

**“Without Conquest or Purchase”:
The Annexation Moment in British Columbia, 1866-1871**

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Abstract

While the annexation movement in British Columbia appears to have been short-lived and disorganized, it was nevertheless understood as a serious threat to British rule. This study seeks to reconcile this contradiction through an examination of newspapers, debates, despatches, and correspondence drawn from British Columbia, Britain, Canada, and the United States. In examining the movement, this study reveals both the peculiar capacity of the minor agitation to present an exaggerated image of its popularity, and the key geopolitical assumptions which led observers to overestimate its importance. As the narrative spectre of annexationism outpaced the actual strength of the movement, confederationist leaders and British and American authorities were led to embark on misguided political strategies. The British Columbian annexation movement's disproportionate impact reveals the complex interaction between local politics and global forces in British North American history, and demonstrates the role of ideology and rumour-making in shaping global political narratives.

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Introduction

This study explores the political and intellectual history of the annexation movement in British Columbia, and its peculiar significance within Anglo-American relations in the period immediately following the American Civil War. Through an examination of the economic and social conditions within the colony which gave rise to the movement, as well as an analysis of the evolving patterns and rhetoric within the movement itself, this study seeks to reinterpret its role within the colonial history of British Columbia and within Anglo-American relations more generally. Unlike most studies of British Columbian colonial politics, this study does not primarily aim to contextualize annexationism in contrast to the larger political trends of confederationism and anti-confederationism. Instead, it examines the profound significance of British Columbian annexationism on its own terms, both as a real political movement and as an ideological spectre in the context of colonial politics and Anglo-American relations. Through an extensive examination of official and popular sources from British Columbia, Great Britain, Canada, and the United States, this study explores the full extent of the movement's rhetorical scope and the effect of its presence on the complex political and diplomatic framework of Anglo-American relations in the region. Though the first murmurs of annexationism in British Columbia did not arise until approximately 1866, the antecedents of the movement date from the foundation of the mainland colony of British Columbia in 1858, following the discovery of gold along the Fraser River.

British Columbia occupies a unique position within British North American history. Separated from the rest of British North America by the Rocky Mountains and from British possessions in Asia by the vast Pacific Ocean, the region was of little interest to Imperial

authorities for much of its early history. Though British Columbia was claimed as a territory of Great Britain in 1778, it remained unincorporated for several decades. No official British settlements were established in the area until 1843 when the Hudson's Bay Company, which British Authorities had granted legal authority over the region, sent James Douglas to establish a new headquarters on Vancouver Island and appointed him Chief Factor in the area. In 1846, when Britain gave up its claims south of the 49th parallel in the Treaty of Washington, Fort Victoria became the main headquarters of the HBC west of the Rockies, and three years later, in January of 1849, Vancouver Island was officially designated as a Crown Colony by the British Colonial Office.¹ For the next decade, the area remained a backwater under the control of Douglas, who acted jointly as Governor of the colony and as the Chief Factor of the HBC operations in the region. Though he attempted to encourage British settlement, progress proved slow. By the mid-1850s, fewer than one thousand non-Aboriginal people resided on the Island, mostly in Victoria and Nanaimo.² This changed virtually overnight in 1857 when word reached San Francisco of the discovery of gold along the Fraser River.

The Fraser River gold rush was a seminal event which reshaped British Columbia from an isolated outpost to a functional pair of settler colonies. Beginning in the spring of 1858, thousands of miners from California flooded the region in search of wealth. Ships loaded with hundreds of passengers arrived almost daily in Victoria, transforming it into a sprawling tent city of more than twenty thousand people.³ With the sudden arrival of so many Americans in the colony, Governor Douglas had to take immediate action to ensure the maintenance of British control and authority over a population composed overwhelmingly of non-British subjects.

¹ Note that "British Columbia" can refer to both the region and the mainland colony, established in 1858.

² Margaret A. Ormsby, *British Columbia: A History*. (Vancouver: Evergreen Press, 1958), 127.

³ Jean Barman, *The West Beyond the West: A History of British Columbia* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1991), 68.

Though he lacked authority over the mainland as Governor of Vancouver Island, Douglas nevertheless stationed a gunboat at the mouth of the Fraser River and began dispensing mining licenses. In August of 1858, the mainland was declared a Crown Colony under the name British Columbia, and Douglas was appointed Governor on the condition that he give up his ties to the Hudson's Bay Company.

As has been suggested by eminent British Columbian historian Frederick Howay, most of the major developments in the history of colonial British Columbia were defined by the growth and decline of the gold rush economy.⁴ The sudden economic boom, followed by an even more sudden collapse, shaped the early politics of the two colonies at a fundamental level and brought about the volatile and desperate conditions which enabled the annexation movement to take shape during the "critical period" of 1866-1871.⁵ At the height of the gold rush, the two colonies relied upon relatively uninhibited trade with the United States as well as growing gold mining revenues to fund their rapid expansion. Merchants in Victoria bought American goods to sell to miners heading inland. As the miners staked their claims and moved into the interior of the colony, they became a reliable consumer base for Victoria's commerce.⁶ In this way the two colonies mutually supported each other's economic activities, and were ultimately sustained by the continued movement of goods and labour across the 49th parallel.

To sustain the rapid expansion of the colony and to preserve British control over the gold mines in the interior, the colonial government was forced to continuously embark upon large infrastructure projects. As these projects, mostly road-building, were very expensive given the

⁴ E. O. S. Scholefield and F. W. Howay, *British Columbia from the Earliest times to the Present*. (Vancouver: The S. J. Clarke Publishing Company, 1914), 244.

⁵ The term "Critical Period" was first used by Walter Sage in his 1942 work. The phrase is used throughout this study to refer to the period between the union of the colonies in 1866 and the entry of British Columbia into Confederation in 1871.

⁶ F. W. Howay, W. N. Sage, and H. F. Angus, *British Columbia and the United States: The North Pacific Slope from Fur Trade to Aviation* (Toronto: The Ryerson Press, 1942), 180.

difficult terrain of inland British Columbia, their construction and financing relied on a series of major loans from the Bank of British Columbia.⁷ These loans in turn were secured by the promise of a continued annual increase of colonial revenues from mining licenses and gold export tariffs as new areas were opened up and made available to miners.⁸ During the initial Fraser gold rush and the early phases of the Columbia gold rush, the outlook for the colony looked extremely positive. Revenues grew substantially each year from the initial rush until the end of 1864.⁹ However, by the middle of the decade, it became clear that the gold economy had not been built on solid foundations.

As miners went further inland, both the extraction of gold and the management and taxation of the miners became more difficult. Individual discoveries in the Cariboo region were small and short-lived, while many of most highly prized and publicised mines could only be exploited by large companies with the use of heavy machinery.¹⁰ By the middle of the decade, the eastward pace of the miners had grown unsustainable. The colonial revenues generated by new discoveries did not always justify the large infrastructure expenditure required to open them up, and the colonial government began to accrue an unsustainable amount of debt.¹¹ While this aggressive policy was seen as necessary to maintain British control over the mostly American inland population, it was not sustainable in the short term, for its financial viability relied on the hope of major discoveries in the future. However, in 1865, the usual “spring rush” of miners from San

⁷ Arthur Birch to Frederic Rogers, January 6, 1868, Library and Archives Canada, CO 60. British Columbia, Original Correspondence, Colonial Office Fonds R10976-0-4-E, Microfilm reel B-100, p. 308; The Bank of British Columbia was established by a Royal Charter in 1862, and its head office was in London.

⁸ Ibid.

⁹ Frederic Rogers to Cabinet, January 6, 1868, Library and Archives Canada, CO 60. British Columbia, Original Correspondence, Colonial Office Fonds R10976-0-4-E, Microfilm reel B-100, p. 304.

¹⁰ Arthur Birch to Frederic Rogers, January 6, 1868, Library and Archives Canada, CO 60. British Columbia, Original Correspondence, Colonial Office Fonds R10976-0-4-E, Microfilm reel B-100, p. 307.

¹¹ Ormsby, *British Columbia*, 212.

