

THE DEFENCE FACTOR IN CONFEDERATION
OF THE BRITISH NORTH AMERICAN PROVINCES

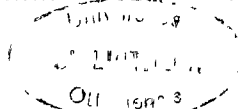
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CURRICULUM STUDIORUM

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INTRODUCTION

Within a few short years, Canada will be celebrating the centenary of its birth. A great deal has been written about the various factors that contributed to its entrance on the threshold of nationhood. However, most of this literature has been limited to the constitutional, political and economic difficulties which Confederation sought to alleviate. Not enough has been written about the desire of the Provincial Ministers, when faced with military abandonment by the Mother Country, to unite the resources of their provinces against the threat from the United States. There is, of course, some literature in this field but mainly on related aspects of the subject.

Research carried out by Chester Martin has led him to conclude that the British Colonial Office was swung to accepting Confederation by the threat from the United States so long in existence and magnified by the incidents during the American Civil War. Such eminent scholars as Colonel C.P. Stacey and William Whitelaw dealt with events surrounding British efforts to reduce military expenditures in North America by shifting the major responsibility for defence to the colonies themselves. More recently, James Gibson, in a well documented paper, referred to these efforts and the subsequent British pressure placed on New Brunswick and Nova Scotia to achieve this objective. Robert Falconer's

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contention that self-protection was a strong motive in the creation of the federation, the result of his investigations in this field, has provided a stimulating contribution to the preparation of this thesis. The writings of these authors, along with others, are included in the bibliography.

This thesis will attempt to show the part the defence factor played in the achievement of Confederation in 1867. It will seek to determine to what extent the threat from the United States, in the face of the agitation in Britain for a reduction of military spending in the colonies, influenced the Provincial Ministers who initiated the federation movement, the Governors who served as intermediaries, and the officials of the British Colonial Office whose forthright stamp of approval brought the scheme to fruition. Apart from the consideration given to matters relating to the United States and Great Britain, the largest portion of this dissertation centres around the initiative and actions of the province of Canada and, to a lesser extent, that of New Brunswick, whose contiguity with the United States made them more keenly aware of the American threat than their sister province Nova Scotia, where comparative safety aroused little desire to unite with Canada for defence purposes. With the exception of a few references, discussion with regard to Prince Edward Island and Newfoundland is not included in this thesis as both gave early indication they were not

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interested in joining the new federation.

The first chapter is intended to provide a military background in support of the discussion of the political events in the succeeding chapters of this report. It briefly summarizes British expenditures on the construction of military fortifications and the garrisoning of British regulars in the province of Canada. It also traces the gradual development of separate local defence forces by the colonies themselves.

The following chapter highlights the threat from the neighbouring United States. It deals with American efforts to annex the British colonies, particularly the province of Canada, and all the accompanying crises, difficulties and outright attacks that occurred in the years between the birth of the American Republic in 1783, and the Confederation of the British North American provinces in 1867. Consideration of such a lengthy span of time was found necessary in order to explore the threat from its origin, throughout the recurring crises, and, finally, to its culmination with the American Civil War.

The reactions of the inhabitants, particularly those in Canada, to these annexation attempts is the subject of the third chapter. It deals with the numerous crises during the twelve years immediately prior to Confederation - the period during which Canada developed its own defence forces and

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laid the foundation on which the future federation was to be founded. This topic, along with Canadian reaction to the Colonial Secretary's notification that Canada would have to provide for its own defence, is the main concern of this chapter. It also indicates the first signs of the conviction that Confederation was the one alternative to annexation.

The marked transition of opinion in Britain, from very close association with her colonies to a loosening of the bonds which tied her to them, is the subject under discussion in the fourth portion. It attempts to show how this change of opinion brought about the desire to reduce British defence outlays in the North American colonies and how this, in turn, eventually led to the establishment of a federation of these provinces. It relates British uneasiness about an American attack on Canada, the separatist agitation of the Little Englanders, and the investigations of parliamentary and government committees whose recommendations contributed in no small way to the government's decision to withdraw the garrisons from the self-governing colonies. The effect of this decision on the Colonial Office and the reactions of the Canadians when informed of this brute fact are also dealt with. In addition, this chapter attempts to demonstrate that the Mother Country insisted on Confederation, despite opposition from Nova Scotia and New Brunswick, because she hoped the scheme would at once relieve her of the traditional

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British defence role in America, thus allowing her to withdraw the regular garrisons and reduce very considerably her annual defence expenditures in the North American provinces.

Chapter five considers defence as one of the primary motives of the colonial statesmen in effecting Confederation. It contends that their first purpose was to unite against a possible re-awakening of American continentalism. Their numerous arguments for Confederation or annexation are used to support this contention. The redoubled activity of the Canadians to promote Confederation once Britain made known its intention to withdraw her regular forces from the province is given as further evidence. The construction of the Intercolonial Railway and its inseparable connection with Confederation are treated briefly.

Finally, the conclusions of this thesis and an annotated bibliography follow in this respective order.

CHAPTER I

A HISTORICAL SURVEY¹

A summary sketch of the military history of the British North American colonies from the end of the war with the United States in 1814 to Confederation in 1867 must place particular emphasis on expenditure for the construction of defence works, the maintenance of British garrisons, and the gradual establishment of the permanent militia in Canada in the light of the events which took place in the United States during this period in which the British policy regarding the defence of her North American colonies was formulated.

A significant factor made evident by the war of 1812 was the direct bearing which the control of the bordering lakes had upon the land operations. The continuing competition for the strongest fleet on the lakes was stopped by the Rush-Bagot Convention of 1817. This convention limited the respective naval forces to one vessel on Lake Champlain, one vessel on Lake Ontario and two vessels on the upper

¹ The information for this chapter is taken from the following writings: G.F. Stanley, Canada's Soldiers 1604-1954, The Military History of an Unmilitary People, Toronto, Macmillan, 1954, Chapters XI and XIII; C.P. Stacey, Canada and the British Army 1846-1871, A Study in the Practice of Responsible Government, Imperial Studies No. 11, London, Longmans, Green, 1936, Chapters I, II, IV-VIII.

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lakes. These vessels were not to exceed 100 tons each with armament not in excess of one eighteen pounder gun. The agreement also stipulated that no new warships were to be constructed on the lakes. From the viewpoint of Canadian defence, such an arrangement might have been disastrous. By depriving Canada of the protection of a strong naval force on the lakes it would favour the Americans, superior in physical force and resources, to strike a deadly blow at any point along the Canadian frontier. However, anxious to lighten the burden of her defence expenditures and fearing that the Americans would not long tolerate British supremacy on the lakes, Great Britain felt that in the end a seagoing fleet would be a sounder investment.

What the British Government saved by restricting its naval construction programme, it promptly spent plugging the gaps along the land frontier. The British military authorities believed that British North America could be successfully defended against an invasion from the United States by the construction of fixed defences able to withstand an attack long enough to permit the despatch of regular troops from the United Kingdom.

In 1825 the Duke of Wellington sent out a commission under Sir James Carmichael Smythe of the Royal Engineers to examine the problem of Canadian defence. As a result of Smythe's recommendations, new defence installations were

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constructed at Halifax and Kingston, while others, on which construction had started previously, were completed at Quebec and in the Montreal area. To assure the maintenance of communications between Kingston and Montreal in the event of hostilities, the Rideau Canal connecting the Rideau and Cataraqui rivers was constructed by the Royal Engineers under the command of Lieutenant-Colonel John By. Between 1819 and 1846, the British Government expended a good deal more than £1,100,000 in its North American colonies on the construction of fortifications and defence projects alone. As a result, they were more defensible than at any previous time despite the economies realized by the surrender of British naval supremacy on the lakes. The citadels at Halifax and Quebec and the fort at Kingston, all built at the expense of the British taxpayer, gave the colonies three major defence installations from which an American attack could be resisted.

This enormous expenditure on military installations was not all the British taxpayer had to bear with regard to the defence of British North America. Following the American Revolution, British garrisons of considerable strength were maintained in the colonies. These forces were meant primarily to defend the British colonies in the event of an invasion from the United States. The war of 1812 brought no fundamental change in this respect. It is true that as soon

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as peace had been established, the strength of the regular garrisons was reduced to that required for manning the forts and local defence installations, but the armed rebellion of 1837 showed the inadequacy of the regular forces which had to be supplemented by a large number of corps raised from the local militia. The call-up of these corps was largely responsible for the heavy outlay that the British Parliament voted between the years 1838 and 1841. Added to this was the cost of transporting and maintaining a large number of regulars sent out shortly after the outbreak of the rebellion. By 1838 the garrisons stationed in British North America had almost tripled.

The reinforcement of British North America was fated to last throughout the Maine-New Brunswick boundary dispute. With the conclusion of the Webster-Ashburton Treaty of 1842, Britain took advantage of the brief interlude between crises to reduce her garrisons in the colonies by more than a third. When the Oregon territory dispute three years later provided a similar crisis, the British again took precautionary measures. Orders were given for the construction of vessels for the lakes which could be used as gunboats, and steps were taken to strengthen the defences at Kingston. In 1846 the civil office of the Governor-in-Chief of British North America and the military office of Commander of the Forces were united in the person of Lord Cathcart. In addition, a detachment of 350 soldiers was sent by way of Hudson Bay to

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Fort Garry, where it remained from 1846 to 1848. During this emergency no reduction of the regular force took place.

In 1849 a number of minor measures were taken to reduce the cost of the Canadian military establishment, including the disbandment of the last of the local forces raised for the rebellion. Further economy measures in 1851-1852 reduced the effective strength of the regulars and led to the abandonment of eight minor stations at which garrisons had been located.

Great Britain became involved in the Crimean War with Russia in March 1854 and was, in consequence, obliged to withdraw still more of her garrisons from British North America. The remaining troops in Canada were left at Kingston, Montreal and Quebec, while all the other stations were vacated for reasons of economy.

In 1855, the British Government's attempts to obtain recruits in the United States to augment her depleted forces in the Crimea once again threatened hostilities between the two countries. By the following year, however, the war in Europe was over and the British Government was able to send reinforcements to aid in the event of hostilities in North America.

After this incident, comparatively peaceful relations existed between Britain and the United States until the Civil War of 1861. British recognition of the belligerency of the

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seceding Southern Confederacy enflamed and alienated the Northern States, creating an atmosphere which contributed to the Trent Affair of November 1861². The start of the Civil War found the regulars in British North America greatly depleted in numbers, which had become usual during a period of tranquility. The Mother Country, however, was quick to react to the threat. Although war was averted, in the spring of 1862 Britain increased her forces to 18,000 regulars. This increase marked the highest number of regulars stationed in America since the war of 1812. With the end of the fighting in 1865, the easing of tensions and the new threat of war in Europe, the garrisons were once more reduced, only to be augmented again during the Fenian crisis in 1866. The lingering Fenian threats permitted little reduction until 1869, when the number was cut from 16,185 to 6,249. Not before 1871 was a complete withdrawal effected from the interior of the country, leaving only small garrisons attached to the Royal Navy bases at Halifax and Esquimalt.

2 The Trent incident occurred when Captain Wilkes in command of the Union sloop San Jacinto encountered the British Mail Steamer Trent on the high seas and forcefully removed two Confederate statesmen, James M. Mason and John Slidell, who were on the way to Europe to secure recognition of the Southern Confederacy.

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To trace the development of the volunteer forces in the colonies, it is necessary to go back to the war with the United States in 1812. Shortly after the Treaty of Ghent in December 1814 most of the militia regiments were disbanded, but their general organization was retained on paper. This was a return to the old Sedentary Militia system of providing a force organized into battalions, each to be available to defend its own immediate area against attack. These battalions coincided with the political subdivisions of each province and were used only for mobilization and not for tactical purposes. Beyond a cadre of untrained officers, they possessed nothing which could enable them to take the field as fighting units. The one commendable feature was that it cost the Canadian taxpayer practically nothing beyond the upkeep of a small administrative staff. Often the annual musters degenerated into drunken and disorderly gatherings, and, almost inevitably, compulsory militia training came to be regarded with contempt rather than as an honourable duty. The 426 battalions, at the time of union of the Canadas, were of little military value; their formidable paper strength of 235,000 men was conducive to a complacent and erroneous sense of security.

The changes made in the militia organization in 1829 were of small consequence. The new regulations required nothing more than the annual muster of active units, men

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between the ages of 18 and 40, whereas the reserve units, consisting of men aged 40 to 60, were excused altogether. In 1846, a new Militia Act was passed to harmonize the militia laws of the two old provinces; in reality it was but a repetition of the former Upper Canada Act. It retained the active and reserve divisions, but renamed them the First and Second Class Militia respectively. The Act also provided for an "active" quota up to 30,000 which was to be drawn from the militia by volunteer enlistment or by ballot if the quota was not filled. It also empowered the governor to authorize the formation of other units without, however, committing the government to any issue of arms and equipment or the responsibility for training. This was the first official recognition given the volunteer principle by the Canadian authorities.

In the years that followed the Act of 1846, the organization of the militia remained relatively unchanged until the withdrawal of a large number of British troops for the Crimean War compelled Canada to look to the improvement of her own forces. In February 1855, a commission of three Canadians and one Imperial officer was appointed by the Provincial Ministers to examine the best means of reorganizing the militia of Canada and of providing an economical means of defence. The commission suggested a comprehensive plan for the improvement of the local forces. Accordingly, a bill embodying its recommendations was passed by the Canadian

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Legislature, but only after a heated debate. The bill retained the Sedentary Militia with universal military service, the classifications of the Act of 1846, and divided the country into eighteen military districts with regimental and battalion subdistricts to facilitate mobilization. For the administration of this force it provided for a paid staff comprising an Adjutant-General (a colonel) and two Deputy Adjutant-Generals (lieutenant-colonels), one for Canada East and one for Canada West.

The principal innovation of the scheme was the section which specified an Active Militia not to exceed 5,000 officers and men, to be made up of a separate force of volunteers differing from the old body in that they would be uniformed, armed, trained and immediately available for sudden emergencies. The commission recommended, as well, that special pains should be taken to ensure up-to-date and complete enrolment of the Sedentary Militia. The expense of the whole scheme amounted to only £25,145, of which £10,000 was for the purchase of arms, accoutrements and ammunition. This was a meagre sum compared to £280,312 incurred the same year by the Mother Country for its military establishment in Canada.

During the summer the volunteer militia made substantial progress in its organization and training. It enjoyed tremendous popularity as the military enthusiasm engendered by the Crimean War attracted thousands of recruits.

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Owing to this success, the Government amended the Militia Act the following year to authorize the formation of additional, but unpaid, volunteer units. This programme was clearly designed to provide a substitute for the British regulars sent to the Crimea and, in effect, represented the first step towards an independent defence organization in Canada.

A year later crop failures and recession of commercial activity brought on one of the severest periods of financial depression that the country had ever experienced. Every class and interest was eventually affected. This condition was soon reflected in the Government's attitude towards existing defence expenditures. The Militia Act of 1859 reduced the appropriation for the militia from \$102,968 in the previous year to \$69,430 and abolished the office of Adjutant-General, to be revived only in an emergency. It also reduced the authorized strength of the paid force, cut the annual drill period practically in half, and curtailed the amount of money allotted for the payroll of each unit. Its sole constructive contribution was to make the militia permanent and retain the volunteer principle.

Following the Trent Affair when military interest in the province again reached the height of enthusiasm, arrangements were made by the Government to call out 38,000 Sedentary Militia and to substantially increase the number of volunteers. At the same time, the first provincial portfolio

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of defence was created, with John A. Macdonald, Attorney General for Canada West, being designated Minister of Militia Affairs. He was immediately named to head a commission appointed to examine the state of the country's defences.

In May 1862, the new Minister of Militia Affairs introduced a bill in the Legislature based on the commission's recommendations which included an active volunteer force enlarged to 50,000 men, a reserve of the same number, a strong body of regulars and a gunboat flotilla on the lakes. The total cost for this scheme was estimated at \$1,100,000, or about one tenth of the provincial revenue. The bill was defeated after the second reading on May 20, and the Government resigned. Under the succeeding administration, headed by John Sanfield Macdonald and Louis Victor Sicotte, the Militia Act of 1859 was amended to increase the paid volunteer force to 10,000 officers and men and to give the Governor-General, as Commander-in-Chief, authority to increase the unpaid force as might be expedient. The appropriation for the militia was increased to \$250,000 which was over three times the amount of the previous year. Despite these efforts, by the end of 1862 Canada, facing embroilment in the Civil War, had 18,000 officers and men in its volunteer units, its only effective force and a token compared to the large forces employed in the United States.

