'Aurore, 3 July, 1819.

94. See la Minerve, 21 August, 1828 and 10 April, 1830.

Specifically, American politics were examined more closely, particularly at the end of the period, and American political figures, or at least some of them, appeared as statesmen of some merit.

This is not to say that the view of American politics as chaos disappeared immediately. In the immediate aftermath of the war, for example, the old view was repeated in the Quebec Gazette in a scathing attack on the American press. Replying to American accusations of British abuses of American prisoners of war, Neilson termed the press south of the border "la honte et le fléau du Pays" and added that "...[un] peuple chez qui les individus peuvent gagner leur vie par la fausseté et la calomnie, et en servant les viles passions d'un parti ou de la populace, n'est pas dans une condition de jouir longtemps de la paix."<sup>95</sup> Similarly, in 1818, an otherwise favourable article on American manners, found serious problems with political life in the republic, both because the population of the United States had been "ramassé de tous les coins de l'univers" and because of its "système d'élections qui tenant le peuple dans une agitation continuelle, fomente les divisions et fait perdre un tems considérable..."<sup>96</sup> The theme of political corruption and anarchy also reappeared as late as November 1822 when a

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95. Quebec Gazette, 6 July, 1815.

96. "Lettre d'un Canadien voyageant aux Etats-Unis" in le Spectateur, 14 February, 1818.

correspondent to la Gazette canadienne wrote that "[l']instabilité de la politique et des affaires [aux Etats-Unis] a donné courage et des forces à l'ambition audacieuse, qui spécul sans remords sur le malheur des autres pour s'élever au dessus d'eux."<sup>97</sup>

Simultaneously, however, the image of American politics was evolving. At the theoretical level, at least one French-Canadian paper recognized in 1819 that the American people enjoyed a measure of political power which was greater than that accorded to subjects living under limited monarchies, greater indeed than that of the British people. Unlike previous comments on the democratic nature of American society this article in l'Aurore did not link that power to anarchy in politics.<sup>98</sup> This changing attitude was also illustrated in an editorial in le Canadien a year later, which praised the American people for their wisdom in consistently electing the Fathers of their Revolution and Constitution adding "heureuse les nations fidèles et qui savent estimer longtemps."<sup>99</sup> The significant change in the attitude toward American politics, however, took place after news of the Union Bill reached the colony. This, of course,

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97. La Gazette canadienne, 21 November, 1822.

98. The comments are contained in an article dealing with the agitation for extensions of the franchise in Great Britain. See l'Aurore, 18 September, 1819.

99. "Sergi" in le Canadien, 22 March, 1820.

was linked to the emerging pattern of discourse which emphasized the differences between European and North American social organization and politics. The implication of this view for the role of citizen in American politics was to raise his status to that, as le Canadien wrote in 1823, of "les plus libres hommes de toute la terre."<sup>100</sup>

Of course the change in attitude toward American politics was not only conditioned by domestic concerns. The very nature of political life in the Republic had evolved considerably by the early 1820's. The acrimonious political strife which had marked the prewar struggles between Federalists and Republicans had faded into the consensus politics of the "Era of Good Feelings". The image that America was projecting supported a more positive interpretation of American politics. Unfortunately for our purposes, ideological consensus and political unanimity also made American politics less interesting to foreign observers. This, combined with the Lower-Canadian preoccupation with the Union Bill, made for scanty reporting of American political events in the mid-1820's.

When American politics were considered in the Lower-Canadian press, the focus of attention was on the White House. As is still the case today, the office of the chief executive and the person occupying it tended to overshadow

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100. Le Canadien, 3 December, 1823; cited by Reid, pp. 195-196.

the activities of the Congress as well as state politics. The exception to the rule was the Governor of New York, Dewitt Clinton, whom the Quebec Gazette hailed on more than one occasion as "one of the most intelligent and patriotic individuals in the United States."<sup>101</sup> Clinton's claim to fame was of course the construction of the Erie Canal which apparently earned him as favourable a reputation in Upper Canada.<sup>102</sup> On the national level, the trend in the period was toward a more positive image of the President as a statesman. Indeed, this view was even applied to James Madison who, despite having declared war and prosecuted it against Great Britain and her North American colonies, was the subject of an eulogistic biography published in le Spectateur shortly after he left office.<sup>103</sup> James Monroe, who presided over the "Era of Good Feelings", was little commented in the period press. A rare exception was one editorial in the Quebec Gazette which on the occasion of his first annual message to Congress predicted that under his administration the progress of the industrious people of the United States would be "ably directed and judiciously

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101. See the Quebec Gazette, 9 February, 1818. Similar comments appear in the same paper's 18 January, 1819 issue.

102. See Errington, pp. 299-300.

103. "Portrait de Madison" in le Spectateur, 19 July, 1817.

administered..."<sup>104</sup> The only other comment on Monroe's presidency appeared in the same paper in response to his speech outlining what became the Monroe Doctrine, which the editor considered "a bold policy".<sup>105</sup>

The relative lack of interest in American politics during the mid-1820's was also characteristic of most of John Quincy Adams' administration. Adams was considered an able administrator, and was cited particularly for his support of higher education. It was not until the last years of his term, however, that the press in the colony became concerned with his presidency. This renewed awareness of American presidential politics was no doubt partially inspired by the bitter contest which was shaping up for the 1828 presidential election. Indeed, the rise of the President's most bitter rival, Andrew Jackson, signalled the end of the "Era of Good Feelings" and the dawn of a new day in American politics. The outlines of the second American party system were already emerging, and the level of partisanry demonstrated in the 1828 elections marked a return to the divisive politics of the Federalist-Republican era. Jackson himself was a sign of the changing times. In a very real sense, this self-styled representative of the

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104. Editorial on Monroe's message to Congress in December of 1817 in the Quebec Gazette, 25 December, 1817.

105. Quebec Gazette, 15 December, 1823.

west and the frontier was the embodiment of the new more popular ethos of American life.

Although the symbolism of Jackson's presidency was not immediately grasped by the French-Canadian press, his candidacy renewed interest in American politics. This new concern with the American political system was also a reflection of the changes which had occurred in French-Canadian political discourse. By the late 1820's the concept of the New World's democratic destiny was appearing with increased frequency in patriote political texts and this inevitably led to further consideration of the United States and its political system. The trend was most evident in the newest of the patriote organs, la Minerve, founded late in 1826. Almost from its inception this paper paid more attention to American life and politics than any previous French-Canadian paper. One of the first topics to catch its eye was the American presidential race.

Given the new emphasis on North American democracy in patriote discourse one would have expected the paper to herald Jackson's candidacy. Indeed, the candidate's followers chose to call themselves Democrats and adopted a discourse not so different from that which was gaining ground in certain Lower-Canadian political circles. Fernand Ouellet, for one, associates Papineau's radicalization with the influence of Jacksonian Democracy, and dates the shift in his thought about the same time as the rise of Jackson's

party.<sup>106</sup> La Minerve, however, not only opposed Jackson's bid for the presidency, but also reproduced a number of anti-Jacksonian tracts and adopted many of the arguments of his critics.

There are a number of explanations for this apparent contradiction. First, la Minerve relied heavily for much of its information on the Courrier des Etats-Unis, a newspaper published in French in New York city. The paper's stance in politics was fairly conservative and its articles, many of which were reproduced in la Minerve, indicate its anti-Jackson stance. More importantly, however, Jackson's image in Lower Canada was primarily that of a reckless and unprincipled adventurer. Jackson's military career had received extensive coverage in the Lower-Canadian press. His activities in New Orleans during the war, his campaigns in Florida, and his execution of two captured British subjects during the Seminole War were all reported in the colony's papers.<sup>107</sup> Jackson no doubt evoked fears of

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106. Fernand Ouellet, Le Bas-Canada 1791-1840 (Ottawa: Presses de l'Université d'Ottawa, 1980), p. 336.

107. On the battle of New Orleans and Jackson's apparent disregard for civil liberties during the British siege see the Quebec Gazette, 22 June, 1815 and le Spectateur, 3 June, 1816. Jackson's execution of British prisoners was reported with outrage by the Quebec Gazette, 11 June, 1818. L'Aurore of 18 July, 1818 reprinted the Quebec Gazette's report and condemned both Jackson's actions and those of his government. The same paper called for Jackson to be brought to justice for his crimes a few months later. See L'Aurore, 17 October, 1818 and 21 November, 1819. The issue was kept alive by le Canadien which published a letter by John Quincy Adams condemning Jackson's

American expansionism which were still present in the 1820's.

For the moment, in 1827-1828, la Minerve agreed with National Republicans in the United States that Jackson was a danger to the political stability of the Union. Both la Minerve and le Spectateur signalled their interest in the election by instructing their readers on the complexities of the Electoral College and the methods through which a president was elected.<sup>108</sup> La Minerve first dealt with the politics of the election in late October, 1827. The paper announced to its readers that the race for the presidency was getting underway and that Jackson's party was much weakened, even in the southern states. Conversely, it believed that Adams' administration had gained him support even among those who had opposed the President in the last election.<sup>109</sup>

By early 1828 the paper was behaving almost as a Adams paper might. An article republished from the New Orleans Commercial Advertiser commented on the presidential contest

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actions in its 3 February, 1819 issue.

108. La Minerve published an article describing how the system worked as well as the laws regulating the choice of electors in the state of Louisiana in its 1 October, 1827 issue. On the eve of the election le Spectateur reproduced an article from the Courrier des Etats-Unis dealing again with the method of selecting electors, but this time including a breakdown of the number of electors per state. See le Spectateur, 4 October, 1828.

109. La Minerve, 29 October, 1827.

in Virginia. Citing the great political leaders produced by that state, the article went on to claim that Virginians would never opt for a candidate with as little distinction as Jackson.<sup>110</sup> A few weeks later the paper was reproducing another anti-Jackson piece, also drawn from the Louisiana press, which claimed that the candidate's Democratic followers in the state had fought for the British during the war.<sup>111</sup> The real source of the paper's opposition, however, was revealed in an article published in August. Under the simple heading "LE GENERAL JACKSON" the piece enumerated the sordid details of the Jackson's military and political career including an assassination attempt on a political rival, the execution of prisoners and of his own troops, atrocities committed against Indian captives, and his threat of entering the Senate to cut off the ears of any member who dared criticize his conduct. The article was inspired by reports of the same nature published in the Richmond Whig.<sup>112</sup>

Clearly it was Jackson's bellicosity as a soldier which worried la Minerve. The patriote paper was more than familiar with the results of placing military men in positions of executive authority. This was a theme which would continue to mark the patriote press' reaction to the

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110. La Minerve, 17 April, 1828.

111. La Minerve, 1 May, 1828.

112. "LE GENERAL JACKSON" in la Minerve, 14 August, 1828.

new president well into the next decade, even at a time when it would applaud his crusade against the Bank of the United States. In 1828-1829 though, la Minerve had to accept the results of the election which swept the former general into office. This it did without commentary, merely reprinting Jackson's inaugural address and reporting the results of the congressional elections.<sup>113</sup> The Quebec Gazette, on the other hand, openly applauded Jackson's election, arguing that "General Jackson is more of a statesman than he is supposed."<sup>114</sup> On the occasion of Jackson's first address to Congress la Minerve was again silent, while the Quebec Gazette hailed the President's message as "one of the most republican documents ever communicated to Congress."<sup>115</sup> Ironically, in the years to follow the Quebec paper would become one of the harshest critics of American politics in the colony.

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113. Jackson's address appears in la Minerve's 16 March, 1829 issue, results of the congressional elections, with a breakdown by state appeared in that of 2 March.

114. Quebec Gazette, 12 March, 1829.

115. Quebec Gazette, 17 December, 1829.

#### 4.8 Reinterpreting the American Revolution

The French-Canadian view of the American Revolution also evolved considerably between 1815 and 1830. At one level, the more positive image of the Revolution was a product of the changed political climate within the colony. Unlike the tense years before 1815, references to the Revolution were more politically acceptable in the 1820's. Further, the Union Bill and the crisis of faith in imperial administration it provoked eventually led French-Canadian commentators to a re-evaluation of the Revolution and the motives behind it.

Americans too were rediscovering their Revolution in the 1820's. Indeed, rising American nationalism in the decade led to a widespread nostalgia for the Revolutionary period and its leading figures. The death of such prominent revolutionaries as John Adams and Thomas Jefferson in 1826 and the triumphant return of the Marquis de La Fayette to the United States in 1824 reinforced the trend. The latter event was reported extensively both in the United States and in France and the emphasis of these reports was, of course, on the old French soldier's role in the Revolutionary War and his close association with Washington.<sup>116</sup>

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116. On the reaction in France to La Fayette's voyage to America see Rémond, tome II, pp. 619-622.

Before 1815 the dominant view of the American Revolution in French-Canadian political discourse emphasized the disloyalty of the American. Usually the motives of the revolutionaries were questioned and always the loyalty of the Canadiens in 1775 was underlined. That aspect of the image survived, and we find allusions to the role of the Canadiens in preserving the colony for British arms in a few instances in this period.<sup>117</sup> Other elements of the old view were modified to suit the new political circumstances of the colony. Before 1815, the Bureaucrats or "anti-canadiens" were likened to the "yankey" rebels, and it was assumed that they were plotting to separate the colony from the Mother Country. By 1820, however, the bureaucrats were seen as a cause of the American Revolution not because they instigated it, but rather because many of them had been royal officials in the Anglo-American colonies. An article in le Canadien likening the political situation in the colony to an illness found the origin of the infection in the American colonies:

Cette maladie, suivant les meilleurs auteurs, tire son origine des ci-devant Colonies angloises et est la cause de leur émancipation. On prétend qu'elle a été emportée en Canada du tems de leur rébellion. Elle n'est pas encore bien générale

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117. See for example le Canadien, 12 February, 1822, where Jacques Langlois, referring to Americans in the colony, writes "...ils se sont sauvés comme les pauvres Bostonnais de '75 en Yankee doodle, doodle. Yankee sauve toi." References to Canadien loyalty also appeared relatively late in the period. See for example Jacques Labrie's speech reproduced in la Minerve, 7 January, 1828.

ici; il n'y a, fort heureusement, que quelques familles qui en sont attaquées.<sup>118</sup>

A more serious article published in the same paper almost a year later outlined the role of the colony's official class in the Revolution in more detail. Under the title "Réflexions politiques sur le Canada", the piece began by stating that the Revolution had forced British officials and "hommes à place" to flee the colonies and that many of them chose to come to Canada. Frustrated in their attempts to dominate the governments of the American colonies by the Revolution itself, these men sought to recreate their privileged position in Lower Canada. Embittered by the experience of the Revolution, they were suspicious of the Canadiens and accused them of disloyalty. The Canadiens, however, had acquired the means to resist their intrigues in the Constitution of 1791, and therein lay the reasons for political conflict in the colony. While this article clearly deals with the source of political unrest in Lower Canada, it nevertheless marks an evolution in the French-Canadian view of the American Revolution and its causes.<sup>119</sup> Indeed, by 1823, the same paper argued that had these bureaucrats been unchecked in their attempts to impose their

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118. Le Canadien, 26 April, 1820.

119. Le Canadien, 21 February, 1821.

system of corruption in Lower Canada, the province might well have fallen to the Americans in 1775 and 1813.<sup>120</sup>

The major change in the image of the Revolution in French-Canadian political discourse came, however, as a result of the crisis over the Union Bill. The Revolution was invoked from the very beginning of the struggle against the policy. Indeed, the first article in le Canadien protesting the measure cited in the established fashion the loyalty of the Canadiens at the time of the Revolution. However, in discussing American actions, the article admitted that the colonists had a legitimate grievance in the issue of taxation. The author maintained that the Revolution was caused by this issue and that the British retreat from the policy came too late to prevent the separation of the American colonies. The Canadiens had nevertheless rejected the American offer to join the Revolution: "[les Canadiens] n'ont pas voulu épouser la querelle quant au droit de la mère patrie de taxer ses colonies...", with the result that "...[ils] ont souffert jusqu'à ce jour et sans le moindre murmure, des impôts mis sur ce pays par la métropole." In effect the Canadiens had been punished for remaining loyal despite the abuses of imperial policy in the 1770's.<sup>121</sup>

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120. Le Canadien, 17 September, 1823.

121. Le Canadien, 19 June, 1822.

The crisis over the Union Bill seemed to open the floodgates of French-Canadian interest in the Revolution. Moreover, 1824 was a year when the return of La Fayette prompted the publication of many documents of the revolutionary era in the French and American press. These, in turn, found their way into Lower-Canadian papers where they were used for political purposes. From April to June 1824, le Canadien brimmed with documents and accounts from the revolutionary era. One of the first in this series was an extract from the Continental Congress' declaration of June 1775. The paper's editor did not in fact reproduce the document literally, rather he presented it in the form of a dialogue between the colonists and the Mother Country. This format was a convenient medium for opposing the legitimacy of American grievances to the arrogance of the British response. The article went on to make clear the lesson of the summary: "Cet extrait fait voir sous quel point de vue des colonies, poussées à bout par de petits tyrans intestins, peuvent regarder ce que la Mère-Patrie appellent [sic] ses bienfaits envers elles." This was followed by an enumeration of the rights of British colonists ending with the comment: "Ces réflexions ne sont peut-être pas inutiles en ce temps où chez la Mère-Patrie on travaille dit-on à donner une existence au monstre scoto-montréaliste, l'Union,

contre laquelle tous les habitants du pays ont réclamé..."<sup>122</sup>

This article was followed by the publication of speeches on the Declaration of Independence, articles on the situation of the American colonies at the time of the Revolution, and further documents of the Continental Congress.<sup>123</sup>

Significantly, despite this new interest in the revolutionary period, le Canadien never published the Declaration of Independence itself. Clearly, the emphasis here was on the activities of the Continental Congress and the justifications for resisting British measures. These were politically useful in the context of French-Canadian resistance to imperial policy in the 1820's.

This change in the interpretation of the Revolution was accompanied by a favourable and even laudatory view of certain leading revolutionary figures. The three men who received the most press in the period were Franklin, Washington and La Fayette. La Fayette, of course, received attention because of his triumphant return to America in 1824-1825. His visit, in turn, prompted a reconsideration

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122. Le Canadien, 21 April, 1824.

123. Le Canadien reproduced the First Continental Congress's "Address to the people of Great Britain" in its 5 May, 1824 issue (the 50th anniversary of the Congress' meeting), the same issue contained an article on the "Caractère des treize provinces des Etats-Unis d'Amérique". Two short articles on Washington appeared a week later in the 12 May, 1824 issue. A piece entitled "Situation des Américains au moment de la guerre" followed on 19 May, 1824. John Adams' speech on the occasion of the Declaration of Independence appeared in the paper's 30 June issue.

of Washington, although the revolutionary general's popularity had never really waned. Finally, the popularity of Franklin's writings had kept him in the public eye, although in this period it was his revolutionary activities which were highlighted.

It is important to note that all three of these men were immensely popular in France between 1815 and 1830. René Rémond found that Franklin was in fact one of the most popular authors of the period. As for La Fayette, the French followed reports of his visit to America with great interest and Rémond claims that the Marquis was a pivotal figure through which the French saw the American Revolution. As the leading figure of the Revolution, Washington was idolized in France, leading Rémond to refer to the existence of a "culte de Washington" in the period.<sup>124</sup> The interest in these figures was demonstrated by the large number of French works devoted to them in the period, many of which found their way into the Lower-Canadian press.

As early as 1818, l'Aurore touched on Franklin's revolutionary philosophy by publishing an imaginary dialogue between the American and Mirabeau. The piece, probably of French origin, also contrasts the French and American Revolutions, with Franklin condemning Mirabeau for unleashing "une Révolution mal entendue" which sought to

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124. Rémond, tome 1, p. 362, tome 2, p. 543-560.

"singer nos bons Américains". The French Revolution, Franklin continued, had degenerated into anarchy because the people of France did not possess political virtue. In this article Franklin appears as the sage of the Revolution, and one of remarkably moderate tone.<sup>125</sup> Franklin's image as a moderate made him suitable choice for discussing the causes of the Revolution. In one of the few texts to appear in the Quebec Gazette referring to the revolutionary era, the editor reproduces a letter of Franklin's dated 1771 in which he predicts that inept imperial management of the colonies would bring about disintegration of the British empire.<sup>126</sup> This was one of the few instances where Franklin was cited to make a point of contemporary relevance. More common in the period were eulogistic tributes to his record as the philosopher of the Revolution. This was the sense of a poem republished twice in Lower-Canadian papers entitled "Vers sur le tombeau de Franklin". Here, Franklin's wisdom and political virtue were seen as a source of the Revolution's success and American liberty was praised.<sup>127</sup> Another such poem, whose French origin is attributed, gave Franklin a

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125. "Dialogue. Mirabeau et Franklin" in l'Aurore, 12 September, 1818.

126. Quebec Gazette, 7 March, 1825.

127. See la Bibliothèque canadienne, May 1828 and la Minerve 2 June, 1828.

large part of the credit for the fact that Americans continued to conserve their liberty.<sup>128</sup>

If Franklin appeared as the philosopher sage of the Revolution, Washington was without a doubt the military hero of the era. The most popular representation of Washington was that of a modern Cincinnatus, the Roman citizen who left his plow to fight for liberty and the republic. This theme was well established in America, and was revived in France at the time of Washington's death in 1799.<sup>129</sup> Some of the tributes to Washington published in French-Canadian papers were of French origin and thus underlined the same themes. Such was the case with the article "Portrait de Washington" a French tribute dating from 1799 which appeared in le Spectateur in 1817.<sup>130</sup> A similar piece appeared a year later in l'Aurore.<sup>131</sup> By 1822 news of revolution in South America

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128. "Chanson faite pour un dîner donné pour Benjamin Franklin à Paris" in la Bibliothèque canadienne, August 1828; cited by Maurice Carrier and Monique Vachon, eds., Chansons politiques du Québec 1765-1833 (Ottawa: Léméac, 1977), pp. 234-235.

129. Durand Echeverria, Mirage in the West. A History of the French Image of American Society to 1815 (Princeton N. J.: Princeton University Press, 1968), pp. 254-255, notes the tributes to Washington in France at the time of his death and underlines that French authors sought to make a parallel between the American hero and Napoleon.

130. "Portrait de Washington" in le Spectateur, 14 April, 1817. The paper attributes the piece to M. Fontanes. It is probably an extract of Louis de Fontanes, Eloge de Washington (Paris, an VIII), cited by Echeverria, p. 254.

131. "Le tombeau de Washington" in l'Aurore, 10 January, 1818.

prompted one French-Canadian paper to compare current revolutionary leaders to Washington. The comparison was accompanied by an enumeration of Washington's qualities which indicates the strength of the Cincinnatus image. These were summarized as "la réunion et le bon usage des plus brillantes comme des plus solides qualités civiles, politiques et militaires."<sup>132</sup> Indeed, references to Washington were among the few touching on the American Revolution to discuss the Revolutionary War itself.<sup>133</sup>

La Fayette's visit to the United States in 1824-1825 also revived interest in the Revolution. The high profile given the visit in the American press focused the nostalgia for the revolutionary period in that country. American accounts were republished in the colony complete with the long speeches given in La Fayette's honour by leading American politicians. These orations were, of course, replete with allusions to the French nobleman's contribution to securing American independence.<sup>134</sup> La Fayette's tour was also extensively reported in France. In the years immediately following the event the French republished

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132. The comparison was with Bolivar. See le Spectateur, 5 January, 1822.

133. A good example is the series of anecdotes from Washington's military career published in le Canadien, 12 May, 1824.

134. See for example the reports and speeches reproduced in le Canadien, 18 August, 1824 and the Quebec Gazette, 20 January, 1825.

accounts of the tour and of the triumphant welcome La Fayette received in the United States. These in turn found their way into the Lower-Canadian press in 1827.<sup>135</sup> Similarly, a French poem hailing the visit and contrasting the decadence of Europe with the Democratic destiny of North America appeared in l'Argus the following year.<sup>136</sup>

The image of the American Revolution in French Canada changed dramatically between 1815 and 1830. Before the War, discussion of the Revolution's causes or its major figures was almost entirely absent from the colony's press. In this period, however, both reappeared for different reasons. Analysis of the early stages of the Revolution, and the activities of the First Continental Congress in particular, emphasized the similarity of Lower-Canadian grievances in the 1820's and those of the American revolutionaries fifty years earlier. This did not mean that French-Canadian political discourse had evolved to point of advocating similar action if their grievances were not addressed, rather it was meant to underline what could happen when the Mother Country ignored the wishes of a colony's inhabitants. Along the way, however, the American Revolution and its

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135. See the text of a speech given in La Fayette's honor by Albert Gallatin reproduced in la Minerve 26 and 29 November, 1827.

136. "La Fayette en Amérique" in l'Argus, 11 February, 1828. The poem is probably drawn from "Lafayette aux Etats-Unis" by A. Cavazzi (Eugène Labat) (Paris, 1826); cited by Rémond, tome II, p. 879.

leading figures were rehabilitated and in the years that followed the Revolution would become a powerful symbol of colonial resistance.

#### 4.9 Are the Canadiens Still Loyal?

The fact that French-Canadian political discourse could begin to rehabilitate both the American Revolution and its leading figures was a sign that favourable references to the Republic were no longer considered treasonous. Still, the more frequent comparisons to the United States in the colony's papers and their generally positive tone, made it necessary from time to time for the Canadiens to respond to charges that they were advocating American control of the province. Again this theme was not as pronounced as it would be after 1830, partially because the patriotes had not yet made the American Republic the model for their program of political reform.

The tension and mistrust caused by the constant fear of American invasion before 1815 evaporated after the war. Both domestic and international events contributed to the trend. If canadien loyalty was less of a domestic political issue than it had been, eventually the idea that it might be tested by a new American invasion also became less than relevant. In the years following the war, Great Britain and

the United States settled many issues, and while Anglo-American relations were not entirely cordial in the period under study here, neither were they marked by the hostility of the pre-war years.

The parti canadien's political opponents were not immediately convinced that the American threat had disappeared. Even British North Americans sympathetic to the cause of the Canadiens, such as John Neilson, worried publicly about the possibility of a new American invasion.<sup>137</sup> More hostile observers found cause for alarm in the growing tendency of French-Canadian papers to draw on the example of American institutions. Such was the case when the Courrier du Bas-Canada published an article praising the state of education in Massachusetts in 1819. A critic found the United States a poor choice for comparison, which in turn prompted a reply from the paper's editor. It was ridiculous, the editor wrote, to cry treason every time an article favourable to American institutions appeared. Indeed, should Lower-Canadians shun all American improvements simply because the United States was Great Britain's rival? "Je m'étonne", he commented sarcastically, "que d'aussi loyaux sujets ne crient pas à la trahison

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137. See for example Neilson's comments in the Quebec Gazette, 14 October, 1819 concerning rumours of new hostilities between the United States and Great Britain.

chaque fois qu'ils voyent un bateau à vapeur dans le fleuve St. Laurent."<sup>138</sup>

Early in the period some Canadiens also worried about American expansion. Most notably, articles commenting on attempts to annex Florida were extremely negative in tone and, while not entirely opposed to the United States acquiring the territory, found fault with the methods employed to that end by Andrew Jackson.<sup>139</sup> Elsewhere some French-Canadian editors continued to restate the old theme that the Canadiens were the best defense against American expansion. Thus, an early article reacting to news of the Union Bill made the point that the Canadiens were entirely foreign to American manners and separated from their neighbours to the south by the insurmountable barriers of language and religion. This was contrasted to the state of society in Upper-Canada, where it was assumed a large portion of the population was American in origin and thus, more sympathetic to the United States. Uniting the provinces would weaken the ability of the Canadiens to act as a barrier to American expansion.<sup>140</sup>

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138. "Trait récent" in le Courrier du Bas-Canada, 30 October, 1819.

139. This is most evident in l'Aurore. See the paper's 18 July, 17 October and 21 November articles on the subject.

140. Le Canadien, 19 June, 1822.

With the exception of these comments, there was relatively little written in the period to indicate a high level of anxiety concerning American designs on Lower Canada. Perhaps because of this, British opinion on the attitudes of the Canadiens toward the United States was divided. Those who had travelled to the colony came away with the distinct impression that the Canadiens were extremely hostile to their American neighbours, at least early in the period.<sup>141</sup> Other British observers found the Canadiens favourable toward annexation to the United States in the years following the Union crisis. This was a view which the patriotes rebutted energetically. In 1827 such comments in the Westminster Review were severely criticized by la Minerve, in an article which argued that it was possible for the Canadiens to fight for their rights while remaining loyal to Great Britain.<sup>142</sup> A year later Denis-Benjamin Viger, the Assembly's agent to the Imperial government, rejected the same charge in a letter to Francis Burton. After stating the usual proclamations of canadien loyalty, Viger ended by saying "ce n'est pas par ambition

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141. This was Sherbrooke's view; see Sir John Coape Sherbrooke to Lord Bathurst, 14 March, 1822, reprinted in Public Archives Report (1897), Note A, pp. 1-2. Richard Parr, a British traveller to the Canadas in 1820, found the same antipathy toward Americans and attributed it to the influence of the Catholic clergy. See NA, MG 24 H 70, Richard Parr Collection, "Richard Parr's Journal", pp. 556-557.

142. La Minerve, 5 November, 1827.

que nous pourrions nous jeter dans le tourbillon de la Confédération des Etats-Unis."<sup>143</sup>

Again, however, these comments were made in response to British questions about the Canadiens' loyalty. The absence of references to the threat which the United States posed to the French-Canadian nationality in this period is a sign of its transitional nature. On the one hand, the Americans seemed far less menacing after 1815, and French-Canadian loyalty was less frequently questioned. Conversely, patriote discourse, even at the end of the period, had not evolved to the point of openly rejecting the British political model and the imperial tie. Thus the question of the colony's fate if freed from British dominion was not addressed, and one logical outcome of independence, annexation to the United States, was not seriously considered before 1831.

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The period between 1815 and 1830 represented a transitional phase in the elaboration of the American image in French-Canadian political discourse. First, it was during these years that the old image of the American as

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143. NA, Fonds Denis-Benjamin Viger, MG 24 B 6, vol. 1, pp. 638-641, Viger to Sir Francis Burton, 16 October, 1828.

political man corrupted vanished from public discourse in the colony. Perhaps more importantly, it was also in this period that key elements of the very positive image of the United States that became central to patriote discourse after 1830 became part of the discursive context. Yet, despite these important changes, the paradigms of domestic political language remained relatively stable, indicating that the new image of the American Republic was fashioned by merely reversing the emphasis on virtue and corruption in American society.

The evolution of the more positive image of the United States in the period was a product of complex circumstances. On the one hand, the Republic seemed less menacing and more stable in the period. Domestic political conditions made the use of American examples more acceptable in public discourse, and the political crises of the 1820's helped intensify the French-Canadian critique of imperial policy and, in time, of British political institutions themselves. Clearly, the event which had the greatest impact on political discourse in the period was the Union Crisis, provoking a profound re-evaluation of the colony's relationship to the metropolis.

Out of this reconsideration grew a significant new tenet in French-Canadian political discourse: the belief that North America and Europe differed essentially in their social organization. The argument that political

institutions in the New World had to reflect that difference came also, in time, to be part and parcel of patriote discourse. Fernand Ouellet has recognized the importance of this shift in Papineau's thought in the late 1820's and early 1830's.<sup>144</sup> It is important to note, however, that this shift in perception was not limited to Papineau and that it emerged in public discourse in 1822 as a reaction to the news of the Union Bill. Moreover, while domestic political circumstances may have created a need to stress the differences between North America and Europe, French-Canadian political writers did not evolve this theme in isolation. Indeed, the concept of the democratic nature of North American society was already well developed in American, French and British political discourse, and works from those countries emphasizing the theme were available in the colony.

Within the context of these changes and continuities in French-Canadian political discourse, the image of America evolved fitfully over the period. Early on, the American character was rehabilitated and American educational institutions were held up as models to be emulated. In economic life, the model of the New England farmer was promoted as a positive example, while economic development

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144. See, for example, Fernand Ouellet, Louis-Joseph Papineau. Un être divisé (Ottawa: Candian Historical Association, 1960), pp. 13-14.

in other sectors met with mixed approval. While American political life and political institutions were not yet adopted as a model for the future of the colony, the virtue of the American citizen, the practice of politics and American political institutions themselves were regarded more favourably. All of these characteristics of the American image in this period presaged its shape in the 1830's.

Perhaps the clearest sign of change in the perception of the United States within French-Canadian political discourse was the more positive portrayal of the American Revolution. In the context of the political struggle over the Union Bill it seemed essential that British administrators be reminded of the lessons of the American Revolution. On the other hand, the emphasis in this period was less on the act of independence itself and the war which followed, than on the causes of the Revolution and the initial protests of the American colonists. The importance of the Revolution as a symbol of colonial liberation remained muted through the period.