Francisco proved far smaller than in previous years.¹² Furthermore, the American miners who did arrive found it easier to avoid colonial taxation in the remote mines of northern Caribou. Thus, they contributed little to the colonial economy or to government coffers.¹³

As the decline in gold revenues continued in 1866 and the final round of highly-touted discoveries in Caribou, notably the “Big Bend”, proved no more viable than their predecessors, miners left the colony to seek their fortunes elsewhere.¹⁴ The decline of the gold rush brought about a major financial and demographic crisis in the colony. As mining activities on the mainland continued to decline, British Columbia’s consumer base began to shrink rapidly. During the quieter mining seasons of 1865 and 1866, importers of American goods in Victoria fell into debt as their goods sat unsold, and the small communities which extended into the mainland’s interior languished as their customers disappeared back across the border.¹⁵ Though its fortunes were strongly tied to gold mining activities on the mainland, Victoria’s more diverse economy and its status as a free port offered it some protection from the economic downturn. However, the island’s privileged economic status had come at the expense of that of the mainland and its capital city, New Westminster. Unable to compete with lower tariffs on the Island, the mainland economy relied almost exclusively on gold mining. Governor Frederick Seymour of the mainland colony at one time joked that British Columbia was a “road with a gold mine at one end and a city in a neighbouring colony at the other.”¹⁶ Its other industries were far less developed, and New Westminster was economically overshadowed by Victoria. While the

¹² Ibid.

¹³ Frederick Seymour to Lord of Buckingham and Chandos, 16 August, 1867, Library and Archives Canada, Despatches sent from British Columbia to Governor of the Colonial Office, Correspondence with the Colonial Office, Microfilm Reel C-15637, p. 523.

¹⁴ Dorothy Blakey Smith ed., *The Reminiscences of Doctor John Sebastian Helmcken*. (Victoria: University of British Columbia Press, 1975), 210.

¹⁵ Ormsby, *British Columbia*, 212.

¹⁶ Howay, Sage, and Angus, *British Columbia and the United States*, 180.

end of the gold rush was a serious blow to the economy of Vancouver Island, on the mainland, it was an existential crisis.

The end of the gold rush fundamentally altered the economic relationship between the two colonies. Previously the commercial trade of Victoria and the mining operations of the mainland had mutually sustained one another. With the collapse of the inland economy and without a unique resource with which to draw income from their wealthier American neighbours, the two colonies stood more directly in competition for settlers, trade and Imperial attention.¹⁷

Vancouver Island was strongly advantaged by its larger, wealthier population and greater economic development. Though the 1854 Reciprocity Treaty had not applied to Vancouver Island, Victoria nevertheless enjoyed the advantages of being designated a Free Port. Regardless, without the gold economy, trade was crippled by the American tariff, and prosperity for either colony could necessarily come only at the expense of the other. The challenge posed by this sudden redundancy was compounded by the depth of the economic depression in which the two colonies found themselves. By the spring of 1866, declining colonial revenues in both Vancouver Island and the mainland had made their debt impossible to manage. Even as the expensive infrastructure projects on the mainland languished, the colonies were forced to devote 25% of their annual revenue to interest payments.¹⁸ Paralyzed as they were by debts, the colonial governments could no longer function. Vital infrastructural projects which may have strengthened the local economy, such as the Victoria harbour expansion, were abandoned, and no

¹⁷ Seymour to Lord Cardwell, February 17, 1866, National Archives of the UK, 1914, CO 60/26. The Colonial Despatches of Vancouver Island and British Columbia 1846-1871. Ed. James Hendrickson and the Colonial Despatches project. Victoria: University of Victoria. Accessed December 9, 2015, <http://bcgenesis.uvic.ca/getDoc.htm?id=B666S02.scx>.

¹⁸ Frederic Rogers to Cabinet, January 6, 1868, Library and Archives Canada, CO 60. British Columbia, Original Correspondence, Colonial Office Fonds R10976-0-4-E, Microfilm reel B-100, p. 305. Note that 25% is for the year 1865. The report notes that the Blue Book for 1866 was not received and thus arrears could not be calculated for 1866.

new economic measures could be launched. By June 1866, the Bank of British Columbia gave notice that it would no longer accommodate further debts by the colonial governments.¹⁹ Out of options, the two colonies could do nothing but petition the Colonial Office for financial support and direction.

From the perspective of the two colonies, direct financial aid would be the most effective means of righting their economies. For Imperial authorities, however, it was clear that there was little advantage to having two separate colonies on the Pacific coast. Interest in the North American colonies was at a low point in Britain, and discussions had long been underway for consolidation of the Eastern colonies and for a major reduction of British military presence and financial obligations on the continent. Even before the depression, as early as 1864, the Colonial Office had begun to seriously explore the idea of consolidating the two Pacific colonies.²⁰ Following the economic collapse, the project of colonial union seemed like a necessary prerequisite towards the stabilization and recovery of the colonial economies. Although the Colonial Office approached the matter of union with a distinct air of caution so as not to anger the colonists, the depth of the economic crisis had prompted considerable support for union in both colonies. Unionist sentiment was most pronounced on Vancouver Island, where an election overwhelmingly returned two pro-unionist candidates. Mainlanders were more skeptical, especially those in the interior who had little connection to the Island and its more urbanized population.²¹ So too were the wealthiest of Victoria merchants who feared for the loss of their

¹⁹ Ormsby, *British Columbia*, 216.

²⁰ Cardwell to Arthur Kennedy, April 30, 1864, National Archives of the UK, CO 410/1. The Colonial Despatches of Vancouver Island and British Columbia 1846-1871. Ed. James Hendrickson and the Colonial Despatches project. Victoria: University of Victoria. Accessed December 16, 2015. <http://bcgenesis.uvic.ca/getDoc.htm?id=V647202.scx>.

²¹ Alexander Begg, *History of British Columbia from its Earliest Discovery to the Present Time*. (Toronto: William Briggs, 1894), 372.

Free Port status.²² Regardless, with the support of both colonial Governors, unification swiftly passed through the Imperial Legislature on August 6, 1866 and was officially proclaimed in the colony on November 19, 1866.

Despite the speed and enthusiasm with which Vancouver Island had embraced union at the beginning of 1865, in practice the unification process was a messy and spiteful ordeal. Union was a matter of economic practicality, and to ensure a swift and relatively seamless transition, the Colonial Office rejected the Island government's proposals for federal union, and opted instead to have Vancouver Island unconditionally incorporated into the larger colony of British Columbia.²³ This decision came in part as a result of the influence of Governor Seymour, who had been present in London to negotiate terms with the Imperial Authorities, and had greatly exaggerated the economic strength of the mainland colony in his correspondence with the Colonial Office.²⁴ Seymour's proactive approach toward unification paid off for him personally as well; he was selected over Kennedy to be governor of the new colony. Under the terms negotiated by Seymour, the laws and institutions of the mainland colony immediately replaced those of the Island. This meant the abolishment of Vancouver Island's real estate and income taxes, which had been among its main sources of revenue, as well as the end of Victoria's free port status, just as the opponents of union on the Island had feared.²⁵ To add to this, Vancouver Island's Legislative Assembly was abolished. In the unicameral parliament of the newly amalgamated colony, nearly two-thirds of the Legislative Council seats were filled by unelected

²² Ormsby, *British Columbia*, 216.

²³ Ormsby, *British Columbia*, 218.

²⁴ Seymour to Cardwell, February 17, 1866, National Archives of the UK, 1914, CO 60/26. The Colonial Despatches of Vancouver Island and British Columbia 1846-1871. Ed. James Hendrickson and the Colonial Despatches project. Victoria: University of Victoria. Accessed December 16, 2015.

<http://bcgenesis.uvic.ca/getDoc.htm?id=B666S02.scx>; George Woodcock, *British Columbia: A History of the Province* (Vancouver: Douglas & McIntyre, 1990), 117.

²⁵ Arthur Birch to Frederic Rogers, January 6, 1868, Library and Archives Canada, CO 60. British Columbia, Original Correspondence, Colonial Office Fonds R10976-0-4-E, Microfilm reel B-100, p. 308.

magistrates, and Vancouver Island only received four of nine elected seats. The loss of Victoria's privileged economic status and most of its financial institutions, along with the dramatically reduced political capacity of its government, left the Island with virtually no means of generating revenue and put its residents in a far worse financial situation than they had faced before union.

Even as colonial union exposed a powerful trans-Georgian bitterness and inspired the first of several annexationist agitations which came to permeate the politics of British Columbia throughout the critical period, the arrangement also quickly proved itself to be a total economic failure. The colonial debt burden made investment into new industries and infrastructure impossible, while the departure of most of the gold miners created a major demographic obstacle to the establishment of new sources of income. Victoria and New Westminster continued to stand in direct competition for settlers and wealth, and without the gold, the colony's proximity to the United States had become more of a liability than an asset.²⁶ Britain remained uninterested in providing direct financial assistance toward debt relief, and there was no indication that Governor Seymour or the Legislative Council were capable of delivering a political solution. As a lone Crown Colony, British Columbia simply did not have the means to bring about its own recovery. The failure of the colony appeared imminent, and the maintenance of the status quo of isolation seemed impossible. It is this context of desperation, division, and utter destitution which gave shape to the critical debates over the destiny of British Columbia and which, crucially, hailed the development of the first annexationist agitation in Victoria.