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By July 1863, it was fairly certain that the Confederate Armies would ultimately be defeated. This so alarmed the Canadian Ministry that, when they met Parliament one month later, Sanfield Macdonald's Government, finally heeding the Governor-General's advice of the previous December, put through an improved code of militia legislation embodied in two Acts.

The first of the Acts improved the method of mobilizing men on the rolls of the Sedentary Militia by organizing a number of service battalions of ten companies each, made up of men selected by ballot, which were subject to drill for a period of six days. These battalions, known as the "Service Militia", were to be officered by men who had qualified at schools of military instruction, also established by the Act. The second Act gave authority to increase the volunteer force up to 35,000. The Supply Act of the same session provided \$583,000 for the purpose of carrying out these measures.

Within a year creditable progress was made. The Service Militia increased to a strength of 88,000 while the volunteer force, aided by parliamentary authorization to pay non-commissioned officers and men, gradually increased in numbers and efficiency. During the summer of 1864 the effective strength reached 21,700, and when the St. Albans raid fomented a crisis later in the year 2,000 of these

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volunteers were called out to man the frontier to prevent similar occurrences in the future. Two military schools which were opened in March proved so popular that, in the succeeding year, the Government decided to appropriate funds for four additional schools.

The uneasiness that prevailed throughout the provinces as a result of the American Civil War also prompted the Maritime Provinces to develop their defence forces. In 1863, Nova Scotia initiated an annual five-day training period for its entire militia force. They were, however, neither armed nor uniformed, making the organization economical but hardly effective. New Brunswick and Prince Edward Island concentrated most of their efforts on the training of their volunteer forces. At a somewhat later date Prince Edward Island also called out its entire militia force for training in the Nova Scotian fashion.

The increase of Fenian activity south of the border caused further anxiety throughout the colonies. For this emergency, large companies of the volunteer militia were called out in Canada during the fall of 1865, and again in March of 1866, while the force itself was ordered to be increased to 25,000. In New Brunswick the mustering of the local militia, along with the presence of British ships-of-war and the prompt intervention of the American authorities, prevented the Fenians from achieving anything. The actual

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raids into Canada East and on the Niagara frontier in Canada West resulted in only temporary successes of short duration. Although the Fenians defeated an outnumbered detached force of volunteers in a brief encounter near Fort Erie, this exploit ended in failure with their withdrawal across the Niagara River to Buffalo under cover of darkness. The raid into Canadian territory at Pigeon Hill, in Canada East, also brought insignificant results for the Fenians. Their disintegrating force of 1,800 had to withdraw to the safety of the Vermont side when their reinforcements of arms and ammunition were seized by American authorities at St. Albans.

The loss of life and blood caused by the Fenian raids alarmed the countryside and drove home the realization that the time had come for greater efforts on the part of every citizen to assist in stronger local defence preparations. This factor increased the enlistments which swelled the volunteer force to 33,750 by the end of 1867. In New Brunswick the Fenian menace did much to swing public opinion in favour of federation. In Canada, Parliament answered the Fenian attacks with an appropriation of \$1,897,085 for defence purposes, out of a total budget of \$7,000,000.

CHAPTER II

THE THREAT FROM THE SOUTH

To understand the forces that gave birth to Confederation, it is necessary to examine the "when" and "why" of the threat to the British North American colonies and to explain its development. In an attempt to cast some light in this direction, this chapter will deal with both the official annexation efforts of the United States and those carried out separately by its citizenry. Part of the material under this heading is devoted to the intermittent crises which always appeared loaded with the potentiality of erupting into full-scale war.

The first threat from the United States to the old Canadian province accompanied the American fight for independence. The next attack came in 1812 and, although again unsuccessful, memories of it in later years served to augment the fears of the British colonies and their Mother Country as well. The danger became more pronounced with the development of the United States to a stage where it was able to muster and support larger armed forces. The recurring crises in the years prior to Confederation made the British provinces keenly aware of this threat from the South.

The underlying reason behind the threat to the British colonies was the American suspicion that the English

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might use Canada as a base from which to destroy the new Republic. This fear was somewhat unwarranted since they had just won their fight for independence. Nevertheless, the solution for the Americans, after the original attempt to lure Canada into the new Republic had failed¹, was to rid North America of all British domination, and the first step to accomplishing this intention was to drive the English from Canada.

In carrying out this quest, the United States made no distinction between Britain and her colonies in North America. There were two reasons for this attitude. First, the Americans never overcame the notion that the colonists, especially the Canadians, lived under British oppression. When they invaded Canada in 1812, they expected the inhabitants to

¹ James Brown Scott, ed., Judicial Settlement of Controversies between States of the American Union, Cases Decided in the Supreme Court of the United States, Vol. 1, New York, Oxford, 1918, p. xxvi. The Continental Congress, in Article XI of the Articles of Confederation, offered Canada more generous conditions to join the Union than it was willing to extend to any other colony. Article XI read as follows:

Canada, acceding to this confederation, and joining in the measures of the United States, shall be admitted into, and entitled to all the advantages of this Union: but no other colony shall be admitted into the same, unless such admission be agreed to by nine States.

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welcome them as liberators², and the rebellions of 1837 were considered by many Americans to be but the second chapter in their own fight for independence³. Second, Canada was the only accessible place for the Americans to attack the British should a conflict break out, an eventuality which most Americans believed was inevitable. In fact, when war did come, it was declared against Britain but waged against Canada.

There is some significance in that an invitation from the Continental Congress to join the American Federation was limited to Canada, whereas Benjamin Franklin had originally suggested the annexation of several other British colonies in North America⁴. This inducement is even more remarkable in that Canada's French population was completely foreign to that of the United States, while Nova Scotians were akin to their neighbours in New England. The close proximity of the province of Quebec to the new Republic, with no greater obstacle than the St. Lawrence river separating the two, caused the United States to live in fear of a British attack from this

2 A.L. Burt, The United States, Great Britain and British North America, From the Revolution to the Establishment of Peace after the War of 1812, Toronto, Ryerson Press, 1940, p. 326-27.

3 Thomas A. Bailey, A Diplomatic History of the American People, New York, Appleton, 5th ed., 1955, p. 204.

4 Julius W. Pratt, Expansionists of 1812, Gloucester, Mass., Peter Smith, 1957, p. 17-18, cited from Writings of Benjamin Franklin, VI, 352-4.

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quarter. Nova Scotia, on the other hand, did not pose such a threat. The arm of sea separating the maritime province from the mainland of the United States at once reduced the menace from the former and made it virtually impossible of capture by the latter⁵. Besides being almost completely waterbound, it enjoyed the protection of the mighty British navy. To some extent New Brunswick, with its miles of coastline and remote interior, enjoyed similar security. This isolated safety soon vanished, however, when its colonization met with that of the state of Maine. The subsequent boundary dispute, resolved in 1842, caused numerous incidents in the area and created a crisis that edged on war⁶. Later the Fenian raids again emphasized the vulnerability of the province to attack from United States soil⁷. British indifference to Canada as compared to Newfoundland and the Maritimes, which were more accessible to British navigation and consequently of greater commercial value, let alone their strategic importance to the British navy, further explains why Americans instinctively

5 A.L. Burt, Op. Cit., p. 15.

6 D. Lowenthal, "The Maine Press and the Aroostook War", Canadian Historical Review, Vol. 32, December 1951, p. 315-18.

7 H.A. Davis, "The Fenian Raid on New Brunswick", Canadian Historical Review, Vol. 36, December 1955, p. 325-28.

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leaned towards the former but ignored the latter⁸.

There were several good reasons for American suspicion of British intentions. The questions that remained unsettled after 1783 caused numerous grievances and eventually led to the outbreak of war in 1812. They arose primarily from: the differences on commercial trade and the exclusive British mercantile system; the difficulties encountered by American shipping interests as a result of the British orders-in-council and the French decrees issued during the Napoleonic wars; the impressment of seamen from American ships on the high seas by the British navy; and the Indian menace at home.

Immediately after the end of the revolution, the new Republic found itself deprived of the trade advantages it had enjoyed as a British colony. To compensate for this loss, it sought a reciprocal trade agreement with its former Mother Country. But the Mother Country was in no mood to reinstate former trade privileges to its defected colony. While a degree of reconciliation was attained by John Jay's treaty of 1795, the continuance of Britain's exclusive mercantile system irritated United States shipping interests no end⁹.

⁸ Gerald S. Graham, Sea Power and British North America 1783-1820, A Study in British Colonial Policy, Cambridge, Mass., Harvard University Press, 1941, p. 74-75.

⁹ Ibid., p. 152.

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As Canada was caught between the United States and Britain, so the United States was squeezed between Britain and France. The double blockade during the Napoleonic wars resulted in the loss of a profitable colonial trade to American merchants and shippers¹⁰, and, when the American Government's plan to play one off against the other ran afoul, it led to the deterioration of relations with Great Britain and became one of the main factors contributing to the war of 1812.

The impressment issue came to the fore almost immediately after the American independence. By 1807 it had become an intolerable issue. The Chesapeake incident¹¹ and later the Little Belt encounter¹² were to follow as a direct consequence of this state of affairs.

10 E. Smith, England and America after Independence, Westminster, Archibald Constable, 1900, p. 136.

11 The Chesapeake was an American frigate which, after an encounter with His Majesty's frigate Leopard, was boarded for the removal of four seamen who had deserted from the British Navy.

12 The Little Belt incident occurred in May 1811 when the U.S. frigate President, in search of the British frigate Guerriere which had allegedly impressed a British seaman from an American merchant ship, met the British sloop-of-war Little Belt at dusk without being able to distinguish what ship it was. In an exchange of broadsides, the President, carrying the heavier armour, inflicted heavy damage on the Little Belt and almost wholly disabled her with thirty-two men dead or wounded.

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Besides the difficulties that arose from American and British differences on the high seas, there was one issue that had its origin on the North American continent. This was the constant Indian menace that threatened the inhabitants in the outlying areas of the Republic which bordered on the Indian lands. The Americans always looked upon any plotting by the vanquished tribes as having the hand of the British behind it¹³. Ironically enough the British governors, while trying to maintain friendly relations with the Indian tribes whose help they hoped to enlist if war broke out with the United States, actually discouraged separate hostilities on the American frontier in the northwest¹⁴. Nevertheless, when the Indians were discovered with newly-marked British weapons, which presumably found their way to the northwest via Canada, American cries were heard for the removal of the red peril through annexation of Canada¹⁵.

The first annexation attempts developed into a pattern of peaceful advances followed by an all-out attack or vice versa. When the Canadians ignored the invitation of the Continental Congress, the armies of the new Republic marched

13 A.L. Burt, Op. Cit., p. 243-44.

14 Ibid., p. 303.

15 Ibid., p. 309, and T.A. Bailey, Op. Cit., p. 130-33. When President Jefferson's declaration of war was read to Congress, a short paragraph was inserted referring to the hostility of the savages and their intercourse with the British.

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into Canada, captured Montreal and laid siege to the City of Quebec. The failure of this expedition made no dent on American designs which persisted beyond the point of frustration on the battlefield. During the peace negotiations at Paris in 1782, the American Commissioner, Benjamin Franklin, suggested that Britain cede Canada to the United States in order to soothe the bitterness created by the war and to prevent future friction. Surprisingly enough, although Mr. Charles Fox, the British Foreign Secretary, was startled by the proposition, the two successive British Prime Ministers, Lord Rockingham and Lord Shelburne, showed little aversion to the idea¹⁶. It is small wonder, in the face of this apparent lassitude, that American statesmen continued to agitate for the annexation of Canada. A similar attitude was to prevail at the conclusion of the Peace Treaty in 1814. James Monroe, the United States Secretary of State, instructed the American Commissioners at the peace conference in Ghent to suggest that Britain should give up Canada as this was a severance that could not be long postponed¹⁷. Although this suggestion was set aside, John Quincy Adams, one of the Commissioners and a future President of the United States, urged his fellow colleagues to inform the British at the conference table of Monroe's wishes. Adams

16 T.A. Bailey, Ibid., p. 27-28.

17 A.L. Burt, Op. Cit., p. 346-47.

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held that the cession of Canada would be of interest to both Great Britain and the United States¹⁸. The desire to take Canada from the British and the belief that, if free from restraint, Canadians would join the United States of their own free will, was rampant in the decade leading to the war of 1812. Thomas Jefferson, when he was President of the United States, also believed that Canada wanted to enter the Union and, during the excitement that followed the Chesapeake affair, he is reported to have told the French Minister that his country would take Canada unless the British provided the satisfaction demanded. Jefferson, like his predecessors, felt that annexation was the only way of avoiding future difficulties with the British in Canada¹⁹.

If the war of 1812-14 from which the United States gained no Canadian territory marked the end of official American designs on Canada, (apart from Seward's suggestions prior

18 E. Smith, Op. Cit., p. 212, cited from Diary of John Quincy Adams, iii, p. 51.

19 A.L. Burt, Op. Cit., p. 243-44.

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to the Civil War²⁰), it did not put an end to the annexation threat. This mania remained with the populace and, at times, was exploited by politicians who found it expedient to agitate for the absorption of British territory whenever a crisis threatened the peace in North America.

These annexation sentiments largely exhibited themselves when the rebellion broke out in Upper and Lower Canadas in 1837. The attitude in the United States was such that it wished success to the insurgents. In the bordering areas the people, belonging in the majority to the ignorant masses, displayed an active and open sympathy for the Canadian rebel cause. They organized meetings where feelings of animosity were heatedly generated into filibustering expeditions²¹. Later, further invasions were organized by secret societies who enlisted in their support fugitive rebels from Canada and large numbers from the sympathetic border population in the

20 J.P. Smith, "American Republic Leadership and the Movement for the Annexation of Canada in the Eighteen-Sixties", the Canadian Historical Association Annual Report, 1935, p. 67, cited from Abraham Lincoln, a History, Vol. III, 445 & ff. During the Presidential campaign, William Seward suggested the annexation of Canada as compensation for any loss which might be occasioned by the defection of the South. Within a month after he was made Secretary of State in Lincoln's new government, he recommended that the disruptive forces in the United States could be stayed by pursuing a programme of expansion in North and Central America.

21 Albert B. Corey, The Crisis of 1830-1842 in Canadian American Relations, The Relations of Canada and the United States, New Haven, Yale University Press, 1941, p. 28-34.

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United States²². These societies organized armed bands to carry out attacks on Canadian territory. At the back of it all was the enduring American illusion that the inhabitants of the British North American colonies were the victims of British tyranny. It is, therefore, not surprising that these societies expected the local population to accept them as liberators. When their hopes went unfulfilled, they resorted to sending over small marauding parties which burned and destroyed property in the hope that retaliation from Canada would force Great Britain and the United States into a war which would ultimately result in annexation²³.

Annexation sentiments again bubbled to the surface during the Fenian menace. It was fairly evident that, by and large, the people of the United States supported the Fenian cause. In 1866, a report of the Canadian Executive Council described the movement as a formidable organization, dangerous not only because of the actual strength of numbers and the termination of the Civil War, which had left an enormous mass of men unemployed who would be apt to rush into Canada for the purpose of plunder and conquest if a Fenian attack were made on British soil, but more particularly because of the tacit support and encouragement it received from large sections of

22 Ibid., p. 70.

23 Ibid., p. 81, cited from Montreal Gazette, December 18, 1838.

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the citizens of the United States²⁴.

The danger, however, was not only from the annexation cries. An even greater menace lay in the possibility that these latent sentiments, which had a habit of flaring up during a crisis, would force the Government into an all-out war, the consequences of which were all too apparent. The Maine border dispute, enflamed by local sentiment, brought New Brunswick and the State of Maine to the brink of war²⁵. During the Oregon boundary controversy, the cry of "Manifest Destiny" and "Fifty-four-forty-or-Fight" became a plank in the platform of the Democratic Party when it nominated James K. Polk as its presidential candidate, and subsequently added to the difficulties surrounding the dispute²⁶. The recurring crises during the Civil War, charged as they were by public animosity, would almost certainly have provoked a conflict had the North not been so completely occupied with the armies of the South.

One of the earliest and most serious crises, which had its roots in the British recognition of the belligerency of the South, was caused by the Trent Affair. War perhaps

²⁴ Lester Burrell Shippe, Canadian-American Relations 1849-1874, Toronto, Ryerson Press, 1939, p. 221-22.

²⁵ D. Lowenthal, Op. Cit., p. 318-28.