That this was so brings us back to the transitional nature of the American image in the period. For while that image evolved greatly up to 1830, its political significance within French-Canadian discourse remained blurred. To be sure the American Republic was drawn upon as an example of desirable improvements in Lower-Canadian institutional life.

However, it was only after the patriote movement openly avowed its republican stance in the 1830's that the image of the United States became an important political weapon.

## CHAPTER FIVE

"LE SEUL MODÈLE QUE NOUS AVONS À SUIVRE...":

THE AMERICAN IMAGE, 1831-1837

Between 1831 and 1837 the American image assumed a prominent place in French-Canadian political discourse. As the patriote movement grew more vehement in its condemnation of the colonial administration and called for reform of the Constitution, the United States became an important model of what they hoped to achieve. In this sense the image of America gave meaning to patriote calls for institutions more in keeping with the social composition of a North American people by providing both an example of such institutions and evidence of their benevolent effects. The central place of America in patriote discourse also made the United States a topic of political debate in the colony. While the patriotes held up the Republic as a social and political model to be emulated, the movement's political opponents attacked it as a failed experiment in government. In the tense years of political conflict leading up to the Rebellions, the image of America had become a political weapon.

Ironically, just as the patriotes began to openly adopt the American model, the United States was undergoing significant economic and social change and experiencing a good deal of political turmoil. Despite these changes, the patriotes clung largely to the idea of North American specificity, and to the notion of the virtuous American citizen. When their political opponents cited examples which seemed to indicate the political corruption of the American people, the movement responded in general terms by noting the European origins of social and political disruptions in the Republic. They also noted that republican government in the United States had achieved important reforms, and predicted that the Americans would soon deal with the issue of slavery.

The economic prosperity of the United States became one of the movement's most important arguments in favour of republican institutions. The patriotes noted with approval the expansion of agriculture and commerce which had taken place south of the border. While they shared the concerns of some Americans with regard to the advent of commercial capitalism, Lower-Canadian editors predicted that the Republic would ultimately be successful in containing its abuses. The American image provided an example of what could be achieved in the economic sphere, as well as a warning of the pitfalls inherent in the development of commerce and banking.

It was the patriotes' insistence on the excellence of American political institutions, however, which gave the image its meaning. The Republic was the embodiment of the only form of political organization appropriate to a North American people, and as such the only model to be followed by the colony. To this the movement's opponents replied by pointing to mob violence, corruption and partisan politics in the United States as proof that image and reality were two different things.

The debate over the nature of American political institutions soon spilled over into another, and to some more crucial, controversy concerning the colony's future. The patriotes' emphasis on the excellence of American government led some in the colony to charge that the movement was actually advocating annexation. Indeed, some patriote texts suggested that such a solution might be desirable, an argument which brought forth the reply that political union with the United States would mean the end of the French-Canadians as a distinct people.

In the 1830's then, the image of America became a subject of intense debate in the French-Canadian press, as both the patriotes and their opponents argued over the merits and flaws of the Republic. In this exchange of views over their neighbours, French-Canadians were also arguing over their political future, and whether it lay in continuing to follow the British parliamentary tradition or

in adopting the precepts of American republicanism. For the patriotes, who represented the dominant view in the period, the answer was clear: a North American people must have a government in keeping with its particular social characteristics, a government like that of the United States.

### 5.1 The American: Enlightened or Intolerant?

In the years leading up to the Rebellions, the image of the American remained firmly rooted in the civic humanist archetype of the ideal citizen. As the battle between the Assembly and imperial authorities intensified, discussion of the United States and of the American character became a central component of political discourse within the colony. Much of that discourse continued to point out the differences between North America and Europe. Papineau, for example, speaking in favour of the Ninety-Two Resolutions in the Assembly, could not resist making the comparison between the state of public opinion and enlightenment in the American Republic and in European monarchies:

Dans un temps où des gouverneurs militaires couvrent l'Europe de sang, les Etats-Unis, sans alarme, sans trouble, ouvrent leurs ports comme l'asile du malheur, où viennent se froisser et se briser toutes les opinions contre des opinions bien meilleures et bien plus profondément gravés dans les coeurs. C'est pourquoi ils ne craignent pas les sentiments des généraux de Bonaparte, qui s'y sont réfugiés. Toutes les opinions, tous les préjugés de la vieille Europe viennent tomber

auprès du républicanisme de l'Union. On n'y a pas besoin d'armée, ni de censeur de la Presse. Chacun peut tout dire, tout écrire, et l'intérêt de tous assure qu'il n'y a pas de danger que les erreurs y prennent racine,<sup>1</sup> et s'étendent au point de devenir contagieuses...

The basis of this ability to shape the new immigrants into virtuous North Americans came from the particular democratic ethos of the American people which, in turn, was derived from the particular social conditions of the New World. This was again highlighted in 1835 when a correspondent for l'Echo du pays published his impressions of Vermont society. Writing from the tiny community of Montpelier Vermont, he argued that "l'égale répartition de la propriété en Amérique est une forte et puissante barrière opposée à l'oppression que facilitent tant dans la vieille Europe les fortunes colossales de l'Aristocratie." The author went on to draw the obvious conclusion for Lower Canada, declaring that "l'état de société y étant le même, il doit également jouir des avantages d'un gouvernement représentatif, responsable et soumis à l'opinion publique. Ce gouvernement, je le répète, est le seul possible en Amérique."<sup>2</sup> Americans and French-Canadians shared the common distinction of being

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1. Papineau, speech in the Assembly, 18 February 1834, reprinted in Etat de la province (Québec, 1834), non paginated [p. 8].

2. "Situation de Montpelier-- Etat de société en Amérique et aristocratie en Europe" in l'Echo du pays, 3 September, 1835.

North Americans, and as such were inherently more virtuous than the impoverished European masses.

Still, despite the assumption inherent in the logic of North American specificity, there remained room for commentary on the character of the American people in the political discourse of the 1830's. In some cases that discussion was prompted by the criticism of newspapers opposed to the patriote cause who now saw the necessity of discrediting both the Americans as a people and their form of government. Having adopted the Americans as a model, the patriotes were now forced to defend their choice.

On one level, the patriote press in the 1830's continued the tendency of the earlier decade which emphasized the virtue of the American farmer. In fact, la Minerve even reprinted texts that had been published in the 1820's which underlined the good manners and virtue of the American farmer. One such text appeared in June of 1836, based ostensibly on the unpublished account of a canadien traveller. Here, as it had in the 1820's, the French-Canadian press heralded American farmers (in this case New England farmers) as "des hommes éclairés et vertueux, remplis de force et d'énergie, pénétrés d'amour pour leur pays, capables par cette raison de tous les sacrifices nécessaires pour en cimenter l'indépendance..."<sup>3</sup>

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3. "Extrait inédit d'un voyage aux Etats-Unis", la Minerve, 1 June 1836.

The American people did not, however, always live up to the image that was being drawn of them in the patriote press. The 1830's were years where the political effervescence that characterized Jacksonian democracy was often expressed in mob action. Riots broke out in New York City in opposition to the growing abolitionist movement, while in Baltimore the people took to the streets in protest of the activities of the Bank of the United States. The Gazette de Québec, which had followed John Neilson in his opposition to the patriote movement, saw the activities of the mob as evidence of the instability of American political institutions. The patriote press, on the other hand, tried to explain the rioting in American cities as either the healthy expression of democratic life, the result of foreign intrigues, or a temporary aberration in the otherwise orderly progress of republican institutions.

This is not to say that French-Canadian papers of any stripe applauded the mob's activities or the destruction of private property which was inevitably the result of such events. La Minerve, without a doubt the most pro-American of the colony's papers, was critical of anti-abolitionist riots in New York City and specifically deplored the destruction of private property they entailed.<sup>4</sup> The paper, however, limited itself to reporting the event and did not

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4. La Minerve, 21 July, 1834.

attempt to explain its significance. Etienne Parent's le Canadien, still very much in the patriote fold at this point, did offer an explanation of the disorders in New York City. Parent saw the riots as evidence of foreign intervention in American political affairs. "Cette masse qu'on nomme populace ne se remue pas d'elle-même pour des principes;" he wrote, "il faut que quelque agent étranger la remue." Still, in Parent's eyes the friends of democratic institutions should not despair since "un gouvernement appuyé, formé par le peuple n'aura jamais rien à craindre de la populace."<sup>5</sup>

Riots in Baltimore directed at the Bank of the United States prompted the editor of le Canadien to return to the same theme. This time he was more specific concerning the source of the foreign contamination of American politics:

L'Amérique étant devenue l'égoût du rebut des peuples de l'Europe elle doit s'attendre au renouvellement fréquent de pareilles scènes; et elle doit prendre ou prendra promptement, nous n'en doutons pas, des mesures énergiques pour réprimer les violences populaires dont elle est devenu le théâtre au grand scandale du monde entier, et au détriment des institutions libérales qui y règnent...<sup>6</sup>

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5. Parent in le Canadien, 18 July, 1834. Elsewhere Parent simply saw the activities of American crowds as the necessary evidence of their interest in public affairs. See for example his editorial on violence in American elections in le Canadien, 11 June, 1834.

6. Le Canadien, 21 August, 1835.

Significantly, these comments came at a time when the patriotes themselves were highly critical of foreign immigration. In addition they again underlined the European origin of political trouble in North America and that such subversion could even operate in the American republic. Reporting the same riots, l'Echo du pays saw the activities of the mob in Baltimore as evidence that the American people were ever-vigilant in guarding against the activities of institutions which might infringe on their liberties. Not unlike Lower-Canadians, the good people of Baltimore had risen up against a local oligarchy:

Si l'on en cherche la source on trouvera qu'ils remontent à l'époque où l'opinion publique se déclara contre la banque des Etats, établissement qui eût fini par faire perdre à nos voisins leur liberté et à les mettre entre les mains d'une oligarchie puissante... ...ils [le peuple] prirent en horreur plus que jamais la tyrannie et les hommes qui voulaient la favoriser. Tout ce qui avait quelque rapport avec la banque excitait leur indignation, et le peuple une fois excité a peut-être été trop loin en quelques circonstances. On voit du moins que la faute n'est pas dans les institutions américaines bien dans l'aristocratie ministérielle des Etats-Unis.

In the same article the journalist left no question of the support for this "aristocratie ministérielle": "il est même à notre connaissance que l'Autriche soudoie des hommes qui se vendent à tout prix pour exciter des troubles chez nos voisins..."<sup>7</sup> Thus, the source of political troubles in the

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7. L'Echo du pays, 27 August, 1835.

United States could again be traced back to European interests and their subversive activities in North America.

Far more damaging to the image of the Americans as a people were the sporadic outbursts of anti-Catholic sentiment which punctuated the 1830's. The most serious, and seemingly most publicized of these occurred in the summer of 1834 when a mob set fire to an Ursuline convent in Charlestown, Massachusetts. The incident was widely reported and its significance debated in the Lower-Canadian press, and had severe repercussions on the American image in France.<sup>8</sup> The event, of course, provided ample ammunition for the anti-patriote press in the colony. From the first news of the incident, then, the patriote press, which by then had firmly tied the fate of its reform measures with American example, was on the defensive. La Minerve, expressed its outrage at the news of the riot, but warned against inferring from the event that republican institutions were at fault: "le langage de quelques hommes qui trouvent dans ces excès d'une populace, des arguments contre les institutions de la République qui nous avoisine, est peu propre à faire respecter leur jugement." The author went on to cite cases of persecution directed at Catholics

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8. René Rémond, Les Etats-Unis devant l'opinion française 1815-1852 (Paris: Armand Colin, 1962) tome II, p. 699, mentions the burning of the Ursuline convent at Charlestown as an event which severely damaged the reputation of the United States in France, and in Europe generally.

in England, which of course was ruled by parliamentary institutions.<sup>9</sup> Le Canadien, for its part, reported the incident in detail and added that the good people of Boston were already repairing the damage done to their reputation by extending charity to the victims of the attack.<sup>10</sup>

The incident, however, echoed through the Lower-Canadian press for years. Thus, when six of the nuns from the convent reached Québec in the fall of 1834, the Gazette took the opportunity to refresh its readers' memories of the previous summer's events. The paper's editorial pointed out that the good ladies from Charlestown had been forced to take refuge from American persecution in a British colony. Without excusing the attack on the convent, Parent, in le Canadien, found it necessary to take issue with the implications the Gazette drew from the incident. He argued that the actions of a small minority in no way reflected the impact of republican institutions, and pointed out that the people of Boston had set up a committee charged with bringing the vandals to justice. Moreover, Parent asked if the crimes of the mob in Charlestown were worse than that of the British government, which had occupied the Jesuit college at Québec, turning it into a barracks.<sup>11</sup>

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9. La Minerve, 21 August, 1834.

10. See le Canadien, 21 and 22 August, 1834.

11. Le Canadien, 7 November, 1834.

The trial of the arsonists early in 1835 once again excited the wrath of the Gazette. Under the title "Gouvernement de la populace", an article in Neilson's paper detailed the expressions of religious prejudice and fanaticism which surfaced at the trial and took the opportunity to mock American government. Parent again found himself defending republican institutions while condemning the activities of a small and isolated community:

L'incendie du Couvent de Charlestown est assurément une tache indélébile sur le caractère du peuple de Charlestown et de ses environs...", he wrote, "... mais peut-on vraiment en faire retomber le blâme sur la forme de gouvernement qui régit cet état: autant faudrait-il attribuer l'assassinat de Henri IV et la St Barthélémy à la forme monarchique, et l'action héroïque de la moderne Judith, Charlotte Corday, qui a délivré la France d'un Monstre, à la forme républicaine du gouvernement français."<sup>12</sup>

Still, Parent had to admit that those accused of the crime had been acquitted, a fact noted in other patriote papers without fanfare or comment.<sup>13</sup>

By now, however, le Canadien and its rival the Gazette de Québec were locked in a continuing polemic on the issue. In March of 1835, Parent noted that the Legislature of the state of Massachusetts had received the recommendations of a committee struck to investigate the incident and was

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12. La Gazette de Québec, 17 January, 1835; Parent in le Canadien, 21 January, 1835.

13. See for example the report in L'Echo du pays, 5 January, 1835.

considering compensation for the damage to the convent. From this he optimistically hoped to see "le corps Législatif de l'Etat laver la tache qu'une populace fanatisée a imprimée sur le caractère national de la Nouvelle Angleterre..."<sup>14</sup> Unfortunately for the Québec editor, this hope was also to be frustrated, as he reported only four days later. Parent nevertheless added that while not voting an indemnity for the damages to the convent, the Legislature had appealed to the people of Boston to come to the aid of the Ursulines.<sup>15</sup> When reports of new troubles directed at another convent, this time in Roxbury Massachusetts, reached the colony, le Canadien again came to the defense of the Americans explaining that: "Au lieu d'une émeute, c'était une sérénade que quelques jeunes gens ont voulu donner à ces Dames comme pour les consoler de leurs malheurs de leurs soeurs de Charleston [sic], et leur donner une preuve de l'intérêt qu'ils leurs portaient..."<sup>16</sup>

The war of words over the anti-Catholic tendencies of the American people might well have come to an end in early 1835 were it not for the publication in New York of one of the most infamous anti-Catholic pamphlets of the nineteenth century. The Awful Disclosures by Maria Monk had a

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14. Parent in le Canadien, 23 March, 1835.

15. Le Canadien, 27 March, 1835.

16. Parent in le Canadien, 27 May, 1835.

particularly serious impact in Lower Canada since the pamphlet purported to report illicit sexual activity which had taken place in Montréal convents and involved both male and female members of the clergy.<sup>17</sup> By the summer of 1836 its notoriety had brought the issue of American anti-Catholicism back into the pages of the Lower-Canadian press. This time, however, the political realignments which had taken place in the colony made things different. Parent, who had gone to such pains to defend American institutions from being tarred with the brush of the Charlestown riot, had now broken with the patriote leadership. Le Canadien, which chastised the Gazette de Québec for drawing conclusions concerning the value of American political institutions only a year earlier, now did the same in its reaction to the publication of Maria Monk's anti-Catholic pamphlet. In August of 1836 the newspaper reported that the pamphlet had sparked anti-Catholic riots in New York and its editor added: "...Si l'imposture des auteurs de cet infâme pamphlet fait horreur, la crédulité de la population des Etats-Unis, qui se vante d'être si éclairée, si réfléchie,

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17. On the genesis of the pamphlet and reaction to it in both Canadian and American Catholic circles see Philippe Sylvain, "L'affaire Maria Monk", Cahiers des Dix, 43 (1983), pp. 167-184. For his part Bishop Lartigue of Montréal attributed the pamphlet to the "fanatisme ignorant qui fait avaler, doux comme miel, aux presbytériens et méthodistes aux Etats-Unis, toutes ces absurdités." Lartigue to Dr. Crolley, 29 July, 1836 published in "Correspondence de Mgr. Lartigue", RAPO, 25 (1944-1945), p. 195.

si avancée en civilisation, est vraiment digne de pitié."<sup>18</sup>  
 A few days later news of a new pamphlet in the same genre pushed him to conclude that "le métier de calomniateur prospère aux États-Unis..."<sup>19</sup> In an editorial on the subject two days later Parent went further, seeing in the reaction to such literature signs of serious social disruptions in the United States:

Les scènes qui ont eu lieu à l'égard des couvens dans les États-Unis laisseraient croire qu'il y a un esprit de puritanisme fanatique, que les gens éclairés devrait plutôt apaiser qu'exciter. Le résultat de ce dévergondage de l'esprit humain est le désordre et le trouble dans la société... certaines classes du peuple y sont aussi fanatisées que les musulmans en matière de religion.<sup>20</sup>

Still, le Canadien's condemnations of American manners paled in comparison with those published in the Gazette de Québec. The paper's editor, John Neilson, a long-time friend of the canadien cause, had broken with Papineau in 1831, and his opposition to the patriotes intensified in the years which followed.<sup>21</sup> The Gazette de Québec almost always

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18. Parent in le Canadien, 29 August, 1836.

19. Parent in le Canadien, 7 September, 1836.

20. Parent in le Canadien, 9 September, 1836.

21. About the same time as Neilson broke with the movement, his Gazette abandoned its bilingual format and began publishing separate French and English issues. Although the French issue was under the control of a separate editor, it accurately reflected Neilson's position and was steadfast in its opposition to the patriotes and consequently in its condemnation of the United States as a political model.

drew political implications from its analysis of American manners, and its conclusion usually was that mob rule prevailed in the United States. This was true even in editorials dealing with other aspects of American life. Commenting on the Bank of the United States, for example, the Gazette argued that republican institutions had not protected the American people from moral and political corruption. "...[La] seule différence entre leur gouvernement du peuple et les autres," wrote the paper's editor, "est que le peuple se corrompt lui-même, chose qu'il a le droit de faire, comme de raison."<sup>22</sup>

The paper's criticisms of the American people and of republican institutions were most bitter, however, when it dealt with manifestations of anti-Catholicism. In reaction to Maria Monk's pamphlet, the Gazette's editor fulminated against those in the colony who argued for the extension of religious freedoms similar to those in the Republic:

...nous savons ce que c'est cette liberté religieuse universelle dans les Etats-Unis: le fanatisme et la violence y règnent en public, le prosélytisme et l'inquisition au sein des familles; la loi ne reconnaissant et ne protégeant aucune religion...

...De là cette fièvre religieuse dont tout un peuple est attaqué; de là cette avidité avec laquelle ce peuple, d'ailleurs si intelligent et éclairé, dévore les calomnies les plus absurdes contre ceux qu'on lui a dépeint comme réprouvés; de là ces infâmes spéculations sur sa crédulité, faites au nom de la religion et de la morale; de là enfin ces violences contre les personnes et les propriétés, ces incendies de couvents, et tous ces

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22. La Gazette de Québec, 20 February, 1836.

désordres qui dans les Etats-Unis déshonorent le dix-neuvième siècle et décréditent les institutions républicaines.<sup>23</sup>

Clearly, for Neilson and his paper, both the American people and their political institutions were to blame for the anti-Catholic disturbances.

Through all of these condemnations of the American people, and specifically the emphasis in the Québec papers on American anti-Catholicism, la Minerve, the organ of the patriote leadership remained silent. The paper continued to praise the virtue and morality of the American people in general terms, but rarely did it engage in polemics on the causes of anti-Catholic disturbances in the Republic. Rather, when it dealt with the United States, its focus was on politics and political institutions. The paper did, however, publish one article at the end of 1836, seemingly as a piece of evidence against the charges of anti-Catholicism levied at the American public by its rivals. The article "L'Eglise Catholique des Etats-Unis", drawn from the Baltimore Catholic Almanac, detailed the state of the Church in the United States, listing the numerous Catholic institutions in the country, including colleges, seminaries and academies. Commenting on the article, la Minerve's editor wondered how the enemies of the United States in the colony could still see the Republic as peopled by religious

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23. Gazette de Québec, 10 September, 1836.

fanatics and as offering no protection to the Catholic faith:

Une nation au sein de laquelle se trouve un clergé Catholique si nombreux et si prospère ne doit pas être taxée d'intolérance envers le catholicisme; elle est au contraire essentiellement tolérante et libérale, puisque, toute protestante qu'elle est, non seulement elle permet l'existence de l'église Catholique chez-elle, mais elle l'alimente en quelque sorte en encourageant ses établissements. C'est là une vérité qui tombe sous les sens, et que tous les sophismes et les outrages de nos prétendus constitutionnels ne sauraient détruire.<sup>24</sup>

Clearly, while the manifestations of American anti-Catholicism were an embarrassment for the patriote position, they did little to cool enthusiasm for the Republic or its institutions. Yet in a discursive context where much of the value of the American political model rested on assumptions concerning the Americans as a people, and the impact of republican political institutions on the American populace, flaws in the national character became powerful weapons to be exploited by the anti-patriote press.

## 5.2 The Laboratory of Democracy

Although some papers in the colony attacked the American character without mercy, few could deny that there were some American institutions that merited close attention and even imitation. The progress made by the United States

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24. La Minerve, 28 November, 1836.

in the areas of educational reform, prison reform and land distribution, to name but those which were most prominently discussed, were admired by Lower-Canadians across the political spectrum. Certainly, political writers disagreed over the effect of such institutions on the American people as a whole, and consequently on the nature of political life in the Republic. On the other hand, American institutions remained an important model available to all Lower-Canadians. In this, of course, colonial observers were far from unique. One need only recall that Tocqueville's Democracy in America was the result of a visit undertaken to study the American penal system in order to realize the extent to which institutions in the Republic were admired and studied by foreigners.

In the period before 1831, most of the comment on American institutions revolved around schools and education generally. Such an emphasis was certainly understandable given the political battles which raged in the colony over new arrangements for French-Canadian schools. An education act passed in 1829 seemed to momentarily settle the question by placing control of schools in the hands of the Assembly. The question reappeared, however, in the 1830's as a result of the Legislative Council's obstruction of a bill designed

to provide funding for these schools.<sup>25</sup> As a result the example of American schools was invoked once again in order to show the importance of education and its positive effects on society as a whole.

Thus, American educational institutions were most often highlighted in articles which promoted education in the colony. In this vein a correspondent to la Minerve in 1831 argued that "il est nécessaire de nous instruire, et nous ne pouvons mieux faire que de prendre pour modèle nos voisins les citoyens des Etats-Unis..." The author went on to state that education was the wellspring of the Americans' happiness and prosperity, and that their superior education was the result of "l'excellence de leurs écoles..."<sup>26</sup> The impact of education on the American public was extended to include political happiness in an article by Etienne Parent two years later. In fact, le Canadien's editor believed that the Americans were the best educated people on earth, surpassing all European nations and England itself. As a result the people were more enlightened and this was manifested in their government. Even immigrants to the country were transformed by the American educational

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25. The Assembly's education act expired on the first of May 1836, without a new bill having passed the Legislative Council. See Robert Rumilly, Papineau et son temps (Montréal: Fides, 1977), tome I, p. 407.

26. "Pensez-y bien" in la Minerve, 21 November, 1831.

experience and this, according to Parent, within ten years.<sup>27</sup>

In these more general discussions, it was not uncommon to see the high level of education in the Republic associated with its degree of prosperity. The most detailed text in this genre appeared in l'Echo du Pays in 1835. The article began with a table showing the total population, the total educated population and the number of banks in each state. Drawing a direct relationship between the diffusion of education and economic progress, the author embarked on a comparison of the situation in the United States to that in Lower Canada. Using the proportion of educated citizens to total population in the states, he estimated that Lower Canada with a population of 600,000 should count 136,363 educated inhabitants. The sad reality, however, was that there were not 25,000 people who had received even a rudimentary education in the colony, and he guessed that no more than 10,000 possessed "une education usuelle, dans le sens du progrès et de l'industrie." Moreover, there were only three banks in the colony, all controlled by "une faction commerciale", while Massachusetts, with a comparable population, counted 102. Going on to outline other economic disparities between the colony and neighbouring states, the

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27. Parent in le Canadien, 20 September, 1833.

article inevitably asked what had caused this difference in the level of economic development:

Cette différence nous devons la trouver en première ligne dans l'excellence des institutions américaines, qui tendent à développer l'industrie et à étendre l'éducation, et dans les vices de notre gouvernement qui refusa obstinément jusqu'en 1824 un bill pour étendre les bienfaits de l'éducation et qui nous a même enlever des biens considérables destinés par nos pères à l'instruction de la jeunesse.<sup>28</sup>

The message here was that the encouragement of education would also spur economic development within the colony. There was also the assumption in this article that a better educated French-Canadian population could participate more fully in directing the colony's economic growth.

There were, as noted above, political rewards to favouring the development of the educational system, rewards which had already been realized in the United States. One of them, outlined in a travel journal published in la Minerve, was preventing the moral and political corruption of the rural population. In this text, the author reports his impressions of a trip to New England and is generally struck by the educated nature of the American population he found there. More significantly, in terms of the civic humanist tradition and the idioms associated with it, he noted that in the countryside "l'influence corruptrice du faste et de l'opulence, de l'avidité et de la bassesse qui

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28. L'Echo du Pays, 22 January, 1835.

gangrènent une partie des habitants des villes ne s'étend pas jusqu'à nous." From this he concluded that proper education could help preserve the civic virtue and independence of the rural folk. This was a solution which he strongly recommended to his compatriots: "Nous pouvons former un rempart assez fort pour mettre la liberté au-dessus de toute atteinte, et pour résister aux ennemis qu'elle peut avoir dans le sein de la nation. Nous saurons garantir les habitants des villes eux-mêmes des fers de l'esclavage au-devant duquel leurs moeurs les disposent à courir."<sup>29</sup> Thus an educational system comparable to that of the United States was considered essential for both economic and political reasons.

Although educational reform had long been part of the political context within which discourse evolved in the colony, the 1830's brought new concerns which in turn led Lower-Canadian authors to look south of the border. Of these, one of the most prominent in the 1830's was prison reform. The Americans, of course, were in this period expanding their new system of penitentiaries, an alternative to the traditional gaols and prisons, and argued that these new institutions improved the chances of rehabilitating criminals by placing them in isolation from morally corruptive influences. Although not all American states

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29. "Etrait d'un voyage inédit aux Etats-Unis par un Canadien" in la Minerve, 1 June 1836.

were convinced of the new system's merits, it did gain a certain amount of international interest. Of course the most celebrated of foreign visitors to the new American penitentiaries was Alexis de Toqueville, who, with his companion and fellow researcher Gustave de Beaumont, conducted an enquiry into the system in 1831 which was published in Paris two years later.<sup>30</sup>

Beaumont and Tocqueville had also visited Canada, and the reason for their mission to the United States was reported in the Lower-Canadian press. As a consequence, la Minerve brought up the subject of prison reform a year before the two Frenchmen had published their findings. In an article discussing legal and penal reform in Louisiana, the patriote organ condemned the British system of criminal law and the harshness of punishments imposed for crimes in England. A small expenditure could not only provide for punishment of criminals, but, argued the author, might help in rehabilitating the convict. The American system offered an excellent example of how this might be achieved:

Nos voisins les Etats-Unis ont déjà de beaucoup devancé l'Europe sur sous le rapport du système pénal; de nombreux pénitenciers se sont élevés dans les divers états de la fédération; l'expérience y a déjà été assez longue pour confirmer les espérances des hommes d'état et des

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30. Gustave de Beaumont and Alexis de Tocqueville, Du système pénitentiaire aux Etats-Unis (Paris, 1833). Rémond, tome II, p. 749, notes that their analysis was generally favourable but that the authors questioned the applicability of the system to French criminals, assuming the more socially oriented French would respond poorly to isolation.

philanthropes. Aussi avons-nous vu le gouvernement actuel de la France députer deux de ses citoyens pour se procurer des renseignements sur cette partie importantes des institutions sociales. MM. de Beaumont et Tocqueville sont venus aussi en Canada. S'ils avaient visité nos prisons, quel contraste ç'a aurait été à leurs yeux!<sup>31</sup>

If awareness of Toqueville and Beaumont's mission brought some authors to call for prison reform, the publication of their findings and the diffusion of their work in Canada led Lower-Canadian political leaders to action. Excerpts from Tocqueville and Beaumont's study appeared in the Lower-Canadian press as early as September 1833.<sup>32</sup> Shortly thereafter, the Assembly named two agents, John Neilson and Dominique Mondelet, to visit American penitentiaries and report on the desirability of such a system for the colony. Mondelet and Neilson left for the United States in the late spring of 1834 and conducted a detailed enquiry into the penitentiary systems in selected American states, including Pennsylvania, New York and Massachusetts. In the process of the enquiry they visited a number of institutions armed in each case with pre-printed questionnaires which, once completed, yielded both

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31. "Système des prisons", in la Minerve, 22 March, 1832.

32. See la Minerve, 19 September, 1833. Le Canadien, 31 October, 1833, published a review of the study.

statistical and descriptive information on the penitentiary in question.<sup>33</sup>

The Lower-Canadian commissioners tabled their report in March of 1835. In it they argued for the adoption of the Philadelphia system of penitentiaries over the Auburn system, stating that the former, while more expensive initially, was more successful in reforming prisoners. The commissioners also drew the Assembly's attention to the Houses of Refuge, established in New York for juvenile delinquents, which operated on the same principle as the penitentiary system, but were aimed at preventing young offenders from pursuing a life of crime.<sup>34</sup>

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33. Some of the records of the commission are conserved among the Neilson Papers. They include copies of the completed questionnaires dealing with prison operations and correspondence received from the wardens of various institutions. See NA, Neilson Collection MG 24 B 1, vol. 13. Correspondence between Mondelet and Neilson concerning the mission is also contained in the collection. See, for example, NA, Neilson Collection, vol. 8, pp. 232-233, D. Mondelet to John Neilson, 19 April, 1834.

34. The commissioners also concluded that the success of the penitentiary system in the United States owed much to the enlightened nature of prison staff, which in turn was a result of the American educational system. See "Report of the Commissioners appointed under the Act 4th William IV. Cap. 10, intituled [sic] 'An Act to authorize the appointment of commissioners for obtaining the necessary information preparatory to the introduction of the Penitentiary system of prison discipline into this province' in JHALC, 44 (1835), App. C. The report is followed by John Neilson's diary of observations made during his visit to the United States, a list of documents obtained by the commissioners, and the responses of state prison officials to questionnaires sent to them by the commissioners.

A key issue in the colony which prompted unfavourable comparisons to American institutions was the question of land settlement and the proposed creation of a land company which would have a virtual monopoly on unsettled Lower-Canadian lands. The Assembly rejected this proposal first in a resolution passed in 1833, then as part of the Ninety-Two Resolutions.<sup>35</sup> There followed a polemic in the press which brought up the example of the American system of land distribution as an alternative to that proposed by the British colonial administration.

Part of the debate focused on which level of government in the United States controlled the distribution of vacant lands and how effective that distribution was in preventing speculation on the part of a small number of individuals. The Gazette de Québec's assertion that land distribution was under control of the Federal Government, and thus in the control of a few hands, was quickly contested by patriote papers. Le Canadien, pointed out that the Federal government only controlled land distribution briefly in the interests of servicing the national debt. The states then assumed control of their own lands, assuring that local interests were protected. This, argued Parent, was very different from the British system where the home government

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35. The Assembly first expressed its opposition to the creation of the British American Land Company in resolutions passed 7 March, 1833. For the text of the resolutions see JHALC, 42, pp. 485-486.

continued to control lands in far off colonies long after local legislatures had been established. Referring specifically to the Lower-Canadian case, Parent added that in the United States, "... on ne donne pas non plus, que nous sachions, de chartes à des compagnies qui mettent les individus hors d'état de soutenir avec eux la concurrence; que là en un mot il n'a a pas de monopole..."<sup>36</sup> A few days later, Parent was forced to retract the correction he had made to the Gazette's original article when he discovered that the bill designed to give control of land distribution to the states had been vetoed by president Andrew Jackson. Still, Parent maintained that control by the American Congress was no less efficient than that which might be exercised by the states, since ultimately land policy remained within the control of the people's elected representatives. Moreover, le Canadien noted that its rival had itself admitted that while lands in the United States were controlled by the Congress, vacant lands in the colony were under the sole jurisdiction of the King. Consequently, Parent argued that the comparison with the United States was not only useful but instructive, since what the American people had was "surveillance" over the lands through their elected representatives, something the colony sorely

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36. Parent in le Canadien, 19 July, 1833.

lacked.<sup>37</sup> A few months later le Canadien printed the reasons for Jackson's veto and reported that the Democrats had introduced a bill more in keeping with the President's wishes that land distribution remain a federal responsibility and that the price of land be lowered to 25 cents per acre. At this news the Québec editor rejoiced, predicting that it would spell the end of the system of concessions existing in the colony:

Adieu alors et les compagnies de spéculateurs, et les projets politiques qu'on fonde sur elles, et les revenus considérables hors du contrôle des représentants du peuple. Quel reproche à notre gouvernement que le peuple de ce pays attende et reçoivent de la sagesse d'un gouvernement, étranger, le remède à un système abusif, contre lequel on réclame depuis si longtemps!<sup>38</sup>

Clearly, Parent believed that further reform of the land-granting system in the United States would make American lands so attractive that the British would have to reform their own system along the same lines in order to attract any settlers.