Among the residents of British Columbia, opinion was sharply divided over the most viable means of restoring the economic prosperity of the colony. Many viewed the imminent Confederation of the eastern British North American colonies as a possible solution should

²⁶ Howay, Sage, and Angus, *British Columbia and the United States*, 203.

British Columbia be allowed to join on equitable terms. The confederation movement, which developed around a group of charismatic Canadian journalists including Amor De Cosmos and John Robson, initially faced stark opposition in the colony, but quickly gained momentum on the mainland with the support of the Colonial Office and Canadian officials. Standing in opposition were the anti-confederationists, represented mainly by British-born residents of Vancouver Island and those affiliated with the Hudson's Bay Company, who were skeptical of the economic benefit of connecting themselves to the distant eastern colonies. Most anti-confederationists wanted British Columbia to remain a single Crown Colony, and were confident that the colonial economy could be restored without such a drastic measure. Though they opposed confederation, the vast majority of anti-confederationists were not annexationists, as they equally opposed the idea of joining the United States. Nevertheless, a sizeable number of influential merchants, disaffected miners, and American immigrants in Victoria believed that the most obvious path to prosperity was to renounce their British status and the tariff along with it, and to petition to join the United States. The British Columbian annexation movement was active periodically throughout the colonial history of the united colony, and its presence profoundly affected the debate over the future of British Columbia.

The period between the end of 1866 and the entry of British Columbia into confederation was defined by its volatility, both in terms of the political debates among the colonists, and in relation to the grand geopolitical forces being brought to bear on the region. The "critical period" as it has been called, embodied the intersection between local politics and global diplomacy, as the two arenas affected one another in a real and meaningful way. This global-local interaction had profound effects on not only the political destiny of the colony itself, but also the policies of Great Britain, the Dominion of Canada, and the United States of America. The local and the

global acted upon each other in British Columbia in such a way that the opinions of a few hundred colonists on the edge of the world had significant geo-political ramifications in the broader sphere of Anglo-American diplomacy. At the heart of this dynamic lay the annexation movement and its vital historical legacy. Despite having few supporters, the very fact that an annexation movement existed within the colony had a powerful effect on the debate between confederationists and anti-confederationists in British Columbia itself and on the political strategies of Britain, Canada, and the United States. In the colony, the annexation threat impelled in the confederationist argument a sense of urgency and consequence, which significantly undermined the anti-confederation position. Loyalists were initially dismissive of the movement. However, as American expansionist efforts towards the colony accelerated, they increasingly came to view the local annexation movement as a genuine threat to Confederation and to British authority in the region. In the eyes of loyalists, annexationism was transformed from “a wild and most ridiculous scheme”, which “cannot and will not be carried out”, to a powerful, lurking spectre, which “with firm step, erect mien, and almost defiant air, walks our streets at noonday”, and which threatened to deliver the colony to the United States against the wishes of the colonists.²⁷

From an international perspective, the presence of an annexationist element brought renewed attention to the colony from both Great Britain and the United States at a time when interest in the region was waning. The “annexation moment” of 1866-1871 stood as part of a decades-long contest between the two powers for political control of the Pacific Northwest, and the presence of the movement became an important consideration in their respective diplomatic strategies in the region. The British Colonial Office reacted to the presence of annexationism in its colony

²⁷ *Daily British Colonist and Victoria Chronicle*, September 12, 1866, p. 2 and January 28, 1870, p. 2.

with unease. Although it was unprofitable, British Columbia occupied a valuable strategic position. British efforts to pressure British Columbia into Confederation were strengthened by their concern over the possibility of losing the territory to a popular movement to join the United States. Meanwhile, American authorities hoped that the movement would grow and that the colony might be secured “without conquest or purchase”, and engaged in numerous efforts to coax British Columbians into their orbit.²⁸ Although both powers greatly overestimated the presence of annexationist sentiment in the colony, their consideration of the movement internationalized and invigorated the debate over the political direction of British Columbia. Despite the movement’s failure to attract followers, the disproportionate attention which it received ensured that it was a relevant factor in the politics of British Columbia and in Anglo-American relations. In this regard it has a significant historical legacy.

The historiography of the annexation movement in British Columbia is fragmented and inconsistent. Scholars who have examined the movement have reached dramatically different conclusions as to its popularity and relevance in British Columbia depending on their approach. Usually, historians have approached annexationism through one of two fields: British Columbian studies and Canadian-American studies. Historians of the province have tended to study annexationism as it related to the growth and development of the confederation movement in colonial British Columbia, and, with a few notable exceptions, have not generally devoted significant attention to the movement itself. Even provincial historians who have studied annexationism in detail have generally considered its role in the history of British Columbia as marginal at best. In contrast, the few historians who have studied annexationism through the lens of Canadian-American relations have almost universally come to opposite conclusions,

²⁸ Representative Windom, January 5, 1869, 40th Cong., 3rd Sess., *Congressional Globe* v. 39 pt. 1, 187.

portraying the British Columbian annexation movement as having been a serious political contender within the colony, and an important factor in the diplomatic context. For the most part, the two respective fields have not been well-integrated. The foundational research on the movement in the first half of the 20th century has informed both fields, but since the 1950s, provincial historians and diplomatic historians have worked separately.

The interpretive rift between the two historiographical approaches to the study of annexationism resulted from conflicting reports within different primary sources of the relative strength of the movement as well as an overreliance by historians on the earliest work on annexationism, much of which was published before important primary sources became available. Furthermore, historians of the two fields have differed significantly in how they value certain primary sources, and by which indicators they have measured the relative strength and importance of the annexation movement. This divergence of methodology has led to very divergent conclusions between the two streams. Provincial historians have described annexationism mainly in terms of its practical political influence within the confederation debates, and have focused mainly on clear and specific political accomplishments of the movement such as an 1869 petition addressed to President Ulysses S. Grant requesting the annexation of the colony. In contrast, historians of Canadian-American relations normally viewed annexationism in terms of how it was observed by Americans on the Pacific coast and by American policymakers. These historians primarily have relied the voice of the movement and its rhetorical power as their primary indicators for measuring its popularity and importance, and have placed more value on American sources than their provincial counterparts. Despite their distinct methodology and opposite conclusions, the two historiographical streams both offer

valuable perspectives. Nevertheless, there remains significant space for further scholarship, particularly regarding the British and Canadian perspectives.

Within the traditional British Columbian historiography, annexationism has generally not received a great deal of attention. Though there are a few important exceptions, the topic has received very little attention from the most celebrated scholars of the history of the province. Over time, the colonial period and the volatile politics of 1866-1871 have come to receive a greater degree of attention within the historiography, but only a select few authors have explored the role of annexationism within that context. Descriptions of the colonial period are usually dominated by the narrative of the development of the confederation movement and the negotiations over the terms of union. Where annexation is mentioned, it is most often in terms of the external American movement to extend Manifest Destiny over the entirety of the Pacific coast. In these narratives, the local annexation movement within the colony receives only minimal attention and is identified only in terms of its most visible achievements such as the 1869 annexation petition. Almost nowhere within the early historiography of the province has there been discussion of the broader effects which the presence of annexationism in Victoria had on the discourse in the colony and abroad, or of the roots or motivations of the annexation movement itself.

The earliest histories of the province, most notably Hubert Howe Bancroft's 1890 study, *History of British Columbia* and Alexander Begg's 1894 work of the same title, make no reference to annexationism whatsoever. These volumes devote very little attention to the period between the unification of Vancouver Island and British Columbia in 1866 and the subsequent entry of the united colony into confederation in 1871, and within that narrative, the Confederation movement is the primary focus. Annexationism, either local or in terms of

Manifest Destiny, is not identified as a factor in the history of the period. This may have been a deliberate result of the strongly pro-Canadian “nation-building” perspective of these volumes, or merely a consequence of the scarcity of sources at the time.²⁹ Regardless, annexation is absent. This absence is historiographically significant because, as foundational texts of the history of the province, these volumes seem to have established a trend in British Columbian historiography in which the years between 1866 and 1871 were not heavily emphasized by scholars relative to the post-confederation period, and were looked upon almost exclusively within the context of the confederation movement. As demonstrated by Chad Reimer in his study of the early historiography of the province, this emphasis on “nation-building” and on the confederation narrative persisted throughout the work of the Edwardian school of historians at the turn of the 20th century and continued into the 1920s in the work of Judge Frederick Howay, the most prolific and successful historian of his generation of scholars.³⁰

While Howay was not an academic historian, he is nevertheless regarded as one of the most eminent scholars of the history of British Columbia. His massive body of published work, numbering over three hundred publications, is fundamental to the historiographical tradition of the province.³¹ Considering Howay’s long and prolific career, it is notable that annexationism never factored heavily into his analysis of the colonial period. Like his predecessors, Howay did not devote considerable attention to the colonial period in general. When he did so, he described it primarily in terms of the confederation narrative. Far more than Begg or Bancroft, Howay has been considered the founder of the historical tradition of British Columbia, and his work set the

²⁹ Chad Reimer, *Writing British Columbia History, 1784-1958*, (Vancouver: University of British Columbia Press, 2009), 71 for nation building approach of Edwardian historians.