²⁶ P.E. Corbett, The Settlement of Canadian-American Disputes, A Critical Study of Methods and Results, Toronto, Ryerson Press, 1937, p. 15-16.

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was averted due to the malfunction of the Atlantic cable, laid three years previously, which delayed the arrival of the news of the North's jubilation until after the British ultimatum was despatched. In the same way, it retarded receipt of the note in the United States long enough to allow Northern animosity to cool down²⁷. In the succeeding years of the war, several alarms were caused by the series of hostile criminal acts launched upon the Union by Confederate agents from Canadian soil in complete violation of Canada's neutrality laws. The St. Albans raid, with the subsequent release of the prisoners by Canadian Magistrate Coursol of Montreal²⁸, infuriated the United States and, for a time, endangered its friendly relations with Canada. In the words of Sir John A. Macdonald, "Coursol's abominable conduct set all the U.S. ablaze"²⁹.

27 T.A. Bailey, Op. Cit., p. 354-55.

28 A band of twenty-five men, claiming to be under the direct authority of the Confederate War Department, crossed the Canadian border on October 19, 1864, and plundered the village of St. Albans in Vermont in reprisal for the depredations of General Sheridan in the Shenandoah Valley. They were pursued by citizens of St. Albans across the border where Canadian authorities apprehended and arrested thirteen of them. Their extradition was delayed by legal process and, consequently, Seward charged the Canadian Government with remissness. To add to the complexity of the affair, the prisoners were set free in Montreal on the technicality that their warrants were not signed by the Governor-General. Most of them were re-arrested in New Brunswick, but were released again when the verdict at their trial concluded that they had been exercising belligerent rights during the raid.

29 E.M. Saunders, ed., Life and Letters of the Rt. Hon. Sir Charles Tupper, Vol. 1, London, Cassel, 1916, p. 112.

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It is not hard to appreciate the magnitude of the danger that accompanied these crises as the United States was a nation superior both in manpower and in resources, and its threat was made even more hostile by the emotionally charged outcries of the public. Had the victorious North attacked with its large armies accumulated during the Civil War, it would have been virtually impossible for the colonists, even with considerable British help, to stop its invasion.

The danger was further accentuated by American behaviour which, on occasions, aroused both British and colonial indignation. Among these incidents was the apprehension of James McLeod by the New York State authorities for his alleged part in the sinking of the Caroline³⁰. The situation was made still more difficult by the complex American Constitution which accorded entire jurisdiction to the State of New York and left the federal government powerless. British anxiety over this arrest caused its government to make certain minor naval and military preparations³¹ and induced Palmerston, the British Foreign Secretary, to urge President Van Buren through

30 A.B. Corey, Op. Cit., p. 36. The steamboat Caroline was chartered by Mackenzie to bring supplies from the United States shore to his band of patriots on Navy Island. However, before the ship could be utilized, a band of Canadian armed men destroyed her in American waters. The violation of American territory aroused strong feeling in Washington and led to the exchange of notes between the United States and Great Britain.

31 Ibid., p. 145.

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the United States Ambassador in London to use all his power for the release of McLeod. Fortunately, McLeod was subsequently acquitted. Had he been convicted, the British people might very well have forced the Imperial Government to preserve British honour by war. Another incident which aroused Canadian ire happened during the Civil War. In the latter part of the conflict, recruiting agents from the North made serious efforts to enrol British subjects from the large source of manpower available in the neighbouring colonies. This recruiting was pursued so zealously that on numerous occasions it involved the use of force. Consequently, when these victims deserted the ranks at the first opportunity, they often found the United States Military Police in hot pursuit, sometimes as far as their homes in Canadian territory³². Fortunately, the end of the war was not too far distant and this problem did not develop to the proportion of a crisis. Nonetheless, the abuses that occurred caused a decided degree of irritation in Canada.

Another element adding to the threat was the passive attitude taken by American officials towards stopping within their own borders activities that threatened alike the neighbouring British territory and the well being of its inhabitants. In the early days of the Canadian rebellions, American

32 L.B. Shippe, Op. Cit., p. 116-17.

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authorities found their hands tied by the limitations of their Neutrality Act³³ which - along with political considerations - stalled government initiative to quell patriot activities in the areas adjacent to the Canadian provinces. In his equivocal message to Congress, President Van Buren lent some support to the sympathizers of the rebel cause³⁴. A similar attitude was evident during the Fenian menace. In an interview with a correspondent of the London Times, President Johnson indicated that his government was determined to put down any overt act or enterprise on land or sea but, because of difficulties in its internal policy, it was desirous of avoiding, if possible, any collision with the popular sentiment of the Irish masses³⁵. It was this selfish political dexterity which aroused D'Arcy McGee³⁶ - one of the foremost Fathers of Confederation - and substantiated his warnings during the Confederation debates that the colonies cannot go on as they are but must unite and

33 A.B. Corey, Op. Cit., p. 44. The United States Neutrality Act of 1818 was, in the main, only penal and could not be used as an instrument to stop any activities sympathetic to the Canadian rebels.

34 Ibid., p. 46 and 88. In the same breath in which he warned the country that filibustering might lead to war, he admitted the propriety for American citizens to express sympathy for Canadians in their struggle for freedom. James Buchanan, the British Consul in New York, wrote to Palmerston on January 31, 1839, that he believed the President found it necessary to take positive measures to secure his re-election.

35 L.B. Shippe, Op. Cit., p. 223.

36 Isabel Skelton, The Life of Thomas D'Arcy McGee, Gardenville, Que., Garden City, 1925, p. 441-42.

provide for their own security³⁷.

The Confederation of the British North American colonies in 1867 brought to an end two eras of annexation threats from the United States. The friendly and coercive efforts that accompanied the birth of the American Republic had initiated the first. The struggle subsided for a time, vigorously erupted again with the war of 1812, then declined and ended with the Rush-Bagot Convention in 1817. The second, which consisted of less violent spasms, began with the Canadian rebellions in 1837 and terminated with the Confederation of the British provinces. Apart from minor territorial gains the Americans may have acquired from the Maine and Oregon settlements, the status quo of 1783 was left undisturbed. However, the numerous crises which marked the second era considerably strained relations on both sides, and it is a credit to the spirit of conciliation of Imperial and American statesmen alike that the difficulties were resolved and war averted.

However, the tensions that surrounded the recurring incidents and disputes in the years prior to Confederation did not abate without leaving a discernible fear of the United States amongst the inhabitants of the provinces. As they viewed the tremendous expansion and developments south of the

³⁷ Parliamentary Debates on the Subject of Confederation of the British North American Provinces, 3rd Session, 8th Provincial Parliament of Canada, Quebec, Hunter, p. 128-29 & 131.

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border, they could not help but visualize the consequences that faced the country if it became involved in a conflict with their gigantic neighbour.

CHAPTER III

ANNEXATION FEARS AND DEFENCE

The recurrent threats to their safety made the colonies realize that assuming a greater share of their local defence responsibility was necessary for their own security. This realization was given added impetus by increasing British reluctance to continue the garrisoning of her troops in North America - a factor that played a deciding role in the eventual achievement of Confederation. This chapter will deal with the Canadian and, to a lesser extent, the Maritime reactions to these American threats in the face of this British pressure, with particular emphasis on the political events that led to the acceptance in principle of a greater degree of colonial self-reliance.

Despite a tendency to be complacent as a result of their traditional dependence on the Mother Country, the legacy of latent fear and anxiety left by the United States was quick to manifest itself in the British American provinces at times of tension along the borders. Any crisis usually had an alarming effect on the provincial populations of Canada and New Brunswick situated as they were in the geographical area paralleling the American frontier. This contiguity bred a certain distrust, particularly in the province of Canada, of even such a favourable American gesture as the Reciprocity

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Treaty. Indeed, isolation from the immediate threat along the frontier was considered a most desirable attribute. It became one of the principal factors in the selection of a capital city for the province in 1857. In its petition to Queen Victoria for this honour, the City of Quebec referred at length to its remoteness from the American frontier¹. When Ottawa was eventually selected, prime consideration was given to its distance from the American border². The unmistakable fears of an invasion from the United States, prevalent between the patriot threats in 1838 and the settlement of the Oregon boundary dispute in 1846, again became evident during the series of grave crises that developed in the twelve years preceding Confederation. This apprehension was apparent on numerous occasions. In fact, the tension during the Civil War reached a level that exceeded the strained relations of 1837-38³.

1 William Wood, ed., "The Petition of the City of Quebec to Queen Victoria in 1857", Canadian Historical Review, Vol. 2, Dec. 1921, p. 366 & 67, dated May 25, 1857, reprinted from a copy of the original sent to Queen Victoria; filed amongst the provincial archives of the Province of Quebec.

2 Lucien Brault, Ottawa, Capitale du Canada de son origine a nos jours, Ottawa, Les Editions de l'Universite D'Ottawa, 1942, p. 149-50. J.A. Gibson, "How Ottawa Became the Capital of Canada", Quarterly Journal of the Ontario Historical Society, Vol. 46, No. 4, 1954, p. 217.

3 Hugh L. Keenleyside and Gerald S. Brown, Canada and the United States, Some Aspects of Their Historical Relations, New York, Knopf, 1952, p. 112.

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Wariness was displayed by the Canadian reluctance to raise a regiment of troops for British service in the Crimea. On this occasion, the Canadians declared that opposition to such a proposal was in part based on their concern with the "large and lawless party" in the United States "which was desirous ... of depriving Great Britain of her North American colonies"⁴; they believed that, in the event of war or the need in the Crimea of the whole military force of the Empire, this party would carry out filibustering raids similar to those of 1838-39⁵. The enlistment crisis and the invasion scare later that year indicated that this anxiety was not without foundation.

Fearful apprehension also swept the province during the Civil War, which produced the possibility that Canada might be in the middle of a conflict between the United States and Great Britain⁶. During the Trent Affair, the Roman Catholic Hierarchy, afraid of an attack and never a great admirer of Americans and their republican institutions, warned its

⁴ C.P. Stacey, Canada and the British Army 1846-1871, A Study in the Practice of Responsible Government, London, Longmans, 1936, p. 95.

⁵ Ibid.

⁶ F. Landon, "The Trent Affair of 1861", Canadian Historical Review, Vol. 3, Ottawa, Mar. 1922, p. 53.

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faithful of the necessity of being prepared for war⁷. Later Canadian regret and alarm accompanied the American termination of the Reciprocity Treaty and the determination to abrogate the Rush-Bagot Convention towards the end of the war⁸. Closing the border after the St. Albans raid to all without passports⁹ caused great inconvenience and aggravated the already strained relations. In addition, the continuous activities and outrageous acts carried out by southern agents and refugees during the war placed British and provincial officials in the impossible position of trying to convince the northern authorities of their innocence in connection with these misdeeds; a task that required the utmost discretion in order to avert open hostilities¹⁰. On the west coast, the danger of the Confederates extending their operations to Vancouver

7 Ibid., p. 54. The administrator of the diocese of Quebec, the Rev. C.F. Baillargeon, issued a pastoral letter urging young men to join the militia and ordering special prayers for the preservation of peace or for the success of the country's armies if war did come. Cited from The Evening Leader, January 4, 1862.

8 Lester Burrell Shippe, Canadian American Relations 1849-1874, Toronto, Ryerson, 1939, p. 133-34.

9 Ibid., p. 123-24.

10 Joseph Pope, The Memoirs of the Right Honourable Sir John Alexander Macdonald, G.C.B., First Prime Minister of the Dominion of Canada, Toronto, Musson, 1894, p. 369.

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Island¹¹ further complicated matters.

The passive manner with which Canadians at first regarded Confederate activities fortunately was eventually displaced by concrete evidence of Canada's good intentions. In an effort to curb Confederate abuses such as the St. Albans raid, an amendment to the Neutrality Act, along with an Alien Bill, were passed by the Legislature with a good majority¹². Furthermore, the Governor-General directed the militia to strategic points on the border to prevent further filibustering raids and, in December of the same year, issued a proclamation against the export of warlike stores and ammunition¹³. To forestall the underground operations of the Confederates, detective and preventative police forces were organized to patrol the frontier and co-operate with the United States authorities¹⁴. These exhaustive efforts proved sufficient to contain American animosity and avoid outright retaliation for the duration of the conflict.

The possibility of American retaliation, however, was not the only thing Canadian authorities feared might

11 Ibid., p. 136-37, cited from Lyons to the Governor of Vancouver Island, April 16, 1863, F.O.5: 882 (P.R.O.). There were reports that the Confederates were planning to outfit privateers for use against the North.

12 L.B. Shippe, Op. Cit., p. 155.

13 Ibid., p. 151 & 157.

14 Ibid., p. 151.

precipitate a war with the United States. Fortunately for Canada, efforts to reconcile the North and the South failed. Had they been successful, the results might have been different, and John A. Macdonald was keenly aware of this possibility. He was afraid that such a reconciliation would bring a renewal of American continental imperialism and, consequently, would almost certainly spell war with England^{15,16} in which Canada would become the battleground. In a letter of March 1865, he mentioned an impending war with the United States and denounced the meagre British appropriation for Canadian defence. He condemned the indiscreet publication of the Jervois report showing the defencelessness of the country which, he stated, caused a panic in Canada West¹⁷. These remarks, coming from the man who as Minister of Militia shared with the Governor-General the responsibility for the defence of the country, could only reflect the concern of the government as a whole.

Another danger which created a marked reaction in the provinces came from the large number of trained men who were

¹⁵ E.M. Saunders, ed., The Life and Letters of the Rt. Hon. Sir Charles Tupper, Vol. 1, London, Cassel, 1916, p. 113, cited from Macdonald to Tupper, Jan. 24, 1865.

¹⁶ Donald Creighton, John A. Macdonald, The Young Politician, Toronto, Macmillan, 1952, p. 410.

¹⁷ J. Pope, The Memoirs of the Right Honourable Sir John Alexander Macdonald, Op. Cit., p. 298, cited from Journals of Leg. Ass., 1865, 2nd Session, p. 8-15.

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discharged from the American armies at the end of the Civil War. An element of the ex-soldiers, being of Irish descent and anti-British sentiment, soon posed a new threat. There is no doubt that Macdonald was seriously concerned with this Fenian menace. In a letter to the Commander of Her Majesty's Forces in Canada, Lieutenant-General Sir John Michel, he described the country as being in a state of semi-war¹⁸. The danger was emphasized by the difficulty the Canadians encountered in getting additional reinforcements from the Mother Country who at the time was herself unable to honour her commitments to Denmark in the Prussian-Austrian war¹⁹. Indeed, the Fenian attacks were viewed with such alarm that, when the Canadian Parliament was summoned in June 1866, two measures were carried through both Houses in such haste as to permit the Governor-General to give his assent only shortly after he had completed the Speech from the Throne. One measure suspended the Habeas Corpus Act for a year, while the other provided for the protection of Lower Canada against further unlawful invasion. These events provide some indication of the gravity with which the Fenian menace was

18 Joseph Pope, Correspondence of Sir John Macdonald, Selections from the Correspondence of the Right Honourable Sir John Alexander Macdonald, G.C.B., First Prime Minister of the Dominion of Canada, Oxford, Toronto, 1921, p. 34.

19 C.P. Stacey, "Britain's Withdrawal from North America 1864-1871", Canadian Historical Review, Vol. 36, Sept. 1955, p. 187 & 90.

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regarded in Canada²⁰.

The Fenian threat was considered no less seriously in the Maritimes. There, the Lieutenant-Governor of New Brunswick urged the local residents along the Maine border to increase the strength of their volunteer units and to organize a home guard²¹. The response, stimulated by rumours of attack, was so good that within three months a force of more than 1,700 men in the home guard augmented a well trained volunteer force²². When an attack became imminent in the spring of 1866, Governor Gordon called for aid from Major General Hastings Doyle at Halifax who responded with a powerful military and naval force²³. The marshalling of this force hundreds of miles from its base bears witness to the impact of the Fenian threat in the Maritimes.

The Fenian menace gave new significance to the Confederation scheme. As a direct consequence, 20,000 volunteers turned out to guard the frontier - a tribute to the patriotism upon which the union was to be founded. In Canada, it

20 J. Pope, The Memoirs of the Right Honourable Sir John Alexander Macdonald, Op. Cit., p. 298.

21 H.A. Davis, "The Fenian Raid on New Brunswick", Canadian Historical Review, Vol. 36, Dec. 1955, p. 318, cited from St. Croix Courier, Dec. 9, 1865.