Despite the general thrust of Jacksonian Democracy toward making public lands in the United States more accessible, the Colonial Office showed little inclination to abandon the idea of a land company with monopoly control over lands in the province. Indeed, the plan had the support of the British merchant class in the colony, which stood to

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37. Parent in le Canadien, 22 July, 1833.

38. Le Canadien, 26 December, 1833.

benefit from its implementation. Thus, the Montreal Herald, organ of the British mercantile interests, not only felt obliged to defend the plan, but, given the patriote dependence on the American model, also to attack the American system. This it did, early in 1835, basing its argument on the fact that, under the American system, Massachusetts retained control over a vast quantity of lands in the state of Maine. This brought forth a vehement and thorough rebuttal from the editors of la Minerve. Its article on the subject described the origins of the initial grants of land in the area which formed the American union, detailing when and where the land claims of the individual states were ceded to the general government, and the disposition of funds raised from the sale of lands. The editor then pointed out that Lower Canada did not receive the same benefits from land sales as individual American states did. When it would, and when the Assembly would be able to control the conditions of the sale and concession of lands, then the patriotes might not object so strongly to the creation of a land company. As for the case of Massachusetts and Maine, the paper explained that before 1820 the latter state had been part of the former, and that the title to lands within the new state given to Massachusetts had been part of the treaty allowing its creation. As such the situation in Maine had absolutely nothing to do with the Federal government and the system of

land concessions it operated. In pointing this out, la Minerve chastised its rival for ignorance of American institutions, or at the very least bad faith in its interpretation of them.<sup>39</sup>

The philosophy behind the system of landholding in the United States could also be used as a powerful and even revolutionary argument in favour of radically altering the social and economic landscape of Lower Canada. The anti-seigneurial letters published in la Minerve over the pseudonym "Agricola", for example, invoked the American example by citing Virginia's 1777 bill of rights.<sup>40</sup> More commonly, however, mainstream patriote political writers used the system of land distribution in the United States as a point of reference in their critique of British plans for a corporate monopoly on land distribution. Along with analysis of other American social institutions, such as schools and penitentiaries, these comments both helped define the nature of political discourse on these precise issues and buttress the overall importance of the United States as a political model for the patriote movement. In some cases, such as education, prison reform and even land distribution, the anti-patriote press found it difficult to rebut such arguments. In these areas it seemed that the

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39. La Minerve, 16 February, 1835.

40. See, for example his letter published in la Minerve, 26 December, 1836.

republican experiment south of the border had, indeed, succeeded.

### 5.3 The Problem of Slavery: A Stain on Republican Institutions

There was one American institution, however, that proved as much an embarrassment to patriote admirers of the Republic as it was to some American citizens. It would not be an exaggeration to say that with the dawn of the 1830's slavery became the most important political issue in American life and remained so until the firing on Fort Sumter transformed it into a military issue. Indeed, by 1830, structural change and ideological currents were converging within the Republic which would eventually tear it apart in the crucible that was the Civil War. In economic and social terms the Northern states were already beginning the rapid economic transformation that came with the expansion of commercial capitalism and the birth of American manufacturing. In contrast, the American south remained a producer of agricultural staples aimed primarily at the export market. The staples of Southern economy, chief among them cotton, were produced using slave labour. Inevitably the system of slave labour, on which the plantation economy rested, became a target for reformers, who in turn founded the first American abolitionist

societies. The battle was engaged with the publication of William Lloyd Garrison's The Liberator, the first abolitionist paper, followed a few years later by the foundation of the American Anti-Slavery Society, a national organization whose aim it was to cleanse the stain of slavery from the American national character.

Because the American model was primarily of political importance, Lower-Canadian comment on the slavery question, both in pro-American circles and in those critical of the United States, focused on the political implications of the institution's continued existence. Patriote newspapers reported the most important developments, such as the Nat Turner Rebellion, a slave uprising in Virginia, and the foundation of Anti-Slavery associations.<sup>41</sup> Most commonly, however, reports dealing with the question touched on the anti-abolitionist riots which broke out sporadically in Northern cities. In most cases the Lower-Canadian press condemned the rioters, and, as we have seen, occasionally explained the disturbances as the result of foreign agents provocateurs.<sup>42</sup>

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41. A report of the Nat Turner Rebellion, without commentary, appears in la Minerve, 8 September, 1831. Le Canadien, 14 October, 1833 published an account of the formation of an abolitionist society in New York City, and even reprinted its articles of association, while declining to comment on the event.

42. Reports of anti-abolitionist riots appear in la Minerve, 21 July, 1834, and in le Canadien, 18 July, 1834, 17 August, 1835 and 19 August 1836. Parent, having turned his le Canadien against the patriote leadership also changed

When the colony's papers finally did comment extensively on the continued existence of slavery in the United States, it was as a result of the controversy reaching the floor of the Congress. This happened most dramatically in two incidents in 1835 and 1836. The first involved a proposal by President Jackson to ban abolitionist literature from the mails, the second was the debate over banning the discussion of abolitionist petitions in the House of Representatives. The first extensive article dealing with the impact of slavery on American political life appeared in l'Echo du Pays late in 1835. The author began by repeating the popularly held opinion that slavery might one day be the cause of the dissolution of the American federation. Slavery after all, he continued, was a contradiction to the premises which underlay the American system of government, foremost among them that "tous les hommes naissent égaux..." Still, although all Americans recognized the immorality of slavery, there were constitutional guarantees which gave the South the right to regulate its own internal affairs, and there were impediments to the noble cause of emancipation. Chief among

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his opinion on the nature and effect of foreign influence on the abolitionists. While in 1834 he condemned such influence (see the 18 July, 1834 issue cited above), by 1836 he argued that British financial aid to the abolitionists did honor to the British spirit of philanthropy; see le Canadien, 10 August, 1836.

these was that the slaves were not prepared to assume their responsibilities of citizens of the Republic:

Les esclaves sont nombreux et leur condition fait qu'il sont généralement peu préparés à devenir tout à coup citoyens. Un grand nombre d'entre'eux [sic] se trouveraient pour ainsi dire sans moyens de vivre et tacheraient sans doute d'exciter des troubles, parce qu'ils en profiteraient. Si donc les inconvénients sont trop grands aujourd'hui pour émanciper les esclaves, les Etats doivent néanmoins prendre les moyens de faire disparaître cette tache de leurs belles institutions. Ne pourraient-on par exemple voter une certaine somme pour donner l'éducation à cette partie malheureuse de nos semblables et les mettre ainsi en état de gagner leur vie et de devenir d'honnêtes citoyens?

The article went on to say that once the education of the slaves had been achieved, the government might then consider a bill to indemnify the slaveholders for their financial loss in the case of emancipation. Despite these impediments to emancipation, the paper remained confident that the Americans would find a solution to the problem once the people were unanimous in demanding abolition, and that the Union would be preserved through the process.<sup>43</sup>

Much the same analysis, with its emphasis on gradual emancipation through a form of national consensus, appeared a few months later in la Minerve. Again the author was conscious of the importance of the question and its potential to tear apart the Union, and that slavery ran against the most fundamental precepts of American government. On the other hand, la Minerve's editorial

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43. L'Echo du Pays, 15 October, 1835.

warned that the problem of slavery was one where the Americans had to act quickly and suggested that they should perhaps not have been preceded in the abolition of slavery by the British. Although this was so, the author recognized the impediments to emancipation which existed in the Southern states, and felt that discussion of the principles behind abolition would bring the southerners to recognize the legitimacy of the cause. Like l'Echo du pays, la Minerve, believed that the slaves would have to be educated before they could become useful citizens.<sup>44</sup>

The anti-patriote press was far more pessimistic about the hopes for national reconciliation in the United States, and saw the continued existence of slavery as evidence that American political principles were a sham. The Gazette de Québec, one of the severest critics of American government in the colony, lost few opportunities to point to the contradiction slavery posed to the political principles of the Founding Fathers. Indeed, in doing this, the paper was not above dragging the most revered name in American political theory through the mud:

Les coeurs généreux, portés naturellement à admirer les institutions des Etats-Unis sur la foi de leurs déclarations publiques, sont surpris et peïnés, en comparant ces déclarations avec les faits, de trouver qu'elles ne sont autre choses que des mensonges politiques. L'auteur même de la déclaration d'indépendance, le célèbre Jefferson, est accusé d'avoir vendu à l'encan ses propres enfants! Un de ses compatriotes a dit de lui,

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44. La Minerve, 14 January, 1836.

qu'il rêvait de la liberté dans les bras d'une esclave -- "He dreamt of liberty in the arms of a slave."<sup>45</sup>

Neilson's paper rarely missed an opportunity to point out the Americans' hypocrisy in proclaiming themselves a free people while holding fellow human beings in bondage. Commenting on the 4th of July celebrations in 1836 the Gazette noted that more than two million American slaves "n'ont pas du y prendre une part bien sincère." In the same issue it reported that the American Congress had recently passed a bill banning abolitionist tracts from the mail which constituted a "censure arbitraire et despotique" worse than that which had brought about the Revolution of 1830 in France.<sup>46</sup> The paper also predicted that the continued existence of slavery would bring about disastrous consequences. American slaveholders were deluding themselves if they thought that keeping slaves from reading would perpetuate slavery. After all, the slaves in Santo Domingo had rebelled and "s'il est une Providence... les scènes de Saint Domingue se renouvelleront un jour sur une portion de notre continent."<sup>47</sup>

Such was the tone of the Gazette' anti-slavery articles that they even brought forth rebuttals from the American

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45. Gazette de Québec, 24 May, 1836. The emphasis appears in the original text.

46. Gazette de Québec, 5 July, 1836.

47. Gazette de Québec, 11 August, 1836.

press, and this from as far away as New Orleans. Indeed, the Abeille de la Nouvelle Orléans, in an article reproduced by the editors of la Minerve, qualified the Gazette de Québec as an enemy of the Republic. To this, the Québec paper replied that it had merely contrasted the principles of American liberty to the reality of American life in order to show what kind of civilization the Americans had produced. When the Abeille predicted a revolution in Lower Canada, the Gazette thundered that the colony's inhabitants knew what true liberty was since they were not "accoutumés à voir vendre et acheter des hommes sur les marchés..."<sup>48</sup>

Le Canadien, too, became increasingly critical of the American tolerance of slavery after it broke with the patriote leadership. Although it was far less negative than the Gazette de Québec, Parent's paper grew more pessimistic regarding the future of the Republic if slavery were not soon abolished. On the occasion of the troubles with Mexico over Texas, for example, Parent predicted that slavery might cause the United States to lose a conflict with its weaker neighbour to the south. This because the Mexicans, upon invading American territory, would proclaim the slaves free. The effect of such a move would be disastrous given the large slave population in the South, which Parent

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48. Gazette de Québec, 10 December, 1836. The debate with the Abeille de la Nouvelle Orléans can be found in the paper's 13 October and 10 December, 1836 issues.

highlighted by using tables showing the slave population for each of the states concerned. From this he concluded that "... l'esclavage est pour les Etats-Unis un volcan, qui les couvrera tôt ou tard de ruines..."<sup>49</sup> Noting anti-abolitionist riots less than a month later, Parent again predicted dire consequences if the "cause sainte" of the abolitionists was not pursued with haste. "Puisse-t-elle ne pas marcher dans les flots de sang pour arriver à la victoire...", he wrote of the cause of emancipation, adding: "...L'avenir des Etats à esclave se couvre de nuages."<sup>50</sup> Clearly, although le Canadien was less prone to draw critical conclusions concerning American political institutions or principles from its analysis of the slavery issue, it nevertheless used the issue to cast doubt on the future greatness of the Republic. By early 1837 Parent was arguing that the question of slavery would ultimately lead to a confrontation between North and South, one which would halt the expansion of the American empire in its tracks:

En effet cette question de l'esclavage menace l'Union Américaine d'une scission violente. Ceux qui prévoient la puissance colossale que constitueront les Etats-Unis avant même un siècle, penseront que cette question est un moyen que la providence a ménagé pour le repos du monde. Qui aurait pu résister à une puissance, bornée par l'Atlantique à l'Orient, par le Golfe du Mexique au Midi, par l'Océan Pacifique à l'Occident, et

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49. Parent in le Canadien, 18 July, 1836.

50. Parent in le Canadien, 19 August, 1836.

peut-être avant qu'il eût été peu par les terres polaires au Septentrion?<sup>51</sup>

As the passage makes clear, Parent believed that Providence, by making Americans bear the burden of slavery, might well have saved Lower-Canadians from being annexed to the Republic.

The discussions of slavery and its relationship to American institutions and political beliefs which appeared in the Lower-Canadian press underline the political importance the image of the United States had achieved. On the one hand the patriote press, while condemning slavery, continued to have faith that the Americans would work through the problem and that enlightened public opinion would eventually resolve the issue by adopting the cause of the abolitionists. Their opponents, first the Gazette de Québec, then le Canadien, alternately saw slavery as a sign of the degeneracy of the Republic and the false promise of American political beliefs, or as the cause of an imminent crisis. In this they sought to tarnish a model the patriotes now regularly invoked in support of their political objectives.

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51. Parent in le Canadien, 20 January, 1837.

#### 5.4 The Prosperous Republic

While American slavery appeared to Lower-Canadians as a remnant of the past which must soon pass if the Republic were to endure, the rate and nature of economic development in the United States seemed to more than compensate for the problems caused by the peculiar institution. America seemed all dynamism and growth in the 1830's, and the economic prosperity of their neighbours to the south left a deep impression on French-Canadian observers. Indeed, next to praise of American political institutions, glowing accounts of American economic well-being constituted one of the most important elements of the image which matured within Lower-Canadian political discourse in the decade. Pointing to economic success was a powerful argument used by the patriotes in favour of American political institutions; for inevitably they attributed the spectacular growth of the American economy to the healthy influence of the republican regime, and, significantly, to freedom from the colonial yoke.

The argument was all the more persuasive in that it was difficult to rebut. No one in the colony could seriously challenge the assertions of American prosperity which appeared so frequently in the patriote press. Indeed, the patriotes' opponents did not deny the prosperity of the Americans, but rather attempted to minimize the claim by

divorcing prosperity from republicanism, by making an unfavourable comparison between the United States and Great Britain, or by harping on American economic misfortunes. In addition, they revived the old theme of the Americans as a people driven by a lust for money, an idea which had never really disappeared since it had been used in le Canadien thirty years earlier.<sup>52</sup>

The idea of the Americans as a prosperous people was not new. Indeed it was part of the American image throughout the period 1805 to 1837. What was new in the patriote discourse of the 1830's was the consistent emphasis on the economic dynamism of the United States. The Republic was "grande, riche et florissante sous tous les rapports," wrote la Minerve's editorialist, adding "... il n'est pas étonnant qu'on regarde en Europe et ailleurs son gouvernement avec un oeil d'envie, qu'on le cite souvent même pour modèle."<sup>53</sup> Under the republican form of government south of the border, wrote a correspondent to l'Echo du Pays, "... tout s'organise, les terres se cultivent, des écoles se forment, les routes s'établissent, d'autres se créent, l'industrie est encouragée et le peuple

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52. This is a theme which also reappeared in the French literature as the dominant positive image of the United States gave way to one that was more critical. See Rémond, tome 2, pp. 763-768.

53. La Minerve, 2 January, 1832.

heureux."<sup>54</sup> For his part Amury Girod declined commenting extensively on American economic progress without first visiting the country again, since change was so rapid that "... tout y marche à pieds de géant, et ce que j'ai vu hier pourrait facilement être contredit par ce que je verrai demain..."<sup>55</sup> In le Canadien, "Le vieux de la montagne" asserted that "...Par l'accroissement de population, de richesse et de force maritime, les Etats-Unis libre finiront par laisser derrière eux leur ancienne métropole."<sup>56</sup> The same author wrote in l'Echo du Pays of "...La marche rapide des Etats-Unis dans la voie des travaux publics, le nombre et l'activité de leurs institutions commerciales, leur condition de bien être universel, leur progrès matériels en général..."<sup>57</sup> Even the St. Jean-Baptiste celebrations in the politically tense summer of 1837 were marked by this mixture of admiration and envy, as a toast proposed for the occasion at St. Jean in Verchères county illustrates: "8.

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54. Letter republished from l'Echo du Pays in le Canadien, 13 December, 1833; cited by Philippe Reid, "Représentations idéologiques et société globale: le journal le Canadien (1806-1842)" (Ph. D. dissertation, Université Laval, 1979), p. 298.

55. Amury Girod, Notes Diverses sur le Bas-Canada... (Village Debartzch [St. Charles]: Imprimerie J. P. De Boucherville, 1835), p. 9.

56. "Le vieux de la montagne" in le Canadien, 30 October, 1835; cited by Reid, p. 410-411.

57. L'Echo du pays, 22 January, 1835.

Les Etats-Unis, puissions nous parvenir à leur état de prospérité."<sup>58</sup>

The allusions to American prosperity and economic progress in the patriote press were an important part of the movement's political discourse. In all of the citations reproduced above, the United States' economic growth was linked to the advent of republican institutions. The other side of the same argument was that the defective political arrangements of the colonial regime in Lower Canada hampered economic expansion. The question of land policy, discussed above, was an example frequently cited in support of republican institutions. An anonymous pamphlet published in 1835 explicitly compared the economic consequences of the two systems:

... Un peuple voisin peut nous servir d'exemple sur ce qu'il eut été possible de faire dans notre propre pays, si le système constitutionnel y eut été scrupuleusement suivi, et si le gouvernement nous eût laissé la disposition des terres nationales. Les Etats-Unis d'Amérique, dans le même espace de temps pendant lequel nous avons été forcés à rester stationnaires ont apporté chez eux des améliorations infinies, qui les mettent aujourd'hui au même rang que les nations Européennes les plus anciennes. A quoi doivent-ils ces avantages et cette gloire? A un système constitutionnel bien établi et suivi avec bonne foi; aux richesses territoriales dont le pays peut disposer chaque jour, et qui loin d'être la pâture

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58. Reported in la Minerve, 3 July, 1837.

d'un petit nombre, sont les trésors d'une communauté.<sup>59</sup>

To this author, then, republican institutions had ended monopoly and privilege in the United States and allowed the community as a whole to take part in the economy. This view, of course, assumed that agriculture was the motor of economic development and that a less restrictive land policy, such as that adopted in the United States, would spur growth.

Other articles used concrete examples in making the same point. A piece commenting on the economic situation of the Americans published in l'Echo du pays a month after the Independence Day celebrations of 1835, used the state of Vermont as a point of comparison with the colony. Since 1791, went the article, the population of Lower Canada had doubled, but its economy had not expanded at the rate it should have, mainly because the colony remained dominated by an oligarchy. Vermont, under the republican government of the United States had grown from nothing to become both populous and prosperous. While Lower Canada's growth was retarded by the control of a small clique, "...L'Américain de Vermont, au contraire, surmonta les barrières que lui opposaient une immense forêt, et triompha des obstacles sans nombre que rencontre toujours l'explorateur de nouvelles

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59. Anonymous, Relation historique des événements de l'élection du Comté du Lac des Deux-Montagnes en 1834... (Montréal, 1835), p. 5.

terres..." As a result Vermont had grown rapidly as cities, roads, churches, schools and manufactures sprang up in the countryside. The same was true, continued the author, for northwestern New York state and for Ohio, which in 1791 "était à peine défriché et peuplé", but which by 1835 was "couvert d'une population de plus d'un million d'habitans et traversé par des canaux, des chemins de fer et des routes faciles, dans toutes les directions..." Inevitably, these comparisons led the author to inquire rhetorically into the source of this rapid progress:

D'où viennent ces rapides changements et ces révolutions étonnantes dans l'état moral et physique d'un peuple? Des institutions libres ont seulement pu opérer ces prodiges du courage, du travail et de l'industrie d'un américain. Elles lui ont appris que tous les hommes sont nés libres et égaux et que sous la protection des sages lois, il pourrait savourer les fruits des son travail...<sup>60</sup>

American institutions then, not only eliminated monopolies, but they also liberated the creative spirit of Americans by assuring that they would reap the full benefit of their labour.

There was, however, another explanation for the prosperity of the Americans. In certain cases, French-Canadian political writers directly attributed the economic rise of the United States to the emancipation of the thirteen colonies from the restraints of the British empire.

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60. "Le 4 juillet, le Canada et les Etats-Unis" in l'Echo du pays, 13 August, 1835.

Commenting on the growth of the American economy, "Le vieux de la montagne" wrote: "...l'indépendance rend la vie aux colonies, et les relations libres et fraternelles en font partager les fruits à la mère patrie. Sous le rapport économique, la question des colonies dépendantes est jugée."<sup>61</sup> The same author elsewhere asserted, again in an article dealing with the American economy that "...l'époque de notre indépendance deviendrait l'époque de notre prospérité."<sup>62</sup> Similarly, an article devoted to describing the progress of the American economy under republican institutions implicitly made the link to independence by dealing with the issue on the occasion of American Independence Day celebrations. Writing from Derby Line on the 4th of July 1835, this article was addressed, significantly, to the "Esclaves de l'Amérique", the political slaves just across the border in Lower Canada.<sup>63</sup>

The United States in the 1830's was a country undergoing substantial economic change. This was, after all, the first decade of the age of rail in the Republic and throughout New England manufactures were becoming larger and more complex. This evolution, wrought by the maturation of

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61. "Le vieux de la montagne" in le Canadien, 30 October, 1835; cited by Reid, pp. 410-411.

62. "Le vieux de la montagne" in l'Echo du pays, 22 January, 1835.

63. "Le 4 juillet, le Canada et les Etats-Unis" in l'Echo du pays, 13 August, 1835.

commercial capitalism, also peaked the interest of French-Canadian observers. Indeed, it was no longer possible to portray the United States as a purely agricultural republic, since the growth of American manufacturing and technological innovation were attracting the attention of observers throughout the world.

These changes ran headlong into the dominant paradigms of both American and French-Canadian political discourse. Indeed, classical republican theory had posited a direct relationship between landownership and political virtue, and much of French-Canadian political discourse remained predicated on the notion that North American society, through its equal distribution of land, had created the necessary social conditions for the republic. Commercial capitalism, both in the United States and Lower Canada was altering the balance of wealth, and although both societies remained predominantly rural, both the patriotes and Jacksonian Democrats expressed apprehensions at the growth in the concentration of wealth which accompanied the expansion of commerce and manufacturing. To some, such as congressman C. C. Camberleng, the "abuses" of commerce risked bringing about "the thorough corruption and revolution of every Government in the Union..."<sup>64</sup>

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64. C. C. Camberleng in the House of Representatives, 1835, cited by Rush Welter, The Mind of America, 1820-1860 (New York: Norton, 1975) pp. 172-173.

Many patriotes shared the same view. For this reason the reaction to the growth of American manufacturing was not as enthusiastic as it might have been. On the one hand, the patriotes sought consistently to highlight American achievements in the economic sphere. To that end they celebrated the rapid growth of American cities, American progress in railway and canal construction and the rapid expansion of American commerce.<sup>65</sup> Moreover, like European visitors to New England, French-Canadian travellers found themselves drawn to the mills, and were impressed by what they saw.<sup>66</sup> These comments were overshadowed, however, by those which stressed the dynamic expansion of American agriculture, and many a French-Canadian traveller, François-Xavier Garneau among them, saw progress in the "hache du défricheur."<sup>67</sup> In this vein, the development of commerce

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65. An article in la Minerve, 2 April, 1836, touches on all of these issues favourably, and even reproduces a table showing the growth of major American cities from 1790 to 1833, a period where the population of New York grew from 33,131 to 269,873. See also the comments on the growth of commerce in the United States in l'Echo du Pays, 13 August, 1835; and an article on railways in la Minerve, 15 August, 1836.

66. Rémond, tome 2, pp. 773-774, mentions that the New England mills had become a favourite attraction of French travellers to America. Canadien travellers also visited the mills in the period. An account of such a visit appears in a letter from John Téroux to Ludger Duvernay dated 15 August, 1831. See NA, Papiers Duvernay (copies), MG24 C3, vol. 1, pp. 206-210.

67. François-Xavier Garneau, Voyage en Angleterre et en France dans les années 1831, 1832 et 1833 (1855) (Ottawa: Editions de l'Université d'Ottawa, 1968), p. 114. The expression can also be found in a letter signed "Franc

could be clearly linked to that of agriculture and the prosperous state of a town such as Ogdensburgh New York tied to its role as a distributor of agricultural produce.<sup>68</sup> As for imitating the American's development of manufacturing, French-Canadians remained divided. Indeed, some commentators argued that it was preferable to remain an agricultural society which traded with manufacturing countries, thus preserving "son existence politique ...relativement supérieure..." with the result that "le peuple cultivateur l'emportera sur les peuples manufacturiers."<sup>69</sup>

Like the Jacksonians, the patriotes also expressed a good deal of trepidation over the development of banking. However, while suspicion of banks before 1830 was generally manifested by a rejection of the institutions per se, and a condemnation of their activities in the United States, after 1830 the movement's discourse evolved to an acceptance of banks as necessary to economic growth, but continued to be suspicious of banks in positions of privilege or monopoly. In the process, the patriote leadership came to favour the creation of their own bank, the Banque du peuple, which would presumably act in the interests of the people. Still,

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Parleur" in la Minerve, 19 May, 1834.

68. L'Echo du pays, 13 August, 1835.

69. "Le vieux de la montagne" in l'Echo du pays, 22 January, 1835.

elements within the movement remained wary of banks in general, and particularly of the emission of paper money. In this, the movement very much mirrored the Jacksonian Democrats who included within their fold both the promoters of state banks opposed to the power of the Bank of the United States and the advocates of "sound" or hard currency, who managed to control a number of state legislatures and implement their policies. Not surprisingly, the patriotes had a good deal to say about the bank controversy south of the border and openly compared their struggle against entrenched banking interests to that of the Jacksonians.

In the first few years of the period, the French-Canadian press was unanimous in its condemnation of banks and its approval of Jackson's position in the Bank War. In late 1830 and early 1831 a series of articles published over the pseudonym "Anti-Banque" appeared in the Gazette de Québec and later as a pamphlet. The author was vehement in his attack on the abuses perpetrated by banks and was particularly concerned with the propagation of paper money, warning that the abandonment of hard currency would spell disaster.<sup>70</sup> The colony's papers reported Jackson's Bank Veto without flourish, although the Gazette de Québec was moved to applaud the President's "fermeté et

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70. Gazette de Québec, 4 and 29 November 1830, 12, 20 and 30 December 1830, 27 January 1831; see also "Anti-Banque" Conclusion des observations d'Anti-Banque (1831).

indépendance."<sup>71</sup> It was, however, Jackson's attempt to kill the Bank by withdrawing federal funds which peaked the interest of Lower Canadians.<sup>72</sup> The President's actions resulted in a motion of censure from the Bank's friends in the Senate, which led some papers in the colony to argue that the Legislative and Executive branches of American government were at war. This was a charge which la Minerve was quick to refute, adding parenthetically that the Senate had overstepped its authority in censuring the President.<sup>73</sup> Le Canadien went further in an editorial on the issue, condemning the Bank as an enemy of free government and the vehicle through which might be created a moneyed aristocracy in the United States:

...il est un grand fait, c'est que l'intérêt Banquier est devenu assez puissant chez nos voisins pour soulever et maintenir une lutte opiniâtre contre le gouvernement, qui dans les Etats-Unis est le peuple. Nos voisins fussent assez sages pour résister autrefois à l'établissement d'une espèce de Noblesse sous le nom d'Ordre de Cincinnati, mais ils n'ont pas su se prémunir contre le danger des banques privilégiées, et c'est à les abattre que travaillent [sic] maintenant le gouvernement des

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71. Gazette de Québec, 21 July, 1832.

72. See the report of the incident in la Minerve, 30 September, 1833.

73. La Minerve, 28 April, 1834; see also the American press reports of the incident reproduced in the paper's 7 April issue.

Etats-Unis. La chambre des représentans appuie le Président, mais on redoute le sénat.<sup>74</sup>

From there it was a small step to linking the Bank of the United States' partisans to the supporters of the established banks in Lower Canada. Thus, in December of 1834, Parent wrote of "parti de la Banque dans les Etats-Unis qui correspond parfaitement à notre parti Tory ici..."<sup>75</sup>

The same theme appeared in an editorial published in la Minerve a few weeks later. Here the author affirmed that Canadian banks were in the same situation as those attacked by the President of the United States and that they presented the same danger "pour le renversement des droits constitutionnels..." However, this article was significant in that while it condemned the abuses of existing banks and applauded the destruction of the Bank of the United States, it nevertheless accepted banks as necessary to economic progress. Banks, argued the author, had been essential to the growth of the American economy, although speculation and the emission of unbacked paper currency had led to abuses within the system. What was needed then, both in Lower Canada and the United States was "le bénéfice du système de

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74. Le Canadien, 18 April, 1834; see also the text of Jackson's protest of the Senate's censure published in translation in the 30 April, 1834 issue.

75. Parent in le Canadien, 1 December, 1834.

banques vraiment nationales...", a system the patriotes intended to establish in the colony:

Les patriotes se sont dit: "le commerce du pays est entre les mains des ennemis du pays; le peu d'entre nos frères qui tiennent le négoce, est sous la coupôle [sic] des Banques dirigées par leurs adversaires politiques...  
 ...Autant les Banques, comme elles existent maintenant, sont fatales au pays, autant des banques tenues par des nationaux pourraient lui apporter de prospérité. C'est en partant de ce raisonnement qu'ils ont résolu la création d'une banque, offrant à la fois sûreté dans l'émission des valeurs, et impartialité dans l'action.

The American experience proved that banks controlled by foreigners were detrimental to national interests, continued the article, thus the patriotes would create a bank controlled by French-Canadian interests.<sup>76</sup>

The idea that banks in the colony and in the United States had to be controlled by local interests also grew naturally out of a dominant idiom of political discourse in the period: the belief that European institutions and influence had a politically corrupting effect on virtuous North American societies. Thus, in their analysis and reporting of the struggle between Jackson's Democrats and the Bank, the patriotes accepted the President's charge that the Bank was controlled by foreign interests trying to subvert the American government. Pamphlets reporting such a plot were noted and endorsed by l'Echo du pays which nevertheless predicted that "... la beauté et la force de sa

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76. La Minerve, 22 December, 1834.

constitution garantiront sans doute l'Union Américaine des complots des monarchies..."<sup>77</sup> When Baltimore crowds rioted against the Bank the anti-patriote press in the colony saw the event as proof that the mob was out of control in the Republic. La Minerve responded by echoing Jackson's charge of foreign influence in American affairs through the Bank:

Eh! qui dit que l'esprit d'absolutisme, sous lequel on voudrait faire disparaître toute idée libérale en Europe, ne vient pas encore souffler la discorde dans ce dernier retranchement de l'indépendance. Qui dit que les monarches ombrageux, craignant qu'on ne leur vante à chaque instant la prospérité des républiques en leur montrant comme l'exemple le plus frappant les Etats-Unis, ne concourent point à alimenter le feu des passions chez les Américains? Le Général Jackson n'était peut-être pas si follement inspiré lorsqu'il prétendait que: la Banque des Etats-Unis, entre les mains des étrangers, devenait l'arbitre des destinées de l'Union.<sup>78</sup>

A few days later l'Echo du pays also endorsed Jackson's position, this time claiming specifically that the Bank and its foreign investors were buying the votes of immigrants in order to subvert the electoral process, "... à peu près comme nos aristocrates..."<sup>79</sup>

While the patriote press followed Jackson in his condemnation of the Bank of the United States, it did not adopt the position of more radical Democrats who opposed banks in general and specifically their emission of paper

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77. L'Echo du pays, 19 February, 1835.