³⁰ Reimer, *Writing British Columbia History*, 71.

³¹ *Ibid.*

vital foundations for the professional historians who succeeded him.³² His disinterest in annexationism may have contributed to the relatively small number of historians of the province who have studied the movement in detail. Regardless, the interpretive gap left by Howay regarding annexationism proved to be an opportunity for Walter Sage, one of the founding professors of the History Department of the University of British Columbia.

Sage's work is of crucial importance to the historiography of British Columbia. As one of the first true academic historians of the province, Sage was among the first to attempt to more firmly situate the colonial history of British Columbia within the international political and diplomatic context. Sage devoted far more attention to the colonial period and to the relationship between British Columbia and the United States than the historians who preceded him, and annexationism was more heavily featured in his work. In 1927 Sage published an article entitled "The Annexationist Movement in British Columbia," which was the first ever study of the British Columbian annexation movement itself.³³ In 1932 he published an article specifically focusing on the colonial period, entitled "The Critical Period of British Columbia History, 1866-1871."³⁴ This article also dealt with the role of the annexation movement in the colonial politics of 1866-1871. Throughout his career, Sage consistently referred to this five-year span as "the critical period", and this nomenclature has become fairly common among historians of annexationism. In 1942, Sage contributed several chapters to *British Columbia and the United States*, a full-length study of written in collaboration with Judge Howay and Henry Angus, another UBC

³² Ibid., 94.

³³ Walter N. Sage, "The Annexation Movement in British Columbia" *Transactions of the Royal Society of Canada*, Third Series, Volume XXI, Section II, (1927), 97-110.

³⁴ Walter N. Sage, "The Critical Period of British Columbia History, 1866-1871" *Pacific Historical Review* Vol. 1, No. 4 (Dec., 1932), 424-443.

historian. Sage authored the chapters concerning the pre-confederation period, and his narrative incorporated both the British Columbian and American annexation movements.³⁵

While Sage's interpretation of the role of annexationism in the critical period of British Columbia evolved somewhat over the course of his three major publications on the topic, his core understanding of the causes and demographics of the movement remained consistent. Beginning in his 1927 article, Sage identified annexationism as a reaction to the economic depression which arose in the colony after the collapse of the gold rush, and as a byproduct of the powerful American influence on the colony. While annexationists were not necessarily republicans, they saw membership in the United States as a more economically viable choice than Confederation. Though its adherents tended to be influential, they were few in number and support for annexationism was limited to Vancouver Island. Sage stated in 1927 that "the whole movement gained influence from the prominence of its advocates rather than from the number of its supporters" and that "Even on Vancouver Island the annexationists were a minority, in fact with a noise out of all proportion to their numbers."³⁶ In short, annexationism was an economically-motivated and somewhat reluctant movement which was supported almost exclusively by a small minority of influential and outspoken residents of Vancouver Island. Even as his views regarding the relative power and influence of the movement shifted over time, Sage never deviated from this central premise.

Though Sage's basic approach to the study of annexationism remained consistent throughout his career, his conclusions evolved over time. As he revisited his argument in subsequent publications, Sage moderated his portrayal of annexationism to incorporate new developments

³⁵ Although Angus edited the entire volume and the individual chapter authors are not identified in the volume itself, it seems to be the general understanding that Sage, not Howay, wrote the chapter on the critical period. Reimer, *Writing British Columbia History*, 112.

³⁶ Sage, "The Annexation Movement", 109.

within the historiography of the province and the discovery of new primary sources. Central to this evolution was Sage's position on the political alignment of Dr. John Sebastian Helmcken, a longstanding and important member of the British Columbia Legislative Council, and one of the most vocal opponents of confederation in the colony. Helmcken doubted the economic viability of confederation, and he often invoked annexation in comparison. Though he was frequently accused of being an annexationist by his contemporaries, historians generally have agreed that he did not, in fact, support the movement. This was much less clear in the 1920s when Sage began his work on annexationism. Helmcken lived until 1920, and his "reminiscences" were not as well known until they were published in 1975.³⁷ Furthermore, the text of the 1867 and 1869 annexation petitions, neither of which Helmcken signed, were not available until after Sage published his first article.³⁸ Sage's 1927 article is based solely on primary sources, including *The British Colonist*, a staunchly pro-confederation newspaper which often accused Helmcken of being an annexationist. It may seem a question of details, but the political alignment of Dr. Helmcken is of central importance to the study of annexationism. By characterizing Helmcken as the representative of the movement in the Legislative Council, Sage dramatically overstated the legislative influence and longevity of the movement.³⁹ By 1932, Sage was more ambivalent about Helmcken's political associations. By 1942, once the text of the 1869 annexation petition

³⁷ Smith, *Helmcken*. The Acknowledgments section of the published *Reminiscences* notes that, although Helmcken wrote his memoir in 1892 and they were held in the archives for some time before 1973, they were not well known before then. Sage did not cite them in any of his work, and they do not appear in relation to annexationism until an article by Willard Ireland in 1941 which cleared up some misconceptions about Helmcken's politics.

³⁸ The text of the 1869 petition was not discovered until 1940, while the 1867 petition seems to be preserved only in the records of Allen Francis, the U.S. Consul in Victoria. Sage referenced neither of these, nor any other source on these documents in his first article. Willard E. Ireland, "The Annexation Petition of 1869" *British Columbia Historical Quarterly*, Vol. 4, No. 4 (October, 1940): 271; Allen Francis to Seward, July 2, 1867, Despatches from the United States Consul in Victoria, 1862-1906. National Archives microfilm publications. T ; microcopy no. 130. National Archives and Record Service General Services Administration, 1957.

³⁹ Sage, "The Annexation Movement", 106, 108.

was available, he correctly identified the doctor as an anti-confederationist loyalist.⁴⁰ In a similar vein, Sage placed much less emphasis on the 1869 petition as a concrete expression of annexationism than he had in his previous work once the text itself was available.

As Sage came to a greater understanding of the politics of the critical period, his conclusions as to why annexation failed to catch on in British Columbia shifted. In his 1927 article, he credited the final defeat of the movement to Governor Anthony Musgrave and the confederationists of the legislative council. In this article, annexationism “ended” when Helmcken reluctantly turned his support to confederation. In his 1932 article, reflecting his changing perspective on Helmcken, Sage focused much less on the idea that annexationism possessed any real credibility within the legislative council itself. Nevertheless, he still attributed its defeat, albeit less directly, to Musgrave and confederationists in the council through their efforts to steadily guide the colony towards confederation.⁴¹ In 1942, Sage further moderated his interpretation of the political relevance of the movement, stating unequivocally that annexation had been “a forlorn hope” in British Columbia and that annexationists had “little or no connection with the political life of British Columbia.”⁴² As new sources became available, and as his colleagues published their own work on the critical period, Sage identified a progressively smaller role for annexationism in the politics of the colony.

Although Sage’s final verdict on annexationism is more consistent with primary sources than his earlier conclusions, it nevertheless represents a narrow view of what constituted “political life” in colonial British Columbia. Interestingly, though Sage identified the disproportionate voice of the annexation movement relative to its size in his very first article, he never strongly

⁴⁰ Sage, “Critical Period”, 441; Howay, Sage, and Angus, *British Columbia and the United States*, 205.

⁴¹ Sage, “Critical Period”, 439.

⁴² Howay, Sage, and Angus, *British Columbia and the United States*, 209.

incorporated that idea into his analysis of the movement. Sage never explored how the loud voice of the movement may have been a factor in its overall significance, either in terms of its indirect influence on the debates in British Columbia or within the diplomatic context of Anglo-American relations. Even when describing the American movement to annex the colony in his 1942 chapter, he never identified a connection between the two groups. Throughout his career, Sage's perspective on the movement was essentially local and his interest in annexationism was firmly entrenched within the context of the confederation debates. Even in his 1927 article, in which annexation is the primary subject of study, Sage's analysis rests firmly within a comparative political context. Sage tended to rely on concrete actions and accomplishments of the movement, including the 1869 annexation petition, as a means of gauging its relative strength, and he judged the movement's relevance based on its level of direct political participation and its success in winning converts. Based on this framework, Sage became more skeptical of the importance of the annexation movement in each of his major publications. As the foundational scholar of annexationism, Sage's work has heavily influenced subsequent scholarship, as virtually every historian of annexationism has relied heavily on his conclusions. Because of this, it is of considerable historiographical importance that Sage came to doubt the importance of annexationism so completely.