22 Ibid., p. 321.

23 Ibid., p. 325, cited from Captain Thomas McKenzie, My Life as a Soldier, (Saint John, 1898), 134-42.

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detained Macdonald from going to the London Conference until late in 1866 when winter made Fenian operations impossible²⁴. In New Brunswick, the Fenians frightened the population into supporting the Confederation scheme. Their boast to assist the anti-confederationists increased the feeling to seek safety within a union of the British provinces²⁵. As a consequence, the Tilley Government, overwhelmingly defeated only a year previous, was returned to office with a sweeping victory²⁶. The effect of the raid had been so successful in turning the popular feeling against the anti-confederationists that the latter charged the Canadians with organizing the whole thing as a plot to frighten the Maritimes into the union²⁷. The Fenian threat once more illuminated the necessity to pursue efforts for defence and to push forward the Confederation scheme which embodied such measures.

It is of considerable significance that United States annexation desires came to be one of the prime arguments used in the Canadian Confederation debates of 1865 to support the federation scheme. For the Fathers of Confederation there was

24 D.G. Creighton, Op. Cit., p. 442-43 & 447-48.

25 H.A. Davis, "The Fenian Raid on New Brunswick", Op. Cit., p. 333, cited from New Brunswick Debates of the House of Assembly for 1867, 124-5.

26 Ibid., p. 332.

27 Ibid., p. 333, cited from St. John Weekly Telegraph, Oct. 16, 1895.

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no question but that union was the one alternative to annexation. This opinion was expressed by the Honourable George Etienne Cartier, Attorney General East in the Canadian Confederation Coalition²⁸. His view was unequivocally supported by the Minister of Agriculture and Statistics, the Honourable D'Arcy McGee²⁹. The Premier, the Honourable Pascal Tache, held that, separated, the colonies would little by little slide down an inclined plane into the waiting arms of the American Union³⁰. During the same debate, Mr. J.B. Ross stated that he believed the Americans would attempt to absorb the provinces by introducing coercive measures which would identify the commercial interest of the colonies with that of the United States³¹. This, however, was not the first time that federation had been held up in Canadian government councils as the only alternative to annexation. In 1858 when the Honourable Alexander Galt was Minister of Finance in the Macdonald-Cartier Government, he warned Colonial Secretary Lytton that the future of the British provinces lay either in Confederation or in their ultimate absorption by the United

28 Parliamentary Debates on the Subject of Confederation of the British North American Provinces, 3rd Session, 8th Provincial Parliament of Canada, Hunter and Rose, Parliamentary Printers, Quebec 1865, p. 55.

29 Ibid., p. 131.

30 Ibid., p. 6 & 343.

31 Ibid., p. 802.

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States³². These warnings to a great extent expressed the mounting Canadian concern with the ambitions of their southern neighbour.

The fear which the British provinces had to endure, however, was not only limited to the threat of an attack; encouragement from within their own borders to United States annexation desires also caused a good measure of concern. On the whole, American overtures were alien to the majority of inhabitants of both British and French stock. But when encouragement was forthcoming, it usually emanated from the disgruntled commercial classes - the section which often looked to the United States for the solution to the financial woes that frequently beset the colonies - and from the American settlers who, by their continuous immigration to the provinces, provided an element which was naturally sympathetic to any American cause. This self-interested partiality was openly displayed during the annexation movements of 1849 and 1865. Fortunately, in both instances, comparatively good official relations precluded any significant American response.

The annexation movement of 1849, although primarily of a commercial character, brought out the anti-French bias among the Anglo-Saxon population. The annexation feeling originated and spread in the wake of the depression that

32 Douglas O. Skelton, The Life and Times of Sir Alexander Tilloch Galt, Toronto, Oxford, 1920, p. 252, cited from Galt to Lytton, Nov. 22, 1858.

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followed the British reform bills of 1846. When it erupted as an organized movement after the passage of the Rebellion Losses Bill by the Canadian Legislature in 1849, most of the support came from the inhabitants of eastern Ontario and the Anglo-Saxon minority in western Quebec. Its intensity became apparent with the violent outburst in Montreal that led to the stoning of the Governor-General and the burning of the Parliament Buildings. The enactment of the bill invoked bitterness in the Tory ranks and provoked their leader, Sir Allan McNab, to declare that he would rather join the United States than agree to its passage³³.

While the racial animosity was not without significance, the annexation movement was prompted to a great extent by commercial motives. The repeal of the Corn Laws by the Mother Country - widely believed to be responsible for the depression in 1849 - so enraged the business community that Governor-General Elgin felt compelled to advise the Colonial Secretary of their widespread conviction that the country would be better off if it was annexed to the United States³⁴. The commercial character largely limited the movement to the area along the St. Lawrence where business interests had

33 H.L. Keenlyside and G.S. Brown, Op. Cit., p. 95-96.

34 Cephas D. Allin and George M. Jones, Annexation, Preferential Trade and Reciprocity, Toronto, Musson, 1911, p. 72, cited from Letters and Journals of Lord Elgin, p. 60.

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suffered the most from the depression³⁵. It was no coincidence that this was the area where the Tory fear of French domination was the most keenly felt.

Limited support for the movement was evident almost immediately after the publication of the annexation manifesto in the City of Montreal in 1849. Its opponents lodged a formal protest under the names of all the Ministers of the Crown in Montreal and the French Liberal members of the city and vicinity³⁶. Its unpopularity was further affirmed by the Governor-General in delivering Her Majesty's condemnation of the civil servants who had signed the manifesto³⁷. With the revival of business and the return of prosperity, annexation was dealt a crushing blow and the resentment directed against the British Government came to an end³⁸. One of the chief factors in eventually defeating the annexation movement in Lower Canada was the loyalty of the French population³⁹.

It is interesting to note the parallel between the course of events in Canada and in the Maritime provinces. The ultimate victory of the Reform parties in New Brunswick and Nova Scotia filled the Tories with resentment towards the

35 Ibid., p. 86.

36 Ibid., p. 144-45.

37 Ibid., p. 335.

38 Ibid., p. 353.

39 Ibid., p. 355.

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British Government and provoked utterances of disloyalty. When the repeal of the preferential duty on lumber caused commercial hardship to the merchant community, the cry for annexation to the United States arose. But here, also, renewed prosperity quickly put an end to the combination of economic adversity and political discontent⁴⁰.

The annexation agitation on the eve of Confederation was comparatively less intense than that in 1849. On the whole, it was merely sporadic and came largely from those quarters opposed to the federation scheme. In Canada, a Montreal faction of the Rouges was dissatisfied with the existing political arrangements as well as with the proposed union while, in Nova Scotia, an indeterminate number of the provincial inhabitants under the leadership of Joseph Howe openly deprecated any association with the Canadians. In New Brunswick, the anti-confederationists expressed sentiments in line with the opinions of the Nova Scotia annexationists⁴¹.

The dissatisfaction in Montreal centred around the French Canadians who sought annexation to the United States because they feared the new Confederation would ultimately lead to the extinction of their nationality⁴². The Honourable

⁴⁰ Ibid., p. 361 & 363.

⁴¹ L.B. Shippe, Op. Cit., p. 193.

⁴² Parliamentary Debates on the Subject of Confederation of the British North American Provinces, Op. Cit., p. 56.

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Hector Langevin, the Solicitor General, reduced this mistaken fear to absurdity by reasoned arguments during the Confederation debates. He referred to the United States (which by that time had already absorbed the old French province of Louisiana) and warned his kinsmen that, "after the war hardly a trace will remain to show that the French race has passed that way"⁴³ - a fact only too well substantiated by time. Needless to say, the movement did not attract a large following.

In the Maritimes, the Fenian raids in New Brunswick quickly reversed the spread of any annexation sentiments, but in Nova Scotia the tenacious Howe held up secession and hinted at annexation in an effort to get better terms for his province in the new Confederation⁴⁴. However, Macdonald agreed to make concessions, and Howe, when he began to realize that the British Government would not permit separation and viewed his activities as treasonable, promptly decided to terminate his efforts against the union⁴⁵.

Like the movement in 1849, the annexation unrest in the mid-sixties stemmed in part from the depressed state of

⁴³ Ibid., p. 366.

⁴⁴ D.F. Warner, "The Post Confederation Annexation Movement in Nova Scotia", Canadian Historical Review, Vol. 28, June 1947, p. 157, cited from Howe Papers, Vol. 4, Letters to Howe 1864-1873, Instructions to Howe from the League of the Maritime Provinces, July 5, 1866.

⁴⁵ Ibid., p. 161 & 165.

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the country. The Honourable Alexander Campbell, the Commissioner of Crown Lands in the Confederation Coalition, expressed this opinion when he wrote to Macdonald at the time the latter was attending the London meeting in 1865. In a letter dated Kingston, May 18, 1865, Campbell stated:

... the country is depressed beyond example - and men talk of annexation, who a few months ago would have resented as an insult any imputation of the sentiments they now openly profess⁴⁶.

In the Maritimes the situation had again paralleled that in Canada. A severe depression in 1866, caused by the termination of the Reciprocity Treaty and the prospect of higher tariffs under the new Dominion, contrasted sharply with the post-war boom in the neighbouring United States⁴⁷. However, annexation agitation rapidly declined when its commercial raison d'être disappeared with the return of prosperity⁴⁸.

While the annexation movements endured they could not but cause anxiety among the local inhabitants. They had a tendency to accentuate the differences between the French and English populations, and there was the ever-present possibility that a recurrence of the strife of 1837 would arouse the sympathetic support of the faction in the United States who

⁴⁶ J. Pope, The Correspondence of Sir John Alexander Macdonald, Op. Cit., p. 26.

⁴⁷ D.F. Warner, Op. Cit., p. 158.

⁴⁸ Ibid., p. 165.

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believed that the colonies lived under British oppression and that it was their sacred duty to liberate them from this yoke. The one positive factor of the movements was that they underlined the need of a unity to arrest the drift towards the United States - a point well appreciated by the exponents of Confederation.

Another interesting matter which caused some consternation in Canada was the American motives behind their agreement to the Reciprocity Treaty of 1854. It is now generally agreed that the northern and southern politicians supported reciprocity with Canada for precisely opposite reasons⁴⁹. It is significant that this point was raised during the Confederation debates as an example to underline American annexation designs on Canada. The Honourable J.H. Cameron expressed the opinion that American statesmen agreed to reciprocity to ripen the Canadian pear until it fell into American hands⁵⁰. Mr. Dorion, a private member, on the other hand, felt that southern statesmen supported reciprocity in order to forestall annexation which would have strengthened the influence of the Northern States⁵¹. Such American speculation could not do other than arouse Canadian suspicions of

⁴⁹ Thomas A. Bailey, A Diplomatic History of the American People, 5th ed., Appleton, New York, 1955, p. 297.

⁵⁰ Parliamentary Debates on the Subject of Confederation of the British North American Provinces, Op. Cit., p. 964.

⁵¹ Ibid., p. 866.

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even so beneficial an arrangement as the Reciprocity Treaty; obviously they had not forgotten the decades of difficulty with the United States. Indeed, it was this awareness that was responsible for the significant change of attitude in Canada.

The anxiety that swept the country following the invasion scare in 1855 generated an initiative which marked the turning point in Canada's appreciation of its own defence. It is notable that this reaction was pertinent to Canada and conspicuously absent in the Maritimes, where comparative security did not excite the same fear of an American attack as did the vulnerability of the Canadian province - a factor inherently responsible for the Maritime reluctance to enter into a union with Canada. The radical separatist agitation in England⁵², the immediate defencelessness of the province owing to the withdrawal of British regulars, and the subsequent crisis resulting from the British-United States enlistment controversy, all served to dramatically awaken the Canadian politicians to the military needs of the country. The enactment of the Militia Bill was the first positive step towards the formation of an independent military organization in Canada; the defence appropriation was increased to more

52 See Ch. IV, p. 72-73.

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than £25,000 from £2,000 the previous year⁵³. The succeeding defence measures during the Civil War and the Fenian menace were but the continuity of Canadian awareness that they could not stand idly by in the face of the rising American preponderance on the continent.

Despite the courageous efforts of 1855 and 1856, the province was far from defensible when the Civil War again brought the threat of attack to its doorstep. To overcome this weakness, a group of British experts suggested, after having carried out a survey in the spring and summer of 1862, that the province needed a force of 150,000 men, a vast scheme of permanent fortifications and an enlarged system of canals to permit bigger armoured vessels to make their way from the sea to Lakes Ontario and Erie⁵⁴. Unfortunately, the scheme called for enormous expenditures beyond the immediate capability of the province. This defencelessness was re-emphasized by the reports of Lieutenant-Colonel W.F.D. Jervois who made extensive surveys in British North America and Bermuda for the British Government during the autumn of 1863. Besides concurring with the findings of 1862, he emphasized that the western part of the province could not be defended

⁵³ C.P. Stacey, Canada and the British Army 1846-1871, Op. Cit., p. 94. See also Ch. I, p. 9.

⁵⁴ Ibid., p. 147-48.

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without naval superiority on the lakes⁵⁵. Like the recommendations of the previous year, his suggestions proved too elaborate to be carried out in Canada.

The seriousness with which this situation was regarded in Canada is reflected in the efforts of successive governments to surmount these difficulties. In effect, the Canadians pursued a course which gradually improved the military organization in the province. The defeat of the Militia Bill in May 1862 was but a temporary setback, while the measures of the succeeding Sanfield Macdonald-Sicotte Government showed that even political ineptitude - a characteristic of Canadian governments in managing their internal affairs during the last few years before Confederation - could not stand in the way of improving the country's defensibility⁵⁶.

Cardwell's notice that the colonies in future would have to provide for their own defence⁵⁷, along with Jervois' frightening report, made defence a pressing Canadian subject at the historic Quebec Conference of October 1864. So concerned with defence were the Canadian delegates, that they summoned Jervois to Quebec to provide them with a first-hand briefing. As a result, he was asked to submit a new report

⁵⁵ Ibid., p. 160-61.

⁵⁶ See Ch. I, p. 11.

⁵⁷ See Ch. IV, p. 86.

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to the Canadian Ministers. In this instance, he recommended elaborate fortifications only for Quebec, Montreal and Kingston, with somewhat cheaper ones for Toronto and Hamilton, the whole scheme estimated to cost approximately £1,754,000⁵⁸. This report became the basis of the Canadian reply to the Colonial Secretary's request for a discussion of the whole question of the Mother Country's defence relationship with its Canadian colony⁵⁹. The tone of the reply indicated the sobering effect of Cardwell's announcement on the Canadian Ministers. They were overwhelmed by the enormity of Jervois' recommendations and, in view of the limited available resources of the province, suggested that the greater portion of the cost of the scheme should be borne by the Mother Country. In addition, the note expressed anxiety over the Colonial Secretary's indication that the two primary objects of Imperial defence would be the protection of British troops in Canada and the maintenance of communication with the fleet. This concern emphasized the uneasiness which plagued the Canadian Ministers. Their bold enquiry as to how many troops the British intended to maintain in the province while the danger of war endured; how many could be counted on in the event of hostilities; and by what means the cost for such a

⁵⁸ C.P. Stacey, Canada and the British Army 1846-1871, Op. Cit., p. 166.

⁵⁹ See also Ch. IV, p. 86.

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war would be defrayed, cannot be accounted for by anything but the Canadian fear of being abandoned to face the American threat alone⁶⁰.

It is noteworthy that the reply also referred to the comprehensive defence arrangements which the Confederation proposals promised for the future. But, because the assumption of large financial commitments by Canada might be used as an argument against the union scheme, the Canadian note requested postponement of any permanent agreement on the whole question till after Confederation⁶¹. The Colonial Office readily acceded to this request and stood by its decision even though the Canadians suggested re-opening the defence discussions the following spring⁶².

Despite the biased tone of the Canadian reply, the proposals put forward showed that the Canadian political leaders had begun to consider their defence obligations seriously. They offered to assume the cost of the Montreal fortifications, suggested by Jervois, if the Mother Country would: guarantee the loan for the purpose; undertake the construction of those at Quebec; and supply the armament for both these

⁶⁰ C.P. Stacey, Canada and the British Army 1846-1871, Op. Cit., p. 167-68.

⁶¹ Ibid., p. 167.