78. La Minerve, 24 August, 1835.

79. L'Echo du pays, 27 August, 1835.

money. After all, by 1835 the movement was promoting its own bank and to that end it deployed a stream of discourse designed to justify its creation. This shift created some contradictions, such as an article published in 1835 which praised the Bank of the United States for stabilizing credit during the banking panic of 1833 induced by Jackson's transfer of the federal government's deposits to state banks.<sup>80</sup> Further, the movement was not always able to silence editors who adopted the more radical Jacksonian position and continued to condemn all banks without exception.<sup>81</sup> Still, articles which argued for the necessity of domestically controlled banks to foster economic development did appear in the patriote press and, once again, the American example was invoked to support the argument. Thus, an article dealing with the prosperity of the Americans published in l'Echo du pays linked that economic growth directly to the existence of banks.<sup>82</sup> For its part, la Minerve now asserted that American prosperity

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80. La Minerve, 19 February, 1835. The panic was actually caused by the Bank of the United States calling in loans to smaller banks, forcing them in turn to call in their loans.

81. This, of course, was an embarrassment to the patriote leadership which was actively promoting the Banque du peuple. One of the culprits seems to have been Edmund Bailey O'Callaghan, editor of the Vindicator, who some patriotes wanted to silence on the issue. See NA, Fonds Famille Papineau, MG 24 B 2, vol. 2, pp. 2225-2226, D. B. Papineau to L.-J. Papineau, 30 June, 1836.

82. L'Echo du pays, 22 January, 1835.

was not only the result of republican institutions, but also of "...leur système monétaire, où de banques." Banks, the article continued, provided much of the capital necessary for the public improvements undertaken in the United States, and in addition the creation of banks on the American frontier furnished settlers both with credit and a means of exchange. Following the American example by founding more banks would spur the economic development of the colony, although the author was careful to point out that the specie emitted by these institutions must be guaranteed by deposits and that they not be monopolies. For although banks had been the cause of political and economic upheaval in south of the border, "...il faut savoir séparer la chose de l'abus qu'on peut en faire."<sup>83</sup>

The economic image of the United States gave meaning to patriote discourse in a number of important ways. By attributing American prosperity to the influence of republican institutions, the movement provided an economic justification to its political demand for an elected Legislative Council. In tracing the origins of economic growth in the United States to independence, the patriotes bolstered their argument for colonial self-rule. The Bank War set the struggle against the British mercantile class in a continental context, and underlined the need for a locally

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83. La Minerve, 2 April, 1836.

controlled bank, which the patriote leadership established in 1835. Finally, the American example showed the utility of such an institution and buttressed the argument in favour of establishing still more "national banks". Thus, while the Gazette de Québec claimed that the United States owed its prosperity to mimicking England rather than to its republican institutions, and le Canadien came to condemn the effects of prosperity on the American people, the patriotes' emphasis on the economic success story south of the border was almost impossible to counter.<sup>84</sup>

### 5.5 The Model Government

American economic progress, the benevolent influence of selected American institutions and the character of the Americans themselves were all highlighted in a pattern of patriote discourse which through the 1830's held up the United States as a model to be emulated. Still, the significance of these themes was derived from the political image of the Republic. America was proposed as a model precisely because it embodied the form of political organization which was thought to be best suited to a North

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84. Gazette de Québec, 31 May, 1836; le Canadien, 12 and 15 May 1837 reproduced many articles chronicling the economic hardship brought about in the United States by the recession of 1837. These included a report of a man and his two children being murdered in a dispute over money.

American society. Further, the patriotes viewed the United States very much as a loosely knit federation of independent republics. In this they were consistent with the classical theme that republics could not be too large, because the common good would become unidentifiable in a large heterogenous country. The American experience seemed then, to be the fulfilment of Enlightenment ideal of the republic, an ideal made reality by the peculiar social conditions of the New World.

Of course, this interpretation of American government was not unique to the patriotes. One finds it in the writings of the French americophiles, and, indeed, in the political discourse of the Americans themselves. After all, the belief in American exceptionalism persisted throughout the nineteenth century. In each of the successive crises which punctuated American politics in the decades preceding the Civil War there was a champion of state rights who expounded the theory that the federal government had been the creation of a contract between the states. Thus, Lower-Canadian opinion, far from being misled or deluded, was very much in tune with that of other contemporary foreign and domestic observers of the American scene.

The most famous of the commentators on the American experiment in government was the French nobleman Alexis De Tocqueville, and his view, in fact, ran contrary to what many Lower-Canadians believed about the nature of American

government and its relationship to American society. What this French nobleman found in the United States was not the republic of virtuous farmers so often chronicled by his countrymen, but rather the bustling, crude, egalitarian society which was Jacksonian America. Virtue was dead in an America where citizens were driven by the urge to acquire material possessions. No aristocracy of talents here, but rather a profound levelling influence which obliterated social distinctions as well as the notion of government by a disinterested and patriotic elite. Still, Tocqueville pronounced the American experiment a success and this on the strength of the Republic's political institutions. What he found, in effect, was an institutional apparatus which allowed a corrupted people to govern itself: the science of American government had made virtue obsolete.

René Rémond has observed that Tocqueville's work was better understood and had a greater impact outside France at the time of its publication than within the writer's own country;<sup>85</sup> a supreme irony, since De la démocratie en Amérique was most definitely written for a French audience, and with French politics in mind. Indeed, to Tocqueville, the American experience was one with universal relevance, hence his rejection of the republic of virtue and the notion of American exceptionalism. There can be no denying that

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85. Rémond, tome 1, p. 387.

the book had a significant impact in Lower Canada, where it was available for sale, and where many papers reprinted excerpts of Tocqueville's work.<sup>86</sup> Indeed, Fernand Ouellet is no doubt correct in naming Tocqueville as a key influence on Papineau and patriote discourse generally.<sup>87</sup> There was much in De la démocratie en Amérique which could be easily integrated into the movement's rhetoric. Tocqueville's first volume was filled with commentary on the operation of the American form of government and it reinforced the Lower-Canadian view of the United States as a loose federation of republics. The core of Toqueville's message, however, was rejected by Lower-Canadian political writers. They continued to believe in the republic of virtue and in North American specificity. Indeed, their whole political program rested on the notion that Lower Canada must be granted political institutions in keeping with the social state of a North American people. Occasionally, it became unclear whether American society had produced republican institutions, or whether the excellence of American society grew out of the influence of those institutions, but few patriotes denied that it was the conformity of the elective principle with the social state of the Americans which made the system work.

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86. See Chapter Two.

87. Fernand Ouellet, Le Bas-Canada 1791-1840 (Ottawa: Presses de l'Université d'Ottawa, 1980), p. 338.

And, of course, it was impossible for them to do so. For, in the case of their own people, French-Canadian political writers argued that the proper social state had been achieved, and this obviously without the presence of republican institutions. Moreover, the rejection of European institutions, imposed through the colonial regime, was predicated on the same argument. Both these patterns of discourse were already well established by the time Tocqueville's work reached the colony. Consequently the book was gutted for what it might provide to support the patriote position. Thus, in defending their right to institutions comparable to those of their neighbours, the patriotes continued to emphasize the differences between North American and European society, often citing Tocqueville as an authority.

The theme of North American specificity and the emphasis on the United States as a political model merged in the patriote discourse of the early 1830's. Papineau openly avowed his republican beliefs in 1831 in speeches before the Assembly which stressed the importance of making the elective principle the basis of Lower-Canadian government. The Speaker made the explicit link between the social state of the colony and the need for political reform, and, increasingly, cited the United States as a model for political change in the colony. Thus, in speaking on reform of the Legislative Council in March of that year, he

referred to the American government as "... le gouvernement où le système représentatif produit de si heureux effets, qui est le thème constant des hommes éclairés en Europe, et dont l'organisation sociale si sagement composée est vantée même par des ministres anglais..."<sup>88</sup> Speaking of American political institutions a few days later, Papineau declared that "... à peu d'exceptions elles sont parfaites, et les habitans des Etats-Unis sont sans comparaison les mieux gouvernés qu'il y ait sur la surface du globe."<sup>89</sup>

By late 1832 and early 1833, reform of the constitution in order to create an elected Legislative Council became part of the patriote programme, and was enshrined as such in resolutions passed by the Assembly.<sup>90</sup> At this point patriote papers openly began to refer to the United States as the only acceptable political model for the colony. Here again the emphasis on the American political system was justified by the argument that it was in harmony with the special nature of North American societies. In the summer of 1833 la Minerve argued that only the American form of

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88. Papineau, speech to the Assembly, in la Minerve, 17 March, 1831.

89. Papineau in la Minerve, 28 March, 1831

90. The Assembly voted a resolution asking that a convention be called to amend the constitution in order to make the Legislative Council more compatible with the state of Lower-Canadian society on January 15, 1833. A petition to the King in support of the same objective was voted by the Assembly on 20 March, 1833. See JHALC, 42 (1832-33), pp. 307-308, 570.

limited government could apply in a situation where "un peuple est composé d'existences homogènes, c'est à dire, qu'il n'y a pas une énorme disparité de droits, de devoirs, de fortune, d'intelligence, de connaissances, d'occupations, et de respectabilité morale entre ceux qui le composent..."<sup>91</sup> Le Canadien made the same point in an editorial published a few weeks later. Citing the egalitarian state of Lower-Canadian society as incompatible with aristocratic institutions, the editor declared: "Le seul modèle que nous avons à suivre, ce sont les Etats-Unis où la société ressemble à la nôtre."<sup>92</sup> Yet another editorial in la Minerve dealt with the differences between European and North American political institutions in an article titled "Deux systèmes opposés". Arguing that the depotism which characterized European government fed on ignorance, inequality and fanaticism, the author noted that, with the exception of the British North American colonies, such forms of government had almost disappeared in the New World: "partout ailleurs les privilèges aristocratiques et les monopoles d'argent et de pouvoir, décrédités, honnis, ont disparu avec l'expulsion de ceux qui les exploitaient."<sup>93</sup> The reference, of course, was to the

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91. "Société politique" in la Minerve, 25 July, 1833.

92. Parent in le Canadien, 12 August, 1833.

93. "Deux systèmes opposés" in la Minerve, 26 August, 1833.

United States which, according to le Canadien, "possède la civilisation la plus avancée; j'entends par civilisation, les meilleures lois, le gouvernement le plus libre et le mieux organisé; la population la plus heureuse et la plus généralement éclairée..."<sup>94</sup>

The Assembly's resolutions calling for constitutional change and the emphasis on the United States as a model for those changes were but a prelude for the more complete statement of the patriote position which came, in February of 1834, in the form of the Ninety-Two Resolutions. Indeed, the Resolutions themselves, albeit in rather veiled language, rejected the British political model in favour of the American. Thus, the 41st resolution reminded the British government of the Colonial Secretary's admission that the colony's inhabitants should have nothing to envy in the political arrangements of their neighbours, adding that there remained a great deal worthy of envy in the American form of government:

... les Etats voisins ont une forme de gouvernement très propre à empêcher les abus de pouvoir et très efficace à les réprimer; que l'inverse de cet ordre de choses a toujours prévalu pour le Canada, sous la forme actuelle de gouvernement; qu'il y a dans les pays voisins un attachement plus universel et plus fort pour les institutions que nulle part ailleurs, et qu'il y existe une garantie de perfectionnement progressif des institutions politiques...

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94. Parent in le Canadien, 20 September, 1833.

The 43rd resolution rejected the British political tradition as the sole source for constitutional reform in the colony. Rather, it suggested that consideration be given to the more liberal regimes which had been granted the American colonies, as well as to "... des modifications que des hommes vertueux et éclairés ont fait subir à ces institutions coloniales, quand ils ont pu le faire avec l'assentiment des parties intéressés." The 44th resolution cited the "consentement unanime avec lequel tous les peuples de l'Amérique ont adopté et étendu le Système électif..." as proof that "... il est conforme aux vœux, aux moeurs et à l'état social de ses habitants..."<sup>95</sup> If the resolutions themselves left any doubts on the matter, Papineau dispelled them in his energetic defense of the patriotes' political manifesto. The speaker predicted that before long "toute l'Amérique doit être républicaine..." and praised the government of the United States as far more liberal than the military despotisms of Europe.<sup>96</sup>

The Ninety-Two Resolutions firmly established the idea that the United States was the only appropriate model for reform of the Lower-Canadian constitution. This view was

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95. The text of the "Quatre-quatre-vingt-douze résolutions" (1834) appears in T. P. Bédard, Histoire de cinquante ans (1791-1841) (Québec: Brousseau, 1869) pp. 334-362. The resolutions cited appear on pp. 345-346.

96. See Papineau's speech in the Assembly, 14 February, 1834, repinted in Etat de la province (1834), non paginated [p. 7].

echoed by La Minerve which, in its New Year's Day edition for 1835, again contrasted the sorry political state of Europe with the prosperity and stability of the American republic.<sup>97</sup> Later the same year the paper explained that representative government had evolved naturally out of the peculiar social conditions of the New World, and that North Americans had begun to teach the lessons of liberty to old Europe. Only the continued existence of European institutions in the colony had prevented it from reaching the same degree of prosperity as its southern neighbour.<sup>98</sup> For its part, l'Echo du Pays made no bones about where Lower Canadians should look for examples of improved political institutions:

... L'exemple du gouvernement modèle, les Etats-Unis, les a convaincu qu'il est celui qui offre le plus de garanties au sujet. Ce qu'ils voient faire le bonheur d'un peuple et lui procurer un état de prospérité inconnue encore chez aucune autre nation, ils le regardent avec raison, comme ce qui approche le plus de la perfection."<sup>99</sup>

By 1835, the same sentiments were being expressed in public meetings across the province. Thus, a reform dinner held in Stanstead toasted the United States, and proclaimed, to the air of "Hail Columbia", that the Canadiens should

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97. La Minerve, 1 January, 1835.

98. La Minerve, 23 November, 1835.

99. L'Echo du pays, 31 December, 1835.

have nothing to envy their neighbours.<sup>100</sup> At the St. Jean-Baptiste celebrations held in St. Denis the same year, two toasts were drunk to the United States, the first celebrating the liberty and prosperity of the American republic, the second calling for reforms in the colony which would leave Lower Canadians with nothing to envy their neighbours.<sup>101</sup> Much the same sentiment was expressed the following year at celebrations held at St. Jean and St. Charles.<sup>102</sup> When news of the Russell Resolutions reached the colony, the emphasis on the United States as a political model intensified. Papineau, speaking before a patriotic assembly held at St. Laurent in May of 1837, was unreserved in his praise of the American form of government, qualifying it "... la structure de gouvernement la plus parfaite que le génie et la vertu aient encore élevée pour le bonheur de l'homme en société."<sup>103</sup> Similarly, toasts made at public

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100. This was the 8th toast of the reform dinner held at Stanstead in January of 1835, reported in l'Echo du pays, 29 January, 1835.

101. Reported in le Canadien, 6 July, 1835.

102. Reported in la Minerve, 27 June, 1836.

103. Comité central de Montréal, Procédés de l'assemblée des électeurs du comté de Montréal: tenue à St. Laurent le 15 mai, 1837 (Montréal, 1837), p. 10.

assemblies on the eve of the Rebellions praised the American Constitution as "un modèle de sagesse que nous envions."<sup>104</sup>

The patriotes' admiration for American government then, grew out of the fact that its democratic institutions were more in keeping with the particular nature of North American society. It would be a grave error to believe, however, that French-Canadians viewed the United States as a unitary government, or that when they referred to American constitutions they had only in mind the federal constitution. In fact, one of the most attractive elements of American political institutions for the patriotes was the autonomy of state governments which they saw very much as independent republics within the federation. The genesis of the state governments lent credence to this view. New states, after all, adopted their own constitutions in democratically elected conventions before joining the Union. When Papineau, in 1837, praised the American form of government as the most perfect known to man, the process for the admission of new states was one aspect listed in support of his argument.<sup>105</sup> Papineau used this example less than a

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104. See reports of the proceedings of the "fête champêtre" held at l'Acadie and at Lavaltrie in la Minevre, 5 October, 1837.

105. The American Constitution, Papineau explained, "pourvoit d'avance à ce qu'un territoire dès qu'il y a 60,000 habitans puisse se constituer en état libre et indépendant. Il devient le maitre et l'arbitre absolu de son sort." See his speech in Procédés de l'assemblée..., p. 10.

year after the admission of the new state of Michigan, the only one added to the Union during the period. Nor had the process of constitution-making in the Michigan territory gone unnoticed in the patriote press. Le Canadien, for one, produced a detailed report on the constitutional convention's activities. Moreover, the sight of a free people adopting their own form of government moved the paper's editor to reiterate the theme of North America as the cradle of political liberty.<sup>106</sup>

Of course, by the time these comments were made, the idea of revising the Lower-Canadian constitution through a popularly elected convention had been around for some time. The Assembly had even formally called for a convention as early as 1833. While this call might not have been inspired by an American constitutional convention, there was one compelling example of the American people acting in convention at the state level early in the period. In 1832, after years of political struggle over the issue of federal tariffs, the state of South Carolina took the drastic step of calling a convention to deal with the issue. The delegates elected to the convention voted to declare the federal tariffs null and void and to forbid the collection of duties within the state. Shortly thereafter, the state legislature made provisions to enforce the Nullification

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106. Le Canadien, 13 July, 1835.

Ordinance adopted by the convention, including preparations for military defense. This provoked the so called "Nullification Crisis", a test of strength between the federal government and a renegade state, which ended with President Jackson declaring South Carolina to be in a state of rebellion and dispatching federal troops to enforce the tariff. Ultimately, South Carolina's attempt to nullify the federal tariff failed, as the state ceded to federal enforcement, but the crisis did bring about a general reduction in tariffs over time, a compromise which preserved, for the moment, the Union's political stability.

Although the Nullification Convention failed in achieving its goals, it was a stunning and well publicized example of direct participation in American politics. As such it was not lost on the patriotes. The incident was widely reported in the press, with Lower-Canadian papers reproducing the Nullification Ordinance and Jackson's Nullification Proclamation.<sup>107</sup> A month after the first reports of the South Carolina convention voting the nullification ordinance appeared in the colony, the Assembly passed resolutions calling on Great Britain to give an elected convention the power to amend the Lower-Canadian

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107. The Nullification Ordinance was published in full in la Minerve, 13 December, 1832 and in le Canadien, 14 December, 1832. Jackson's proclamation appeared in le Canadien, 21 and 24 December, 1832 and in the Gazette de Québec, 22 December, 1832.

constitution.<sup>108</sup> The debates over the issue leave no doubt of the American inspiration of the measure. Papineau's speech in defence of the idea cited American colonial history as an example of the elective system operating within the British Empire.<sup>109</sup> The example of South Carolina was raised, on the other hand, by opponents of the convention. Joseph Gogy, speaking against the measure, warned: "Nous voyons dans la Caroline du Sud les effets d'une convention, c'est le commencement d'une guerre civile - et en dépit du sénat on est sur le point de rompre l'union générale."<sup>110</sup>

Although the debates in the Lower-Canadian Assembly took place before the denouement of the nullification crisis, the patriotes had to admit that the actions of this particular convention had put the Union in peril.<sup>111</sup> When the issue was resolved, the patriotes press rejoiced,

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108. JHALC, 42 (1832-33), p. 307-308.

109. See the text of Papineau's speech of 10 January, 1833, reproduced in la Minerve, 17 and 24 January, 1833; cited by Ouellet, Bas-Canada, p. 353.

110. See the report of Gogy's speech in the Gazette de Québec, 22 January, 1833.

111. Patriote papers recognized this when they first reported the actions of South Carolina's convention. Parent, in le Canadien, wrote of "... la position menaçante dans laquelle ces deux pièces [South Carolina's Nullification Ordinance and Jackson's Nullification Proclamation] mettent le gouvernement général des Etats-Unis vis-à-vis d'un des états de cette vaste et florissante république..."; see the paper's 14 December, 1832 issue.

arguing that such a crisis, defused through compromise in the United States, would surely have provoked a war in Europe.<sup>112</sup> Further, the nullification debate did little to cool patriote enthusiasm for the notion of a constitutional convention. Indeed, the example of South Carolina pointed out that the people of a state could meet in convention to alter existing political arrangements. Papineau made this point in 1834, when he argued that political institutions could be perfected and revised in the republican system "au moyen de conventions du peuple, pour répondre sans secousses, ni violences aux besoins de toutes les époques."<sup>113</sup>

Although the Jackson's actions in the Nullification Crisis seemed to indicate the supremacy of the federal government over the states, the patriotes continued to view

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112. See l'Echo du pays, 28 March, 1833; also le Canadien, 30 April, 1834, where Parent argues that "La question des états du sud, qui a été réglée à l'amiable, aurait certainement causé des bouleversements en Europe."

113. Speech reported in la Minerve, 24 March, 1834; cited by Ouellet, Bas-Canada, p. 353. Papineau was citing the 41st of the Ninety-Two Resolutions. Privately, Papineau predicted that the American federation might one day break into several smaller federations, but believed that this would be affected through conventions of the various states involved rather than through war. Papineau made the comment in a letter to Arthur Roebuck. See NA, Roebuck Papers, MG 24 A19, file 5, pp. 47-48, Papineau to Roebuck, 13 March, 1836.

the Union as extremely decentralized.<sup>114</sup> The patriote press was aware, however, that there were proponents of a stronger federal government in the United States. La Minerve, in 1831, in an editorial dealing with American politics, discussed both American views of federalism and traced their historical development back to the days of John Adams' Federalists and Thomas Jefferson's Democratic Republicans. The author, in this instance, felt that the Federalist view was more realistic since the differences between the states were not so great as to be endangered by a stronger central government. Significantly, the article continued to say that were Lower Canada to become part of the union, "... nos institutions seraient plus en danger avec le fédéralisme qu'elles ne le sont avec notre bureaucratie."<sup>115</sup>

This last comment indicates the circumstances within which the Lower-Canadian discussion of American federalism

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114. Such an interpretation of the American Constitution was not unusual for the time. State's rights activists, such as John C. Calhoun, a key player in the Nullification Debate, continued to press the case for the primacy of local sovereignty well into the 1850's. Moreover, when foreign observers looked to the Republic, they saw the federal government as one with very limited powers. Rémond, tome II, p. 669, argues that French radical republicans saw the decentralization inherent in American federalism as a weakness. This, of course, was also Tocqueville's view and his comments on American federalism were republished in Lower-Canadian papers. See for example an excerpt from De la démocratie en Amérique entitled "Des effets de la décentralisation administrative aux Etats-Unis" reproduced in le Canadien, 30 September and 2 October, 1835.

115. La Minerve, 29 August, 1831.

would evolve. After 1834, as the patriotes increasingly invoked the American political model, the movement was accused of advocating annexation. This was a charge they energetically denied. On the other hand, patriote papers were also quick to point to the relative independence of individual states within the Union, and in fact, made the point that American states enjoyed more political autonomy within the federal system than did colonies within the British Empire. Thus, Denis-Benjamin Viger, writing in 1835, affirmed that "... le gouvernement des Etats-Unis ne s'immisçait en aucune manière de celui de l'intérieur des provinces respectives dont ils se composait...", which, he continued, was certainly not the case with Great Britain's administration of her colonies.<sup>116</sup> Similarly, l'Echo du pays, in discussing the problem of slavery, saw the guarantees of autonomy enjoyed by the southern states under the constitution as a major impediment to abolition.<sup>117</sup> By 1837, when many of their opponents were convinced that the patriotes were advocating annexation, the movement extended the argument that American states were really independent republics, implying that such a status was preferable to that of a colony. Papineau, in his speech at St Laurent

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116. Denis-Benjamin Viger, Observations de l'honorable D. B. Viger contre la proposition faite dans le Conseil... (Montréal: Duvernay, 1835), p. 32-33.

117. L'Echo du pays, 15 October, 1835.

stated that with the exception of commercial affairs and war the American federal government had "... guères plus d'autorité sur le plus faible des états de l'union, qu'il n'en a sur le plus puissant empire étranger."<sup>118</sup> Similarly, A. N. Morin, defending himself from the le Canadien's charge that he was advocating assimilation into the American republic, corrected the paper's editor by pointing out that he had merely stated that given British injustices, "... nous serions mieux comme état indépendant annexé aux Etats-Unis."<sup>119</sup>

These generalizations about the nature of the American federalism were supplemented by a more detailed analysis of the Republic's political institutions as well as of political events south of the border. Clearly, by the time the Ninety-Two Resolutions were introduced in the Assembly, the importance of the American image in French-Canadian political discourse necessitated such a discussion. In such a context it became almost impossible to discuss reform of the Legislative Council without reference to the American Congress, to condemn the abuses of the colonial executive without contrasting British governors with American presidents, or to call for reform of the colony's

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118. See Papineau's speech reported in Procédés de l'assemblée..., p. 10-11.

119. See Morin's letter in le Libéral, 5 August, 1837.

constitution without adding that in the United States the people made their own constitutions.

Lower-Canadian papers continued to be fascinated by presidential politics in the period. Partially this was a result of the tone of Jackson's presidency, which greatly enhanced the power of the executive and, indeed, brought forth an opposition party dedicated to resisting this trend. The President's speeches and addresses to Congress remained by far the most frequently reproduced of American political documents. From 1831 to 1837, all of Jackson's annual addresses were published in French in the colony, usually in more than one of the papers surveyed.<sup>120</sup> In addition, both Jackson's second inaugural address and Van Buren's inaugural address were reprinted in French in the colonial press.<sup>121</sup>

General comments on the American presidency were extremely favourable in the patriote press. A favourite

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120. La Minerve published all of Jackson's annual messages except that for 1835; see the paper's 15 December, 1831, 17 and 20 December 1832, 12 and 16 December, 1833, 15 and 18 December, 1834, 19 and 22 December 1836 issues. Le Canadien published all of the annual messages except that of 1832 and 1833; see its 17 December, 1831, 22 December, 1834, 18 December, 1835, 21 December 1836 issues. The Gazette de Québec, ironically, reproduced all of Jackson's annual messages; see its 16 December, 1831, 13 December, 1832, 12 December, 1833, 16 December, 1834, 17 December, 1835, 15 December, 1836 issues. For its part l'Echo du pays only reprinted the 1833 message; see its 19 and 26 December, 1833 issues.

121. Jackson's second inaugural appears in the Gazette de Québec, 14 March, 1833 and in le Canadien, 18 March, 1833. Van Buren's inaugural appears in la Minerve, 23 March, 1837.

tactic in highlighting the benefits of the American system of government was to compare the chief executive of the Republic to European monarchs or to the governor of the colony. At a very basic level, the President, elected by the people, had their respect and affection. Thus when Jackson undertook a triumphant tour of the United States in 1833, le Canadien commented: "...c'est un triomphe que prépare partout l'enthousiasme des peuples. Que les Rois de l'Europe avec leur cent mille bayonettes, avec leurs cours brillantes, sont petits auprès de cet homme d'un peuple libre et souverain!"<sup>122</sup> When the Gazette de Québec pointed out that Jackson had been accompanied by a military escort, le Canadien retorted, citing its rival's report, that the escort had merely prevented the President from being overwhelmed by thousands of well-wishers.<sup>123</sup>

The President also seemed to Lower-Canadian papers the embodiment of republican simplicity, if only in that he and the other executive officers of the Republic worked for salaries which seemed modest when compared with those of colonial governors. Thus, l'Echo du pays noted that Lord Aylmer received \$15,000 more than the American president, who governed a country of twelve million men and did a

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122. Le Canadien, 21 June, 1833.

123. Le Canadien, 26 June, 1833.

better job of it.<sup>124</sup> The comparison was even more effective when it was made to the state governors, as la Minerve did in 1835 and again in 1836. In the first article, the paper noted that no governor in the United States made more than \$7,500, that those of New York and Pennsylvania received a mere \$4,000, while the governor of tiny Rhode Island cost only \$400 annually.<sup>125</sup> The following year it reported that despite the relatively low salaries of state governors in the United States, the state of Louisiana's senate was actually considering the reduction of the governor's salary by a third. "On voit", observed the paper, "que nos voisins connaissent les avantages d'un gouvernement à bon marché!"<sup>126</sup>

Still, the patriotes were inconsistent in their appraisal of Jackson's presidency. In effect, the movement appropriated those aspects of American political discourse which best reinforced their own particular political context. Part of that context was, of course, a constitutional arrangement where colonial government was presided by an appointed executive whose power stood virtually unchecked. For this reason the patriotes were receptive to the emerging Whig party's criticisms of Andrew Jackson's presidency as marked by abuses of the executive

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124. L'Echo du pays, 7 May, 1834.

125. La Minerve, 6 April, 1835.

126. La Minerve, 16 February, 1836.

power. Such an interpretation of the president's activities was, both in the case of the Whigs and the patriotes, a restatement of a theme common to civic humanist discourse, marked as it was by distrust of executive power.<sup>127</sup> On the other hand, the movement seemed to generally admire Jackson's stand against the Bank of the United States, seeing him in this case as the champion of the people struggling against the entrenched economic interests. Here too, the link to the domestic discursive context is clear, since the patriotes assimilated Jackson's struggle to their own battle with the British mercantile class in the colony.

Thus, when the patriotes sought to highlight the commonality of their struggle against the moneyed aristocracy in Lower Canada with that of the Democrats in the United States, Jackson became the champion of the people. Le Canadien, in 1834, made the link between politics in the two countries explicitly, and this time at least, President Jackson was classed on the side of liberty.<sup>128</sup> Later the same year the paper termed the

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127. Daniel Walker Howe, The Political Culture of the American Whigs (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1979), p. 87, writes that the Whigs believed "The usurpation of power by the executive was such a common cause of the recurring cycle of republican degeneration that it had to be forestalled if at all possible." Similarly, la Minerve commented that the American Whigs were struggling to resist "l'oppression que le chef de l'exécutif semblerait vouloir établir..." See the paper's 9 October, 1834 issue.

128. See for example an editorial on the Bank War published in le Canadien, 1 December, 1834.

president's enemies "aristocrates", speaking of Jackson as "ce digne successeur de Washington" and "le grand républicain".<sup>129</sup> La Minerve echoed these sentiments the following year, when it agreed with Jackson's assessment that the Bank of The United States was plotting to overthrow the American government.<sup>130</sup> By 1836, the paper was announcing to its readers the upcoming publication of Jackson's message to Congress stating that "... ce message est comme tous ceux du Général Jackson, rédigé avec soin, avec calme et surtout avec intérêt...", praise which the President's contemporaries would surely have found odd.<sup>131</sup>

Yet, these generally positive appraisals of Jackson's presidency were counterbalanced by severe criticism. In essence, Jackson never quite lost the warrior image which had worried patriote editors when he ran for the presidency in 1828. Further, one incident in the period did little to enhance the President's reputation in Lower Canada. Jackson's extended conflict with the French government over reparations dating back to the turn of the century brought the United States to the brink of war with France. Both domestic and foreign observers of the Franco-American diplomatic conflict tended to attribute the breakdown in

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129. Le Canadien, 3 December, 1834.

130. La Minerve, 24 August, 1835.

131. La Minerve, 15 December, 1836.

relations to the bellicosity of the American chief executive. Lower-Canadian papers were quick to adopt the same line. Indeed, la Minerve went so far as to compare the President to Lord Aylmer, noting that they were both military men.<sup>132</sup> Jackson's hard line with France and his threat of a recourse to arms if American demands were not met was condemned by patriote papers. La Minerve was consistently critical in its reporting of the conflict speaking of Jackson's desire "de s'élaner dans une querelle incertaine...", and of the President's "intentions irréfléchies..."<sup>133</sup> Still, the paper again found proof of the excellence of American institutions in the matter's settlement. This came in the form of resolutions passed by the House of Representatives condemning Jackson's inflexible stance, which in turn moved la Minerve's editor to conclude: "... ceci est encore une nouvelle preuve de l'excellence des institutions américaines; le caprice d'un chef n'y peut rien, la sagesse des représentants du peuple peut et fait tout."<sup>134</sup>

The conflict with France was but one example of how the executive, even within the American system, might tend to an abuse of power. This le Canadien admitted in response

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132. La Minerve, 26 February, 1835.

133. La Minerve, 12 and 16 March, 1835.

134. La Minerve, 16 March, 1835.

to an editorial in the Gazette de Québec which criticized politics in the Republic by publishing complaints against Jackson's administration. Parent nevertheless argued that if it was possible for the executive to abuse power in the United States, the potential for such abuse in Lower Canada, and the subsequent loss of liberty it entailed, was far greater. As the author put it: "Si l'aigle puissant qui plane au dessus des alléghanies [sic] peut craindre pour sa liberté, que sera-ce du faible perdreau qui voltige dans nos savanes?"<sup>135</sup> Indeed, there were similarities between the abuses of the executive in the United States and in the colony. The most obvious was the use of patronage by the Jacksonians. When the congressional opposition attacked the Democrats using the charge of executive corruption, la Minerve was quick to draw a parallel to the Lower-Canadian situation:

Là comme ici la puissance a ses créatures d'affection qu'elle accable de places, de richesses et de prérogatives et sur les déprédations desquelles elle affecte de fermer les yeux. Là comme ici c'est un pillage perpétuel des deniers public au nom du bien public. Là comme ici, les adorateurs intéressés de l'administration annoncent qu'elle seule est capable de sauver la patrie, que les députés fidèles ne sont que des factieux! ...