Though Sage was the most eminent and prolific of the early authors of annexationism, it must be noted that was not the only historian who wrote about the topic in the 1920s. Hugh L. Keenleyside, another professor at UBC, published his own article on annexationism in 1928 entitled "British Columbia – Annexation or Confederation?." While Keenleyside has had somewhat less influence on subsequent scholarship, his work is important as it differs so heavily from that of other authors. Like Sage, Keenleyside misidentified Helmcken as an annexationist,

but he took this error a step further, suggesting that the majority of the legislative council who opposed Confederation in 1869 were annexationist, and that the majority of people on Vancouver Island supported the movement.⁴³ In his effort to present annexationism as a viable alternative to confederation, Keenleyside dramatically overstated its influence in all respects. Though he was limited by the availability of sources and the lack of established scholarship, Keenleyside's article displays none of the careful nuance present in Sage's work. Instead, at times it reads as a hagiographical celebration of Musgrave's "adroit and determined leader[ship]" in defeating the annexation movement.⁴⁴ The article is historiographically important because it has enjoyed a high degree of longevity within the scholarship and because of Keenleyside's prominence as a scholar of Canadian-American relations. Virtually all of the major studies of annexationism have referenced his article in some way. While most historians have been critical of Keenleyside's perspective, the article does seem to have led some historians to similarly exaggerate the popularity and power of annexationism. For the most part, however, Sage's perspective has informed subsequent scholars. The influence of Sage's core approach to annexationism is clearly visible in the work of Willard Ireland, another foundational scholar of the historiography of the movement.

Willard Ireland is perhaps the most significant scholar of annexationism in British Columbia. After completing his MA at the University of Toronto in 1940, he took on the position of British Columbia's provincial archivist. That same year, Ireland published his first article on annexationism, a detailed study of the 1869 annexation petition addressed to President Grant, and a prosopography of its 104 signatories. The article, entitled "The Annexation Petition of

⁴³ Hugh L. Keenleyside, "British Columbia – Annexation or Confederation?" *Report of the Annual Meeting of the Canadian Historical Association / Rapports annuels de la Société historique du Canada*, vol. 7(1), (1928): 37, 39.

⁴⁴ *Ibid.*, 40.

1869”, is one of the most significant and enduring contributions to the historiography of annexationism in British Columbia. Using the petition, which had been rediscovered in Washington D.C. and presented to the British Columbia Archives, Ireland provided a fresh perspective on the annexation movement and on annexationists themselves. Echoing Sage, Ireland’s article describes the roots of the annexation movement in such factors as the economic crisis in British Columbia, “Little Englandism” in Britain, the American purchase of Alaska, and the post-Civil War tension between Britain and the United States.⁴⁵ Based on the text of the petition, he contends that annexationism, at its heart, was an economic issue, and that despite the heavy American influences on the colony, no overwhelming republican sentiment drove the movement.⁴⁶ Ireland showed that many annexationists wished to remain British, but believed that economic circumstances had rendered the maintenance of the Imperial connection impossible. For Ireland, annexationism was a reluctant movement motivated entirely by economic concerns.

Though his analysis of the movement is valuable, the true historiographical significance of Ireland’s 1940 article lies in his prosopographical analysis of the 104 signatories of the petition. Ireland’s work revealed that more than half of annexation’s supporters were Germans or Jews, and that the movement consisted heavily of influential merchants and businessmen, as well as disaffected labourers and drifters. This contrasted with earlier assumptions that annexationists were mostly American citizens living in the colony, and provided a far more nuanced look at the demographics of annexationism in the later years of the movement.⁴⁷ The following year, Ireland published a second article which added further details regarding the petition and which described

⁴⁵ Ireland, "The Annexation Petition of 1869", 267, 268, 271. He notes that his article is the first time the text of the petition has been available.

⁴⁶ Ibid., 281.

⁴⁷ Sage, "The Annexation Movement", 108.

the interesting role of the Masonic Lodge in Victoria in circulating the document.⁴⁸ Ireland's work heavily influenced Sage's perspective in his 1942 book, and has factored heavily into the narratives of subsequent historians of the Province, who have also tended to focus almost entirely on the petition when discussing the annexation movement and to address its significance somewhat uncritically.⁴⁹ Since it was published, the perspective on annexationism offered by Ireland has not really been challenged within the historiography of the province. Though the petition came late in the life of the movement, and its importance may be overstated within the historiography, Ireland's work remains the essential source for historians who have attempted to incorporate the annexation movement into their narratives.

Interestingly, despite the level of authority his 1940 article maintains within the historiography of the province, Ireland, like Sage, eventually came to question the historical significance of annexationism. In his effort to show the full extent of the attention which the annexation petition received, Ireland may have overstated its real impact. In a short 6-page article published in 1948, entitled "British Columbia's American Heritage", Ireland seems to dismiss the influence of annexationism within the discourse during the critical period. Citing Sage's 1927 article, Keenleyside's 1928 article, and his own 1940 work, Ireland contended that the "significance [of the annexation movement] has been overplayed". He echoed Sage's 1942 dismissal, calling annexationism "a forlorn hope" in British Columbia. He went on to state firmly that annexation was never an option in the colony, and "in consequence there has been no political heritage [of the movement]".⁵⁰

⁴⁸ Willard E. Ireland, "A Further Note on the Annexation Petition of 1869," *British Columbia Historical Quarterly* Vol.5(1) (January, 1941): 67-72.

⁴⁹ Ormsby, *British Columbia*, 243; Barman, *The West Beyond the West*, 99.

⁵⁰ Willard E. Ireland, "British Columbia's American Heritage" in *Historical Essays on British Columbia*, ed. J. Friesen and H. K. Ralston, (Toronto: McClelland and Stewart Ltd., 1976), 118, 119.

Though he did not specifically identify how his previous work overstated the role of annexationism, Ireland's basis for rejecting the movement reveals the similarity of his methodology and approach to studying the critical period to that of Sage. Like Sage, Ireland tended to focus on annexationism only through its tangible political achievements. He noted that annexationism was not represented in the Legislative Council, that it was not a factor in the confederation debates, and that even the most major events in the colony which might have been likely to arouse an annexationist response, such as the 1867 purchase of Alaska, failed to do so.⁵¹ Ireland's view of annexationism was entirely local, and was strongly tied to its identity and activities as a political movement. More than this, however, his basis for judging its importance seems not to have been whether it attempted to win over colonists, but whether or not it was actually successful relative to other political movements. Based on its failure in this capacity, Ireland determined the movement to have been essentially irrelevant to the history of British Columbia.

Sage and Ireland's extensive work on the failure of annexationism as a political movement in British Columbia is important, but their dismissal of its historical legacy and importance on that basis alone represents a limited approach. Like his predecessor, Ireland never explored the indirect influence of annexationism on colonial politics, or elaborated upon its role in the diplomatic context. By only focusing on the direct political participation of annexationists, they drastically understated the actual historical significance of the movement. Nevertheless, it is of considerable historiographical importance that both Sage and Ireland came to the eventual conclusion that annexationism had been relatively unimportant in the history the critical period of British Columbia. Their dismissal of the subject seems to have contributed to a general

⁵¹ Ibid.

disinterest in annexationism among historians of the province and a stagnation within the historiography. No subsequent historians of British Columbia have been as prolific as either scholar regarding the subject, and until very recently, only one other historian of the province, Margaret Ormsby, has meaningfully contributed to the historiography of annexationism.

Margaret Ormsby's *British Columbia: A History*, published on the centennial of the founding of the mainland colony, is an exhaustive and lengthy study of the history of British Columbia since the arrival of Europeans. Ormsby was among the leading scholars of the province who had been raised within the historical tradition established by Howay and Sage, and her work is well-respected among scholars of the province. Her book, which remains among the definitive texts on the province, is valuable within the historiography of annexationism in that it reveals a broader interpretation its role and importance, while at the same time demonstrating the disinterest with which historians of British Columbia have approached the local movement since the 1940s. In describing annexationism, Ormsby drew heavily from the work of Sage and Ireland, but she was not heavily critical of their perspectives on the roots of the movement or its role in colonial politics. Ormsby's own area of expertise was the immediate post-confederation period, and she does not appear to have looked far beyond the established research on the annexation movement in her analysis.