⁶² Ibid., p. 186.

installations⁶³. However, when the British Government answered these proposals with a meagre £200,000, to be expended at £50,000 a year⁶⁴, the Canadians, highly incensed with this niggardly contribution, made good their offer of \$1,000,000 for the permanent defence of the country⁶⁵ and an additional \$330,000 for the maintenance of the volunteer force on active duty on the frontier⁶⁶. When the delegation of Canadian Ministers⁶⁷ journeyed to London the following spring, they were primarily concerned with reaching agreement with the Colonial Office on the means of speedily effecting Confederation and on the arrangements necessary for the defence of Canada in the event of war with the United States. The deliberations at this meeting once again emphasized the strong concern with which the Canadians viewed the threat from their neighbour. With the termination of the Civil War and the consummation of Confederation delayed by its setback in New

63 Ibid., p. 168.

64 George F. Stanley, Canada's Soldiers 1604-1954, The Military History of an Unmilitary People, Toronto, Macmillan, 1954, p. 222.

65 C.P. Stacey, Canada and the British Army 1846-1871, Op. Cit., p. 175. This money, however, remained unspent. Ibid., p. 188.

66 Ibid., p. 175, cited from f. 28 Vict., cap. 3.

67 The delegation consisted of Macdonald, Brown, Cartier and Galt. Cited from John Lewis, George Brown, The Makers of Canada, Parkman edition, Vol. 19, Toronto, Morang, 1906, p. 186.

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Brunswick, the Canadians assumed a feeling of urgency in regard to their province's defence. This was evident from their discussions with the Colonial Secretary. In a memorandum, Galt, while he admitted that Canada might fairly assume greater responsibility for its own defence, made it clear that the Canadian Government distrusted the United States whose "amicable professions"⁶⁸, he contended, were insincere. As a result, the Canadian Ministry felt that the question of defence was of "imminent necessity and paramount importance" and that Jervois' scheme should be considered in the light "as if war were immediate and certain"⁶⁹. The subsequent military proposals made by Galt to Cardwell came to approximately eight to ten millions sterling - not counting £5,000,000 for the construction of an intercolonial railway between Quebec and Halifax and for the improvement of the canals connecting the Great Lakes and the ocean, for which Canada would expect an Imperial guarantee. Unfortunately for the Canadians these staggering suggestions were rejected by the British Government, and nothing to add to the defence of Canada was achieved⁷⁰. The subject remained closed until after Confederation. When the Canadian Parliament met in August, it could

⁶⁸ C.P. Stacey, Canada and the British Army 1846-1871, Op. Cit., p. 182.

⁶⁹ Ibid.

⁷⁰ Ibid., p. 181-87.

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merely continue its encouragement of the volunteer force for which it appropriated an additional \$480,000⁷¹.

The initiation of the volunteer force had furnished the first indication of the Canadians' choice to provide for themselves rather than be absorbed by their rapidly expanding neighbour. The responses and sacrifices of the provincial inhabitants during the Fenian menace gave a clear warning that they would resist any attack with all the resources at their disposal. Indeed, the threat from the United States had inured a fear which prompted Canadians to adopt independent defence measures. The establishment of the portfolio of Minister of Militia was a step in this direction while, with the offer to bear the cost of the defence works at Montreal, the Canadians assumed responsibility in a field hitherto left entirely to the Mother Country.

Although there was some reluctance to assume a greater portion of their defence responsibility, the efforts made in the years prior to Confederation were without doubt commendable. The strength of the volunteer force had increased five-fold, while the annual defence appropriation rose from a mere £2,000 in 1854 to that approaching \$1,000,000 on the eve of Confederation. That these efforts were still far from adequate is indicative of the enormity of the problem. It is little wonder, therefore, that the Canadians, as well as the

71 Ibid., p. 188.

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British, who for years had been trying to lessen their load of defence spending in North America, looked to Confederation for the means to solve their dilemma. Fortunately, United States' preoccupation with its internal affairs after the Civil War provided the breathing spell to effect the Union - an arrangement which the Mother Country anticipated would rid it of a burden that had plagued it for decades.

CHAPTER IV

THE BRITISH TRANSITION

In order to appreciate Britain's insistence on Confederation, it is necessary to trace the transition of British sentiment at home towards its far-flung Empire and the subsequent effect of this change on the defence of the colonies. An examination of this transition is important because it prompted Britain's endeavour to reduce defence spending in North America, an effort which precluded the evolution of two separate provincial federations - one in the Maritimes and another in Canada. This chapter will cover the changing defence relationship between the Mother Country and her North American colonies which led to the Confederation of 1867.

It was but a few decades after the conclusion of the American War of Independence that Great Britain and her remaining provinces in North America were faced with the danger of a belligerent United States. The birth of the Republic brought with it the menacing threat of invasion and annexation. This danger hung as a mounting wave, ever ready to sweep over the neighbouring Canadas with a momentum that could very easily have engulfed the Maritime provinces as well. The war of 1812 eliminated any doubt that the United States, during a crisis, would hesitate to heap its vengeance on Britain by attacking Canada. In the succeeding years,

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the recurrent difficulties with the United States frequently forced Britain to prepare for what, at times, seemed to be an inevitable conflict. It was small wonder then that Britain should eventually find the burden of maintaining her garrisons in North America overbearing and necessitating a new arrangement; this became paramount to the Confederation of the British North American provinces.

In the early years of British-United States relations, Britain had much less to fear from an American attack than in the years preceding Confederation. The superiority of the well trained British regular over the raw American militiaman and the undisputed might of the Royal Navy made the defence of the British colonies a comparatively straightforward task. However, with the advent of the American Civil War, the picture took on a different hue. Its vast resources, along with the large number of troops recruited during the war, made the United States a dangerous neighbour. Fortunately, the evolution of this change became apparent to the Mother Country some years before the threat had reached the critical stage. Sir Edmund Head, the Governor-General of Canada, four years prior to this American conflict, served notice of its impending danger. He warned the Colonial Office that Britain could not in future discuss the balance of power in Europe without taking into consideration the increasing strength and political actions of the United

States¹. Subsequent events were to indicate the seriousness with which the Colonial Office accepted Head's cautionary remarks, while the stark reality of this situation had already spurred the Canadians into developing their own defence forces². Further evidence of Britain's concern can be found by looking back to the days when the Duke of Wellington was Master-General of the Ordnance in the British Cabinet. In the midst of the years of tranquility after the Rush-Bagot Convention of 1817, he began planning defences in Canada against a possible attack from the United States. The construction of defence fortifications and a system of canals which he initiated, and which were subsequently carried out over a span of years at a formidable cost to the British taxpayer, were designed for no other purpose³. Unfortunately, by the time the Civil War broke out these fortifications were in a sad state of disrepair or had largely outlived their usefulness.

For more than three quarters of a century, Britain met the recurring crises with the United States by the despatch of large numbers of reinforcements to North America.

1 Alice R. Stewart, ed., "Sir Edmund Head's Memorandum of 1857 on Maritime Union: A Lost Confederation Document", Canadian Historical Review, Vol. 26, Dec. 1945, p. 412, cited from P.A.C., Series G, Governor-General's Secretary, 1857, nos. 7000-99.

2 See Ch. I, p. 7-14, and Ch. III, p. 50-58.

3 See Ch. I, p. 2-3.

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Indeed, this policy proved to be sufficient to forestall any American designs. However, in the two decades before Confederation, the ability of the United States with its growing resources to support a large army was good reason for the increased concern in the Mother Country. Besides, the defencelessness of Canada, with the withdrawal of most of the garrisons to the Crimea, was another good reason for this increased fear. As a result, when the enlistment controversy during the winter of 1855-56 placed considerable strain on the good relations of the United States and Britain, the Imperial Government was so disturbed with a possible invasion that Prime Minister Palmerston lost no time that spring⁴ in diverting to Canada troops which had become available when the Crimean War came to an end.

The increasing uneasiness in the Mother Country became even more pronounced as she viewed the defencelessness of Canada in the face of the expanded armies of the North during the Civil War. The Trent Affair brought more soldiers to North America than at any time since the war of 1812. Palmerston, in the fall of 1862, wrote to Lord Russel, his Foreign Secretary, and expressed his reluctance to recognize the Southern Confederacy because he feared recognition might cause the Northern States to attack Canada at a time when the

⁴ Donald G.G. Kerr, "Edmund Head, Robert Lowe and Confederation", Canadian Historical Review, Vol. 20, Dec. 1939, p. 416. See also Ch. I, p. 5.

winter had disrupted all communications⁵. Again, at the end of the war, in another letter to Russel, he made reference to a dozen ship's launches being built in a British shipyard for the Northern Government, and he was apprehensive of their possible use to cover the landing of troops on the shores of the Canadian lakes⁶. Remarks such as these, between a Prime Minister and his Foreign Secretary, would not have been expressed on paper had there not been real anxiety in the British Government regarding a United States attack on Canada.

Unfortunately, at this time agitation for a reduction in the defence budget, the emancipation of the colonies, and the subsequent withdrawal of all defence forces had reached its pinnacle in Britain. The North American colonies, of course, had to share this criticism as they, now more than ever, required large garrisons for their defence. This added fuel to the old sentiments that Canada, specially Upper Canada, was too far beyond the reach of British sea power to remain an integral part of the Empire⁷ and would eventually

5 G.P. Gooch, ed., The Later Correspondence of Lord John Russel 1840-1878, London, Longmans, 1924, Vol. 2, p. 326-27. This was from a letter by Palmerston to Russel, dated Oct. 2, 1862.

6 Ibid., p. 336, Palmerston to Russel, Feb. 7, 1865.

7 Gerald S. Graham, Sea Power and British North America 1783-1820, A Study in British Colonial Policy, Cambridge, Mass., Harvard University Press, 1941, p. 93-94.

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be annexed by the United States in any event⁸. This indifference was evident when George Brown visited England in 1864. In writing to Macdonald, he indicated that there was a manifest feeling in Britain that before long the British American colonies should shift for themselves and, in some quarters, evident regret that they did not immediately declare for independence. Brown attributed this attitude to the immediate fear of an American attack on Canada⁹. Similar sentiments were expressed by Alexander Galt when in England during the London Conference in 1865. In writing to his wife, he expressed concern at the seriousness of seeing half a continent slip away from the grasp of England with scarcely an effort to hold it¹⁰. This feeling in Britain, unfortunately, was but the culmination of an attitude that had

8 Ibid., p. 81. Despite the successful defence of Canada in 1812-14, only two years later Alexander Baring scorned further expenditures on armament as "the foolish thing in the world". Canada, in his view, remained "the lamb" prepared for the eventual slaughter. Cited from John Quincy Adams, Memoirs, Philadelphia, 1874-77, III, 279.

9 Joseph Pope, The Memoirs of The Right Honourable Sir John Alexander Macdonald, G.C.B., First Prime Minister of the Dominion of Canada, Toronto, Musson, 1894, p. 290.

10 Douglas O. Skelton, The Life and Times of Sir Alexander Tilloch Galt, Toronto, Oxford, 1920, p. 382. Galt was overly pessimistic about Canada's chances of averting American absorption. At as late a date as January 1867, he doubted whether Confederation would save Canada from annexation. Ibid., p. 411.

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first sprouted after the Treaty of Paris in 1814 - the year which marked the beginning of a new era of peace in both Europe and America.

The establishment of peace in Europe found Britain saddled with a burden of war debts which she had accumulated during the Seven Years War in America, the American War of Independence, and the Napoleonic Wars in Europe¹¹. In fact, between 1742 and 1815, the national debt, to which defence expenditures had contributed substantially, increased seventeenfold from £50 million to £850 million¹². In addition, during the half century that followed, the enormous cost for the continued protection afforded the colonies in the expanded Empire maintained the financial load on the British taxpayer without any significant let-up. The heavy burden from the perpetuation of this expenditure can easily be appreciated when compared to the current growing national debts of Canada and the United States, which have been incurred during twenty years of military preparedness and tension - a mere fraction of time alongside the British century of defence costs. Canadians to-day would sympathize with the British taxpayer, who eventually cried for relief from these heavy defence outlays. The subsequent repeal of the Corn Laws

11 G.S. Graham, Op. Cit., p. 277.

12 W.S. Reid, Economic History of Great Britain, New York, Ronald Press, 1954, p. 299 & 304.

and the establishment of free trade in 1846 accentuated the cry for ridding the country of colonies which no longer provided a financial advantage over other world markets¹³. Indeed, in many quarters the maintenance of the connection with Canada was considered unprofitable and burdensome¹⁴. This dissatisfaction, naturally, aroused heated debates in Parliament.

The Whigs, as champions of reform, launched their first attack within a year of Waterloo. They contended that the expenses of the colonial garrisons were too high and, with the increase of colonial populations, would soon become intolerable¹⁵. The Tories defended the government's policy, maintaining that they were securing the Empire by preserving the strategic bases which had proven dangerous in enemy hands¹⁶. However, some years later, encouraged by the enduring peace both at home and abroad, the Tories originated

13 Cephas D. Allin and George M. Jones, Annexation, Preferential Trade and Reciprocity, Toronto, Musson, 1911, p. 42-43.

14 William Weir, Sixty Years in Canada, Montreal, John Lovell, 1903, p. 48. From a resolution moved by John Rose at a meeting of the Annexation Association of Montreal on Dec. 12, 1849.

15 W.C.B. Tunstall, "Imperial Defence, 1815-1870", The Cambridge History of the British Empire, Vol. 2, The Growth of the New Empire 1783-1870, J.H. Rose, A.P. Newton, E.A. Benians, eds., Cambridge University Press, 1940, p. 808.

16 Ibid., p. 808-09, cited from Ibid., p. 1104.

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their own policy of reducing the garrisons in the colonies - a policy which was continued when the Whigs came to power in 1830. The Canadian rebellions in 1837-38 necessitated a quick about-face of this reduction programme, which had reached its high mark in the intervening years¹⁷.

While government policy on the defence of the colonies was determined to a large extent by events abroad, the tenor of opinion at home, which never ceased to agitate for reducing expenditures in the colonies, succeeded in keeping the question alive. The Little Englanders - a term which can be used to describe the radicals, economists, anti-imperialists and separatists - at their peak influence between the years 1828 and 1859, were outspoken in their criticism of colonial matters. Molesworth and Warburton of the philosophical radical group, speaking during the debate in the House of Commons regarding the Canadian rebellion, advocated terminating the connection with the British North American provinces because they saw less danger of a war with the United States if British dominion over these colonies was abandoned¹⁸. Similar criticism was levelled in the House of Lords. Lord Brougham, who had been Lord Chancellor in the Whig administration of 1830-34, sitting in the

17 Ibid., p. 809.

18 Edward Porritt, The Fiscal and Diplomatic Freedom of the British Overseas Dominions, Oxford Clarendon, London, 1922, p. 336.

opposition, voiced the opinion that the North American provinces were worth nothing from a national point of view. In the same breath that he criticized their defence burden on the Mother Country, he called for their amiable and peaceful separation which, he held, would be beneficial to both sides. These opinions, he assured the House, were not come by spontaneously but were the fruit of the many long years of attention he had given the subject¹⁹. Aberdeen, who had been the Foreign Secretary in the Tory Peel administration of 1834-35, and again in 1841-46, said he regarded the separation of the colonies as inevitable and he could see no reason for closing one's eyes to the fact²⁰. During the same debate, Lord Ashburton reiterated an earlier conviction that the British North American colonies could not be held in a war with the United States²¹. Despite these pronouncements, the government indicated without hesitation that it intended to retain the colonies. This was the stand taken by the Marquis of Lansdowne, who was Lord President of the Council in the Whig government headed by Melbourne. Somewhat later, Melbourne himself indicated unequivocally that separation would be a mistake and, furthermore, he regretted

19 Ibid., p. 341-42.

20 Ibid., p. 342.

21 Ibid., p. 343. Lord Ashburton sat as Alexander Baring in the House of Commons. See also p. 64, footnote 8.

this popular indifference to the colonies²².

It is noteworthy that the utterances for separation, although from both the Whigs and the Tories, were never made by men holding office and in a position to carry out such a policy. In fact, neither House was ever asked by a vote to accept or reject the continuance of this colonial connection²³. In view of the anomaly of these circumstances, it is difficult to believe that these early utterances were for little more than the political kudos which accrued from speaking against any expenditures of the Mother Country in its colonies. Nevertheless, it is significant that such utterances were made at all, and there is no doubt but that they contained the seeds of the agitation which forced the government to shift a greater share of the local defence responsibility to the colonies.