Still, the paper ended the comparison by showing that in the Republic the people had a constitutional recourse which allowed them to resist such executive abuses, including the

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135. Le Canadien, 2 May, 1834.

right to elect a new administration and the Senate's power to investigate and resist the President.<sup>136</sup>

When the American Whigs raised the spectre of executive abuse and insisted on the role of the legislature in preserving the people's liberties, their message was received wholeheartedly by the Lower-Canadian patriotes. For the French-Canadian political movement, the struggle was similar and the stakes just as high. In advocating an elected Legislative Council, the patriotes were seeking to wrest control of the colonial government from the hands of the Governor and, what they considered to be, his corrupt entourage of appointed officials. In this sense the American model was a compelling one, for, at both the state and federal level, popularly elected bicameral houses watched vigilantly over the actions of the executive. The essential quality of American government in the patriotes' eyes then, was popular participation at all levels of the legislative process. Thus, Denis-Benjamin Viger, speaking as a member of the Legislative Council he sought to abolish, pointed out that nowhere in the United States could there be found a legislative body immune from the influence of the people. Consequently no legislative body could, as was the

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136. "Gouvernement des Etats-Unis. Payes extraordinaires." in la Minerve, 9 October, 1834.

case in the colony, stifle the will of the people's elected representatives.<sup>137</sup>

When French-Canadian papers favourable to reform discussed changing the Legislative Council, the American model was invariably invoked. Even before the passage of the the Ninety-Two Resolutions, an article in le Canadien argued that the reformed upper house should be patterned after the American senate, with councillors serving six-year terms, and with a third of the house elected every two years. The author also suggested that election to the Council be reserved for those owning land in the colony.<sup>138</sup> Linking the council to land ensured that it would be composed of virtuous and independent members. Indeed, this was the only way to ensure the independence of councillors in a society where "... les fortunes sont mobiles, où l'homme qui était indépendant hier peut devenir dépendant demain..." Thus, the new Council had to be clearly linked to property, "... comme on l'a fait dans presque tous les Etats-Unis..."<sup>139</sup>

The patriotes also envisaged an Upper House which would act as a balance against the will of the people expressed in the Assembly. Indeed, the very call for a reformed council

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137. Viger, Observations... (1835), p. 31.

138. Le Canadien, 12 August, 1833.

139. Le Canadien, 10 May, 1833.

rather than for abolition of the Upper House indicates the importance still attributed to the idea of balance in political institutions. Yet, having pronounced North America as antithetical to aristocracy, the question became what order in society would be represented in the council. To this the patriotes replied that the council would be made up of the "aristocratie des talents et vertus", or the "aristocratie naturelle" within Lower-Canadian society. In describing the political balance established by the American constitution, patriote papers noted that while the Americans had rejected the idea of a hereditary aristocracy, they had created "une aristocratie elective".<sup>140</sup> Indeed, this was one of the primary advantages of the American system: it allowed men of virtue, independence and talent-- the "natural" aristocracy-- to take their rightful place in the political order.<sup>141</sup> The example of virtuous and moderate upper houses in the United States, both at the state and federal level, seemed to indicate that such a body might restore the

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140. The term appears in "Réflexions sur l'administration générale des colonies" in la Minerve, 4 July, 1831.

141. See for example Papineau's description of American government in his speech at St. Laurent in May of 1837: "...Toutes les charges y étant électives, elles y sont exercés par l'aristocratie naturelle..."; see the report of his speech in Procédés de l'assemblée..., p. 12.

balance which had been so long absent from the Lower-Canadian legislative process.<sup>142</sup>

The patriotes' very open advocacy of an American form of government did not go unchallenged. Indeed, their political opponents reacted, particularly after 1834, with a scathing critique of the United States and its constitution. Le Canadien, while it opposed the patriote leadership after 1836, rarely attacked the American form of government per se, preferring to harp on the dangers presented by the prospect of annexation to the Republic. The Gazette de Québec, however, felt the need to rebut the patriote position more directly. To this end it highlighted disorder and conflict in the United States and proclaimed that the Republic was but an experiment in government which was inevitably doomed to failure. Thus, on the occasion of squabbles between two states in 1835, the Gazette predicted that the union "n'existera certainement pas cinquante années de plus."<sup>143</sup> When some slave owners in Louisiana put a price

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142. Etienne Parent continued to believe this even after he had broken with the patriotes. Applauding the creation of an upper house in Vermont, the editor remarked "Une seconde chambre avec certaines conditions d'âge ou d'expérience et de propriété, nous parait un modérateur nécessaire dans un gouvernement représentatif..." See le Canadien, 26 October, 1836. There were those, however, who argued for the abolition of the Upper House, and predicted the disappearance of the House of Lords in England, as well as the American Senate. This view, a rather isolated one, appears in an article published in l'Echo du pays, 16 October, 1834.

143. Gazette de Québec, 14 May, 1835.

on the head of a leading New York abolitionist, the paper mocked the vaunted perfection of American institutions: "Vraiment, la république parfaite commence à offrir des traits qui répugneraient aux noirs de l'Afrique, dont ils [sic] tiennent un si grand nombre en esclavage."<sup>144</sup> When feeling against the Bank of the United States excited American mobs to riot, the Gazette termed American government "... une expérience en embrion...", predicting "ces étoiles et ce drapeau rayé ne flotteront pas pendant cinquante ans sur ce continent, sans qu'il se passe des scènes de carnage qui feront la honte de la liberté et de la raison..."<sup>145</sup> When the American economy was plunged into disorder in 1837, the Québec paper believed the crisis to be imminent: "...Le peuple souverain demande à hauts cris une réforme radicale du gouvernement modèle; on parle d'assembler une convention nationale, et de lever à New York une armée de 10,000 hommes pour aller assiéger le Président à Washington."<sup>146</sup> In short the Gazette argued that the patriotes were blind to the Republic's faults and that in choosing it as their political model they had demonstrated their own political ineptitude.

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144. Gazette de Québec, 3 September, 1835.

145. La Gazette de Québec, 20 February and 30 April, 1836.

146. Gazette de Québec, 27 May, 1837.

## 5.6 The Practice of American Politics: Democracy or Mob Rule?

In their theoretical discussions of American political institutions the patriotes presented a highly idealized view of the Republic. Yet, as their own comments on the corruptive effect of executive power in the United States make clear, theory and reality were two different things. The Gazette de Québec, in particular, lost few opportunities to point out corruption and strife in American political life. Thus, the Gazette regarded the presidency merely as an elective monarchy, and one which was more powerful and potentially harmful than the British monarchy.<sup>147</sup> When the patriotes pinned their faith in the American model on the excellence of the Republic's elected representatives, the Gazette responded with examples of corruption and partisanship in the Congress.<sup>148</sup> Faced with the argument that frequent elections prevented the Republic from political corruption and degeneration, the paper quoted American electoral reports portraying elections as merely a violent struggle for the spoils of office. Citing examples of partisanship in political appointments on the occasion of

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147. See for example the editorial on the choice of Jackson's successor for the Democratic nomination in the Gazette de Québec, 9 June, 1835.

148. See the Gazette de Québec, 7 march, 1837.

the American congressional elections of 1834, the Gazette's editor concluded:

Il est impossible sous un pareil état de choses que la haine, les animosités, la corruption ne se fraient pas un chemin. Ces influences dangereuses à la justice et à la chose publique, exercent aux Etats-Unis, en effet, un ascendant qui contraste peu avantageusement avec le régime constitutionnel anglais.<sup>149</sup>

Indeed, it was easy for the critics of American society and politics to find fault with Jacksonian America. American politics in the period were marked by fierce partisanship and the Democrats openly proclaimed their intention of practising the system of rotation in office, that is, of implementing the idea that to the victor belonged the spoils. More troubling to Lower-Canadian observers of all political stripes was the electoral violence which marked the period. Such characteristics of American politics, widely reported in the colonial press, did little to enhance of the image of the American republic as one where a virtuous population delegated power to disinterested and independent elected representatives.

These blemishes, however, were far from enough to make the patriotes retreat from their praise of American institutions and politics. American political violence, such as that exhibited in the New York elections of 1834, could always be contrasted to that in the colony. This was

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149. "Elections populaires aux Etats-Unis" in the Gazette de Québec, 17 April, 1834.

la Minerve's response, and the paper's editor was quick to point out that, in New York, order had been promptly restored, unlike Montreal in 1832 when the government had resorted to firing on the people.<sup>150</sup> Le Canadien took much the same tack in responding to the Gazette's charge that violence was the chief characteristic of American elections. The ballot box, argued that paper's editor, could bring about change with little or no violence in the United States which elsewhere might only be achieved through civil war.<sup>151</sup> In fact, Parent maintained that the system of frequent elections in the United States prevented popular uprisings such as the French Revolution or the riots which had broken out in London and Bristol, while nevertheless providing the people with the power to affect significant change. "L'humanité a deux grandes obligations à l'Amérique", he concluded, "la découverte de la baguette électrique qui prévient les ravages de la foudre, et celle du système électif qui prévient les grandes commotions populaires, inévitables sous l'ancien système."<sup>152</sup>

There were, of course, other explanations for the outbursts of popular unrest in the United States. If American elections were agitated, wrote Parent in le

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150. La Minerve, 17 April, 1834.

151. Le Canadien, 2 May, 1834.

152. Parent in le Canadien, 4 July, 1834.

Canadien, it was because the population of the Republic was vigilant in its defense of liberty. Indeed, he maintained that this vigilance and the popular agitation it occasionally brought forth was essential to the survival of republican government:

C'est au contraire l'âme de la république qu'une agitation politique continuelle. Les sociétés sont en cela semblables à l'eau; les unes et l'autre ont besoin d'être continuellement agitées pour ne pas se corrompre. L'agitation est aussi nécessaire au corps politique, que l'exercice au corps humain. De l'inaction le peuple tombe bientôt dans l'indifférence, de l'indifférence dans la torpeur, et de la torpeur dans les filets du pouvoir. Malheur à l'Amérique entière si l'agitation venait à cesser chez nos voisins...<sup>153</sup>

Political upheavals in the United States then, became evidence that the Republic was healthy, and its people jealous of their liberty. Moreover, Parent was assuming that political involvement was proof of the American population's political virtue, an assumption he extended to include his own people.<sup>154</sup>

Patriote papers also believed that it was not only the American people who were responsible for the unrest which characterized elections in the Republic. Some commentators believed that there was a common cause of conflict in both

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153. Parent in le Canadien, 11 June, 1834.

154. Parent argued that given the potential for corruption in Lower Canada it was amazing that the population was rising up against the colonial oligarchy. This he saw as evidence that "notre population... [est] ... généralement bien vertueuse, bien ferme, bien incorruptible." See le Canadien, 2 May, 1834.

the colony and the United States: the activities of a privileged elite or, more specifically, a moneyed aristocracy. This was how l'Echo du pays explained political troubles in the United States at the end of 1834. The paper's editor adopted the Jacksonian argument that the Whigs were really the party of money and privilege, the same faction which had fought against the president in the Bank War. The author wrote of "...la puissance qu'a déployée cette Aristocratie des richesses dans les présentes élections...", adding that it had been successful in a number of areas and "... comme celle de notre pays elle a fait couler du sang!" Still, while warning of the danger this faction represented for American liberties, the article expressed confidence in the Republic's ability to overcome the threat through the action of the people at the polls. This was a far cry from Lower Canada, where although the people might vote for the Ninety-Two Resolutions, the colonial administration would simply ignore their wishes. "Les Américains jouiront tranquillement de leur victoire", the author concluded, "et les Canadiens gémiront encore sous l'oppression!!"<sup>155</sup>

The text which most clearly linked political strife in the United States to European origins was published in la

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155. "Les élections Américaines" in l'Echo du pays, 27 November, 1834; republished in le Canadien, 3 December, 1834.

Minerve in the summer of 1835. In a long editorial on the nature of American politics, the author traced the historical development of the European plot in the United States and outlined the methods through which it had operated. At the time of the American Revolution those loyal to the British cause whose wealth was tied up in the Republic chose to remain in the United States after independence was declared. Hiding their preference for aristocratic and monarchic institutions, these enemies of the true republican spirit continued to dream of overthrowing the government. These same individuals greatly benefited from the rapid economic growth of the United States which took place after independence. They became in effect, a merchant elite, comparable to that which had developed in Lower Canada and with strong ties to the latter. Unable to impose their will in the egalitarian Republic where "la fortune n'est rien, la vertu et la capacité personnelles doivent être tout", this "aristocratie des richesses" resorted to intrigue. In classic civic humanist terms, the author then goes on to describe the danger posed to liberty by a wealthy faction:

L'aristocratie des richesses, la pire de toutes, certainement est bien dangereuse, car n'étant point appelé par sa naissance, ainsi que l'autre, à posséder le pouvoir, elle ne peut y parvenir qu'à l'aide de commotions politiques...

Thus, the political unrest which existed in the United States could be attributed to the activities of a wealthy

faction which had never truly accepted republican rule. Further, that faction acted in league with its equivalent in Lower Canada to oppress the people and stifle the progress of popular government.

The moneyed aristocrats also played on the few weaknesses in American society in order to advance their plans. They exploited the slavery issue, for example, pitting northern and southern states against each other. They fanned the fires of fanaticism in the north, and encouraged the persecution of Catholics. More than anything else they used newly arrived immigrants as pawns in their political game. This was facilitated, the writer continued, by the fact that recent immigrants, unlike those which had come to the Republic in the first years after the Revolution, were destitute and came only as itinerant workers. These newest Americans, with little or no ties to their adopted land, could be exploited by the merchant aristocracy for their own gain. Their votes could be bought by aristocratic candidates and they could be used to stir up trouble during elections.

Despite this dire threat to the Republic's survival, the author believed that the people would triumph in their struggle against these would-be oppressors, just as the people of Lower Canada would one day triumph over their own moneyed aristocracy. This, because a North American people would never submit to being ruled by an aristocracy or a

monarchy. America would remain republican.<sup>156</sup> This explanation of the forces at work in American politics was one which had been used by Jeffersonian Democrats in their struggle against Hamilton and the Federalists, and which was popular with Jacksonian Democrats who spoke of a great battle between producing and non-producing classes. It is also a restatement of the classical fear of merchant classes within republics, and their ability to corrupt republican government through faction.

Attributing political troubles in the United States to the intrigues of an "aristocratie des richesses" allowed the patriotes to situate themselves in a more universal, or at least continental, struggle for the preservation of political liberty. In this vein it is noteworthy that this article underlines the danger to republican stability created by the emigration of a landless European proletariat. The patriotes, of course, were dealing with the same problem at home and predicted the same dire consequences for the virtue of Lower-Canadian society. However, some observers believed that political reforms in the United States aimed at extending the franchise had compounded the problem. Denis-Benjamin Viger, for one, believed that in attempting to extend liberty the Americans

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156. La Minerve, 10 August, 1835.

had actually endangered it.<sup>157</sup> La Minerve, in an editorial published in 1836, was even more explicit:

Ainsi on le voit: il n'y a pas que nous qui nous plaignons de l'inconvénient qui doit résulter de la tolérance d'une immigration de pauvres. On ne saurait calculer tout le mal qui a été fait aux Etats-Unis, ni toutes les conséquences qui en découleront, s'ils ne coupent bientôt le mal dans sa racine; c'est un véritable fléau qu'ils doivent craindre beaucoup, tant qu'il n'auront pas modifié leur principe électoral universel de manière à exclure de la classe des électeurs ces causes de troubles et de perturbations.<sup>158</sup>

In order to preserve the republic, the franchise had to be restricted to the virtuous American citizen: the native landholder.

The power of the American political model in patriote circles was precisely that it could both embody the movement's aspirations and mirror its political struggle. Yet the struggle seemed more balanced south of the border. There, the people's champions, the aristocracy of talent and virtue, had access to power and could act effectively to defend liberty. There, institutions reflected the social composition of North America and provided a strong point in the struggle against the forces of European despotism. Thus, despite the challenges mounted by intriguing factions in both the colony and the republic, it seemed that liberty

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157. Viger, Observations... (1835), p. 34.

158. La Minerve, 8 September, 1836.

must eventually triumph, and the patriotes saw their struggle as part of that process.

### 5.7 The Annexation Debate

The patriote emphasis on the American model and their oft-stated belief in the republican destiny of North America raised an important question. What was the future of French Canada in such a scenario? The movement never openly advocated annexation, at least not before the Rebellions. The logic of their position, however, seemed to indicate an eventual union with the American federation of republics. Indeed, it was difficult to reach any other conclusion when the patriotes argued that the introduction of elective institutions was a necessary preparation for a time when all North America would be republican. In the few years between the adoption of the Ninety-Two Resolutions and the outbreak of the Rebellions this became one of the most consistent debates carried on between the patriotes and their political opponents. The latter charged that the patriotes did indeed intend to annex Lower Canada to the United States, a move which they predicted would result in the destruction of the colony's institutions, language, laws and religion.

The charge that the patriotes advocated annexation to the United States grew shriller as political conflict within the colony intensified. Although the movement was always

careful to state that it was not calling for political union with the Americans, it nevertheless consistently predicted that such would be the inevitable result of British intransigence with regard to political reform. Thus, as early as 1831 Etienne Parent warned that "la mauvaise politique de l'Angleterre" might lead to the colony becoming "un des états de la confédération américaine."<sup>159</sup> By the time the Ninety-Two Resolutions were adopted, the threat of union with the Republic had become commonplace. Papineau, who had already publicly proclaimed the republican destiny of North America, wrote to Arthur Roebuck that public opinion in both Upper and Lower Canada favoured American institutions and that if reform could only be achieved within the American federation, "... les vœux des peuples s'y porteront bien vite."<sup>160</sup>

By the time these words were written, the patriotes had openly adopted the American political model as the only acceptable blueprint for reform in the colony. Still, charges that such reforms were a prelude to annexation were rebutted energetically by the movement. Yet, often the patriote press added that French Canadians would be better off as residents of an American state. Thus, Parent argued in 1835 that those who maintained that annexation would lead

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159. Parent in le Canadien, 12 October, 1831.

160. NA, Roebuck Papers, vol. 1, file 5, Papineau to Roebuck, 16 January, 1835.

to cultural assimilation knew little of the American constitution. Lower Canada, as a state within the Union, would preserve its local autonomy. "Quant à nos lois et nos usages", concluded the editor, "il suffit de dire que chaque état est souverain chez lui dans l'union américaine."<sup>161</sup>

If such comments did little to reassure the movement's political opponents, neither did the oft-repeated assertion that the Americans would jump at the chance to help Lower Canadians win their political liberty. When an Independence Day dinner in Vermont toasted the patriote cause, le Canadien responded with a long editorial celebrating American sympathy for the movement. Parent added that the American people "verrait avec exultation les rives du St. Laurent ajouter de nouvelles étoiles à son drapeau, si l'offre lui en était faite." While the editor denied this was a threat of annexation, he warned British ministers that American sympathy for the cause was a factor not to be taken lightly.<sup>162</sup> Nor would Americans stand by and let the Lower-Canadian people be oppressed. L'Echo du pays predicted that, in the case of armed conflict, Lower-Canadians could expect help from their republican neighbours. "Les Américains savent trop bien apprécier la liberté pour ne pas

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161. Parent in le Canadien, 17 June, 1835; cited by Louis Nourry, "La pensée politique d'Etienne Parent, 1831-1852" (Ph. D. dissertation, Université de Montréal, 1973), p. 147.

162. Parent in le Canadien, 20 July, 1835.

la favoriser chez toutes les nations..." , explained the author.<sup>163</sup>

These comments on the part of patriote editors no doubt alarmed those in the colony who were in favour of retaining the British connection. The fear of annexation was intensified when news of the Russell Resolutions reached the colony. In the outpouring of protest which greeted the new policy, patriote discourse more openly invoked the possibility of union with the United States, as well as the eventuality of American assistance in the case of a confrontation with Great Britain. Papineau, in May of 1837, invoked the example of the American Revolution, and went to great pains to demonstrate the autonomy enjoyed by American states within the Union. Resolutions adopted by the Assembly of the county of Richelieu were even more explicit, stating that the new policy demonstrated the bad faith of the British government and adding: "...Une triste expérience nous oblige à reconnaître que de l'autre côté de la ligne 45 étaient nos amis et nos aliés naturels."<sup>164</sup> The same sentiments were echoed in resolutions adopted by other assemblies across the province in the summer of 1837. The Fils de la liberté, formed in Montréal at the end of the summer, proclaimed that union with the United States would

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163. L'Echo du pays, 24 September, 1835.

164. Cited in le Canadien, 15 May, 1837.

be preferable to British rule, and welcomed the sympathy and support of the American population.<sup>165</sup>

The patriote penchant for invoking both the eventuality of union with the Republic (given British misadministration of the colony), and American sympathy for the Lower-Canadian cause, evoked an angry response from their political opponents. For those who stood against the movement, there was no doubt that the patriotes were openly advocating annexation. Starting with the debate over the Ninety-Two Resolutions in the Assembly, those who defended the constitutional status quo warned of the dangers of any institutional or political rapprochement to the Americans. In this vein Joseph Gogy, arguing against the Resolutions, felt obliged to remind members of the Assembly that American revolutionaries had condemned British tolerance of Catholicism in the colony, adding : "... et ce sont ces Américains qui sont les modèles de l'hon. Orateur, et dont il affecte de faire de si grands éloges."<sup>166</sup> The same tactic was employed by the Gazette de Québec which cited incidents

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165. See an explanation of the association's position published in la Minerve, 16 October, 1837 and resolutions voted at their meeting of 6 November, reproduced in the paper's 11 November, 1837 issue.

166. Joseph Gogy, speech to the Assembly, 18 February, 1834, reprinted in Etat de la province (1834), non paginated [p. 13].

of American anti-Catholicism in support of its argument against American institutions and union with the Republic.<sup>167</sup>

When the attack on the patriotes' supposed annexationist views began in earnest in 1836, the movement's critics had grown to include Etienne Parent and his le Canadien. Indeed, Parent cited his opposition to patriote plans for annexation as the main reason for his split from the movement and his reconciliation to the colonial administration.<sup>168</sup> Referring to the patriote leadership as the "parti américain" and to la Minerve and the Vindicator as "les journaux de sympathie étrangère", the paper which had formerly praised the Republic now loudly denounced annexation as the death knell of the Canadiens as a people.<sup>169</sup> Great Britain had protected canadien institutions, a correspondent argued in 1837; annexation to the United States would destroy them:

Nous serions confondus dans la république, notre langue serait perdue, nos lois abolies, notre

167. Gazette de Québec, 10 November, 1835.

168. In le Canadien, 19 October, 1836, Parent explained that he had never favoured annexation and that it was "notre éloignement pour cette existence politique qui, depuis un an à peu près nous a fait rapprocher d'une administration qui se présentait avec des paroles de justice et de conciliation." The timing of Parent's defection from patriote ranks implied in this passage is misleading. The editorial position of le Canadien seems rather to have changed early in 1836. On the defection of Québec city patriotes from the movement see Ouellet, Bas-Canada, pp. 381-384.

169. The terms appear in le Canadien, 1 September, 1837 and in the paper's 31 July, 1837 issue respectively.

religion sacrifiée, notre clergé opprimé, nos monastères incendiés, notre prêtres et nos religieuses persécutés et obligés de fuir devant une masse fanatique et préjugée contre le Catholicisme.<sup>170</sup>

Parent agreed completely with this evaluation, stating that with annexation "... le peuple Canadien perdra à jamais l'espoir de perpétuer son nom et sa race, noble héritage qu'il avait reçu de ses pères..."<sup>171</sup> Nor should Lower Canadians expect any sympathy from the Americans, "... le moins chevalresque de tous les peuples". Further, the American did nothing unless it produced a profit for him. "Nous avons toujours pensé", he continued, "que nous n'avions d'autres sympathies à attendre de lui [l'Américain] que le sentiment qui peut résulter d'une règle d'arithmétique."<sup>172</sup> In attacking annexation as a threat to his people's cultural survival, Parent had returned to the stereotype of the avaricious American so common in French-Canadian political discourse before 1815.

Needless to say, the Gazette de Québec, while still condemning Parent and his paper, used many of the same arguments against annexation.<sup>173</sup> In addition, both papers reproduced numerous articles from the American press

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170. "Un électeur" in le Canadien, 21 June 1837.

171. Parent in le Canadien, 1 September, 1837.

172. Parent in le Canadien, 17 July, 1837.

173. See for example the Gazette de Québec, 30 April, 1836.

alternately showing the hazards of political union and the lack of sympathy for the Lower-Canadian cause which made such a union unlikely. Thus, reports of a bill which would prohibit the immigration of Catholics to the United States were presented in le Canadien as an antidote to the views of those who would hasten union with the Americans.<sup>174</sup> The paper also cited American newspapers in order to show that there was little support or interest for the canadien cause south of the border, and indeed that some papers considered the Canadiens an "ignorant" people.<sup>175</sup> Both le Canadien and the Gazette de Québec reported in detail the impediments Texas faced in its bid for admission to the Union as proof that Canada would never be able to join the American federation. In the words of the Gazette's editor: "... les raisons de justice, de politique et d'intérêt qui militent contre l'admission du Texas dans la confédération Américaine, militeraient avec cent fois plus de force contre celle du Canada..."<sup>176</sup>

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174. See le Canadien, 3 March, 1837. The paper reminded readers of further examples of American anti-Catholicism, including the burning of the Catholic convent in Charleston and the anti-Catholic tone of the Declarations of the First Continental Congress in its 22 March, 1837 issue.

175. Le Canadien, 17 July, 1837; cited by Nourry, p. 339.

176. Gazette de Québec, 14 October, 1837; see also le Canadien, 16 October, 1837.

The case of Texas was surely a relevant example, but there was a much more compelling model which attracted the attention of Lower-Canadian editors: the state of Louisiana. Louisiana had, after all, been a French possession until its cession to the United States, and offered an example of a French and Catholic people living under republican rule. Beginning in the 1820's French language papers from Louisiana were cited in the Lower-Canadian press, and from 1831 to 1837, papers from the state were cited more frequently than those of all other states in the Union, except New York.<sup>177</sup> Early in the period the suggestion that Lower-Canada might one day become part of the Union prompted the patriotes' opponents to invoke the example of Louisiana, where the inhabitants had sacrificed their language and religion when they became part of the United States.<sup>178</sup> Similarly, "T. J." , writing in the Gazette de Québec, noted that the French populations in Louisiana and Detroit sent no representatives of French origin to the Congress. "Il est presque incroyable", the author concluded, "que ceux qui prétendent vouloir soutenir la langue, les lois et les

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177. See the discussion of newspaper citations in Chapter Two. One reason papers from Louisiana were frequently cited was, of course, that those published in French did not have to be translated.

178. See Pierre De Sales Laterrière's letter in le Canadien, 5 October, 1831; cited by Reid, p. 277-278.

institutions du pays, veulent les soutenir en nous livrant au Congrès."<sup>179</sup>

The patriote press, of course, saw things differently. Citing articles drawn from the Louisiana press, they portrayed a healthy and prosperous French community living under the protection of republican institutions. Moreover, Louisiana was an example of the progress which could be made under republican institutions. In discussing judicial and penal reform, la Minerve cited the state, "Français comme nous dans l'origine", as one which had made great strides.<sup>180</sup> When the Gazette's correspondent bemoaned the state of the Louisiana French, it was le Canadien, still tied at this time to the patriote leadership, which refuted its charges. This it did by noting that while it received many French papers from Louisiana, it could not find any complaint within them concerning the status of the French language.<sup>181</sup>

Parent's opinion of Louisiana changed once he found himself combatting what he saw as the patriotes' dangerous advocacy of political union with the United States. In July of 1836, le Canadien published an editorial on Louisiana in

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179. "Avenir du Canada" by "T. J." in the Gazette de Québec, 17 december, 1833.

180. "Système des Prisons" in la Minerve, 22 March, 1832. Louisiana's penal code was revised by Edward Livingston, whose work gained him the recognition of the French Académie des Sciences morales et politiques. See Rémond, tome 1, p. 364.

181. Parent in le Canadien, 20 December, 1833.

which it formally reversed its opinion on the question of the French population of the state. Parent explained that his change of mind on the question had been occasioned by the publication of a new paper, l'Echo de la Louisiane, which reported that the French population of the state was being persecuted by Americans who had migrated into the area. "Hélas!", Parent exclaimed, "les hommes sont partout les mêmes, invoquant les principes de la morale et du droit naturel lorsqu'il s'agit d'eux, mais les foulant aux pieds envers les autres..." Nor did he miss the opportunity to point out the moral of the story:

Canadiens, que cela soit pour nous une leçon.  
N'attendons pas notre salut que de nous, de notre  
fermeté, de notre prudence, après Dieu. Nous nous  
préparons à nous et à nos enfans un terrible  
mécompte, si nous fondons nos espoirs sur d'autres  
efforts que les nôtres.<sup>182</sup>

For Parent, Louisiana had now become the ultimate argument against annexation, an example of the fate which awaited the Canadiens should they be thrown into the arms of the Republic.

When la Minerve responded with an article from l'Echo de la Louisiane which predicted a revolution in Lower Canada and the colony's annexation to the United States, Parent returned to the same theme, pointing out that events in Louisiana should serve as a sobering thought to those who

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182. Parent in le Canadien, 15 July, 1836; cited by Reid, p. 421.

dreamed of political union with the Americans. French had lost its legal status in the state, and might soon be proscribed altogether. "Voilà le sort qui vous attend, Canadiens, si jamais vous êtes unis aux Américains...", predicted Parent, "...Vous disparaîtrez, vous, vos institutions, votre langue et vos lois, du sol même où sont les tombeaux de vos pères, où fut votre berceau à vous-même [sic]."<sup>183</sup> Louisiana, which the patriotes had presented as an example of the benefits of republican rule became, in the hands of the movement's political opponents, one of the most compelling symbols of the dangers of annexation.<sup>184</sup>

The debate over annexation, despite the fact that the patriotes continued to maintain they never advocated political union with the Republic except as a last resort, illustrates how important the American image had become to French-Canadian political discourse. By emphasizing the threat to canadien institutions which their republican programme seemed to imply, the patriotes' opponents sought not only to discredit the movement itself, but its political model, the American republic. Thus, Parent might well concede that the political liberty of Lower-Canadians would

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183. Parent in le Canadien, 9 December, 1836

184. Articles in the same vein appeared in the Gazette de Québec, see for example the paper's 10 December, 1836 issue for a response to the same article mentioned above. For its part, le Canadien returned to the Louisiana case in a general discussion of annexation published in its 16 September, 1837 issue.

be enhanced by joining the American federation, but he now maintained that the price of liberty would surely be the sacrifice of French-Canadian institutions, language, religion and laws.<sup>185</sup>

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Between 1831 and 1837, the image of America which had been developing since the end of the war of 1812 reached maturity. In the dominant stream of French-Canadian political discourse, American political institutions represented the enlightenment ideal of the republic. Indeed, American republicanism seemed to embody the simplicity and frugality the classical theorists had associated with this most democratic of governments. Moreover, patriote writers believed that their people were suited to such a government. The Canadiens were an agricultural people and, despite the machinations of aristocratic Europeans in the colony, their political virtue remained intact.

The American image had thus come full circle since 1815. Yet, the political language within which that image was framed remained largely the same. Certainly, there were those in the colony who appealed to the natural rights of

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185. See his argument in le Canadien, 1 September, 1837.

all peoples, and spoke of the progress of humanity rather than the inevitability of political and moral corruption. However, just as the Whigs and Democrats south of the border alternately invoked the spectre of executive power and the threat of moneyed aristocracies, the patriotes continued to discuss politics in terms of virtue and corruption.

The meaning of America within French-Canadian political discourse can only be understood within this civic humanist context. Indeed, if the patriotes were speaking the language of modern liberalism, with its emphasis on individualism and democracy in the modern sense, there could be no explanation for their insistence on political institutions in keeping with the social conditions of a North American people. The patriotes, on the contrary, continued to discuss politics in terms of a conflict between virtue and corruption, liberty and power. Moreover, they found the same themes restated in American political discourse.

There were, however, aspects of American political and social life in the 1830's which were difficult to reconcile with the image of the virtuous, agricultural republic. The patriotes' political opponents seized on issues such as slavery, popular upheavals and religious intolerance in their effort to discredit both the movement and its political model. For the patriotes, however, these blemishes on the American character simply indicated that

the struggle to maintain liberty continued in the Republic, and that the forces of European corruption and despotism were attempting to subvert the model government. This, in turn, helped give meaning to their own political struggle, for liberty could never be safe until the last remnant of European influence had been banished from North America.