That said, Ormsby did devote considerable attention to colonial British Columbia, and to the critical period in particular. Though her narrative focus was centred on the confederation movement, her contribution to the historiography of annexationism can be found in her more nuanced perspective on the influences shaping the direction of the colony. In her analysis, Ormsby devoted greater attention than her predecessors to the way in which British colonial officials understood and reacted to the volatile politics of British Columbia and the threat of

annexationism, and on the external forces which guaranteed the movement's failure. In contrast to the work of Sage and Ireland, Ormsby's analysis was more firmly grounded in the international diplomatic perspective. She argued that British Columbians had an "exaggerated notion of their own coercive power" to decide their political future and to resist "the external forces which were drawing them into the Canadian Orbit".⁵² Where Sage and Ireland saw the failure of annexationism in the activities of the colonial Governor and the greater ability of confederationists to win over the colonists, Ormsby saw the external influence of Britain and Canada as far more central to the outcome of the critical period.

Though Ormsby was the first author to attempt to situate the annexation movement within the overarching diplomatic context, she did not write extensively on the topic, nor did she revisit annexationism in her later work. As a result, her contribution has gone mostly unnoticed within the provincial historiography. Since Ormsby's monograph, none of the major survey studies or compilations of the history of the province have featured annexationism in any detail, and those that have mentioned the movement have almost universally repeated the conclusions of Sage and Ireland. George Woodcock's 1990 *British Columbia: A History of the Province* does not include a single mention of annexationism, nor does *The Pacific Province*, a 1996 compilation edited by Hugh J. M. Johnston. Jean Barman's 1991 *The West Beyond the West* devotes less than a page to annexationism, and describes it almost exclusively in terms of the 1869 petition.⁵³ Even *British Columbia & Confederation*, a 1967 centennial series of essays on the critical period, edited by George Shelton, makes only scant reference to the idea.⁵⁴ Within the provincial historiography,

⁵² Ormsby, *British Columbia*, 235.

⁵³ Barman, *The West Beyond the West*, 99.

⁵⁴ W. George Shelton, ed, *British Columbia and Confederation*. (Victoria: University of Victoria Press, 1967), 14-15. Various essays in the volume mention the movement, but none devote any real attention to it.

Sage and Ireland seem to have had both the first and final say as to the significance of the annexation movement within the history of British Columbia.

Despite the dwindling attention towards the subject among historians of British Columbia, the historiography of annexationism has continued to develop since the 1960s through smaller, more focused works within the fields of Anglo-American and Canadian-American relations. Though few in number, these studies have focused more heavily on the role of annexationism within the diplomatic context rather than within colonial politics. This perspective is crucial to forming a thorough understanding of the historical legacy of the annexation movement, and usefully compliments the more locally-focused historiography of the province. However, due to their divergent focus from the established historiography of British Columbia, some of authors of the Anglo-American tradition have repeated errors of interpretation common to the earliest studies of annexationism, or have otherwise made interpretive or methodological errors which have led them to overstate the actual political power of the movement within British Columbia. Although the annexation movement was mentioned within the historiography of Canadian-American relations as early as the 1930s, most historians of this tradition have not considered it an important factor in the diplomatic history of the Pacific Northwest, or have approached annexationism solely from the perspective of American manifest destiny.⁵⁵ The first author to analyze annexationism in British Columbia in detail from the Canadian-American perspective was Donald F. Warner in his 1960 study *The Idea of Continental Union: Agitation for the Annexation of Canada to the United States, 1849-1893*.⁵⁶ In his book, Warner devotes most of a

⁵⁵ Lester Burrell Shippee, *Canadian-American Relations, 1849-1874*. (New York: Russell & Russell, 1970), 206, 343. Annexationism is briefly mentioned in various sections of Shippee's book, but most texts make little or no mention of British Columbian annexationism as a factor.

⁵⁶ Donald F. Warner, *The Idea of Continental Union: Agitation for the Annexation of Canada to the United States 1849-1893*. (Kentucky: University of Kentucky Press, 1960.), 127-141.

chapter to annexationism in British Columbia. Notably, he addresses both the local annexation movement in Victoria, as well as the external American movement to annex the colony.

Warner's work is significant for its broader focus and its fresh perspective on annexationism. However, his analysis of the movement itself is deeply flawed. In his chapter on British Columbia, he drew heavily on the works of Howay, Sage and Keenleyside but did not make any reference to Ireland or Ormsby.⁵⁷ Warner relied heavily on the earliest scholarship surrounding annexationism, and this seems to have led him to overstate the power and influence of the annexation movement in the colony. Throughout the chapter, Warner portrayed the movement as a relatively equal ideological competitor to the confederation movement, and he dramatically overstated its longevity into 1870. In doing so he appears to have made the same error as Keenleyside in failing to differentiate between annexationists and anti-confederationists. He did allow that a segment of the colonial government was not annexationist, and instead disapproved of confederation for "selfish purposes", but he did not elaborate further upon the anti-Canadian elements of the population. Though historians were largely unanimous in the notion that Dr. Helmcken had not been an annexationist by the time Warner's book was published, he nevertheless suggested that the "dubious" legislator "perhaps" advocated annexation. Warner admitted that annexationism was limited to Vancouver Island, and was "undoubtedly a minority even there", but nevertheless, in overlooking anti-confederationists, he consistently overstated the political power and relevance of annexationists in the colony.⁵⁸

Even if Warner's analysis of the annexation movement itself is limited by his approach and his reliance on older sources, it remains valuable for other reasons: as a bridge between the

⁵⁷ Though he did not reference Ireland's work, he was still heavily influenced by Ireland's perspective on the annexation petition via Sage's 1942 collaboration with Howay and Angus, which Warner cited in relation to the petition.

⁵⁸ Warner, *The Idea of Continental Union*, 133, 138-139.

Anglo-American historiography of annexationism and that of British Columbia; and as one of the earliest works to address in detail the broader Anglo-American context surrounding the annexation movement. As Warner is far more successful in these aspect of his analysis, his work should be seen as foundational within the historiography. Throughout the chapter, Warner described the American movement to acquire British Columbia alongside the movement in Victoria, and charts their development in relation to one another. Though he demonstrated clear skepticism regarding the degree of support among Americans for acquiring British Columbia, he noted in several places the efforts of British Columbian annexationists to draw the attention of the United States to their cause.⁵⁹ This point in particular is what separates Warner's work from Sage's 1942 analysis. Although Sage demonstrated to some degree that annexationists in British Columbia were buoyed by the various legislative efforts of American annexationists, neither he nor Orsmy considered that the opposite was also true. The degree to which the presence of annexationists in British Columbia may have attracted the attention of American expansionists is an extremely important historical legacy of the annexation movement. Warner was among the first historians to explore the interplay between the two movements in detail and to reveal how annexationists were successful in presenting an image of strength and relevance abroad. This latter point is absolutely crucial to determining the true significance of the annexation movement in British Columbia and has factored heavily into subsequent studies of annexationism through the Anglo/Canadian-American lens. Even where he does not directly connect the activities of the two groups to each other, Warner diligently presents the annexationist "threat" in British Columbia as essentially coming from both within and without.

⁵⁹ Ibid., 134, 135. Warner notes that a minority in the United States supported annexation, but that individuals like Seward were buoyed by the presence of the local movement.

Interestingly, despite his distinct focus on the indirect influence of annexationism, Warner's analysis is somewhat uncritical of the probable disconnect between the real strength and popularity of the movement in British Columbia and its unique capacity to project its voice abroad. This latter facet of the annexation movement is virtually absent within the historiography. Historians who have demonstrated the capacity of the British Columbian annexation movement to make itself known abroad have, to varying degrees, assumed that this corresponded to a commensurate level of real political influence in the colony, although this was likely not the case. While Warner seems to have been the first historian to commit this error, he is not the only one. This assumption is highly evident in David Shi's 1978 article, "Seward's Attempt to Annex British Columbia, 1865-1869", and Richard E. Neunherz' 1989 "'Hemmed In': Reactions in British Columbia to the Purchase of Russian America."⁶⁰ Both articles drew heavily from Warner's analysis, and similarly have overstated the real power of annexationism in the colony in their assessment of its international influence. These articles, along with Charles John Fedorak's 1989 work, "The United States Consul in Victoria and the Political Destiny of the Colony of British Columbia, 1862-1870", which remains the only article to explore in detail the mechanisms by which the voice of annexationism came to be heavily disproportionate, are of utmost significance, not only because they reveal a crucial perspective on the annexation movement, but because they are the most recent and "cutting-edge" contributions to the historiography.⁶¹

⁶⁰ Richard E. Neunherz, "Hemmed In": Reactions in British Columbia to the Purchase of Russia America." *The Pacific Northwest Quarterly* , Vol. 80, No. 3 (Jul., 1989), pp. 101-111; David E. Shi, "Seward's Attempt to Annex British Columbia, 1865-1869. *Pacific Historical Review* Vol. 47, No. 2 (May, 1978), pp. 217-238.