The first important change in this respect came with the ascent to power of the Whig Ministry in 1846. The reform bills of that year under Peel's Tory Government significantly altered commercial relations with the colonies and were but the first step in loosening the ties with the Mother Country. When Lord Grey donned the mantle of Colonial Secretary in Lord Russel's Government, he brought with him the desire to reduce the garrisons abroad, not only because

22 Ibid., p. 344-45.

23 Ibid., p. 348.

of the criticism levelled by the anti-imperialists, but also because of the threatening continental situation²⁴. With the Maine and Oregon boundary disputes settled, it was comparatively easy to reduce the British regulars in Canada. However, Grey was neither a separatist nor an imperialist. He deprecated the policy advocated by the Little Englanders as unwise and unworthy of a great nation²⁵. Grey envisaged the maintenance of the colonies within the Empire under a new scheme. In North America, he saw interprovincial free trade as the corollary of the Empire scheme, which would alleviate the economic situation in the provinces and be a step towards their political federation²⁶. Through federation he hoped to maintain the link with the Mother Country. Under responsible government, which was extended to British

24 C.P. Stacey, Canada and the British Army 1846-1871, A Study in the Practice of Responsible Government, London, Longmans, Green, 1936, p. 65, cited from Evidence before Select Committee on Arms and Ordnance Expenditure: P.P., 1849, Vol. IX, No. 499, Ans. 7281. In 1848, there were revolutions in France, Austria, Prussia, and other European countries. In addition, there were the insurrections against Austrian supremacy in Italy and Hungary.

25 E. Porritt, Op. Cit., p. 346.

26 William M. Whitelaw, The Maritimes and Canada before Confederation, Oxford, Toronto, 1934, p. 85, cited from Grey to Elgin, private, Feb. 2, 1847, Elgin-Grey Correspondence, Can. Archives.

America during his term at the Colonial Office²⁷, he anticipated the colonies would assume a large portion of the financial responsibility for their own military protection²⁸. Although Grey was a bit premature in his thinking, his concept was the forerunner to the defence arrangements which were to evolve within the next two decades. It is a credit to his ingenuity that the policy of bringing home the legions, except when international events dictated otherwise, was carried out to a great extent by subsequent Colonial Secretaries.

The withdrawal of the garrisons, however, turned out to be but a peacetime measure which provided only temporary relief for the British taxpayer - a fact which was not long in becoming evident to the opposition and the government supporters as well. This, along with the indifference of the American colonies regarding their own defence, opened another avenue for criticism in Britain. It was generally

27 Responsible government was recognized in Canada when the Russel administration upheld Lord Elgin's signature of the Rebellion Losses Bill in 1849. See Joseph Pope, The Day of Sir John A. Macdonald, A Chronicle of the First Prime Minister of the Dominion, Toronto, Glasgow, Brook, p. 25. In the Maritimes, it was achieved through Grey's directive in 1846 laying down the principles of responsible government at the request of the newly appointed Lieutenant-Governor of Nova Scotia, Sir John Harvey. See William L. Grant, The Tribune of Nova Scotia, A Chronicle of Joseph Howe, Toronto, Glasgow, Brook, p. 88.

28 C.P. Stacey, Canada and the British Army 1846-1871, Op. Cit., p. 68-69, cited from Grey to Elgin, March 22, 1848.

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assumed that, with the acceptance of responsible government, a colony was to undertake a greater responsibility for its internal and external defence. The tardiness of the colonies, particularly Canada, in shouldering this responsibility, when added to the tariffs and protectionist duties levied against British manufacturers, placed the British Government in an embarrassing position and alienated the popular sympathy which hitherto had supported greater independence for the colonies²⁹. These difficulties marked the beginning of a new period of dissatisfaction with the colonies in British North America.

The manufacturers of England and Scotland quickly vented their indignation and chagrin over the Canadian tariffs. The men in Parliament who had advocated separation from the colonies anticipated no loss of trade through hostile tariffs³⁰. Canada's protectionist retaliation took them completely by surprise. It was not long before a new clique of reformers, the Manchester School, succeeded the agitators of 1828-59. From 1859 to 1873, this crop of Little Englanders were outspoken in their criticism of the colonial defence burden, the colonial tariffs and the danger of war growing out of the colonies. As a solution to these embarrassing problems, they suggested severance of the bonds

29 E. Porritt, Op. Cit., p. 369 & 371.

30 Ibid., p. 375-76.

between the self-governing colonies and Great Britain³¹.

Added to the agitation of the Little Englanders was the critical attitude which was being adopted within the circles of the government itself. The War Office, the Colonial Office and the Treasury had heretofore regarded Imperial defence mainly as a series of local problems connected by constitutional and financial similarities³². The French war threat which had been building up for over a decade, and intensified by Napoleon III's steam driven navy³³, was a big factor in bringing about a reappraisal of the old method of protecting the colonies. When the question came under the close scrutiny of an interdepartmental committee, its findings, among other things, concluded that the failure of the colonies to contribute to their own defence was a great obstacle to their growth and self-reliance³⁴, a fact which hardly required the deliberations of a committee, except that self-reliance was considered a requisite of self-government to which a good number of colonies aspired. When the report came to light in 1860, it precipitated the establishment of a Select Committee of the House of Commons on Colonial Military Defence and Expenditure. The fact that

31 Ibid., p. 381 & 383.

32 W.C.B. Tunstall, Op. Cit., p. 820.

33 Ibid., p. 822.

34 Ibid., p. 828.

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this committee was formed, in spite of the opposing stand taken by Prime Minister Palmerston that its institution would be usurping the functions of the Executive³⁵, indicates the seriousness with which this question was regarded.

The evidence given before the committee showed that amongst the experts in colonial government there was a preponderance of opinion in favour of withdrawing the Imperial garrisons from the self-governing colonies³⁶. The report tabled by the committee in 1861 stated unequivocally that the colonies proper ought to undertake the main burden of their own defence, and it gave full approval to the policy initiated by Grey³⁷. During the debate that followed in the Commons, a resolution was unanimously carried that the self-governing colonies should bear the major responsibility for their internal order and defence, and assist in their external defence³⁸. It was but a matter of time before the concrete nature of this resolution provided the stimulus for the withdrawal of Imperial troops from the autonomous

35 Ibid., p. 829.

36 Ibid., p. 830, cited from Parl. Pap. 1861, XIII (423), evidence of Elliot, p. 93-135; Godley, p. 209-18; Newcastle, p. 277-302; Erskine, p. 303-12; Low, p. 312-22; Herbert, p. 328-42; Gladstone, p. 347-62.

37 Ibid., p. 832, cited from Parl. Pap. 1861, XIII (423), p. 73.

38 Ibid., p. 833, cited from Hansard, Third Series, CLXV, 1032-60.

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overseas possessions. In Canada, this would be completed by 1871, leaving only Esquimalt and Halifax as the sole remaining bases at which small garrisons of British regulars were stationed. Further enquiries into the possibilities of Canadian defence brought home the conclusion that in the case of serious trouble Canadians would largely have to look after themselves³⁹. There was no question now but that the handwriting was on the wall.

The defeat in the Canadian Legislature in May 1862 of the Militia Bill, which was to provide special defence measures in Canada, further accentuated the growing indifference to retaining connections with the colonies. This defeat aroused a chorus of caustic criticism in the British Parliament and press⁴⁰ and prompted an immediate despatch from the Colonial Secretary, urging more extensive action for Canadian self-defence⁴¹. Four years later, the increasing reluctance of the home government to help defend British America, even in a crisis, again became evident during the Fenian menace. The annoyance of John A. Macdonald, the

39 Ibid., cited from Parl. Pap. 1865, XXXVII (3434) and Hansard, Third Series, CLXXVI, 373-8.

40 R.G. Trotter, "British Finance and Confederation", Canadian Historical Association Annual Report, Ottawa, 1927, p. 92-93.

41 W. Howard Russel, Canada and Its Defences, Conditions and Resources, London, Bradbury and Evans, 1865, p. 209-14.

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Canadian Minister of Militia, provides evidence that the Canadians were aware of this tendency. On this occasion, he stated that additional troops arrived only after "pressing remonstrances" and "they ought to have come some time ago"⁴².

Despite the overwhelming desire in Britain to be relieved of its colonial defence burdens, the indication was that, as far as the provinces in America were concerned, the Mother Country was not ready to let the United States absorb them through British default. Even though pressed from opposing quarters, the actions of successive British Governments showed a desire to follow a middle course⁴³. Palmerston sent a large number of troops to bolster Canada during the Trent crisis and then quickly withdrew them when events in Europe became acute. In turn, the succeeding Derby Government, although reluctantly, again reinforced the North American garrisons during the Fenian menace. But these too were withdrawn as the threat of a Fenian attack subsided⁴⁴.

⁴² Joseph Pope, Correspondence of Sir John Macdonald, Selections from the Correspondence of the Right Honourable Sir John Alexander Macdonald, G.C.B., First Prime Minister of the Dominion of Canada, Oxford, Toronto, 1921, p. 35.

⁴³ C.P. Stacey, "Britain's Withdrawal from America 1864-1871", Canadian Historical Review, Vol. 36, Sept. 1955, p. 188.

⁴⁴ C.P. Stacey, Canada and the British Army 1846-1871, Op. Cit., p. 198-201.

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However, before the idea for withdrawal from the colonies had progressed very far, it became fairly evident that the threat from the growing United States called for immediate and drastic action in the field of defence. Britain's desire to reduce its garrisons abroad necessitated substituting another concept of defence for the provinces in America. A solution to this problem preoccupied the officials of the Colonial Office as well as their gubernatorial representatives in the colonies for some considerable time. Indeed, Newcastle's unique attempt at revamping the old defence arrangements in the provinces was an effort to solve this defence dilemma.

Newcastle proposed a bold plan for a union of the military forces of all the provinces to the Governor-General before the latter's meeting with the Lieutenant-Governors of the Lower Provinces at Quebec in September 1862. In the same despatch, he deplored the defeat of the Militia Bill and requested that such an interprovincial union for defence be officially considered⁴⁵. Unfortunately, this scheme was destined to founder on the rocks of particularism and the colonies' jealousy of their newly acquired responsible government. Newcastle visualized an association for defence without political union. This would have necessitated the transfer of control over the militia from the provincial

⁴⁵ W.H. Russel, Op. Cit., p. 213.

governments to the local governors and, in the case of the Maritime provinces, from the Lieutenant-Governors to the Governor-General who would have been responsible only to the home government. The financial support under such an arrangement was to come from the separate legislatures.

While the lack of railway communications for the proper operation of the scheme was blamed for the unwillingness to adopt it, the real reasons for rejection were more fundamental. The relative immunity of the Maritimes from attack did little to encourage their concurrence. On the other hand, the surrender of control over the militia - a primary point of local autonomy - so soon after the acquisition of responsible government, made it quite unpalatable to all the provinces⁴⁶.

Some years before Newcastle suggested his plan, Sir Edmund Head, Lieutenant-Governor of New Brunswick, had pointed out the need for a union of the British North American colonies to prevent their falling under United States domination. In Head's secret memorandum to Lord Elgin in 1851, his initial point dealt with the defence of the colonies, which he maintained should be left under British responsibility and paid for by Her Majesty's Government⁴⁷. Six years

⁴⁶ W.M. Whitelaw, Op. Cit., p. 182-84.

⁴⁷ Chester Martin, "Sir Edmund Head's First Project of Federation, 1851", Canadian Historical Association Annual Report, May 1928, p. 26.

later while advocating a separate union of the Maritimes - an arrangement he extolled as presenting a much more formidable front to the United States than the then disjointed form - he scrupulously omitted any mention of the Mother Country's role, but he did point out the advantage of raising a local militia under such a union⁴⁸.

Unfortunately, no complete record of Head's 1857 memorandum is available. However, his desperate expedients to arm the volunteer corps during the winter of 1855-56⁴⁹, when the country was left defenceless, had a very definite effect on Head⁵⁰. The possible solution to the defence dilemma must have been one of the factors uppermost in his mind when he reverted to the larger union in the Throne Speech of 1858⁵¹. The lack of sufficient common interests between the Maritimes and Canada had been one of the reasons why Head had proposed a separate Maritime union in the first instance⁵². His shift back to the larger union could only have been prompted by his recognition that defence was the

48 A.R. Stewart, Op. Cit., p. 418.

49 D.G.G. Kerr, Op. Cit., cited from C.O. 42, vol. 603, Head to Labouchere, "Memorandum on the defensible condition of western Canada", by Sir Edmund Head, secret and confidential, March 1, 1856.

50 Ibid., p. 413 & 414.

51 Ibid., p. 419.

52 A.R. Stewart, Op. Cit., p. 417.

one important interest common to all the British North American provinces⁵³ - a fact later recognized by Newcastle⁵⁴.

A solution to the problem of the military defence of the colonies was also considered by another Lieutenant-Governor of New Brunswick. Shortly after his appointment in 1861, Sir Arthur Gordon wrote to Newcastle advocating a union of all the provinces and pointing out that such a union would ensure a unity of purpose and action during a war⁵⁵. No doubt Gordon's suggestion had some influence on Newcastle, as there is a considerable resemblance between the latter's plan for an association of the provinces for defence and Gordon's proposal.

It is highly significant that suggestions of a union for military purposes originated from the Governors close to the scene. They, undoubtedly, were instructed or certainly made aware of the pressure at home and must have considered it their duty to suggest ways and means of solving the Mother Country's defence dilemma in North America.

The period of 1856-64 marked the transition of Britain's frustration at not succeeding to reduce her high

53 D.G.G. Kerr, Op. Cit., p. 415.

54 W.H. Russel, Op. Cit., p. 212-13.

55 J.K. Chapman, "Arthur Gordon and Confederation", Canadian Historical Review, Vol. 37, June 1956, p. 143, cited from Stanmore Papers, Gordon to Newcastle, Dec. 23, 1861. (Stanmore Papers are lodged in the Beaverbrook Collection in the Bonar Law-Bennett Library, University of New Brunswick.)

defence commitments to the acceptance in principle of the larger federation in North America⁵⁶. Undoubtedly, her desire to support Confederation was spurred on by the almost certain victory of the North in the Civil War⁵⁷. It was also apparent that this triumph would catapult the United States to the status of a powerful nation, a factor which was bound to have a far-reaching effect on the adjacent British colonies⁵⁸. To the Mother Country, it was fairly evident that her colonies could not be left in their weak disjointed form without inviting an attack from the stronger Republic whose behaviour in its adolescent years was hardly that of a peace-loving neighbour. Confederation offered the possible solution to this immediate problem. Indeed, the urgency of the situation explains the abruptness of the subsequent actions of the Imperial Government. Once it was satisfied that Confederation would bring about the necessary changes in its defence relationship with the provinces, it became less concerned about public opinion and more with securing favourable majorities in the colonial legislatures.

⁵⁶ J.A. Gibson, "The Colonial Office View of Canadian Federation, 1856-1868", Canadian Historical Review, Vol. 35, December 1954, p. 281.

⁵⁷ Chester Martin, "British Policy in Canadian Confederation", Canadian Historical Review, Vol. 13, March 1932, p. 3.

⁵⁸ James Hanney, Wilmot and Tilley, The Makers of Canada, Parkman ed., Vol. 17, Toronto, Morang, 1907, p. 206-207.

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Careful steps were taken in the Colonial Office to select Governors well disposed towards the movement, and it never hesitated to reprimand and supplant them when necessary. This impelling attitude became clear from the actions of the Colonial Secretary after the Quebec Conference.

Prior to this, however, the movement for a union of the Maritime provinces had received the most active consideration, both in the colonies themselves and in the Colonial Office. The fact is that the Charlottetown Conference was called in September 1864 with the blessing of the Colonial Office for the specific purpose of arranging a union of Nova Scotia, New Brunswick and Prince Edward Island. Only a courteous afterthought on the part of the Maritimers permitted the Canadians to present their scheme at all. But the arrival of the Canadians put an end forever to a Maritime union. From there on, active consideration was shifted to the larger federation and, by December of that year, the Colonial Office would hear of nothing else⁵⁹.

The reason for this sudden shift of policy can be attributed directly to the Colonial Office's concern with the military importance of the plan. By April of the following year, Cardwell pointed out to Gordon, the Lieutenant-Governor of New Brunswick, that the first motive of the

⁵⁹ C. Martin, "British Policy in Canadian Confederation", Op. Cit., p. 10.

Colonial Office in approving the result of the Quebec Conference was that "it was eminently calculated to render easier and more effectual the provisions for the defence of the several provinces"⁶⁰.