If this logic led to a rejection of British colonial rule, it received a powerful reinforcement when news of the Russell Resolutions reached the colony in the spring of 1837. Like the American Patriots sixty years earlier, the patriotes were now confronted with the loss of political liberty. Now too, America's revolutionary heritage became far more relevant, and with it the chilling realization that the virtuous citizenry of Lower Canada might have to rise up to protect its liberty. As the possibilities of political compromise evaporated in the tense summer and fall of 1837, the movement would increasingly invoke the memory of Washington, Franklin and Jefferson. To many it seemed that the last act of their revolution might well be played along on the banks of the St. Lawrence.

CHAPTER SIX  
IMPORTING THE REVOLUTION

The great Republic which French-Canadian political writers praised so freely in the 1830's was born of revolution. In a period where the American image had become one of the mainstays of patriote discourse, it is not surprising the American Revolution came to occupy an increasingly important role. As a war of colonial liberation from the British Empire, the struggle of the American Patriots was surely relevant to the Lower-Canadian situation.

In a context where British colonial administrations became the movement's chief enemy, the causes of the American Revolution seemed rather straightforward. The history of the American Colonies was cited as proof of the inherent corruption of the colonial system, and quite naturally Lower-Canadian writers found that they were suffering from the same abuses which had precipitated the American Revolution. In the 1830's, as in the 1760's and 1770's, British ministers were ignorant of colonial affairs, sought to impose unfair taxes on the colonies and supported local oligarchies which corrupted local political life.

The Revolution was also invoked as a model of the means through which British misrule could be resisted. At one level, of course, the principles of the Revolution provided inspiration to the patriotes. Additionally, however, the history of American resistance in the decade before the Revolutionary War indicated the means through which a colonial people could force the metropolis to abandon oppressive measures. The American strategy of economic boycott became a favourite subject of patriote writers, and the system of local committees the Americans had used to enforce their policy was imitated in the colony. Still, while the bulk of patriote discourse emphasized the peaceful measures adopted by the First Continental Congress, some writers invoked the more radical meaning of the Revolution, one which taught the necessity of resistance at all costs, and the inevitability of independence.

These ambiguities in the meaning of the Revolution were intensified in the spring and summer of 1837. The Russell Resolutions, which stripped the Assembly of its power to withhold revenues, pushed the patriotes to more radical means and more violent rhetoric. While the movement officially called for a strategy of economic boycott, both its radical and moderate leaders increasingly invoked the example of the American Revolutionary War. The ambiguity in the meaning of the American Revolution was being resolved in favour of the more radical interpretation. By the fall of

1837, references to the Revolution most often dealt with the act of independence itself.

As patriote discourse became openly revolutionary, the example of the American Patriots provided it with principles, methods and inspiration. The history of the American Revolution also seemed to call the movement to act in defense of its liberties before it was too late. This was a call the patriotes answered energetically in the fall of 1837 at St. Charles where they proclaimed their solidarity with other North and South American peoples against the European oppressor. By then, the patriotes had made the American Revolution their own.

### 6.1 Justifying the Revolution

The changing images of Great Britain and the United States in French-Canadian political discourse significantly altered the dominant view of the American Revolution in the colony. Nowhere was this more in evidence than when Lower-Canadians discussed the causes of the Revolution. While criticism of British colonial policy at the time of the Revolution had emerged in the 1820's as a result of the Union Crisis, discussions of the Revolution in the 1830's were even less charitable in their assessment of British actions. In most cases articles dealing with the Revolution explicitly compared colonial policy in the 1830's to that

which had brought about the separation of the American colonies. Thus, in their analysis of the Revolution's causes, patriote writers laid blame squarely on the shoulders of the British, and praised American leaders for their heroic resistance to political oppression.

Denis-Benjamin Viger argued in 1831 that the Revolution had been the result of negligence on the part of the Imperial Government. Great Britain had abandoned its role of protector of the American colonies after 1763, when it adopted a policy of coercion designed to tax the colonists without their assent. Exonerating the American colonists of any pre-conceived plan of rebellion, Viger maintained that British measures brought about their gradual disaffection and eventually made compromise impossible. By the time the British had abandoned their claim to taxing the colonies in 1778, the loyalty of the colonists had turned to contempt. In his analysis of the situation, Viger was making the point that similar policies might well produce similar results in Lower Canada.<sup>1</sup>

Discussion of the causes of the Revolution intensified during the debate over the Ninety-Two Resolutions. Referring to the patriotes' demand for an elective Legislative Council, Etienne Parent argued that the people's right to modify their political arrangements had been

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1. Denis-Benjamin Viger, Considérations relatives à la dernière révolution de la Belgique (Montréal, 1831), p. 60.

consecrated "sur le sol de l'Amérique en caractères de sang...", an obvious reference to the Revolution.<sup>2</sup> In the Assembly, Papineau spoke of the injustices committed by Great Britain which had pushed the Americans to rebellion, while noting that, despite suffering from the same abuses, the Canadiens had remained loyal.<sup>3</sup> A week later, a long article in le Canadien explicitly compared the policies of the colonial administration in the 1770's with that of the 1830's. In both cases, the author argued, the British Parliament had demonstrated its ignorance of colonial conditions. North Americans could never accept the despotic institutions which characterized European governments, and British plans to impose or perpetuate such institutions would lead to the separation of the colony from the empire. Moreover, the author found a perfect parallel between the charges of disloyalty and rebellion being hurled at the patriotes and the similar accusation that had been made of Americans who had resisted imperial measures in the years leading up to the Revolution.<sup>4</sup>

"Franc Parleur" reiterated this theme a few months later in la Minerve. It was the inherent despotism of the

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2. Parent in le Canadien, 14 February, 1834.

3. Papineau, speech to the Assembly, 18 February, 1834, reprinted in Etat de la province (1834), non paginated [p. 4].

4. Le Canadien, 26 February, 1834.

colonial regime which had brought about the American Revolution. The American colonies had been stifled both economically and politically under British rule. The last straw came when the British tried to tighten their control over the colonies by taking away some of the colonists' liberties. As North Americans, this was something that the colonists could not tolerate. "La servitude n'est pas naturelle aux forêts...", wrote the author, "...les colons coururent à l'insurrection et arrachèrent au peuple Anglais la plus belle de ses possessions!"<sup>5</sup> The same point appeared in an article published a month later in the same paper. This time, however, the author specifically isolated the question of British taxation of the American colonies. Citing the example of the Stamp Act, he showed how the British parliament had overstepped its authority in imposing an unjust tax on the colonies. American resistance had forced the British to remove the tax. Still, the Parliament continued to assert its right to tax the colonies and retained a tax on tea. This, affirmed the author, was the immediate cause of the Revolution. The success of the American Revolution and of the form of government it instituted proved that "la tyrannie de l'Europe était une plante exotique qui ne pouvait prendre racine en Amérique." The article ended by advising British ministers to learn a

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5. "Franc Parleur" in la Minerve, 19 May, 1834.

lesson from the history of the Revolution.<sup>6</sup> Nor was the warning only addressed to British politicians. When the Times of London published an article critical of patriote demands, la Minerve responded by arguing that the British press was also partially responsible for the Revolution. British journalists in the Revolutionary era had led public opinion astray and encouraged the British ministry in its disastrous policies, which in turn had led to the separation of the American colonies.<sup>7</sup>

As they had in the 1820's, Lower-Canadian papers also attributed the Revolution to the activities of local oligarchies in the American Colonies, oligarchies very much like that which dominated their own government. Thus, l'Echo du pays in July of 1835 stated that, until the Revolution, the Americans had been tyrannized by "une faible et méprisable oligarchie."<sup>8</sup> La Minerve also pointed to the existence of an oligarchy in Colonial America, but believed that even the Revolution had not completely liberated the Americans from its economic influence.<sup>9</sup>

The causes of the American Revolution were in this period assimilated to the political troubles plaguing the

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6. La Minerve, 23 June, 1834.

7. La Minerve, 15 December, 1834.

8. L'Echo du Pays, 16 July, 1835.

9. La Minerve, 10 August, 1835.

colony. Misguided colonial policies, marked by unjust pretensions of taxing the colonists without their consent, and attempts to impose despotic European political institutions had brought the Americans to rise up in defense of their liberties. In comparing their struggle to that of the American colonists before the Revolution, the patriotes found legitimation for their cause. Surely, the American Revolution had demonstrated the folly of a British colonial policy which sought to override the wishes of the local population. In addition, the Revolution's success demonstrated that a North American people would not submit to such political oppression. In all these texts then, French-Canadian political writers were warning British ministers that their policies might recreate the conditions which had led to the American Revolution, possibly with the same results.

## 6.2 The Revolution as a Model of Colonial Resistance

If the history of the revolutionary era showed the misguided nature of British policy, it also demonstrated the means through which colonists had sought to resist this tyranny. As such, the actions of the American revolutionaries provided both inspiration and tactics to the patriote movement. Between 1834 and 1837, however, the emphasis remained on the colonial resistance which preceded

the Revolutionary War itself. The patriotes then could point to the political actions of the American Patriots in the 1760's and 1770's as the proper response to the intransigence of the British Colonial Office.

That the patriote movement drew its inspiration in a general fashion from the American Revolution cannot be doubted. Indeed, allusions to the Revolution became commonplace as the movement adopted an overtly republican political discourse. As early as 1833, Etienne Parent, in le Canadien, underlined the fact that the American Revolution was the source of the Canadiens' political principles. It was, after all, the Revolution which had forced Great Britain to concede representative institutions to the colony in the first place. These institutions had, in turn, helped to diffuse the idea of political liberty among the people. Moreover, when the patriotes needed examples in their struggle to preserve liberty they turned quite naturally to the American Revolution. To those who argued that the French-Canadian political movement had been inspired by the French Revolution, Parent replied that the American Revolution had produced "en abondance des fruits de liberte qui font l'admiration du monde." To which he added that the French themselves owed their notions of political liberty to the American Revolution, and that there still

existed in France a group of republicans who were inspired by the American example.<sup>10</sup>

Parent also cited the Revolution in editorials dealing with the Ninety-Two Resolutions. He responded to the charge that the French-Canadians were not ready for self-government by pointing to the experience of the Americans after the Revolution. "Les Etats-Unis," wrote Parent, "bien au dessus desquels se croyait l'Angleterre, ne se sont ils pas aussi donné la constitution la plus parfaite et la mieux adaptée au bonheur de la société?" Had some Lower-Canadian journalists been writing at the time of the American Revolution, Parent added, they would surely have predicted that the Americans were incapable of self-government.<sup>11</sup>

The Revolutionary Era could also furnish examples of moderation. For while the patriotes sought to assimilate their struggle to that of the American Patriots, they also, for the moment, did not want to appear to be preaching revolution or disloyalty. To this end they could cite the example of Benjamin Franklin. A major figure of the Revolutionary movement, Franklin had nevertheless, as le Canadien pointed out, exhausted every avenue of conciliation and negotiation before following his countrymen into

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10. Parent in le Canadien, 24 July, 1833; cited by Philippe Reid, "Représentations idéologiques et société globale: le journal le Canadien (1806-1842)" (Ph. D. dissertation, Université Laval, 1979) p. 400.

11. Parent in le Canadien, 28 February, 1834.<sup>1</sup>

rebellion. "...C'est un Dieu que ce FRANKLIN", exclaimed the author, "...[qui] travailla jusqu'à la fin à prévenir, s'il était possible cette terrible catastrophe [the Revolution]..."<sup>12</sup>

La Minerve highlighted the history of the American revolutionary movement beginning in 1834. The first article in this vein appeared in June of that year and recounted the resistance of colonial Americans against unjust measures of taxation. Touching on the Stamp Act and the Townshend Acts the article showed how colonial opposition had forced the imperial authorities to repeal duties on a number of commodities. Americans had achieved this goal by standing united in their opposition, the article noting that during the period the acts were in force "on ne perçut pas un denier de taxe sur ces marchandises..." The author continued, stating that the Americans refused to tolerate any taxation without their consent, a position which eventually led them to adopt a revolutionary stance.<sup>13</sup> A few weeks later the paper gave its readers the American justification for rebellion when it reprinted in full the Declaration of Independence.<sup>14</sup>

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12. Le Canadien, 25 April, 1834.

13. La Minerve, 23 June, 1834.

14. See la Minerve 10 July, 1834. The Declaration was no doubt also printed in honour of the American Independence Day celebrations.

La Minerve seemed by 1835 dedicated to teaching its readers the lessons of the American Revolution. It began the year with a New Year's Day editorial titled "Affaires de la Province" which, after a few paragraphs, lapsed into an extended comparison of the abuses suffered by the American colonies and those suffered by Lower Canada. Colonial Americans, stated the author, had observed the enactment of the Stamp Act as a day of national mourning, terming the Act "folie de l'Angleterre, ruine de l'Amérique". Lower-Canadians might well see their own political troubles in the same light and exclaim, in the wake of the murder of Canadien electors, "injustice de l'Angleterre, spoliation du Canada." Americans had fought for their liberty at a time when civilization was less advanced, when their calls for liberty were largely unanswered. Lower-Canadians on the other hand lived in a more enlightened age and in the shadow of the mighty Republic. Like the Americans, the patriotes had to stand firm against half measures which would only perpetuate their oppression, but how long could the situation continue? The author answered with a menacing analogy. Of the American colonies he wrote: "Elles ont souffert longtems:", adding, "-- Nous souffrons depuis longtems.-- Avons nous encore longtems à souffrir?"<sup>15</sup>

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15. "E. D.", "Affaires de la province" in La Minerve, 1 January, 1835.

La Minerve was not the only paper to refer to the American revolutionary experience in 1835. L'Echo du pays, for example, greeted the Fourth of July celebrations in that year by affirming that this was the day where "l'Américain brisa ses fers, vit fuir ses tyrans et devint peuple libre et indépendant."<sup>16</sup> Another more lyrical reference to American independence appeared in the same paper a month later in the form of a letter from a correspondent in Vermont. It too celebrated the significance of Independence Day:

Le 4 juillet!.... Esclaves du nord de l'Amérique, vous ignorez ce qu'il y a de grand, de beau, de sublime dans la célébration de l'anniversaire du jour où treize colonies opprimées secouèrent leur chaînes! Les gouvernants Anglais qui voulaient river ces fers sont descendus dans la tombe: leur noms ne sont rappelés que parce qu'ils sont liés à des événements qui font détester et honnir leur mémoire, leur orgueil et leur despotisme, tandis que le souvenir de ces hommes illustres qui ont proclamé la liberté sur le sol américain est gravé dans tous les coeurs et se perpétuera par l'éternelle gratitude d'un peuple éclairé et reconnaissant.

The author continued to praise the heroes of the Revolution, including Washington, Franklin, Jefferson and Adams. The anniversary of American independence should serve as a lesson to present generations that virtue and talents could always overcome military force and aristocratic

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16. L'Echo du pays, 16 July, 1835.

pretensions.<sup>17</sup> Le Canadien also noted Independence Day celebrations in 1835 by reminding British authorities of the Americans' continuing attachment for the cause of liberty and their support of the patriote cause.<sup>18</sup>

Later in the year la Minerve embarked on the ambitious project of enhancing its readers' knowledge of the American Revolution. To that end the paper published a series of six lengthy articles dealing with the history of the revolutionary period, from 1763 to the time of the Revolutionary War. Each of these articles began by noting the parallels between the history of the American colonies and that of Lower Canada. In one such article, published on the first of October 1835, the author explained why he chose to examine the American resistance to Imperial measures. The crucial difference between Americans and Lower Canadians, he argued, was that the former were not distinguished from their governors by race and religion. Indeed, the American colonists were British and protestant and yet they had not only resisted imperial rule but had risen up against its abuses. Clearly, this showed that the patriote resistance to imperial misrule was not merely a matter of nationality, as some authors claimed. Still, national differences exacerbated a situation which was

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17. "Le 4 juillet, le Canada et les Etats-Unis" in l'Echo du pays, 13 August, 1835.

18. Le Canadien, 20 July, 1835.

largely analogous to that of the American colonists and might one day lead to the same conclusion.

It was important, therefore to analyze the course of American history in order to understand how the conflict between the colonies and the Mother Country had degenerated to the point of revolution. Thus, these articles chronicled the various conflicts between the imperial authorities and the colonists in great detail. They were also written from a pro-American perspective. Consequently, they stress the unity of purpose of the American Patriots, their success in having unjust measures recalled, as well as the weakness and indecision of the British Parliament and Cabinet. Moreover, these articles tended to highlight the success of the American strategy of non-importation of British goods. Finally, the narrative showed that the American colonists were ultimately pushed into armed resistance by British insistence on interfering in colonial affairs.

The articles also questioned whether the Canadiens had done the right thing in remaining loyal in 1775 and again in 1812. Events similar to those which had led the Americans to rebel might well test the loyalty of Lower Canadians, and the results, after such a long wait for justice, might be different than they had been in the past:

... des évènements, dans le genre de ceux qui signalèrent l'élévation de l'immortel Washington pourraient encore laisser indécis pour nos neveux, les bonnes intentions de notre gracieux Souverain vis-à-vis ses peuples du Bas-Canada. La coïncidence provient: de ce que les Canadiens

gémissent sous les mêmes abus dont se plaignaient les Américains.... Enfin de ce que les Canadiens, à force de se plaindre en désespoir d'obtenir justice, se trouveront dans la dure situation de ne plus prendre conseils que de leur énergie, tant pour se soustraire à l'oppression que pour faire cesser les railleries insultantes de leurs persécuteurs, qui leur reprochent, chaque jour, de n'avoir pas assez de courage pour obtenir leur liberté.

This series then appeared as both a discussion of the American methods of resistance, and a comparison to the current political situation in the colony. That comparison in turn, seemed to point to the fact that there was a definite limit to colonial patience, and a point where colonists had to take up arms in order to preserve liberty.<sup>19</sup>

By 1835, some authors believed that point was close at hand. As "Un Canadien" warned, in an open letter to Lord Gosford published in la Minerve in September, the Americans had shown in 1776 that "un peuple pouvait-être libre quand il le voulait." "Ce peuple, Milord," he continued, "est voisin du Canada. Nous l'avons combattu, il est vrai, en '75 et 1812, mais un peuple ne combat pas toujours contre la liberté."<sup>20</sup> A few months later, Papineau, in a speech

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19. The citation is from la Minerve, 1 October, 1835. This issue also contains the justification for publishing the series. Other articles in the series appear in the paper's 28 September, 5, 8, 12, and 15 October, 1835 issues.

20. "Un Canadien", "Lettre à Lord Gosford" in la Minerve, 10 September, 1835. The emphasis appears in the original text.

before the Assembly, made much the same point. If Great Britain insisted on perpetuating aristocratic political institutions in its North American colonies, "...il se trouverait encore une plume de Jefferson et une tête de Washington pour s'opposer à ce qu'une branche de la législature restât à la nomination de la couronne."<sup>21</sup>

The example of the Revolution led to an inescapable and sobering conclusion: Americans had only been able to win their liberty through armed struggle. Increasingly, patriote political writers recognized that fact, and stated it, more often than not, as a warning to British ministers. Still, while their patience seemed to be running out, most French-Canadian commentators before 1837 also believed that the example of the Revolution would prevent Great Britain from repeating the same mistakes. As Parent put it in 1834, British plans to impose European institutions on the colony would probably be scuttled by the memory of the American Revolution:

L'expérience que l'Angleterre a acquise dans le dernier siècle lors de la Révolution Américaine, arrêtera probablement la plupart des membres de la Chambre des Communes dans leur trop prompt détermination à adopter les moyens que proposerait le ministre des colonies, pour ne point amener des événements semblables à ceux de 1775 et d'exposer l'Angleterre à perdre ce qui lui reste de territoire en Amérique du Nord...<sup>22</sup>

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21. Report of Papineau's speech to the Assembly of 11 November, 1835, published in la Minerve, 23 November, 1835.

22. Parent in le Canadien, 28 February, 1834.

Still, the political stalemate which occurred in the aftermath of the Ninety-Two Resolutions meant that resistance to imperial measures had to be broadened. Although Fernand Ouellet implies that the idea of revolution was in the air from 1834 onward, clearly the patriotes believed that the movement could still adopt the route of "constitutional" or "passive" resistance, and continued to maintain that this was its goal right down to the outbreak of the Rebellions.<sup>23</sup> This too was a lesson of American history. The American Patriots had, after all, carried out their resistance without recourse to arms for a decade before 1775. In highlighting this phase of the Revolution's history, the patriotes were implicitly arguing for the same type of resistance to British rule in the colony.

The movement also overtly adopted the methods used by the American revolutionary generation in the "constitutional" phase of its struggle. In 1834 and 1835 the patriotes created organizations designed to broaden the base of their resistance movement by circulating petitions, organizing mass meetings and other forms of protest. The most famous of these was the Comité central de Montréal, formed in 1834 and, according to Ouellet, inspired by the example of the American Revolution.<sup>24</sup> The American

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23. Fernand Ouellet, Le Bas-Canada (Ottawa: Presses de l'Université d'Ottawa, 1980), pp. 380-381.

24. Ouellet, Bas-Canada, p. 434.

inspiration of these committees is even more evident when we realize that in fact they referred to themselves as "Comités de correspondance", modelled, of course, on the famous Committees of Correspondence established by American Patriots in the aftermath of the Stamp Act crisis of 1765.<sup>25</sup>

If the patriotes had learned a lesson in political organization from the American Revolution, they also came to adopt some of the methods of their predecessors. Chief among these was the idea of an economic boycott of British imports. In 1834 the Comité central de Montréal urged the populace to imitate the American Patriots in refusing to purchase British tea:

Quel bel exemple vous donnent les anciens  
 Bostonnais, lorsque se renfermant encore dans les  
 bornes d'un résistance constitutionnelle, avant  
 d'avoir été poussés et forcés à une résistance  
 armée, des milliers d'entr'eux eurent le courage  
 et le bon esprit de renoncer à l'usage du thé qui  
 y était universel, plutôt que de souffrir le même  
 genre d'injustice dont on vous menace..., celle de

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25. Manuscript records of the minutes of these committees consistently use the term "Comité de correspondance". See an extract of the "Procédés du Comité de correspondance de Montréal" for November 1834 preserved in NA, Fonds Famille Papineau, MG 24 B 2, vol. 2, pp. 1867-1869. Additional minutes of the Montréal committee for the years 1834 and 1835 are preserved in a separate collection. See NA, Fonds Comité de Correspondance de Montréal, MG 24 B 129. Minutes of the Québec committee for the years 1834 to 1836 are also preserved in a separate collection: NA, Fonds Comité de Correspondance de Québec, MG 24 B 128. Both collections contain projects of petitions as well as administrative and financial details.

disposer de vos propriétés dans le parlement  
Britannique.<sup>26</sup>

The passage makes clear that the attraction of the strategy of economic resistance was that it was "constitutional", or that at the very least it did not imply a criminal act. Although the campaign for a boycott of British goods does not seem to have been extensively promoted before 1837, references to it appeared several times in period discourse. In 1834, for example, Parent reminded bureaucrats who practised political discrimination in their choice of employees that a united people had brought the merchant class in the American colonies to its knees in the period before the American Revolution.<sup>27</sup> In 1836, the resolutions of two public meetings again raised the idea of an economic boycott of British products, in both cases referring to the example of the American Revolution. Thus, the meeting held at Deux-Montagnes in April of 1836 cited the example of the American Revolutionaries' boycott as "sage et salulaire" and urged the same strategy on the Lower-Canadian people.<sup>28</sup> The patriotism of the people of Deux Montagnes was applauded in the patriote press, which endorsed the idea of economic

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26. Comité central de Montréal, Observations sur la réponse... (Montréal, 1834), p. 31.

27. Parent in le Canadien, 21 November, 1834.

28. "Résolutions de l'Assemblée du Comté des Deux Montagnes", 11 April, 1836, 10th resolution, published in le Canadien, 18 April, 1836.

resistance as a means of pressuring the British government.<sup>29</sup> Late in the summer of 1836 an assembly of the inhabitants of Vaudreuil also cited the example of the American colonies in support of the strategy of economic boycott.<sup>30</sup>

The growing popularity of boycotting British products in order to pressure concessions from the Mother Country very much reflected the impact of the American Revolution on patriote discourse before 1837. Between 1834 and 1837 the movement invoked the example of the Revolution largely to show that the Colonial Office was in danger of repeating the same mistakes it had made in the decade leading up to the American Revolution. Further, the American resistance in the years leading up to the Revolution offered an example of how Imperial misrule could be successfully countered through the actions of a united colonial population. The emphasis on the pre-revolutionary period also indicated that the patriotes did not as yet see armed resistance as the only solution to their political troubles. Indeed, until 1837, they continued to petition the British government for reform

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29. See for example an editorial on the resolutions published in L'Echo du Pays, 28 April, 1836.

30. "Résolutions de l'assemblée du Comté de Vaudreuil", 9th resolution, published in le Canadien, 3 August, 1836. The resolution cited the example of the "ci-devantes colonies anglaises, aujourd'hui les Etats-Unis d'Amérique, de n'encourager que les manufactures locales... par la non-consommation des boissons et des effets importés..."

of colonial institutions, in much the same way as American colonists before 1776. Yet, the history of the American revolutionary era also ultimately taught that at a certain point colonists had to rise up against tyranny or face losing their political liberty. That lesson seemed particularly relevant when news of the Russell Resolutions reached the colony in the early spring of 1837.

### 6.3 Resistance or Revolution?

In April of 1837 the patriotes learned that not only had their demands for political reform been rejected by the British Parliament, but also that it had authorized the Governor to appropriate funds without the Assembly's consent. This measure, embodied in the Russell Resolutions, had a significant impact on Lower-Canadian political discourse and on the image of the American Revolution within it. Until 1837, the patriotes used the Revolution as an example of the mistakes made by British politicians in dealing with the American colonies and as a warning that the same mistakes might result in the separation of Lower Canada. The Revolution also taught that the American colonists' recourse to "constitutional resistance" was abandoned in favour of armed resistance when imperial measures became so oppressive that they threatened the colonists with political slavery. The Russell Resolutions

made this aspect of the Revolution far more relevant. For, like the Coercive Acts of 1774, these new measures struck at the core of the colonists' concept of political liberty. They undermined the Assembly's right to act as a check on the authority of the executive by taking away its power to control a certain portion of the province's revenues. The corruptive influence of appointed officials now stood virtually unopposed.

The danger to political liberty was evident, and the American Revolution had shown that in some cases recourse to armed resistance was entirely justified. The Revolution, which until then had been primarily a model of constitutional and economic resistance, now seemed to point to the inevitability of armed conflict. Fernand Ouellet, in analyzing the patriote response to the Russell Resolutions, concludes that "Dans les circonstances tout autre stratégie qu'une stratégie de type révolutionnaire est impraticable."<sup>31</sup> To Ouellet, the events of 1837 represent a fitful but steady progression toward an inevitable armed conflict which, he argues, was the ultimate goal of the patriote movement.

Still, the movement chose to officially pursue a strategy of economic resistance. In the spring and summer of 1837, the emphasis in patriote discourse on an economic

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31. Ouellet, Bas-Canada, p. 421.

boycott of British products intensified and was reaffirmed in successive mass meetings held around the province. In most cases the American Revolution was also invoked as an example of the efficacy of such measures. But raising the example of the Revolution also meant highlighting American recourse to arms in the face of a colonial regime which failed to respect the fundamental liberties of colonists. What was different about patriote discourse in 1837 was that references to the American Revolutionary War became more frequent.

This tendency was evident very early in the reactions to the Russell Resolutions. Although la Minerve greeted news of the Resolutions with a fairly moderate tone<sup>32</sup>, letters published in the paper over the next few weeks were far less restrained. A letter signed "D. P. L." demonstrated that references to the Revolution could have a double meaning. Ostensibly, the letter was written in support of economic resistance. Thus the author, citing the example of the American colonists, urges his compatriots to

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32. La Minerve reacted to the news in an editorial published in its 13 April, 1837 edition. The article merely saw the Russell Resolutions as a temporary setback, arguing that Lower Canada would eventually be free by virtue of its being a North American society: "Que la métropole fasse ses lois que bon lui semble, qu'elle appesantisse son bras sur nous, ses décrets ne pourront jamais nous déplacer du continent où des institutions libres forment partie des croyances et de l'existence politique des habitants de l'Amérique du Nord." This passage is also cited by Ouellet, Bas-Canada, p. 432.

abandon British products in favour of those manufactured in Canada. The people should wear clothes manufactured from "l'étoffe de pays", abandon the use of coffee and tea, substitute maple sugar for "celui des Isles" and consume whisky and beer rather than imported rum. The text however, is distinguished from previous arguments by the violence of its rhetoric. The British, argued "D. P. L.", sought nothing less than to establish political slavery in the colony. Indeed, the British Parliament seemed to already consider Lower-Canadians slaves. "Aujourd'hui on ne nous craint pas," continued the author, "on se rit de nos maux, on nous traite comme des nègres; il faut que cela change." Clearly, the British had forgotten the lessons of American history, lessons which the Canadiens could never forget: "s'ils [the British] oublient la glorieuse Révolution Américaine, et la honte qui en rejailli sur la Métropole, ne l'oublions pas nous. C'est dans l'histoire de cette révolution que nous devons puiser des leçons qui doivent nous guider au bonheur et à la prospérité."<sup>33</sup>

The patriote strategy of initiating an economic boycott of imported goods was publicized throughout the summer in a series of mass meetings. These "Assemblées publiques" were designed both to raise political consciousness across the province and to lay the infrastructure needed for enforcing

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33. "D. P. L." in la Minerve, 1 May, 1837.

the boycott. The speeches and resolutions which marked these meetings were laden with references to the American Revolution. They too demonstrated the ambiguity of the Revolution's heritage, and often what began as a lesson on the merits of the American campaign of economic resistance ended in praise of the Revolution itself. For Ouellet this period represents "La Révolution sous le masque de la légalité"; for while the patriotes continued to push the idea of economic resistance, it seemed they were also paving the way for armed conflict.<sup>34</sup> The example of the American Revolution was also an important factor in giving this apparently legal resistance a rebellious flavour.

The first of these meetings, held at St. Ours on May 7th, indicated that the strategy of economic boycott was to have a prominent place. The meeting passed resolutions urging not only that the people abstain from consuming imported goods, but also recommended that the smuggling of goods from the United States be encouraged. Some of the resolutions passed at St. Ours also seemed to echo the American Declaration of Independence. Thus the third resolution at St. Ours condemned the British government as oppressive for having violated the "contrat social", while

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34. Ouellet, Bas-Canada, p. 432.

the fifth recognized the American people as "nos amis et nos alliés naturels".<sup>35</sup>

A week later another meeting was held at St. Laurent, where Papineau gave a long speech. Papineau's oration, later published in pamphlet form, perhaps best exemplifies how references to American economic resistance in this period almost inevitably led to a consideration of the Revolutionary War. Clearly at this time Papineau was not trying to incite rebellion, in fact it seems that he may well have been trying to keep control of the movement from passing into more radical hands. Yet, Papineau's unbounded admiration for the American system of government led him to eventually embrace the cause of the American Patriots in a way which legitimized the recourse to arms.

In addition to praising the American constitution and its operation almost ad nauseam, a good deal of Papineau's speech dealt with the strategy of economic resistance instituted by the American Patriots. To those who felt that the opposition of the British Parliament was insurmountable, Papineau recommended the example of the American resistance:

Ce gouvernement tout puissant, les Américains l'ont glorieusement battu, il y a quelques années. C'est un spectacle consolateur pour les peuples que de se reporter à l'époque de 1774; d'applaudir aux efforts vertueux et aux succès complet qui fut

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35. Cited in Félix Leclerc, "1837-1838, Dates et événements" in Jean-Paul Bernard, Les Rébellions de 1837-1838 (Montréal: Boréal Express, 1983), pp. 91-135, at 96. See also Ouellet, Bas-Canada, p. 435.

opposée à la même tentative qui est commencée contre nous.<sup>36</sup>

Later in the same speech, Papineau urged his audience to follow in "la voie qu'on tracé les patriotes de 1774." The emphasis on 1774 here is significant. Papineau consciously chose to highlight the activities of the First Continental Congress, which had adopted the strategy of economic boycott. Thus, the reference to the revolutionary era is grounded in the period of "constitutional resistance".

Yet, as the speech went on, it was evident that once the Revolution had been mentioned it was difficult for Papineau not to discuss the Revolutionary War and the ultimate separation of the American colonies from the British Empire. In fact, Papineau's speech makes the comparison between the British ministry of the 1770's and that of the 1830's in a very explicit way. He follows this by showing how the aristocratic pretensions of the British Parliament had been refuted in 1776 by "les immortels auteurs de la déclaration d'indépendance" and how the plans and schemes of British ministers had been slain and destroyed by "l'épée de Washington".<sup>37</sup> By now, invoking the example of the "juste et glorieuse révolution des Etats-

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36. See the report of Papineau's speech in Comité central de Montréal, Procédés de l'Assemblée des électeurs du comté de Montréal: tenue à St. Laurent le 15 mai, 1837 (Montréal, 1837), pp. 5-20, at p. 6.