⁶¹ Charles John Fedorak, "The United States Consul in Victoria and the Political Destiny of the Colony of British Columbia, 1862-1870." *BC Studies*, no. 79, (Autumn 1988), pp. 3-23.

Like Warner, both David Shi and Richard E. Neunhertz approached the subject of annexation from outside the British Columbian historiography. Both authors referenced Warner's work in their analysis, and, in connecting the British Columbian annexation movement to American annexationist overtures in the region, both authors overestimated the relative power and influence which annexationists actually possessed within the colony. Shi's article is more heavily focused on the American perspective than that of Neunherz, whose attention is directed almost exclusively towards the outburst of annexationist sentiment in Victoria following the Alaska Purchase. Though their articles differ in content, they are very similar in terms of their methodology and historiographical significance. Both historians approached the subject of annexationism through their work in American Pacific history, and to some degree both historians privileged American sources and perspectives over those of the established historiography of annexationism in British Columbia. While Neunherz took more care to situate his work within the scholarship, both authors were overly credulous of the way Americans in the colony and American newspapers presented the annexation movement, which caused them to overestimate its power and influence in British Columbia.⁶² Nevertheless, both authors have presented an important perspective on annexationism in that they consistently relate the activities of American annexationists and British Columbian annexationists to one another in their analyses. Shi's analysis of the activities of Seward made frequent reference to the optimistic reports of annexationism which the Secretary was receiving from Allen Francis, the U.S. consul to Victoria, as well as from various American newspapers. Similarly, Neunherz shows how the surge of annexationist rhetoric in 1867 in Victoria made itself heard within the United States. By connecting their analysis of the local politics to global diplomacy, Shi and Neunherz revealed a

⁶² Shi, "Seward's Attempt", 231; Neunherz, "Hemmed In", 103-105.

critical aspect of the role of the annexation movement in British Columbia. However, their work is not without problems.

In demonstrating the relationship between the annexation movement in British Columbia and its American counterpart, Shi and Neunherz have pointed to Allen Francis as a primary actor in communicating the state of annexationist support in the colony to his superiors in Washington. In doing so, however, both authors have treated his representation of the movement as essentially trustworthy.⁶³ In this their interpretation differed significantly from that of Charles John Fedorak. Fedorak published his article on Allen Francis in 1989, and, although he is not an academic historian, he has the distinction of being the first British Columbian scholar to meaningfully contribute to the historiography of annexationism since Margaret Ormsby. In contrast to Shi and Neunherz' respective efforts, Fedorak's analysis of Francis and Seward has been framed in terms of the unreliability of Francis as a source on annexationism. Fedorak contrasted the way Francis presented annexationism to Seward against the conclusions of Sage, Ireland, and Ormsby regarding the actual popularity of the movement, and suggested that the consul's representation of the movement to Seward was entirely untrustworthy.⁶⁴ Seward therefore was working under false assumptions as to how his various efforts to annex the colony would be received by the locals. Fedorak does not elaborate on other mechanisms by which annexationists may have exaggerated their own influence. In his analysis of Francis' motivations, however, Fedorak identified an aspect of annexationism which has remained virtually unaddressed within the historiography – the idea that Americans willingly duped themselves into believing the movement represented the majority opinion in the colony.

⁶³ Neunherz, "Hemmed In", 105; Shi, "Seward's Attempt", 225.

⁶⁴ Fedorak, "The United States Consul in Victoria", 16.

The idea that, while annexationists in British Columbia never represented more than a fraction of the population in Victoria, they were somehow able to convince journalists and policymakers around the world that they represented a significant proportion of British Columbians is the movement's most important historical legacy. By presenting an image of popularity, a small minority was able to influence the direction of international politics. While several historians have identified the connection between the local movement and American policy, only Fedorak has criticized the disparity between the real power of the movement and the attention which it received. Sage and Ireland both noted that the "voice" of the movement was out of proportion to its size, but they did not, nor has anyone else, explored the ramifications of this disparity. To this day, no historians have devoted significant attention to how this was a relevant factor regarding British and American policy towards the colony or to how the "spectre" of annexationism affected the debates over confederation in British Columbia. These perspectives are among those with which this study is principally concerned and represent vital aspect of the historical legacy of the British Columbian annexation movement which remain largely uninvestigated.

At its core, this study explores how the annexation movement has been presented in colonial publications, official despatches, and correspondence from British Columbia and abroad in comparison with indicators of its actual presence in British Columbia in order to disentangle annexationism as a movement and annexationism as a narrative and explore their highly divergent legacies. Chapter one explores the history of the annexation movement itself in terms of its demographics and political activities, as well as its major influences. Using the variety of perspectives presented in colonial newspapers throughout the period, the chapter will build on the existing research of Willard Ireland and Richard Neunherz in order to discern the actual

extent of the popularity of annexationism throughout the period. In meticulously comparing every individual account of relevant events and developments in the history of annexationism from the perspectives of both loyalists and annexationists themselves, this chapter will disentangle the political rhetoric from the actual events occurring in the colony. In doing so it will uncover the actual shape and role of the annexation movement in British Columbia, as well as its major influences and the way in which it was sustained by major events outside the colony. This profile of the history of the annexation movement will provide a valuable foundation for the exploration of its narrative and rhetorical significance in subsequent chapters by grounding them in the actual political situation in the colony throughout the critical period.

Building on the narrative foundation of chapter one, chapters two and three will explore how the idea of annexationism was confronted by the various factions engaged in the struggle for the future of British Columbia throughout the critical period. Chapter two will focus on how the contextualization of the movement in 1867 cast a rhetorical shadow over the confederation debates of 1868-1869. The wide variety of political perspectives which are presented in the vibrant colonial press provide valuable contrasts which reveal the anxieties of colonists over the prospect of being annexed to the United States, and demonstrate the nuanced effects of the presence of annexationism on the discourse. As circumstances in Anglo-American relations changed and as Canada looked westward to the Pacific, the debates in British Columbia evolved significantly. Throughout this process, the idea of annexationism came to possess significant rhetorical and narrative power in relation to the debates over the future of the colony. By comparing the way in which observers in the colony confronted and contextualized annexationism to its actual presence in the colony, and how their contextualization changed over time, chapter two explores the disparity between the rhetorical construct of annexationism and

the real movement in a local context. This disconnect, in turn, provides valuable insights into the underlying assumptions and priorities of different observers and political factions over time in relation to not only annexationism but also the broader global forces acting upon colonial British Columbia.

Expanding on the ideas expressed in chapter two, chapter three will explore the spectre of annexationism outside the colony from the perspective of the growing global narrative of British Columbian annexationism. Throughout the period, the idea that British Columbia contained an annexation movement was simplified and exaggerated as it was disseminated globally. In exploring how the rumour of annexationism was propagated outside British Columbia, this chapter assesses the changing way in which British and American policymakers viewed the colony over time. Further, it explores how a number of key observers, both American and British, personally contributed to promoting the notion that British Columbia was annexationist among the highest levels of policymaking in those countries. By charting the propagation of the rumour that British Columbia was annexationist, this chapter reveals the ideological influences which shaped observers' understanding of the idea and the way in which local annexationism sustained American expansionism and British efforts to push the colony into Confederation. By exploring the narrative of annexationism from a perspective which is firmly grounded in its actual history, and by demonstrating the mechanisms and avenues by which policymakers and the public came to understand and perceive the annexationist presence in a way which was fundamentally disconnected from the reality of the movement, this study will reveal the peculiar capability of a local political agitation to profoundly and perhaps inadvertently affect policy on a regional and global level.

In terms of sources, this study makes a thorough analysis of every surviving issue of British Columbian newspapers from the summer of 1866 until the spring of 1870 as well as a number of key volumes and articles which have only survived in diplomatic records and personal collections. The vibrant print industry in the colony produced no less than eight major, relevant newspapers through this short period. As a result, British Columbian newspapers offer a variety of competing perspectives on events within the colony. Colonial newspapers offer a far closer look at the perspectives of colonists than any other source. Not only were news editors politically relevant in the colony, a wide cross-section of residents contributed letters to the various newspapers. The variety of perspectives which these sources offer, in combination with the more in-depth, personal perspectives afforded by memoirs and the United States consular files, afford an incredibly microscopic view of affairs in British Columbia and the changing priorities and perceptions of its most politically-active residents. For events and developments outside British Columbia, this study relies upon a selection of key British and American newspapers, as well as a wide variety of archival documents. Key newspapers, such as the *Daily Alta California*, and the *London Pall Mall Gazette*, which carried the story of annexationism, have been explored, along with a wide selection of smaller, regional papers. In relation to the propagation of the idea of annexationism among policymakers, this study relies upon Congressional and Parliamentary debates, as well as a key selection of documents and reports. Overall, these sources afford a surprisingly detailed view of the changing perceptions of annexationism as the idea spread globally, and reveal how knowledge of the movement affected the debates and policies in Britain and the United States in relation to British Columbia.