Unlike Newcastle, who at one time advised a Nova Scotia delegation that the question of union was entirely for the colonies themselves to consider⁶¹, Cardwell's reaction to any opposition was swift. When news of the rejection of Confederation by Prince Edward Island and the resounding defeat of the scheme in New Brunswick reached him, Cardwell left no stone unturned in his efforts to reverse the trend and thwart any further spread of anti-Confederation feelings. He immediately despatched a note to the Lieutenant-Governors of the Maritime colonies, pointing out in no uncertain terms that it was the strong and deliberate opinion of Her Majesty's Government that all the provinces should be united for defence. The following excerpt from Cardwell's directive indicates that the military value of Confederation was the primary concern of the Colonial Office:

60 Ibid., p. 16, cited from C.O. 188, Vol. 45, Cardwell to Gordon, April 12, 1865.

61 Charles Tupper, Recollections of Sixty Years in Canada, London, Cassel, 1914, p. 21.

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Looking to the determination which this country has ever exhibited to regard the defence of the Colonies as a matter of Imperial concern, the Colonies must recognize a right and even acknowledge an obligation incumbent upon the Home Government to urge with earnestness and just authority the measures which they consider to be most expedient on the part of the Colonies with a view of their own defence. Nor can it be doubtful that the Provinces of British North America are incapable, when separated and divided from each other, of making those just and sufficient preparations for national defence, which would be easily undertaken by a Province uniting in itself all the population and all the resources of the whole⁶².

That the defence factor was the foremost consideration which moved the British Government to press for Confederation is further supported by the views of Sir Frederick Rogers, Permanent Under-Secretary at the Colonial Office, when Nova Scotia's petition for withdrawal from the union was rejected in 1868. Rogers reiterated the position taken previously by Parliament that the consolidation of the British North American provinces was required for purposes of Imperial defence⁶³.

62 C.P. Stacey, "Britain's Withdrawal from America", Op. Cit., p. 189, cited from Papers relating to the Conferences which have taken place between Her Majesty's Government and a Deputation from the Executive Council of Canada (Quebec 1865), Cardwell to Lieutenant Governor of N.B., June 24, 1865.

63 J.A. Gibson, Op. Cit., p. 309, cited from A Printed Copy Endorsed by "Sir Frederick Rogers, Bart", Archives of the Hudson's Bay Company, London, Buckingham and Chendos (Stowe) Collection, XXIIb, and published by permission of the Governor and Committee of the Hudson's Bay Company.

The relentless pressure which the Colonial Office placed on New Brunswick and Nova Scotia is indicative that the Mother Country would stand for nothing less than the larger union. In order to ensure the triumph of the scheme, the Lieutenant-Governors of these provinces were summoned to the Colonial Office during their vacation in London in the fall of 1865⁶⁴. Macdonnell of Nova Scotia was supplanted by a military man, Fenwick Williams, while Gordon was severely reprimanded for his activities in support of Maritime union and returned to New Brunswick with the pledge to assist in the achievement of Confederation⁶⁵. Thereafter, he bent over backwards to fulfill his instructions. He himself admitted that, in carrying out the wishes of the Colonial Office, he went against his own constitutional advisers by being in constant collusion with Tilley, the Leader of the Opposition⁶⁶.

The British intention to reduce defence spending in North America was the reason behind this coercion. The successful withdrawal of the garrisons was directly dependent on the achievement of the scheme, and this left the Colonial

⁶⁴ C. Martin, "British Policy in Canadian Confederation", Op. Cit., p. 17.

⁶⁵ J. Pope, Correspondence of Sir John Macdonald, Op. Cit., p. 29.

⁶⁶ C. Martin, "British Policy in Canadian Confederation", Op. Cit., p. 11-12.

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Office with no alternative. The union of the British North American colonies was mandatory to the curtailment of the defence budget, and a couple of dissenting colonies could not be permitted to stand in the way.

The pressure exerted on Canada meanwhile was additional evidence of Britain's main desire. In August 1864, Cardwell shocked the Canadians when he advised them that, in future, the defence of Canada would principally depend upon the resources and courage of her own people. He served notice that the Imperial Government thought the time had come for the Mother Country and the colony to discuss the defence problem in all its aspects and to arrive at some effective co-operation. Cardwell further indicated that the home government was ready to consider what measures the Canadians believed should be taken and what share of the expense the province was willing to contribute⁶⁷. Britain revealed once again that she was determined to arrive at a new defence relationship in North America. When Confederation was suggested by the Canadians⁶⁸ as a means to this end, the Colonial Office was quick to seize the opportunity.

However, once the federation movement was well on its way, the British Government was content to stand by and

67 C.P. Stacey, Canada and the British Army 1846-1871, Op. Cit., p. 160-61, cited from Cardwell to Monk (confidential), Aug. 6, 1864: G, 172, p. 205.

68 See this Ch., p. 82-83 and Ch. III, p. 52-54.

postpone any defence changes until after the birth of a union which could more realistically assume greater defence responsibilities. It readily accepted the Canadian request of November 1864, to defer final agreement on defence till after Confederation, and refused to discuss the urgent scheme suggested by the Canadian Ministers at the London meeting the following spring. The Canadian representatives were made aware that any new defence arrangements would require the transfer of a substantial financial responsibility to the consolidated treasuries of the colonies. When they proposed a grand joint military scheme, which amounted to some 15 millions sterling, the Colonial Office turned it down flat⁶⁹. The British insisted, despite protestations, that the whole question of defence should be left until after Confederation and were content to stand by their modest appropriation for the fortification of Quebec⁷⁰, which had been voted earlier in the year. Of course, little more could be expected from a government hampered by a Parliament hostile to any military expenditure in the colonies⁷¹.

69 C.P. Stacey, Canada and the British Army 1846-1871, Op. Cit., p. 181-85.

70 Ibid., p. 171 & 173.

71 Ibid., p. 187.

The following year when the British North America Bill and its annexure, the Canadian Railway Loan Bill, reached Parliament, the general attitude served to accentuate the official feeling towards the scheme. In the opinion of the influential London Times, the primary importance of the whole project consisted simply in the opportunity which it seemed to present for relieving the Mother Country of her responsibilities in America⁷². This conviction, needless to say, was representative of the belief of many an eminent British politician.

The Mother Country saw in Confederation the answer to a difficulty which had plagued her for decades. The problem in North America was but a symptom of the overextended colonial system. The calls for Imperial defence from the far-flung colonies created a staggering burden on the British treasury. Britain's taxpayers could not be blamed for demanding a reduction in the defence expenditures in the colonies, especially in those that had been granted a greater measure of autonomy. The provinces in America, once given responsible government, could not escape the criticism of the Little Englanders. Federation was to be the last obstacle to the reduction of the tremendous yearly defence outlay in America. Indeed, for Great Britain, Confederation in America brought within sight the end to many years of

72 Ibid., p. 196.

frustration.

To the ensuing federation was left the task which had largely been carried out by a shuttle service of well trained British regulars. This, to be sure, was a formidable responsibility. The threat from the United States certainly had increased. Without doubt, the new arrangement carried with it a calculated risk, yet the emancipation of the Empire had dictated a new status quo. For the several succeeding British Governments the clock could not be turned back.

The maintenance of colonies solely for their trade advantages was made obsolete by the institution of free trade. Outcries for complete separation from useless colonies accompanied those for the reduction of military expenditures abroad. Consequently, support for the union scheme in America became a compromise between those who wanted to maintain the colonial connection and the extremists who demanded complete separation.

This internal conflict forced the Colonial Office to coerce the Maritimes into the union. The uniform system for defence, advocated by Newcastle, had been rejected. For the Mother Country then there was no alternative to Confederation in British North America.

CHAPTER V

CONFEDERATION FOR DEFENCE

The defence factor was paramount in the achievement of Confederation in 1867. This chapter will attempt to show the extent to which it influenced the statesmen of the colonies in their quest for a union between Canada and the Maritime provinces. Particular emphasis will be placed on the efforts of the Canadian leaders who played such a prominent role in bringing this scheme to fruition.

The constitutional problems and political difficulties which beset the Province of Canada in 1864 were the result of years of racial and religious strife between opposing factions in the Upper and Lower sections of the province. It is generally agreed that these differences created a political deadlock in the legislature which in turn, to a great extent, was responsible for the Canadian initiative and its most important role in promoting Confederation. However, sufficient recognition has not been given to the provincial desire to unite for defence purposes in the face of the menacing shadow of the United States. In the words of a great Canadian, Sir Robert Falconer:

Though there is much truth in Goldwin Smith's aphorism that 'the real parent of Confederation was deadlock', self-protection was also a strong motive in its creation. In the thrust and parry between the United States and Britain scattered provinces might come to harm; confederated they would acquire strength and higher status¹.

The threat from the United States had a profound effect on the outlook of the Fathers of Confederation. During the Confederation debates in the Canadian Legislature, defence against an attack along the Canadian-United States frontier was used as a primary argument by supporters of the Confederation scheme, while in the Maritimes it was utilized with equal fervour to discredit the anti-union elements.

Although the threat became most acute immediately after the American Civil War, evidence of its growing menace and of the necessity of creating a unified front to resist it was recognized by provincial leaders in British America, as it had been in the Mother Country, long before the Civil War had elevated the United States to the status of an undisputed power.

Consideration of a union of the British North American colonies, on the whole, was inspired to preserve the British connection and dates back to the year after the

¹ Robert Falconer, The United States as a Neighbour from a Canadian Point of View, Cambridge University Press, 1926, p. 119-20.

American War of Independence². It is noteworthy that such a suggestion, made by Robert Morse, a Colonel in the Royal Engineers, was found in his report on the military defences required for Nova Scotia³. Perhaps, being a military man, he may then already have visualized the future threat to the colonies. The first outright suggestion of a union for defence was found in Uniacke's plan⁴ of 1826, the same year that Wellington began fortifying the Canadian frontier. In a proposal to the Colonial Secretary, he claimed that a confederation of the British provinces was imperative in the face of the territorial expansion of the United States⁵. It is significant that the defence factor was considered as the basis for a union four decades prior to the political deadlock in Canadian politics⁶.

The fact is that the political and economic unity which was formed in 1867 had originally been inspired as a measure of defence against the threat and designs of the

2 R.G. Trotter, Canadian Federation, Its Origins and Achievements, A Study in Nation Building, Toronto, Dent, 1924, p. 5-8.

3 Ibid., p. 5, cited from "Report on Nova Scotia, 1784", in Canadian Archives, Report, 1884, Appendix C.

4 R.G. Trotter, "An Early Proposal for the Federation of British North America", Canadian Historical Review, Vol. 6, June 1925, p. 142-43.

5 Ibid., p. 145.

6 Ibid., p. 154.

United States⁷. Canada could no more develop into a prosperous nation with its flanks exposed to an American attack than it could isolated from the Maritime east or the vast uncolonized west. In effect, the safety of Canada was inseparable from the security of all of British North America⁸. This fact was well understood by John A. Macdonald. His primary desire was to preserve the autonomy of the British colonies in co-operation with Great Britain and against the United States⁹. Confederation, according to the famous Canadian historian Donald Creighton, "... was in essence and design for the defence of that separateness"¹⁰.

As has already been pointed out in previous chapters, the Canadians were frightened into developing their own militia forces. However, as the gulf between their needs and available military resources was extreme, they still relied heavily on the Mother Country to supply the reinforcements required to repel any invasion. But, when Cardwell served warning that Canada's defence must principally depend upon the spirit and courage of her own people, the Canadians

7 Anonymous, "Canada and Imperial Defence, Part I, The Evolution of the Principles which govern Canada's Relations with the Mother Country", Canadian Defence Quarterly, Vol. 12, Oct. 1934, p. 41.

8 Donald Creighton, John A. Macdonald, The Young Politician, Toronto, Macmillan, 1952, p. 240.

9 Ibid., p. 442.

10 Ibid.

began to wonder about this British assistance, and their passive attitude towards their own defence reversed direction almost overnight¹¹. This change was immediately reflected in a series of actions by the Canadian leaders¹². The summoning of Jervois to the Quebec Conference; the firm offer to spend large sums on the militia and the Montreal fortifications; the quick despatch of George Brown to the Mother Country in November of that year to soften the Colonial Office view of Canadian defence efforts¹³; and the subsequent mission of Canadian Ministers to Great Britain the following spring - all were indicative of the new sense of urgency adopted in Canadian government circles regarding the defence of the country. This importunate attitude almost immediately lent support to the unduly heavy pressures that the Colonial Office exerted on the Maritimes to unite with Canada^{14,15}. The Canadians were keenly aware of the

11 Chester Martin, "British Policy in Canadian Confederation", Canadian Historical Review, Toronto, Vol. 13, March 1932, p. 15, cited from Series G, Vol. 172, p. 205, Cardwell to Monk, "Confidential", August 6, 1864. See also Ch. IV, p. 86.

12 See also Ch. III, p. 52-55.

13 C. Martin, "British Policy in Canadian Confederation", Op. Cit., p. 16.

14 C.P. Stacey, Canada and the British Army 1846-1871, A Study in the Practice of Responsible Government, London, Longmans, Green, 1936, p. 181 & 197. See also Ch. IV, p. 82-86.

15 C. Martin, "British Policy in Canadian Confederation", Op. Cit., p. 11 & 17.

American danger. Their long unguarded frontier and the threatened withdrawal of the British garrisons frightened them into seeking assistance from the Mother Country to bring the Lower Provinces into the Confederation.

These concerted efforts of the British and Canadians at this point were presented with a stroke of good fortune. It happened at the expense of the province of New Brunswick, which was dramatically awakened in April 1866 to its vulnerability to attack by a sudden Fenian assault on its territory. This Fenian venture brought the province's weakness to the forefront and substantiated conclusively the warnings of the Colonial Secretary the previous year, that Confederation of the British North American provinces was needed for their own protection¹⁶. The appearance of the Fenians provided this warning with a meaning that was immediately appreciated. This was borne out by an editorial in the St. Croix Courier of May 19, 1866. It read as follows:

¹⁶ George E. Wilson, "New Brunswick's Entrance into Confederation", Canadian Historical Review, Vol. 9, March 1928, p. 23.

If there is one argument in favour of Union stronger than another it is the necessity that exists for a good and efficient system of mutual defense. We have sometimes regarded this as one of the weaker points in favour of Union, invasion or trouble seemed to be at so great a distance, but now when we see how soon sudden danger can threaten us, and how our enemies may concentrate within a gunshot of our very doors, the man must be blind, infatuated or prejudiced who can fail to recognize its force¹⁷.

It was the sudden awareness of external danger that was largely responsible for the defeat at the polls of the anti-Confederation Smith Government in the summer of 1866¹⁸. The dramatic return of a pro-Confederation government in New Brunswick - a complete reversal from the previous year - without a doubt tipped the balance in favour of the larger federation in the Maritimes.

The defence factor that contributed to the turn of events in New Brunswick, also furthered the federation scheme in Canada. When Galt presented his Confederation resolutions in the summer of 1858, he emphasized that, in addition to solving the parliamentary and constitutional difficulties, it would also add to the national strength and prestige¹⁹ which he deemed so necessary for the future of the country²⁰.

17 H.A. Davis, "The Fenian Raid on New Brunswick", Canadian Historical Review, Vol. 36, Dec. 1955, p. 334.

18 See also Ch. III, p. 47.

19 Douglas O. Skelton, The Life and Times of Sir Alexander Tilloch Galt, Toronto, Oxford, 1920, p. 219-20.

20 See Ch. III, p. 42-43.

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The subsequent Confederation conferences further substantiated that the provincial leaders considered the question of Confederation intimately connected with defence, while the Confederation debates in the Canadian Legislature in 1865 brought out defence as one of the primary points in support of the union scheme.

At the Charlottetown Conference, delegates from all the provinces spoke of defence and Confederation in the same breath. Edward Whelan from the Prince Edward Island delegation stated that:

The subordinate question of defence ... brought the primary question of Union to the position it now occupies ... and there is no doubt that if Union be accomplished, it will be owing to the sentiment of self-preservation against the perils which now threaten the Colonies from abroad, more than to a belief in the pecuniary advantages which new commercial regulations would confer²¹.