37. Ibid., p. 11.

Unis"<sup>38</sup> was leading him to affirm that the military resistance of the Americans had been justified and that such resistance might succeed again. In doing this, Papineau invoked the image of virtuous North American farmers battling the oppressing armies of European despotism:

La plus belle et la plus forte armée que l'Europe eut encore vomie sur l'Amérique venait de mettre bas les armes devant de simples milices américaines, sans organisation, sans discipline, devant de bons cultivateurs, comme il y en a encore, qui savaient aimer leur pays et tirer aux tourtes, qui n'étaient forts que de la justice de leur cause, mais qui ignoraient les premiers élémens de toute tactique militaire.<sup>39</sup>

Essentially Papineau had come to invoke the Revolution in support of the idea that the British could be defeated militarily by a virtuous citizenry.

In terms of strategy, Papineau's speech did not represent a shift in the movement's position toward an advocacy of immediate armed conflict. Superficially, at least, the patriotes continued to insist on the importance of an economic war against Great Britain as an initial stage of resistance. In the months that followed, however, references to the Revolutionary War became more frequent both in the movement's rhetoric and use of symbols. At the "Assemblée" of the county of Deux-Montagnes, for example, American revolutionary slogans and symbols abounded. La

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38. Ibid., p. 13.

39. Ibid., p. 15.

Minerve reported the presence of banners at the meeting which read "la mort avant l'esclavage", as well as that of

...un aigle américain magnifique sur un pavillon blanc avec l'inscription "libre comme l'air", en côté un aigle canadien portant dans son bec une branche d'érable. Ces deux aigles étants flanqués de deux pavillons dont l'un était parsemé d'étoiles, et l'autre d'une seule étoile, avec l'inscription significative "notre avenir!"<sup>40</sup>

A few weeks later the meeting held at Berthier passed a resolution which condemned the British appropriation of Lower-Canadian revenues by explicitly comparing it to the measures which had brought about the American Revolution. In so doing, the meeting approved the course of the American revolutionaries in eventually rising up against the metropolis:

...[British colonial policy] rappelle fortement de pareilles tentatives faites dans le tems passé et qui justement furent dénoncées alors comme étant la folie de l'Angleterre et la ruine de l'Amérique, et conduisirent néanmoins à cette juste résistance suivie de succès qui a donné naissance à ces libres et heureuses institutions politiques qui ont si rapidement porté au plus haut point de puissance et de liberté nos proches voisins des Etats-Unis...<sup>41</sup>

The emphasis on the Revolution and its happy conclusion continued to mark political meetings held through the remainder of the summer. The St. Jean-Baptiste celebrations

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40. Description of the "Assemblée du comté des Deux-Montagnes" held 1 June, 1837 in la Minerve, 5 June, 1837.

41. Third resolution of the "Assemblée du comté de Berthier" held 18 June, 1837, published in la Minerve, 22 June, 1837.

at l'Islet, for example, clearly associated American political happiness with the act of independence when it toasted "Nos heureux et indépendans voisins des Etats-Unis d'Amérique."<sup>42</sup> The county of Missisquoi held its patriotic assembly the day of the anniversary of American Independence. The American flag was present for this occasion, as were two living symbols of the Revolution, who appeared as part of the procession leading to the meeting:

...après, deux vétérans, héros de la Révolution américaine, domiciliés en Canada, mais jouissant d'une pension que la Grande République accorde si généreusement à ceux qui combattirent pour ses libertés. Puis venaient deux drapeaux, l'un blanc avec l'inscription: "les leçons de nos pères: -- elles ne sont pas oubliées" l'autre rouge avec l'inscription "les oeuvres de 1775: les ministres britanniques feraient bien de ne pas les oublier".

Among the other banners displayed was one proclaiming that America would give democracy to Europe and another, suspended from the church tower, "où on remarquait un aigle et six étoiles, avec le mot 'Réforme!'"<sup>43</sup> A few weeks later an assembly held in the county of l'Acadie declared in its

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42. Seventh toast of the St. Jean-Baptiste dinner held at l'Islet, 24 June, 1837, published in le Libéral, 1 July, 1837.

43. The presence of the American flag was noted by Amédée Papineau and appears in a typewritten copy of his "Mémoires" conserved in NA, Fonds Famille Papineau, vol. 24, p. 157. The citations reproduced are from a report of the event published in la Minerve, 10 July, 1837. While the eagle on the banner suspended from the church tower is an obvious reference to the American republic, the meaning of the six stars is unclear. They probably represent the six British North American colonies.

third resolution that the Gosford Commission had been nothing more than "...un des moyens faux employés pour tromper nos frères américains avant leur séparation de la mère-patrie..."<sup>44</sup>

For his part, Papineau continued to compare the situation of Lower Canada with that of the American Colonies in the period before independence. At the assembly of Lachenaie et l'Assomption counties, he again underlined that "...la crise actuelle ressemblait beaucoup à celle qui avait précédé l'indépendance des Etats-Unis." The political situation in Lower Canada was marked by the same abuses of power, the same injustices, the same corruption and the same attempts to trample the rights of colonists. The American resistance to these abuses of British policy, Papineau continued, had been marked by "une intrépidité héroïque" and their strategy of economic resistance had been "exécutée avec énergie".<sup>45</sup> When patriote members of the Assembly met for its last session in August of 1837, they highlighted their support for a boycott of British imports by wearing garments made from "l'étoffe du pays", another form of

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44. Third resolution of the "Assemblée du comté de l'Acadie", published in la Minerve, 20 July, 1837.

45. Précis of Papineau's speech at the assembly of l'Assomption et Lachenaie held 23 July, 1837, published in le Libéral, 16 August, 1837.

political protest borrowed from the American Revolutionary era.<sup>46</sup>

Patriote newspapers reflected this interest in the American Revolution over the summer of 1837. On the one hand they did so by reporting allusions to the Revolution which marked the rhetoric and symbols of the mass meetings held across the province. More than this, however, papers such as la Minerve celebrated the anniversary of American independence in 1837 by honouring the memory of the Revolution's military heroes. Thus, in July of 1837, the paper published poems and articles which underlined the military and political virtues of George Washington.<sup>47</sup> A few days after the first of these appeared, the paper published a short piece on La Fayette.<sup>48</sup>

In Québec City the patriotes had founded le Libéral to counter the influence of le Canadien, which had broken with the movement's leadership, and the Constitutionalist Gazette de Québec. Le Libéral was explicit in its comparisons of the political troubles of Lower Canada to those of the American Colonies before independence. In September of 1837, the paper published a long comparison of the circumstances which had brought about the American

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46. Ouellet, Bas-Canada, p. 443.

47. See, for example, la Minerve, 13 July and 24 July, 1837.

48. La Minerve, 17 July, 1837.

Revolution and those which had caused a political crisis in Lower Canada. The article argued that the Americans had been loyal colonists pushed by British policy into armed rebellion. Despite the justice of the American cause, French Canadians had resisted their appeal to join the Revolution and stood almost alone in defence of the colony in 1775. But in 1837 the situation was so similar to that which had brought about the Revolution, the editor felt obliged to warn the British government that it was in danger of losing the colony.<sup>49</sup>

A few weeks later the same paper returned to the subject of the Revolution. This time it dwelt more on the Revolutionary War itself and the causes which had pushed the Americans to armed resistance. The British government in 1775 had been, as it remained in 1837, ignorant of the true nature of North American society. In its blind ambition of imposing European despotism on the Americans, it had trampled on their liberties and pushed them to armed resistance. "...[Il] fallut qu'un peuple énergique se soulevât contre cet attentat", explained the editor, "--les cultivateurs quittèrent la charrue et les artisans leurs ateliers pour voler à la défense de leurs droits-- Des deux cotés on aiguïsa le glaive, la lutte fut longue et sanglante, mais la liberté triompha enfin de la tyrannie."

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49. Le Libéral, 26 September, 1837.

His conclusion was that the same type of resistance might ultimately be required of Lower Canadians in defence of their liberties, especially since the oppression suffered by colonists in 1837 was even greater than that which had led to the American Revolution:

Le Bas Canada gémissant sous des griefs beaucoup plus considérables que ceux des anciennes colonies, est menacé d'une violation des droits beaucoup plus outrageante-- Un peuple remarquable par sa patience à souffrir des maux, a depuis nombre d'années fait entendre ses plaintes au gouvernement métropolitain. Un ministère en même temps qui reconnaît la justice de ses mêmes plaintes, veut ajouter l'insulte et la punition à l'outrage-- au milieu de ses attentats à la liberté, resterons nous dans l'inaction, nous osons dire au nom de nos compatriotes, non! La mort avant l'Esclavage.<sup>50</sup>

Almost from the day that news of the Russell Resolutions arrived in the colony, the American Revolution acquired a new and more powerful meaning in patriote discourse. John Neilson, editor of the Quebec Gazette, recognized this immediately. Commenting on the patriote propensity to invoke the Revolution, he mocked what he saw as the movement's attempts to imitate American revolutionaries:

Lower Canada, forsooth, is to become another Massachusetts! The soul and centre of another North American Confederation, in the resistance to the British Government and Parliament! Q imitatoris servum pecus! You do not even comprehend what you pretend to imitate. The descendants of the English puritans never can be

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50. Le Libéral, 10 October, 1837.

imitated; and the least of all by Lower  
Canadians.<sup>51</sup>

Neilson's embittered comments illustrate the extent to which he had become alienated from the patriote movement. They also constitute a recognition of the power of the American Revolution as a symbol of colonial resistance in patriote discourse.

The Revolution, invoked by the movement's leadership in support of a strategy of economic resistance, lent itself all too well to arguments in favour of more radical and even violent solutions. The image of the Revolution as it developed in the spring and summer of 1837 also seemed to underline the inevitability of armed struggle. This because it taught that men had sometimes to fight for their liberty or face losing it, and as Papineau had noted in his first speech against the Russell Resolutions, that a trained European army could be defeated by citizens armed only with patriotism, virtue and the justice of their cause.

By 1837, however, the American Revolution provided much more than a justification of armed resistance or a revolutionary tone to the patriote movement. It furnished it with an organizational model which gave a structure to its strategy of resistance. The committees of

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51. Neilson in the Quebec Gazette, 19 April, 1837; cited by J. G. Neilson, "John Neilson: Constitutionalism and nationalism in Lower Canada", M. A. thesis (history), Acadia University, 1982, p. 187.

correspondence which had been set up in 1834 were broadened in scope in the spring and summer of 1837. In late May the Comité central et permanent in Montreal decided to encourage the establishment of comités de vigilance at the parish level.<sup>52</sup> These were similar in nature to the Committees of Safety established by American leaders in order to enforce their economic boycott in 1774 and 1775. The broadening of the movement's structure had much the same effect in Lower Canada as it had in colonial America. American historians point to the Committees of Safety as central in putting control of colonial resistance into more radical hands. Ouellet shows quite clearly that the same thing happened in Lower Canada. Local leaders in some areas proved far more radical both in their discourse and designs than the high patriote leadership and ultimately, the direction of the movement was passing out of the hands of more moderate leaders such as Papineau.

In the prelude to the American Revolution it was Massachusetts Patriots who took the lead in moving the resistance movement toward rebellion. In Lower Canada radical elements in areas such as the county of Deux-Montagnes openly defied the government. By September the Comité central et permanent in that county had forced local government officials to resign in favour of its own

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52. Ouellet, Bas-Canada, p. 436.

candidates.<sup>53</sup> By October 1st the same county was electing new justices of the peace and organizing independent militia units.<sup>54</sup> In essence, the local leadership was using the organization designed to enforce economic resistance in order to erect a parallel government. In copying the American model, the patriotes gave control to local leaders who in some cases were far more radical than the movement's leadership.

Another organization formed at the beginning of October and clearly modelled on the American example also helped push the movement in a more radical direction. The Fils de la liberté were essentially a para-military organization. Composed of young Canadiens from Montréal, the Fils de la liberté conducted military exercises in open fields around the city. The organization's manifesto, issued on October 4th, was very much inspired by the American Declaration of Independence. In fact the first paragraph of the manifesto differs from the first paragraph of the Declaration only in that replaces "it becomes necessary to dissolve the political bands which have connected them together" with "...rendent nécessaire que les citoyens se forment en associations." In other words the manifesto parallels the Declaration in its analysis of the causes of independence,

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53. Ouellet, Bas-Canada, p. 438.

54. Leclerc, "1837-1838, Dates et événements", p. 101.

but substitutes for the act of independence that of forming a patriotic association. While they stopped short of calling for revolution the Fils de la liberté, very much like their American predecessors, seemed to be preparing for it.<sup>55</sup>

By inspiring more radical rhetoric and organizations of a more revolutionary nature the example of the American Revolution had helped to significantly alter the discourse of the patriote movement by October of 1837. Indeed, by the time the assembly at St. Charles was being planned, the high patriote leadership was clearly losing control of the movement, and with it of the meaning of the American Revolution. When local leaders met at l'Acadie to toast officials removed from office by the government, the obligatory toast to the example of the American Revolution no longer even mentioned the strategy of economic boycott. Rather it congratulated the Americans for having "ramenés le bonheur chez-eux en chassant loin de leur rivage un gouvernement qui voulait exploiter le peuple pour le profit du petit nombre."<sup>56</sup> John Neilson had been correct when he predicted in April that the movement would seek inspiration

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55. See the "Adresse des Fils de la liberté de Montréal aux jeunes gens des colonies de l'Amérique du Nord", published in la Minerve, 9 October, 1837.

56. Fifth toast of the "Festin à l'Acadie pour les officiers destitués", published in la Minerve, 5 October, 1837.

from the example of the American Revolution, but surely he had been mistaken in his evaluation of how well the patriotes would imitate the organization and rhetoric of the American Patriots. By October of 1837 radical elements in the movement were drawing the ultimate conclusion from the history of the Revolution: in some cases liberty had to be preserved by force.

#### 6.4 The Logic of Rebellion

With the Assemblée des six comtés, held at St. Charles on October 23rd, the image of the American Revolution unambiguously assumed its more radical meaning. Fernand Ouellet has written that the patriote resistance took a decisive turn at St. Charles, an interpretation which is amply supported both by the tone of the meeting and by the resolutions and the political manifesto adopted by the representatives of the six counties.<sup>57</sup> Here, as in many of the mass meetings held through the summer of 1837, the example of the American Revolution was invoked. This time, however, the lessons of American history served not to buttress the idea of economic or "constitutional" resistance, but rather to justify the creation of a

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57. Ouellet, Bas-Canada, pp. 445-450.

provisional government and to prepare the people to defend their liberties through the use of force.

This was evident in the first resolution passed by the meeting. Invoking the example "des héros de 1776", the resolution went on to endorse the rights which Jefferson in his Declaration had held as self-evident, translating the famous American document word for word. The resolutions which followed mirrored the American enumeration of British abuses which had formed the bulk of the Declaration of Independence, substituting the crimes of the Lower-Canadian colonial administration for those of George III. They also stated that the Lower-Canadian people had the right to alter their political institutions.<sup>58</sup>

If there was any doubt about the revolutionary nature of the meeting's resolutions, these must have been dispelled by the "Adresse de la confédération des six comtés, au peuple du Canada", issued the day after the meeting. The text of the "Adresse" began by paraphrasing the Declaration of Independence, but stopped short of saying that the people had to "dissolve the political bands which have connected them with another..." The patriote declaration stated that men in danger of losing their liberty had to make "les arrangemens nécessaires pour conserver intacts leurs droits de citoyens et leur dignité d'hommes libres." Yet, while

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58. "Résolutions sur l'état de la province" published in la Minerve, 30 October, 1837.

this seemed to stop short of advocating independence or revolution, the document again invoked the memory of the "sages et immortels rédacteurs de la DECLARATION D'INDEPENDANCE AMERICAINE" who had not only outlined the rights of man, but who had also fought for the establishment of the only form of government appropriate to a North American people. The text then affirmed the solidarity of French-Canadians with the other peoples of North and South America in their adherence to the principles enounced in the Declaration, and in their determination to bring about a change in political institutions consistent with those principles.

The body of the "Adresse", like that of the American Declaration of Independence, is made up of a list of grievances against the British government and the colonial administration. The tenor of these is very much that colonial government was marked by the abuses of "une administration corrompue". Judges dependant of the executive and Legislative Councillors named by a government 3,000 miles away had combined to oppress the Lower-Canadian people. Through manipulation of the justice system and the destitution of government officials opposed to the system of corruption, the executive had mercilessly persecuted the patriotes. Educational reform and internal improvements had been stifled by the opposition of the bureaucrats, and

through these actions Lower Canada had become "une exception disgracieuse aux autres parties de ce continent."

Like Jefferson's Declaration, the patriotes' "Adresse" also postulated that this was only the beginning of a plan to impose a greater tyranny on the province. Echoing American fears in 1776, the document prepared at St Charles warned that the presence of troops in the colony meant that the government's aim was nothing less than to "compléter au moyen de la violence et de l'effusion du sang notre esclavage et notre ruine déjà décidée de l'autre côté des mers." It was clear, the "Adresse" continued, that the abuses suffered by the colony at the hands of the British were a repetition of those heaped on the American colonists before the Revolution, and their experience taught "la folie d'attendre et espérer de la justice des autorités Européennes."

If the situation seemed grave, the "Adresse" nevertheless expressed faith in the "vertus publiques" of the Lower-Canadian populace, and predicted that the character of the Lower-Canadian people would help effect "une régénération". To this end it urged the people to exercise their public virtue by electing their own local officials and by forming local branches of the Fils de la liberté. It also called for the local militias to elect officers of their choice "pour la sûreté, le bon ordre, et la protection de la vie et de la propriété." Adding, "C'est

par là que l'on pourra conserver heureusement les libertés coloniales."

Significantly, the document ended by invoking the sympathy of the American people for the Lower-Canadian cause. Indeed, the support of the Americans would grow naturally out of the fact that the cause of Lower Canada was the same as that of the Patriots of 1776. Thus the patriotes wrote that for their colony's liberation they counted on Providence, the people's love of liberty and

...sur la sympathie de nos voisins démocrates, qui dans l'établissement d'un gouvernement arbitraire sur leurs frontières, sont assez prudents et assez clairvoyants pour prévoir l'élévation d'un système qui pourrait servir de précédent et d'instrument de l'introduction du même gouvernement arbitraire dans d'autres parties du continent américain, et qui ne consentiront pas que les principes pour lesquels ils ont combattu avec tant de succès dans le dixhuitième [sic] siècle, soient dans nos personnes foulés aux pieds dans le dixneuvième [sic].<sup>59</sup>

Simply put, the Americans would sympathize, and perhaps even lend assistance, because the Lower-Canadian resistance was the last act of the American Revolution, the last battle with the forces of European despotism on the continent.

The important place of the American Revolution and particularly of the Declaration of Independence in the "Adresse de la confédération des six comtés" has long been

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59 "Adresse de la confédération des six comtés au peuple du Canada", published in la Minerve, 2 November, 1837.

recognized by historians.<sup>60</sup> Identifying Papineau as the document's author, Fernand Ouellet maintains that the reference to the Declaration allowed the patriote leader to placate radicals in his party without invoking the spectre of social revolution which a reference to the French Revolution would have entailed.<sup>61</sup> The example of the American Revolution, however, was, by the fall of 1837, so firmly established as part of the movement's discourse that one could hardly imagine a patriote declaration of rights omitting it. The ambiguity of the Revolution's image had indeed been a factor which made it appeal to both radicals and moderates within the movement, but that tendency had been obvious since the first of the mass meetings was held at St. Ours in the spring.

At St Charles, although the strategy of economic resistance was briefly invoked, the Revolution was clearly being used as a justification for the people rejecting

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60. See for example Abbé Ivanhoe Caron, "Influence de la Déclaration de l'Indépendance américaine et de la Déclarations des droits de l'homme sur la rébellion canadienne de 1837 et 1838", Mémoires de la Société Royale du Canada, troisième série, XXV (1931), pp. 5-26; as well as Jean Bruchési, "Influences américaines sur la politique du Bas-Canada, 1820-1867" in Gustave Lanctôt, ed., Les Canadiens-Français et leurs voisins du sud (Toronto: Ryerson, 1941), pp. 185-235.

61. Fernand Ouellet, "Papineau dans la révolution de 1837-1838", CHAR (1958), pp. 13-34, reprinted in R. Cook, ed., Constitutionalism and Nationalism in Lower-Canada (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1969), pp. 75-94, at p. 81.

British government and establishing their own republican regime. For although the "Adresse" stopped short of proclaiming independence, it endorsed both the principles of the American Revolution and its results. Patriote plans for calling a "Convention" also suggested that the Lower-Canadian republic would soon be proclaimed.<sup>62</sup> The events of the spring and summer of 1837 had brought the movement to what Bernard Bailyn termed "the logic of rebellion".<sup>63</sup> That is, the patriotes in their discourse had come to the point where they had to choose between becoming political slaves or defending their liberty.

The choice was far more than a political one. For the movement's discourse still posited the relationship between the social state of North America and the political virtue necessary to maintain liberty. The patriotes' struggle was as much one to conserve a North American way of life from the corruption introduced by Europeans, as it was one for political reform. In fact, the social and political components of patriote discourse were inexorably linked, and this too made the example of the American Revolution extremely compelling.

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62. Ouellet, Bas-Canada, p. 445.

63. Bernard Bailyn, The Ideological Origins of the American Revolution (Cambridge Mass.: Belknap Press, 1969), chapter IV.

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The positive image of the United States which had evolved in French-Canadian political discourse since 1815 reached its zenith in the fall of 1837. By then the meaning of the American Revolution was that North American peoples had to be free of their European oppressors in order to preserve their liberty. As the "Adresse de la confédération des six comtés" stated, the history of the Revolution also showed the futility of expecting justice from Europeans. If Lower-Canadians wanted their freedom, they would have to fight for it, as the American Patriots had.

The meaning of the American Revolution had not always been so clear. For although the example of the Revolution was frequently cited in patriote discourse after 1834, its chief use until the spring of 1837 had been to bolster the notion of constitutional and economic resistance to British measures. There always was, however, a more radical meaning to the Revolution, one which even more moderate leaders such as Papineau found difficult to conceal; in some ways it was the very threat of violent resistance to colonial rule inherent in references to the American Revolution which made them so politically useful.

The Russell Resolutions indicated that the British ministry had not learned the lessons of the American Revolution. The patriotes, however, had. Not only did they

cite the example of colonial American resistance to unjust Imperial measures, they actively imitated it. The Lower-Canadian committees of correspondence, the comités de vigilance and the Fils de la liberté were all modelled on the American example. As was the case with the American Revolution, these associations helped put the resistance movement into the hands of more radical local leaders. Like the Massachusetts Sons of Liberty in 1775, the patriotes of Deux-Montagnes sought to move beyond speeches, resolutions and economic resistance, and to that end began to erect the basis of a parallel government. Like the Second Continental Congress, the patriote leadership was faced with a fait accompli by the time the representatives of the Six comtés assembled in St. Charles. In attempting to keep the movement united, Papineau invoked a symbol dear to radicals and moderates alike: the Declaration of Independence. Echoing the Declaration, the "Adresse de la confédération des six comtés" made the radical strategy that of the movement as a whole and, in so doing, placed the patriotes on the path of confrontation with the colonial government. Within weeks, the patriotes found themselves fighting the British with muskets rather than words.

## CONCLUSION

By late October of 1837 it was clear that the patriotes and the British colonial administration would eventually settle their differences through armed conflict. Lord Gosford, the embattled Governor of the province, realized as early as June of 1837 that the patriote agitation in the province might lead to rebellion.<sup>1</sup> The open defiance of his proclamation against the mass meetings being held throughout the province no doubt reinforced this view. By early September Gosford's correspondence showed that he considered the separation of the province and the erection of a French-Canadian republic as the movement's ultimate goal.<sup>2</sup> The open acts of defiance in the county of Deux-Montagnes and the proceedings at the assembly of the Six comtés indicated that the crisis was imminent. A week after the Fils de la

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1. Gosford expresses this sentiment in a despatch to Lord Glenelg, 10 June, 1837. Cited by Félix Leclerc "1837-1838, dates et événements" in Jean-Paul Bernard, ed., Les Rébellions de 1837-1838 (Montréal: Boréal Express, 1983), pp. 91-135, at p. 98.

2. NA, Colborne Papers (copies), MG24 A40, vol. 9, pp. 2469-2471, Lord Gosford to Lord Glenelg, 2 September, 1837. See also his despatch to Glenelg dated 8 September, 1837, cited by Ouellet, Le Bas-Canada (Ottawa: Presses de l'Université d'Ottawa, 1980), p. 457.

liberté clashed with members of the Doric Club in Montreal, Gosford acted. Justices of the peace in the Montréal district whose loyalty was questionable were discharged and replaced with men the government could rely on. A few days later warrants were issued for the arrest of the principal patriote leaders in the region.<sup>3</sup>

By the time the government acted, many of the movement's leaders had fled Montréal to the relative safety of the countryside. After a band of armed men ambushed a small detachment sent to arrest local leaders at Longueuil, the government sent troops south to re-establish order. On November 23, British troops met a patriote force at St. Denis. The Lower-Canadian revolution had begun.

As Papineau had predicted in May, the virtuous Lower-Canadian citizenry was capable of defeating the British military. The successful patriote defense of St. Denis, which Amédée Papineau later termed "ce Bunker Hill du Canada", greatly reinforced the rebels' confidence in an eventual triumph over British arms.<sup>4</sup> Unlike the battle of Bunker Hill, however, the patriotes had not inflicted serious casualties on the enemy at St. Denis.<sup>5</sup> Moreover, as

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3. Leclerc, "1837-1838, dates et événements", pp. 104-107.

4. Louis-Joseph Amédée Papineau, Journal d'un Fils de la liberté (1838) (Montréal: Réédition Québec, 1972), p. 83.

5. Leclerc, "1837-1838, dates et événements", p. 109, estimates British losses at six dead and eleven wounded.

Ouellet has shown, the organization and effective leadership which produced the patriotes' first and only military success was sorely lacking in subsequent engagements.<sup>6</sup>

Thus, as British troops approached St. Charles, the patriote "General" T. S. Brown refused reinforcements offered him from St. Denis, optimistically believing that his men could defend their position. When the British engaged the patriotes at St. Charles, Brown fled, leaving behind him a small and disorganized force which was defeated in a battle lasting only one hour.<sup>7</sup> With the defeat at St. Charles the patriote resistance in the counties south of Montréal collapsed, a trend which the flight of the movement's leaders to the United States no doubt hastened.

A few weeks later the British moved against the last major pocket of resistance at St. Eustache. Again patriote "Generals" such as Amury Girod proved unworthy of the confidence which had been placed in them. Despite the heroic defense of the village by Jean-Olivier Chénier and a small band of patriotes, the much larger British force prevailed. In the cases of both St. Charles and St. Eustache, government troops and loyal volunteers brutally repressed any remaining will to resist, burning and looting

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6. Ouellet, Bas-Canada, pp. 460-467.

7. Ouellet, Bas-Canada, pp. 461-462; Leclerc, "1837-1838, dates et événements" pp. 110-112.

villages which had been sympathetic to the patriote cause.<sup>8</sup> For all intents and purposes, the Rebellion of 1837 was over by mid-December.

Fernand Ouellet has detailed a complex set of motivations which explain the actions of middle class patriote leaders and the habitants who participated in the rebellions. Essentially, Ouellet argues that the movement's leadership incited the people to revolution by exploiting the economic hardship caused by a crisis in Lower-Canadian agriculture and channelling habitant dissatisfaction into nationalist sentiment. In so doing, the patriotes made the rebellion into a war against "les anglais", one to be waged by the people for the profit of the middle classes. Having incited the people to rebellion, the movement's leadership failed at the crucial moment, thus dooming the cause to failure. Ouellet's interpretation rests largely on the analysis of depositions taken by the British authorities after the Rebellions.<sup>9</sup>

One of the most important aspects of Ouellet's interpretation is the idea of pre-meditation. The argument

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8. Ouellet, Bas-Canada, pp. 465-466; Leclerc, "1837-1838, dates et événements", pp. 115-117.

9. See Ouellet's analysis of the Rebellions in his Bas-Canada. This interpretation was first elaborated in Fernand Ouellet, "Les insurrections de 1837-1838: un phénomène social", Histoire sociale/Social History, 2 (November 1968), pp. 54-82, reprinted in Bernard, ed., Les Rébellions de 1837-1838, pp. 205-229.

here is that from the first meetings called to protest the Russell Resolutions, patriote leaders, while officially advocating a strategy of economic resistance, were inciting the people to rebellion against British rule. Ouellet's analysis, however, also provides some clues as to the role of American image in the motivation of both patriote leaders and the people they sought to convince. For when speakers at mass meetings talked of overthrowing the British government, they often invoked the example of the United States. As noted in the previous chapter, allusions to the American Revolution were frequent in the speeches and resolutions of the meetings held in the spring and summer of 1837. Ouellet's evidence suggests that these were accompanied in some cases by incitations to imitate the Americans and establish an independent French-Canadian republic. Thus, Ouellet cites depositions describing statements made by patriote leaders as early as June 1837 in which they claimed to be working to overthrow the government with the goal of establishing "... une république et pour l'unir aux Etats-Unis ou pour en faire un gouvernement indépendant suivant qu'il sera jugé le plus avantageux et afin d'avoir un commerce libre avec les Etats-Unis..."<sup>10</sup>

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10. The statement is attributed to A. Archambault "clerc notaire de Varennes" and was purportedly made on 18 June, 1837. It is reported in the deposition of P. Nichols, also of Varennes, which is cited by Ouellet, "Les insurrections de 1837-1838...", p. 208, note 11.

Similarly, patriote leaders at Nicolet stated they were ready to assist Papineau "à renverser le gouvernement anglais et à faire du Canada un gouvernement indépendant comme le gouvernement américain..."<sup>11</sup> Ouellet also reports the statement of a shoemaker in Nicolet who stated that "... il fallait se rendre indépendant comme le gouvernement américain..."<sup>12</sup>

More frequent than these allusions were those which expressed the belief that the Americans would actively support a Lower-Canadian Revolution. Already in June, J. B. Groulx, a member of the Assembly, was telling the habitants not only that the American government was "un gouvernement libre", but that "... ils [the patriotes] n'avaient qu'un coup de sifflet à donner et tous les américains voleraient à leurs secours."<sup>13</sup> C. H. O. Côté is reported to have told those assembled at St. Charles in October that "l'Amérique était à leur disposition", and that Upper Canada and Prince Edward Island were also rebelling against British rule.<sup>14</sup>

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11. The statement is attributed to the "frères Pacaud" and apparently was made at Nicolet in June, 1837. It is reported in the deposition of L. Lanoville, cited by Ouellet, Bas-Canada, p. 440.

12. Attributed to J. Parmentier in his own deposition of November, 1837, cited by Ouellet, "Les insurrections de 1837-1838...", p. 218.

13. Reported in the depositions of P. Hébert, L. Léon and J. Prince, cited by Ouellet, Bas-Canada, p. 440.

14. Reported in the depositions of A. Brodeur and Ls. Beauchamp, cited by Ouellet, Bas-Canada, p. 446.

Moreover, Ouellet suggests that the high patriote leadership itself believed that the Americans would help liberate Lower Canada, citing a conversation between Viger and Papineau which took place in Montréal before the latter fled the city in November.<sup>15</sup> With the Revolution looming, it seems the Americans now appeared as liberators. No doubt such discourse was, as Ouellet points out, designed to encourage the habitants to defy the government. Still, the belief that the Americans would help liberate Lower Canada had been present in patriote discourse for years, and the patriote leadership seemed to believe such predictions possible.

#### The American Liberators and the Rebellion of 1838

Although their movement had been crushed, patriote leaders who had been able to escape to the United States in November and December of 1837 continued to believe that their cause was not lost. A key component of their optimism was the idea that the United States would actively support the cause of Lower Canada. Thus, patriote leaders in exile along the border dreamed of liberating their province with the help of American financial aid, American munitions and, indeed, American volunteers.

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15. Ouellet, Bas-Canada, p. 458.

Early contacts with the Americans seemed to reinforce patriote notions regarding sympathy for their movement. Already in late November, E. B. O'Callaghan reported to Papineau that the "mass of the people here I doubt not is with us...", although he was wary of the upper classes.<sup>16</sup> In mid-December, Louis Perrault wrote to Ludger Duvernay of an interview with the Governor of Vermont in which the latter had assured him of "les sympathies des masses américaines."<sup>17</sup> Writing to Papineau three days later, Perrault told of meetings held at Swanton and St. Albans Vermont in support of the movement adding that "les gens de ces endroits sont déterminés de s'armer afin de prévenir les dégradations des Tories dans les environs des lignes..."<sup>18</sup>

For his part, Papineau sought to obtain the support of the American government directly. To that end he wrote to influential Americans asking them to help secure the President's support. In his letters, the patriote leader explained his attachment and that of his movement to American political principles and detailed the abuses of the

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16. NA, Fonds Famille Papineau, MG24 B2, vol. 2, pp. 2420-2425, E. B. O'Callaghan to Papineau, 28 November, 1837.