At a subsequent banquet in Halifax at the conclusion of the Charlottetown Conference, the defence question was again linked with Confederation. Cartier, of the Canadian delegation, spoke of defence as the most important question after federation was accomplished. He pointed out that, while the provinces were not able to defend themselves separately, union would give them such strength that it would

21 Edward Whelan, comp., The Union of the British Provinces, Confederation of the Provinces, Charlottetown, Haszard, 1865, p. 2.

act as a deterrent to an attack²². His colleague, George Brown, added the prediction that federation would result in a half million able-bodied men ready and willing to defend their country²³. Tilley, the Provincial Secretary of New Brunswick, suggested that under a federation defence could be more effectually arranged and that, because of the privileges the colonies enjoyed, the people would be willing to pay for their defence and the maintenance of liberty²⁴. The Honourable Colonel Gray, Premier of Prince Edward Island, added his support to the belief that union would strengthen the defence capabilities of the provinces²⁵. John A. Macdonald, of the Canadian delegation, emphasized the need of one political government with a unified organization to defend the country against any future attack²⁶. So much in agreement were the remarks of the various delegates that, had there not been the long history of threats from the United States, one might think that they were indulging in sinister fabrication to scare the public into accepting Confederation when, in effect, they themselves were the ones

22 Ibid., p. 25-26.

23 Ibid., p. 33.

24 Ibid., p. 39.

25 Ibid., p. 41-42.

26 Ibid., p. 43 & 46.

frightened by the threat from the south. Their subsequent speeches around the country were but the reiteration of their remarks in Halifax. It would be absurd to think that the delegates were insincere in their public pronouncements; this is substantiated by their deliberations at the Quebec Conference. There, the discussions were in camera and any expressed views remained confidential and, consequently, did not have the effect of influencing the public. Nevertheless, they treated defence with the same concern and urgency which had accompanied their earlier public statements.

In fact, the mutual defence of the colonies was cited as one of the purposes of Confederation in the opening address at the Quebec Conference by Sir Etienne Tache, the Premier and Minister of Militia of Canada²⁷. Cartier supported his Premier's statement and referred to the advantage of unifying all the means to repel an enemy as compared to the defencelessness of the separated colonies. Macdonald went a step further, suggesting that the isolated and defenceless position of the colonies was an embarrassment to the Mother Country and that it was necessary for the sake of peace that the colonies make themselves powerful and

27 A.G. Doughty, "Notes on the Quebec Conference", Canadian Historical Review, Vol. 1, Mar. 1920, p. 27, cited from the Papers of Sir John A. Macdonald in the Public Archives of Canada.

important, especially in the eyes of the United States²⁸. Tupper's concurrence with these remarks came at a grand banquet given during the conference. He held that Confederation would not only preserve the colonies but guarantee them against any assault²⁹. This was not just a gratuitous statement made on the spur of the moment. During a speech delivered at the first sitting of the Canadian House of Commons three years later, he reasserted the connection between defence and federation. On that occasion, he stated that defence far transcended the progress and material interests to be derived from the union of British America³⁰. These views were enlarged on by George Brown. The decisions taken at Quebec became the subject of a speech by Brown at a banquet in Toronto on November 2, following the conference. This was shortly before he left to discuss the defence question with the British authorities. He said that the Quebec Conference had reached agreement to put the colonies' military and naval defences in a satisfactory position.

28 Joseph Pope, The Memoirs of the Right Honourable Sir John Alexander Macdonald, G.C.B., First Prime Minister of the Dominion of Canada, Toronto, Musson, 1894, p. 285.

29 E.M. Saunders, ed., The Life and Letters of the Rt. Hon. Sir Charles Tupper, Vol. I, London, Cassel, 1916, p. 107.

30 Charles Tupper, Recollections of Sixty Years in Canada, London, Cassel, 1914, Appendix I, p. 321, reprinted from the Canadian News, June 11th, 1868.

While Brown admitted that Britain had a duty to defend the colonies, he also felt that under a federation the country could afford a greater share of its own defence. He further indicated that the colony would be willing to discuss practical new defence arrangements with the Mother Country³¹ - a subject by that time already broached by Cardwell. These statements left little doubt as to the importance Brown attached to the defence question.

From these remarks it is quite clear that defence had assumed a role almost on a par with Confederation itself. This was particularly so as far as the Canadians were concerned. During the Confederation debates in the Canadian Legislature, the connection between the two was almost unanimously voiced. Macdonald wasted little time in clearly establishing the government's position on the question. In January 1865, shortly after the opening of Parliament, he stated:

... if we wish to afford to each other the means of mutual defence and support against aggression and attack - this can be obtained only by a union of some kind between the scattered and weak boundaries composing the British North American Provinces ... One of the great advantages of Confederation is, that we shall have a united, a concerted uniform system of defence ... and one system of militia organization³².

31 E. Whelan, Op. Cit., p. 200-02.

32 Parliamentary Debates on the Subject of Confederation of the British North American Provinces, 3rd Session, 8th Provincial Parliament of Canada, Quebec, Hunter, Rose, 1865, p. 28 & 40.

About halfway through the session, Macdonald reiterated his stand and reminded the members of the urgency of the matter. He said:

Another reason why this question must be dealt with promptly ... is that it is more or less intimately connected with the question of defence, and that is a question of the most imminent necessity³³.

The pressing importance of effecting Confederation for defence purposes and the connection between the two were emphasized again and again before Macdonald concluded his address.

The same haste and concern with which he urged the House to accept the Quebec Resolutions accompanied Macdonald's mention of the Canadian delegation's journey to London. This part of his address was as follows:

Some of the leading members of the Administration should be in England at this juncture, for the purpose of attending to Canadian interests, and of concluding this negotiation without any loss of time whatever. It is desirable ... that the two questions of Federation and Defence should be discussed at the same moment, and that the opportunity should be taken of exactly ascertaining the position of British North America with respect to her degree of reliance on the Imperial Government in a political sense, as well as with regard to the question of defence³⁴.

His remarks made it abundantly clear that he considered the defence question as being most urgent and intimately connected with Confederation and that, the sooner the latter

33 Ibid., p. 649.

34 Ibid., p. 703.

could be accomplished, the better it would be for British North America. Macdonald, undoubtedly, spoke for the whole government on this question, and the leading members of the administration supported his stand.

During the same debate, Cartier pointed out that, separated, the colonies were defenceless and, as a consequence, Confederation was almost forced on the country by what transpired in the United States³⁵. Brown favoured Confederation because it would result in a more efficient military organization to ward off the warlike Americans. He also recalled the point he had made at a banquet in Toronto, that a united country would be better equipped to contribute its share to defence, both in peacetime and war³⁶. McGee, in supporting his colleagues, warned of the threat from the United States and that the desire of the Mother Country for new defence arrangements made it imperative that the provinces provide for their own defence³⁷. Other members of the administration spoke in support of the position taken by their colleagues and, when the final vote was counted, it revealed that the supporters of the Quebec Resolutions outnumbered those against by three to one³⁸.

35 Ibid., p. 55.

36 Ibid., p. 106 & 107.

37 Ibid., p. 129-131.

38 Ibid., p. 962.

The importance of defence to the Confederation scheme was again demonstrated by the resolutions adopted at the Quebec and London Conferences. The power to enact laws respecting the "Militia, military and naval service and defence" was given to the Federal Government³⁹, in contrast to the United States where, even to-day, the local State Governors can call out the militia at their discretion. There was no question that defence was a federal matter under all circumstances. In addition, immediately upon the enactment of the British North America Bill, military roads, armouries, drill sheds, etc., became the property of the central Government⁴⁰. It is highly significant that these resolutions were adopted at Quebec and remained essentially unaltered to become articles in the British North America Act. The fact that the defence question did not consume the same volume of discussion at the Quebec Conference, and later during the Canadian Confederation debates, as some other topics, is but another indication of the unanimity with which the importance of the question was regarded in the colonies.

39 Joseph Pope, ed., Confederation: being a series of hitherto unpublished documents bearing on the British North America Act, Toronto, Carswell, 1895, Quebec Res. No. 29, Sec. 13, p. 43-44; London Res. No. 28, Sec. 11, p. 102-03; and B.N.A. Act Sec. 91, No. 7, p. 267-68.

40 Ibid., Quebec Res. No. 55, Sec. 7 & 10, p. 49; London Res. No. 54, Sec. 7 & 10, p. 108; and B.N.A. Act Sec. 108, p. 274 and Third Schedule, Nos. 7 & 10, p. 291.

From a military standpoint, one of the most important resolutions adopted at Quebec was for the construction of the Intercolonial Railway linking the Maritimes with Canada. To the moulders of Confederation, the construction of this line of communication was at one and the same time necessary for the defence of the country and for the operation of the union itself. Like the defence items, a section for the construction of the railway was included in both sets of resolutions and eventually became part of the British North America Act⁴¹.

The military advantage of a direct line of communication between Quebec and the Maritimes was realized immediately after the war of 1812. With the advent of the railroad, the necessity of having a military lifeline became still more evident⁴². The need of such a railway was again emphasized during the rebellions of 1837-38⁴³ when British troops had to be transported to Quebec by sleigh in the middle of winter. Lord Durham suggested a rail line as a

⁴¹ Ibid., Quebec Res. No. 68, p. 52; London Res. No. 65, p. 110; and B.N.A. Act, Sec. 145, p. 282.

⁴² D. Lowenthal, "The Maine Press and The Aroostook War", Canadian Historical Review, Vol. 32, Dec. 1951, p. 315.

⁴³ J. Pope, The Memoirs of the Right Honourable Sir John Alexander Macdonald, Op. Cit., p. 112.

prerequisite to uniting the British American provinces⁴⁴. The British were anxious to see the project started in 1856 when the recruiting crisis pointed afresh to the need of uninterrupted passage between the Mother Country and Canada during the winter months⁴⁵. Its construction was almost agreed to by the Railway Conferences in the early 1860's. But it was not until 1867, when it became the Sine qua non of Confederation, that an Imperial guarantee of £3,000,000 made its realization possible⁴⁶.

The dire need for a line of communication as far removed as possible from the American frontier for military purposes was visualized from the beginning by the leaders of the federation movement. Macdonald, in a speech at Halifax following the Charlottetown Conference, held that the Inter-colonial Railway must be built for the security of the colonies to ensure that they would not be isolated some months of the year⁴⁷. At Quebec, he took the position that the

⁴⁴ William Annand, ed., The Speeches and Public Letters of The Hon. Joseph Howe, Vol. 2, Boston, Jewett, 1858, p. 411. Cited from Howe to Earl Grey, London, Nov. 25, 1850.

⁴⁵ Donald G.G. Kerr, "Edmund Head, Robert Lowe and Confederation", Canadian Historical Review, Vol. 20, Dec. 1939, p. 416, cited from Hudson's Bay Company Archives, A7, Vol. 2, Simpson to Shepherd, Confidential, Nov. 15, 1856.

⁴⁶ R.G. Trotter, "The Coming of Confederation", The Cambridge History of the British Empire, Vol. 6, Canada and Newfoundland, J.H. Rose, A.P. Newton, E.A. Benians and W.P.M. Kennedy, eds., Cambridge University Press, 1930, p. 461.

⁴⁷ E. Whelan, Op. Cit., p. 45.

railway must follow a political union because the Maritime provinces, from a military point of view, were essential to Canada even though their commercial value had decreased⁴⁸ - another statement supporting the defence purpose of Confederation. On the same occasion, Galt indicated that the Intercolonial would enable both the strength of the Maritimes and assistance from Great Britain to be available to Canada in time of need⁴⁹. Galt's keen appreciation of the military value of such a railway was reflected in his remarks during the meeting with the British Government in the spring of 1865. He made it quite clear that, although it had a commercial purpose, it was essentially a work of military defence⁵⁰. Cartier, perhaps as much as any one Minister, advocated the construction of an intercolonial railway primarily for its military value. He supported a route as far as possible from the American frontier as a line most useful for the defence of Canada⁵¹. Indeed, the Canadian Ministers left little doubt that they were primarily concerned with a rail line for defence purposes. The fact that the line was routed away from, and around, the Maine border

48 J. Pope, Confederation:, Op. Cit., p. 56-57.

49 E. Whelan, Op. Cit., p. 49.

50 See also Ch. III, p. 56.

51 Alfred D. DeCelles, Papineau, Cartier, The Makers of Canada, Parkman ed., Vol. 10, Toronto, Morang, 1904, 2nd part, p. 49 & 50.

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supports the suggestion that Confederation itself was largely motivated by a fear of the United States.

Defence, undoubtedly, was one of the most important reasons motivating the Canadian leaders to look to Confederation as a bulwark against the United States. The Canadians realized that the larger union was necessary if the colonies were to assume a greater share of the responsibility for their own defence. In New Brunswick, it was the fear of an attack from the United States mainland and the recognition of the need for solidarity against such a danger that turned the tide in favour of union with Canada. Indeed, the unanimity with which the provincial Ministers regarded the threat from the United States provides unquestionable evidence that their efforts were prompted to a very large degree by the military value of Confederation.

CONCLUSION

There can be no question that various factors contributed to Confederation in 1867. The desire to resolve the political stalemate in the province of Canada certainly carried great weight in support of the project. But the peculiar nature of this difficulty discounts it as being a primary motive of the Fathers of Confederation. A solution to the problem required a federal system of government, but need not have taken the form it did. It could have been achieved by a federation of the old political divisions of Upper and Lower Canada. The admission of the Maritimes contributed nothing to alleviate the political difficulties in their sister province. The guarantees that were given to French Canada and the adoption of George Brown's principle, "Representation by Population", were not in the slightest dependent on the larger union. By the same token, need for closer commercial relations between the colonies, brought about by the loss of the American market with the cessation of reciprocity, could have been met by separate agreements eliminating all existing trade barriers. The answer to this difficulty was likewise found in Confederation, but it would be an exaggeration to give it the prominence of the foremost factor.

On the other hand, to forestall future American expansion required measures which could only be met by a

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union of Canada and the Maritimes. The sudden rise of the United States to the status of a world power demanded more than an arrangement of separately organized militias of questionable effectiveness. It called for a show of solidarity to remind the Americans that the colonies preferred to retain their tie with the Mother Country. Without this exhibition, it is doubtful whether the proponents of "manifest destiny" could have been restrained from making another attempt at absorbing the British provinces - an effort that might well have succeeded where the previous ones had failed. Confederation was yet another reminder that Canadians would be willing to sacrifice their lives to defend their country against annexation. Defence against the threat from the United States was the one interest common to the provinces. It was instrumental in initiating the scheme in Canada and timely in tipping the scales in the latter's favour in New Brunswick. Indeed, the urgency of defence made Confederation mandatory.

Defence might not have assumed such importance had Britain not indicated to the Canadians that she was unwilling to continue her traditional military support. Indeed, it was Britain's insistence that Canada assume the major responsibility for her own defence that made it paramount to Confederation. She viewed such a union as a prerequisite to the curtailment of her defence spending in North America - a

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reduction she keenly desired - and she refused to permit a couple of dissenting colonies to stand in the way. The coercion of New Brunswick and Nova Scotia proved that she would accept nothing less. Responsibility for military defence and for external affairs were the only areas the granting of responsible government had left to the Mother Country, and the continued burden of defence drove her to relentless efforts to reduce these obligations even more. The acute desire to transfer a large share of her defence responsibility to the provinces virtually guaranteed the achievement of Confederation and wrote an end to the Maritime union scheme forever.

Other factors contributing to Confederation may for a time have overshadowed defence, but the latter quickly catapulted to the forefront when Cardwell forwarded Jervois' frightening report on the defencelessness of Canada and advised the Canadians of the Mother Country's decision that they would have to rely on their own resources for the future defence of their country. These two factors had a dramatic and sobering effect on the Canadian leaders, and their subsequent actions indicated that their primary purpose for promoting the scheme lay in the hope that it would provide the means with which the federation could assume the defence responsibility that was to be thrust upon it by the Mother Country.

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The Provincial Ministers considered Confederation a necessity if ever there was to be a uniform and efficient system of defence. They reiterated this time and again, and the defence resolutions to which they unanimously agreed at Quebec were among the few that remained unaltered before being written into the bill that was to become the British North America Act. Special concessions were made to the provinces on education. Quebec was allowed to retain its separate system of law. The Maritimes were assured of special consideration by the regional representation of the Senate. Indeed, involved discussion centred around a number of resolutions; terms were drafted and redrafted, but the lack of such controversy with regard to defence was highly significant. There was unanimous agreement that defence belonged to the federal field and that it must be designed to ward off an attack from the United States.

The assumption of a task carried out for almost a century by British regulars was indeed a formidable responsibility. The threat, if anything, had increased and, thus, presented a calculated risk. Neither the Mother Country nor its colonies were unaware of this. British insistence on a reduction of its defence spending, coupled with the increased danger of the United States, had left no alternative. These circumstances forced Confederation on British North America just as surely as the agitation in Britain imposed its realization on the Mother Country.

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An account of the political transition from rejection to acceptance of Confederation in New Brunswick. Useful for its references on Lieutenant-Governor Gordon's efforts to carry out the wishes of the Colonial Office, and the belief of the latter that Confederation of the provinces was necessary for their own protection.

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M. H. E.