17. NA, Papiers Duvernay (copies), MG 24 C3, vol. 2, pp. 856-857, Louis Perrault to Ludger Duvernay, 12 December, 1837.

18. NA, Fonds Famille Papineau, vol. 2, pp. 2350-2353, Louis Perrault to A. St. John (Papineau's pseudonym), 15 December, 1837.

British government against the Lower-Canadian people.<sup>19</sup> In a letter to his son written at about the same time, Papineau confidently predicted that he would soon return to the province "pour assurer le triomphe et l'émancipation des deux Canadas."<sup>20</sup>

Indeed, most of the letters written by patriote leaders in December of 1837 were full of optimism. C. H. O. Côté reported he could find 350 volunteers "tant Canadiens qu'Américains" in Northern New York and Vermont.<sup>21</sup> While E. E. Rodier was less sanguine concerning the support of the people of Burlington Vermont, he nevertheless reported that in Montpelier the patriotes had amassed a cache of 5 canons and 1200 muskets.<sup>22</sup> Perrault, writing at the end of the month, seemed to capture the optimism of the moment. In a letter to Papineau he reported sympathy for the patriote

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19. See NA, Fonds Famille Papineau, vol.2, pp. 2356-2361, Papineau to George Bancroft, 18 December, 1837. The text of Papineau's letter is reproduced in Ronald F. Howell, "The Political Testament of Papineau in Exile, 1837", CHR, XXXVIII, 4 (1957), pp. 295-299.

20. Papineau to Amédée Papineau, 16 December, 1837, cited by Ouellet, Bas-Canada, p. 469.

21. NA, Fonds Famille Papineau, vol. 2, p. 2768-2771, C. H. O. Côté to E. B. O'Callaghan, 19 December, 1837.

22. NA, Papiers Duvernay (copies), vol. 2, pp. 863-866, E. E. Rodier to Ludger Duvernay. Of the people of Burlington Rodier wrote: "Les amis d'ici sont capables de donner le spleen à l'homme le plus gai et le plus courageux. Ce sont des chi [sic] en culottes et des figures à claques."

cause throughout New England.<sup>23</sup> In another circular letter addressed to various patriotes, Perrault spoke of meetings of supporters in many American cities, of the tacit support of Democratic politicians and of American Generals who expressed their readiness to lead the Canadiens in the liberation of their country.<sup>24</sup>

Patriote hopes of American aid in the invasion of Lower Canada faded early in 1838. On January 5th, President Martin Van Buren issued a Neutrality Proclamation which forbade American citizens from interfering in Canadian affairs and warned that those compromising the neutrality of the United States would be arrested.<sup>25</sup> Despite this setback, the patriotes decided to proceed with a plan of invasion elaborated three days earlier during a meeting at Middlebury Vermont. On February 28th, four days after a mysterious theft of guns from an armoury at Elizabethtown New York, a patriote force entered Lower Canada. Once in the province, one of the leaders, Robert Nelson, issued a proclamation of Lower-Canadian Independence which, among other things, abolished seigneurial tenure and made the franchise universal. The patriotes retreated to the United

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23. NA, Fonds Famille Papineau, vol. 2, p. 2383-2385, Louis Perrault to A Saint-John (Papineau), 21 December, 1837.

24. NA, Papiers Duvernay (copies), vol. 2, p. 869-875, Louis Perrault to Duvernay and others, 23 December, 1837.

25. Leclerc, "1837-1838, dates et événements", p. 117.

States on March 1st, however, where they were met by the General Wool of the American army who confiscated their weapons and made some arrests.<sup>26</sup>

The events of January and February 1838 crippled the revolutionary movement in two important ways. Juellet points out, quite correctly, that deliberations over the goals of the Revolution, particularly over seigneurial tenure, during the meeting at Middlebury drove a wedge between Papineau and the more radical revolutionary leaders. Henceforth, Papineau would keep his distance from the radicals and their plans for invasion. This ideological division in patriote ranks appears to Ouellet as one of the most important factors in explaining the failure of the rebellion of 1838.<sup>27</sup>

While this is no doubt true, the actions of the American government also greatly contributed to demoralizing and dividing patriote leadership. As Amédée Papineau put it, two weeks after Van Buren's declaration: "Ensuite, outre le gouvernement anglais, nous avons à combattre le

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26. Leclerc, "1837-1838, dates et événements", p. 117-118.

27. Fernand Ouellet, "Papineau dans la révolution de 1837-1838", Canadian Historical Association Report (1958), pp. 13-34, reprinted in R. Cook, ed. Constitutionalism and Nationalism in Lower Canada (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1969), pp. 75-94, at p. 89.

gouvernement américain!"<sup>28</sup> The movement's early reaction to the Proclamation was to try to convince prominent citizens to use their influence with Washington to have it revoked. The American reaction to this suggestion seems to have been cool.<sup>29</sup> A few weeks before the planned invasion, the actions of the American government were far from encouraging. J. L. Beaudry, in a letter to Duvernay, reported that the patriotes were being closely watched by the American militia, adding "...il doit s'établir une patrouille de Dragon [sic] pour maintenir la pussillanimité [sic] du Président et restreindre le noble peuple des E. U. de nous aider dans notre [sic] la meilleure des causes..."<sup>30</sup> The model government was not behaving in an exemplary fashion.

The failure of the expedition of late February and the arrest of its leaders by the American army further embittered the patriotes toward the American government. In announcing the news to O'Callaghan, Perrault expressed the

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28. L.-J. A. Papineau, Journal d'un fils de la liberté, vol. 2 (1838) (Montréal: eds. Etincelle, 1972), p. 83. The comment is dated 19 January, 1838.

29. NA, Fonds Famille Papineau, vol. 2, pp. 2645-2648, Thomas Bouthillier to Louis-Joseph Papineau, 10 February, 1838. Bouthillier claimed to have discussed the idea with influential Americans but added that "...ils ne repoussent pas cette idée, mais je ne crois pas qu'il l'ait accueilli avec chaleur..."

30. NA, Papiers Duvernay (copies), vol. 2, pp. 933-935, J. L. Beaudry to Ludger Duvernay.

belief that the cause was lost unless the British declared war on the United States. The Americans, Perrault wrote, "... parlent beaucoup mais je crois qu'ils craignent l'Angleterre."<sup>31</sup> Later in March, Perrault wrote of being "horriblement trompés par les sympathizers". In the same letter he attributed the patriote defeat to the treachery of an American postmaster who had sold a letter of Nelson's to the Lower-Canadian Tories. "Quant à la tricherie des Américains pour de l'argent," he concluded, "ils peuvent tout."<sup>32</sup> A few weeks later, a bitter Ludger Duvernay expressed the movement's disillusionment with the Americans in a letter to Joseph Robitaille. "Nous suivirent [sic] leur exemple," he wrote, "pleins d'espérances dans la sympathie de nos voisins. Mais c'est ici comme ailleurs, malgré les bonnes dispositions il est impossible de ne rien faire sans argent!"<sup>33</sup> Papineau, on the other hand, attributed the inaction of the American government to "l'esprit de parti", "l'influence sinistres des Banques

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31. NA, Fonds Famille Papineau, vol.2, pp. 2719-2720, Louis Perrault to E. B. O'Callaghan, 3 March, 1838.

32. NA, Fonds Famille Papineau, vol. 2, Louis Perrault to E. B. O'Callaghan, 27 March, 1838.

33. NA, Papiers Duvernay (copies), vol. 3, p. 1036-1043, Duvernay to Joseph Robitaille, 7 April, 1838.

administratrices de l'Or Anglais" and "l'intérêt du commerce".<sup>34</sup>

Many of the patriotes continued to hope that Great Britain and the United States would go to war over such issues as the New Brunswick-Maine border dispute, and thus help their cause. However, after the early spring of 1838 few of the refugees seriously believed they would receive extensive aid from either the American people or its government. This fact was underlined by the failure of meetings designed to drum up support for the movement as well as by the pitiful results of campaigns to raise funds for the patriotes. Papineau's stay in Philadelphia through the spring and summer of 1838 further emphasized the general apathy of Americans for the Lower-Canadian cause, and his visit with the French ambassador to the United States in August dashed any hopes of assistance from France.<sup>35</sup>

Ironically, just as the refugees' hopes of support were being crushed under the weight of American apathy and geopolitical reality, rumours of an impending invasion by an American army of liberation spread across Lower Canada.

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34. These explanations appear in many of his letters in this period. See for example three letters to his son Amédée written from March to May 1838 in NA, Fonds Famille Papineau, vol. 2, pp. 2830-2833, 26 March, 1838; vol. 2, pp. 2864-2867, 12 April, 1838; vol. 2, pp. 2913-2916, 6 May, 1838.

35. Ouellet, "Papineau dans la révolution de 1837-1838", p. 90.

Further, these rumours were not unknown to patriote exiles in the United States. As early as January 1838, letters to Louis Perrault and Ludger Duvernay from correspondents in Lower Canada reported the widespread belief that Papineau would return to the province at the head of a huge American liberation force. "Il se fait beaucoup d'histoires", wrote C. D. Roy to Perrault, "sur l'avenir de Mr. P. avec les Américains [sic], les uns disent que tout les noirs du sud vont venir, les autres que Mr. P. est à la tête de 25,000 hommes."<sup>36</sup> Similarly, Joseph Danserau wrote to Duvernay early in February of 1838, reporting rumours that the Americans were at "l'Isle aux Noix" and "à la prairie [sic]", adding "Je te prie de m'écrire quelque chose de certain."<sup>37</sup>

Clearly, the refugees did little to discourage such rumours. Indeed, as they organized the secret association of the Frères Chasseurs, patriote leaders used the rumours to advantage in order to attract potential recruits. In fact, in some cases it seems that initiates to the association travelled to patriote bases in the United States.<sup>38</sup> The depositions taken from those who participated

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36. NA, Fonds Famille Papineau, vol. 2, pp. 2539-2540, C. D. Roy to Louis Perrault, 11 January, 1838.

37. NA, Papiers Duvernay (copies), vol. 2, pp. 927-929, Joseph Danserau to Ludger Duvernay (written from Verchères, Lower Canada), 2 February, 1838.

38. Leclerc, "1837-1838, dates et événements", p. 123.

in the second rebellion indicate that references to an American invasion were a key element in local leaders' efforts to raise recruits. Michel Meunier of St. Marie de Monnoir stated that during his initiation in October of 1838 he was told that "... la masse Américaine sortoit pour venir prendre le pays..."<sup>39</sup> Hyppolite Pariseau of Varennes recounted in his deposition how he had been told by François Malo of Pointe aux Trembles in October that Robert Nelson and C. H. O. Côté "... venaient des Etats-Unis avec quarante-mille hommes pour renverser le gouvernement Anglois et établir une indépendance dans les Canada [sic]..."<sup>40</sup> Thomas Bédard's deposition indicated that there was also an economic reason for supporting the American invaders. He had overheard five men saying that the British were letting the people starve to death and that "on étoit bien mieux chez les Américains que sous notre gouvernement, en autant qu'avec eux on avoit toujours quoi manger."<sup>41</sup> Further, local leaders continued to tell the people that the Americans were coming right up to the moment of the Rebellion. Thus, Jean-Baptiste Leduc claimed that to have

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39. NA, Rebellion Records, RG4 B37, vol. 1, pp. 379-382, deposition of Michel Meunier, 31 December, 1838. Other portions of the same deposition are cited by Ouellet, Bas-Canada, p. 474.

40. NA, Rebellion Records, vol. 1, pp. 129-131, deposition of Hyppolite Pariseau, 22 November, 1838.

41. NA, Young Family Collection, vol.8, pp. 724-725, deposition of Thomas Bédard, 29 November, 1838.

been warned early in November that "...l'armée 'Bostonaise' allait arrivée et que ceux qui n'auraient point marché souffriraient."<sup>42</sup>

As Fernand Ouellet shows, patriote leaders kept up the charade even as the second rebellion began. At Napierville, the largest of the patriote camps assembled in November of 1838, Côté and Nelson, after once again proclaiming Lower-Canadian independence, told their followers that the arrival of American troops and weapons was imminent.<sup>43</sup> Their departure from the camp to open the road for the Americans is considered by Ouellet "une fuite pure et simple", inspired by the knowledge that their cause was already lost.<sup>44</sup> The American army of liberation expected by the habitants who assembled at the patriote camps in November of 1838 never arrived. Within a few weeks, the second rebellion was over. Many of its leaders escaped to the safety of the United States. The people were left to face the wrath of soldiers and volunteers, whose reprisals on the population were even more brutal than those of the previous year.<sup>45</sup>

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42. NA, Rebellion Records, vol. 1, pp. 146-147, deposition of Jean-Baptiste Leduc, 26 November, 1838.

43. Ouellet, Bas-Canada, p. 480; see also Leclerc, "1837-1838, Dates et événements", p. 128.

44. Ouellet, Bas-Canada, p. 481.

45. Ibid., p. 482.

## Disillusionment

Writing of the Rebellion of 1838 many years later, F. X. Prieur explained that the people of the counties south of Montreal "s'attendait à des secours venant des États-Unis...; chacun oubliait les malheurs de l'année précédente."<sup>46</sup> Another veteran of 1838 recalled:

Nos renseignements des États-Unis indiquaient des préparatifs sur une grande échelle pour venir à notre secours. On nous parlait de dépôts d'armes, de munitions, de volontaires prêts à passer la frontière pour grossir nos rangs. On parlait même d'intervention du gouvernement aussitôt que nous aurions pu gagner le moindre avantage sérieux sur les troupes anglaises. Nous nous bercions de ces idées, et nous regardions le succès comme très probable, puisque cette année au moins, nous aurions des armes et des secours d'armes et d'argent.<sup>47</sup>

The idea that the Americans would help liberate the province, spread in rumours encouraged by patriote leaders, was an important contributing factor to the Rebellion of 1838. The wide currency given to these rumours over the summer and fall of that year helped convince and perhaps even coerce the habitants in the areas south of Montréal to support yet another attempt at revolution. That the people believed the rumours is testimony to the impact of patriote

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46. F. X. Prieur, Notes d'un condamné politique de 1838 (Montréal, 1884), p. 9.

47. Félix Poutré, Echappé de la potence. Souvenirs d'un prisonnier d'état. (1862), p. 8.

discourse in the years leading up the Rebellions. Since at the early 1830's, the Americans had been presented as a free people, as the enemies of despotism, as the natural allies of the Canadiens.

The refugees who fled to the United States after the collapse of the second rebellion found sympathy for their cause waning. In the aftermath of the 1838 uprising Papineau travelled to Washington in an attempt to win the sympathy of the American government. This mission, like all the others, failed.<sup>48</sup> Still, many of the refugees drew hope from what seemed to be an imminent conflict between the United States and Great Britain over the Maine-New Brunswick boundary dispute, although they now pinned those hopes on the actions of the Governor of Maine rather than on President Van Buren.<sup>49</sup> Indeed, reports of border conflicts constituted the only good news for the movement. Attempts to generate sympathy or financial support for the cause were failing miserably. One ill-fated mission to Philadelphia and Washington in March and April of 1839 barely covered its

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48. Ouellet, "Papineau dans la révolution de 1837-1838", p. 91, states that Papineau actually had an interview with Martin Van Buren.

49. See comments of this nature in NA, Papiers Perrault (copies), MG24 B37, vol. 2, p. 60-62, H. A. Gauvin to Louis Perrault, 24 February, 1839; and vol. 2, pp. 71-73, C. H. O. Côté to Louis Perrault, 3 April, 1839.

costs. Even American Congressmen seemed uninterested in the cause, contributing only twenty dollars between them.<sup>50</sup>

Facing such apathy, the refugees became increasingly bitter towards the American people and their government. Indeed, such an attitude was evident even before the second rebellion. Writing from Boston, E. Duchesnois warned Duvernay that they had been wrong about the Americans. "Avouons le...", he argued, "les Américains ne valent pas mieux et peut-être bien moins que les autres, ce sont de francs hypocrites, s'ils étaient Catholiques ils seraient assurément Jésuites."<sup>51</sup> In the aftermath of the 1838 uprising, Amédée Papineau noted in his journal that loyal volunteers in Lower Canada had fired on American troops adding: "Tant mieux, Van Buren et ses agens méritent cela: l'ennemie s'entretue!"<sup>52</sup> The most bitter comments came in the form of a long letter from Charles Drolet to Ludger Duvernay in November, 1839. Drolet noted at the outset that sympathy for the cause had evaporated both in Vermont and New York. He concluded that the whole experience of the

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50. Reports of this mission appear in NA, Papiers Duvernay (copies), vol. 3, pp. 1292-1298, Ludger Duvernay to Louis Perrault, 17 February, 1839; and in NA, Papiers Perrault (copies), vol. 2 p. 70, H. A. Gauvin to Louis Perrault, 4 March, 1839, and vol. 2, pp. 85-86, E. Duchesnois to Louis Perrault, 16 April, 1839.

51. NA, Papiers Duvernay (copies), vol. 3, pp. 1084-1087, E. Duchesnois to Ludger Duvernay, 20 April, 1838.

52. NA, Fonds Famille Papineau, vol. 32, "Journal d'un Fils de la liberté..." vol. 3, p. 3, 13 November, 1838.

rebellions had taught a valuable lesson to the Canadiens, that they should rely only on themselves:

Si nous eussions acquis notre indépendance en 1837 ou 1838 nous aurions ouvert les portes du pays à cette horde de spéculateurs qui comme les vautours et les corbeaux s'assemblaient sur les frontières pour se repaître des débris du naufrage, nous ne les connaissons pas, et notre défaut est une extrême confiance dans les étrangers, et une méfiance impardonnable de nos compatriotes, et de nous mêmes. Nous nous serions livrés qui aurait [sic] comme dans le Texas, envahi toutes les places; et auraient inondé notre malheureuse patrie de monnaie guenille et de fripons. Nos vertueux cultivateurs auraient été induits par de hauts prix, à vendre leurs terres, et à se retirer dans l'intérieur laissant à leurs nouveaux maîtres les plus belles propriétés, et prenant volontairement un rang inférieur dans la société...

...L'amour de l'or a étouffé depuis longtemps tout autre sentiment chez les Américains...<sup>53</sup>

In the time the refugees had been in the United States, the failure of the Rebellions and the lack of American support for the patriote cause eroded the idealized image of America that the movement had developed in the 1830's. Some, such as Papineau, continued to blame American apathy on party spirit and the influence of banks. By 1839, however, Papineau was in France. Fellow patriotes, who had migrated to other areas of the United States in search of freedom and a better life, reported back that conditions were less than ideal for canadien settlers. A Dr. Trudeau, writing from St. Louis, answered questions about the

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53. NA, Papiers Duvernay (copies), vol. 4, pp. 1635-1639, Charles Drolet to Ludger Duvernay, 8 November, 1839.

possible settlement of refugees in the area with little enthusiasm. While it was possible for a settler to become established, times were hard and "l'anglais est la langue presque entièrement parlé, peu ou point de Français à l'exception de quelques Canadiens... les notaires ici n'ont rien à faire car notre coutume est bien différente à celle du Canada..."<sup>54</sup> Louisiana, which had been held up by the patriotes as a model of what Lower Canada might become within the Union, seemed no more inviting. "J'ai été un mois malade à la Louisiane", wrote one patriote who had migrated there, "n'encouragez aucun Canadien d'aller à la Nouvelle Orléans, c'est le plus maudit pays que je n'aie [sic] jamais vu."<sup>55</sup>

For the refugees, the American dream had turned into a nightmare. Many returned to Canada as soon as they could. Papineau remained in France until he was granted a pardon in 1845 and was finally allowed entry into the province.<sup>56</sup> The president of the Lower-Canadian republic, Robert Nelson, left to find his fortune in California. E. B. O'Callaghan, Papineau's Irish lieutenant, swore never to set foot on British soil again, settled in New York and later became one

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54. NA, Papiers Duvernay (copies), vol 2, pp. 939-943, Dr. J. M. F. Trudeau to Ludger Duvernay, 20 February, 1838.

55. NA, Papiers Duvernay (copies), vol. 4, pp. 1508-1509, L.-G. Beaudriau to Ludger Duvernay, 24 August, 1839.

56. J. M. S. Careless, The Union of the Canadas (Toronto: McClelland and Stewart, 1967), p. 121.

of the state's most famous historians.<sup>57</sup> E. E. Mailhot, who had been a "General" in the patriote army of 1838, travelled to Louisiana, settled there and was elected to the state Senate in 1856.<sup>58</sup> Ironically, in the sixty years following the end of the Rebellions, hundreds of thousands of French-Canadians, most of them fleeing agricultural distress, would migrate to the mill towns of New England.

#### New Images of America

An image of America which rested on the democratic nature of North American society and the inevitability of liberation from the British colonial regime could not possibly survive the failure of the Rebellions. The geographic determinism inherent in patriote discourse, the historical inevitability of political freedom or slavery (Pocock's Machiavellian Moment) which made American assistance in the act of colonial liberation necessary, not only to Lower Canadians but to the Americans themselves, had been confounded by a victory of British arms in 1837 and 1838. If French-Canadian thinkers continued to follow the

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57. Jacques Monet, La première révolution tranquille (Montréal: Fides, 1981), p. 60.

58. "Edouard-Elisée Mailhot" in C. Dufresne, J. Grimard, A. Lapierre and P. Savard, eds. Le dictionnaire de l'Amérique française (Ottawa: Presses de l'Université d'Ottawa), p. 233.

logic of patriote discourse after 1839, the cause of liberty was lost.

There was much in the political developments of the early 1840's to suggest that the Canadiens had been reduced to the status of political slaves. The Durham Report and its recommendations, the Act of Union with its unfair representation no doubt seemed like a death sentence for the virtuous people of the late province of Lower Canada. Out of the profound pessimism of the period came an important realization: if the forces of corruption could not be stopped, they could be accommodated. Ironically, it was two former patriotes, LaFontaine and Cartier, who affected this major change in the dominant paradigms of French-Canadian political discourse. Within fifteen years of the Act of Union, the dominant faction of the French-Canadian political elite acquired control over the instruments of executive corruption and used them to create and maintain a solid political block in the Parliament of the Canadas. To this end they added an alliance with the representatives of Montreal merchant capitalism, as well as one with the ultramontane clergy in the province. In the process, this dominant group also accepted the inevitability of British rule and returned to the old concept of exchanging French-

Canadian loyalty for the Empire's protection of the nation's particular characteristics.<sup>59</sup>

The implications of these changes to the dominant image of the United States in French-Canadian political discourse were profound. As was the case before 1815, the Americans were again defined as a threat both to British dominion and the French-Canadian nation. As the years went by, the old stereotype of the greedy, materialistic American reemerged as the embodiment of that threat. This attitude was reinforced by the elite's need to stem the tide of French-Canadian emigration to the United States, a movement which was now defined as spiritual and cultural suicide for the migrant, genocide for the nation.

There were those in the 1840's, however, who put forward a different strategy for national development. Inspired by the return of the great prophet of the American image, Louis-Joseph Papineau, a group of radicals in the late 1840's actively campaigned for annexation to the United States. But as Papineau faded into obscurity, it became clear that their image of the United States was a far cry from the classical republic posited in patriote discourse. For the Rouges had also abandoned the paradigms of virtue and corruption and linked their hopes for French Canada with the idea of progress. Their America was that of individual

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59. This is in substance the interpretation presented in Monet's La première révolution tranquille.

initiative and economic opportunity, and their discourse very much mirrored that of the emerging Republican party in the United States.<sup>60</sup>

The Rouges were never able to convince their compatriots that their vision of the future was the correct one. While their more positive appraisal of America survived in the discourse of their less radical successors, it always competed with a far more prevalent view of the United States as a society obsessed with material gain and devoid of spiritual values. Even as Québécois politicians invited American capitalists to exploit their province's vast natural resources at the turn of the twentieth century, French-Canadian intellectuals warned of "le péril américain" as a serious threat to cultural survival.

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The patriote image of America passed into history along with a form of political discourse which reflected the profound ambivalence of a generation toward economic and social change. Essentially French-Canadian politicians

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60. On the Rouges image of the United States, as well as that of their political opponents, see Jean-Paul Bernard, Les Rouges: libéralisme, nationalisme et anticléricalisme au milieu du XIX<sup>e</sup> siècle (Montréal: Presses de l'Université du Québec, 1971).

before 1837 were reacting to the rise of commercial capitalism by attempting to control it, perhaps even to halt it, in the interest of preserving what they saw as the basis of democratic government: the equal distribution of wealth characteristic of North American society. The patriotes saw the accumulation of wealth and the cult of "luxury" as signs of political decline. When they spoke of a régénération, they understood a reaffirmation of the independent and virtuous nature of the citizenry and the disassociation of the forces of corruption from government.

Before 1815, the image of America gave meaning to French-Canadian political discourse as an example of a corrupt society and government. In the rhetoric of the parti canadien, the American was defined as a being driven by his baser passions. Because Americans valued material things above all others they lacked the virtue to work as a community for the "common good". Consequently, politics in the Republic appeared as merely a struggle between warring factions in the promotion of their own interests. Defining their own people as virtuous, French-Canadian political writers sought to identify the factious elements in their own society, in this case British merchants and bureaucrats, with the Americans. Thus, "yankey" became synonymous with "anti-canadien". The struggle to preserve the virtue of the Canadiens before 1815 revolved around the idea of establishing the proper constitutional balance between the

Assembly, the Legislative Council and the Governor, through an affirmation of the Assembly's rights and privileges. In this period Great Britain was still very much a model of the type of government which French-Canadian politicians hoped to achieve.

The images of Great Britain and the United States were reversed by the events of the 1820's. In the eyes of French-Canadian commentators, politics in the decade were marked by the intrigues of corrupt colonial administrations in the province and, with the Union Bill, by the support of the British politicians for such schemes. The campaign against the Union Bill necessitated an energetic definition of the French-Canadian identity, and in the process political virtue was identified with the particular nature of North American society. Simultaneously, the character of the American people was redefined as virtuous and enlightened, their government increasingly seen as the embodiment of the "common good".

Consequently, through the 1820's French-Canadian political writers drew more frequently on the American model as an example of the type of political and social institutions which were desirable for their own people. In this, the "Era of Good Feelings" in the United States, the American people seemed prosperous and contented, and factions seemed to have vanished from American political life. Alternately, British and European governments

exhibited the ill effects of an excessive concentration of power and wealth. The natural virtue of the Old World had been sacrificed to the ambition of both moneyed and landed aristocracy.

By the early 1830's the image of America had become central to the political discourse of the patriote movement. Having identified French-Canadian society as distinctly North American, and thus inherently virtuous, the patriotes now argued that only one form of government could be acceptable to their people, that of a republic modelled on the United States. By extending the elective principle to all levels of government, the Americans had provided the people with a means of injecting virtue into politics. In the American system it was the aristocracy of talents and virtue, rather than that of birth or money, which occupied positions of power. In that sense, the government of the United States truly reflected the democratic nature of North American society.

Still, the patriotes were not so naive as to believe that American political life was free from the forces of corruption. When their opponents pointed to the existence of political, social and economic strife in the Republic, the movement responded by identifying that corruption as European in origin. In this light, the struggle to maintain North America's particular social characteristics took on a continental dimension, and the fight against European

intrigue in the colony could be associated with that which continued in the United States. The Americans, however, had the advantage of a form of government which was well suited to fighting political corruption. Thus, the people's elected executive could act as a champion in the struggle against the moneyed aristocracy and their instrument, the Bank of the United States. Alternately, the people's elected representatives could resist an executive which sought to abuse power.

The American system was also a compelling example because it illustrated how virtue could be preserved while a people became prosperous. In advocating republican government, the patriotes were not arguing for economic stagnation, but rather for development under local control. Moreover, along with the Jacksonians, the movement came to accept that the presence of certain institutions associated with merchant capitalism, such as banks, was necessary to economic well-being. The lesson of American republicanism was that such institutions had to be separated from political power in order to prevent the corruption of governments. Thus, when the patriotes advocated a system of small, locally controlled banks they were attempting to harness the forces of economic change in a way that might preserve and promote an economy based primarily on agricultural exploitation. Following the American example, such a course would create prosperity without sapping the

fundamental equality of condition which characterized North American societies.

The alternative was the system promoted by the moneyed aristocracies in Lower Canada and the United States. In both societies, these factions sought to establish a dominion of wealth, by using money to corrupt government for the benefit of a small minority. By the 1830's, the banking crisis in the United States and the obstruction of the political and economic oligarchy of Lower Canada seemed to indicate that the struggle between the forces of virtue and corruption was fast approaching a climax. In this context, the American Revolution became a powerful example of how a virtuous people might wrest control of government from the hands of corrupt Europeans. Initially the history of the Revolution demonstrated the utility of constitutional and economic resistance to European oppression. Eventually, when the British colonial administration rejected patriote demands for local autonomy, the Revolution became a symbol of the inevitability of colonial independence and the legitimacy of a recourse to arms in the struggle to preserve political liberty.

Although this study has not dwelt on definitions of collective identity in terms of the evolution of French-Canadian nationalism, its findings speak directly to the relationship between nationalism and political discourse posited in existing historiography. For many historians,

the essential point has been to determine whether nationalism in the period was compatible with what they saw as primarily a "liberal" political discourse. In this vein, a national self-definition which highlighted the agricultural nature of Canadien society and called for the preservation of traditional institutions in the face of British merchant capitalism appears as a fundamental contradiction to our definitions of liberalism. However, the patterns of political discourse highlighted in the present study suggest that this supposed contradiction in French-Canadian political discourse before 1837 did not exist in the minds of contemporary political writers.

Linking the form of discourse outlined in this study to the interests of the social group which articulated it points to the difficulty of considering it "liberal". When the patriotes wrote of a natural aristocracy of talents and virtue acceding to power in Lower Canada, they no doubt had themselves in mind. Further, the type of society they wished to create through the introduction of a republican regime would have reenforced their social position. In essence, the parti canadien and parti patriote were "country parties" in the sense given the term by historians of Anglo-American political discourse. In eighteenth-century Britain and nineteenth-century America, factions of the middle class whose wealth was tied to land (country parties) struggled against those associated with merchant capitalism (court

parties) using the language of virtue and corruption. In the United States, Jeffersonian Republicans and Jacksonian Democrats both warned of the dangers posed by too close an alliance between money and political power, particularly when that alliance involved the executive. Similar fears in the discourse examined here are in this sense not surprising, since the French-Canadian professional elite was very much tied to agriculture and saw its power threatened by the activities of merchants closely allied with the colonial executive. In this vein, Philip Buckner's recent argument that British ministers saw colonial political movements as largely "country parties" seems perfectly justified.<sup>61</sup> In Lower Canada at least, the patriotes were using the language of such a party.

In arguing that French-Canadian politicians before 1837 articulated a vision of society which was essentially agricultural in its inspiration, we should guard against the assumption that political, social and economic discourse in the period rejected economic change in favour of the perpetuation of an ancien régime model. Clearly, by the 1830's the patriotes were arguing for a form of economic development which, while it might produce prosperity, would nonetheless preserve the more equal division of wealth in

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61. P. A. Buckner, The Transition to Responsible Government: British Policy in British North America 1815-1850 (Westport, Conn.: Greenwood Press, 1985).

the colony. By advocating the creation of smaller, locally controlled banks in the colony, the movement actually hoped to stimulate development by providing capital, while at the same time preventing that capital from corrupting political institutions. Such a delicate balance might be maintained, it was believed, through the simultaneous introduction of republican political institutions. The movement's most persistent fear was the excessive concentration of wealth in a few hands, and its political use for the benefit of a small minority at the expense of the community as a whole. Again, such fears were common in the discourse of both Jeffersonian Republicans and Jacksonian Democrats.

Finally, as an analysis of the meaning of the American image in French-Canadian political discourse from 1805 to 1837, this study underlines the importance of external models in the development of that discourse. Certainly, Jean-Pierre Wallot was correct when he characterized Lower-Canada as part of a North Atlantic civilization undergoing fundamental economic, social, and political change in the early nineteenth-century. The civic humanist tradition described by J. G. A. Pocock was an important part of the ideological and linguistic heritage of that world, one which by the early nineteenth-century had found fertile ground in the political discourse of the American Republic. French-Canadians, in giving meaning to their own political context, appropriated that heritage and made it their own. Thus, in

the years before the rebellions, the patriotes struggled with their own "Machiavellian Moment", and used the American image as a model of how corruption and degeneration might be forestalled. Without the power of seeing into the future they had no way of knowing that theirs was a battle the Americans had already lost.

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