In assessing the annexation movement, this study will attempt to tread a middle ground between the later historiographical interpretation of Sage and Ireland on the one hand, and those

of Keenleyside, Warner, Shi, and Neunherz on the other. Though the annexation movement had very little real political influence in British Columbia, its presence nevertheless carried significant rhetorical and narrative power, both in the colony, and internationally. Though disproportionate to its actual size, the powerful voice of the movement, and the peculiar way in which it was further amplified by American expansionist ideologues and anxious Imperialists, affected both the debate in British Columbia over the future of the colony and Anglo-American diplomacy over the Pacific Coast in a meaningful way. The idea that there were annexationists in the colony and that they might gain new supporters had its own power. In the colony, annexationism cast a peculiar shadow over the debates between confederationists and anti-confederationists, conferring in those who wished to remain British a sense of dire consequence. Annexationists were a small minority whose views were not generally welcome within the public discourse over the future of the colony. In the brief annexation debates in the autumn of 1867 and the summer of 1867 loyalists succeeded in rhetorically countering and demonizing the movement and in suppressing its ability to organize politically. After 1867 the movement itself was thoroughly discredited, but idea of annexationism nevertheless became a powerful tool for confederationists who marshalled the latent threat which the movement represented against opponents of confederation. The spectre of annexationism poisoned the discourse over confederation in British Columbia, and aided confederationists by acting as a rhetorical foil which undermined the anti-confederation movement.

The idea of annexationism was powerful even as the movement declined in influence in the colony. Prominent Victorian merchants like Henry Heisterman, along with journalists such as Leonard McClure and James Eliphalet McMillan embraced annexationism for a variety of economic and political reasons. In advancing their cause in the colony, they simultaneously

managed to convince powerful individuals outside the colony that annexationism was a real political threat. In the United States, this narrative reinforced existing notions of Manifest Destiny and gave focus to lingering anti-British resentments which had developed during the Civil War. As such, the idea that annexationism was popular in British Columbia was easy to accept for American annexationists and expansionist policymakers like William Henry Seward and Hamilton Fish. The presence of annexationism in British Columbia encouraged American expansionist activities in the region, including the purchase of Alaska, and was a strong undercurrent in the bitter diplomacy over the Alabama Claims. More crucially, the sudden interest in the Pacific coast which American expansionists expressed in response to annexationism brought about, in turn, renewed British interest in the colony. In response to what they understood to be a growing annexation movement, British authorities worked more actively and directly to secure British Columbia's entry into Confederation. The spectre of annexationism in the colony meaningfully affected British and American policy in relation to British Columbia as both powers operated on the false assumption that the colony housed a popular and powerful annexation movement. Annexationism as an idea held far more power in British Columbia than the annexation movement ever did. For most of the "annexation moment" in the colony, the two were quite distinct entities. Despite the failure of the local movement, annexationism was important as the focal point of the intersection between local politics and global diplomacy in British Columbia. This dynamic, in terms of the complex intersection between global, universalizing tendencies, and local, particularizing tendencies, has been described within social sciences scholarship in terms of the concept of "glocalization".

Roland Robertson, in his extensive sociological work on the concept of glocalization as a conceptual alternative to globalization, has identified the "pivotal aspect of globalization to be

the ongoing interpenetration of universalizing and particularizing tendencies".⁶⁵ In 1998, Robertson applied this concept to the field of history as part of an analysis of the role of historical sociology in interpreting emerging trends in global history. One of Robertson's major premises is the notion that globalization is not a recent, universalizing manifestation which has been preceded across centuries by the particularized developments of disparate global civilizations. Instead, universalizing and particularizing tendencies have consistently interacted in a complex way as long-term historical processes. The dynamics of glocalization, as embodied by the complex intersection of the universal/particular and the global/local are richly apparent within the history of British Columbian annexationism. This can be seen in terms of the differences between the American and British approach to annexationism, in the manner in which the local annexation movement and the American expansion movement sustained one another, and in the differing local and global conceptions of the spectre of annexationism. The idea of annexationism was absorbed by different groups according to their existing presuppositions about British Columbia and about continentalism more generally. In this view, the concept of glocalization is useful in relation to British Columbian annexationism for its capacity to contextualize the unique divergence of the global narrative of British Columbian annexationism from its rather unspectacular roots in the colony. The unique dynamics by which the idea of annexationism was disseminated and understood by observers reveals a great deal about the particular ideological underpinnings and perceptions of British Columbian loyalists, American expansionists, and British imperialists.

⁶⁵ Roland Robertson. "The New Global History: History in a Global Age" *Cultural Values* 1998, Vol. 2: 374. This concept is usually applied within social sciences as a criticism of the concept of globalization as a "new era" of world-historical development, and used in relation to localizing concepts occurring in the contemporary era. In the discipline of history, and in the case of 19th century British Columbia in particular, it is valuable in revealing the powerful globalizing tendencies of the period, as well as their interactions with local idiosyncrasies. See also Jonathan Friedman, Kajsa Ekholm Friedman, "Globalization as a discourse in hegemonic crisis: a global systemic analysis" *American Ethnologist* v.40(2) (May 2013), 244

Chapter One

“A Noise out of all Proportion to Their Numbers”: The Growth and Decline of the Annexation Movement in Victoria, 1866-1871

This chapter describes the growth and decline of the British Columbian annexation movement from its first emergence in the autumn of 1866 until the entry of the colony into Confederation in 1871. The Annexation movement in British Columbia was not a consistent presence in colonial affairs during the critical period. Instead, annexationism in the colony was erratic and came about in distinct phases in response to local and global events, enjoying some brief periods of attention before being overshadowed by new developments and controversies. Annexationist sentiment never disappeared entirely during the critical period, though it frequently fell into remission and ceased to resemble a political movement in any real sense. The first murmurs of annexationism in British Columbia came in the autumn of 1866 during the finalization of colonial union. A public meeting in September brought annexationism to the forefront over the issue of the unequal colonial union arrangement, and forced colonists to reconcile their loyalty to Britain with their disappointment over the colony's financial and political condition. The second, largest wave of annexationist sentiment came in the spring of 1867. The unexpected news of the Alaska purchase and rumours that the United States was negotiating with Britain to purchase the western half of British Columbia incited considerable alarm in Victoria. At the end of April as local political and economic conditions worsened, colonists began to discuss the merits of annexation openly and in earnest, with several newspapers on Vancouver Island coming out in favour of joining the United States. A final, but smaller upturn of annexationism emerged in the spring of 1869 as a response to the final stages of the confederation negotiations, and its failure

to attract any following whatsoever proved to be the final embarrassment which ensured the defeat of the movement.

Annexationist sentiment in the colony developed from matters internal to the colony, including misgovernment, financial instability, and external geopolitical factors. Throughout the period, local colonial politics and high level Anglo-American diplomacy were heavily intertwined in inducing and sustaining the annexation movement in British Columbia. The local political agitations of annexationists in Victoria, the various expansionist efforts of the United States, and the accelerating efforts of Britain to bring the colony into Confederation built off of one another in a recursive pattern which strengthened the movement locally, and amplified its visibility in both the local and global spheres. Annexationists in the streets of Victoria engaged in political activism in response to news and rumours from Britain and the United States regarding the powers' respective plans for the colony. These local activities, in turn, engendered a diplomatic response, which once again reinvigorated the local movement. This pattern, stretching across three distinct waves of annexationist agitation in Victoria, afforded the movement a surprising longevity and presence in the colony despite its consistent inability to win over more than a small proportion of colonists.

Though each iteration of the annexation movement arose in response to different factors and events, the political tactics and global consciousness of the movement remained consistent throughout the period. Annexationists were strongly aware of the unique position of British Columbia within Anglo-American relations on the continent, and their political activities were almost always directed at Britain or the United States. As annexationists had no direct political power in the colony, they relied on tangible expressions of popular will as their primary means of political advocacy. During each outbreak of annexationist sentiment in the colony,

annexationist leaders worked to harness and direct popular enthusiasm into constructive activism. Each wave of annexationist debate in the colony was accompanied by one such act: a public meeting in the autumn of 1866, a petition in the summer of 1867, and a final petition in the autumn of 1869. In each case, annexationists attempted to present an image of political strength and popularity to sway British or American policies in their favour.

While the particular tactics of the annexation movement won it a certain degree of visibility and notoriety outside of the colony, the effectiveness of the annexationists' approach was limited by their limited popularity in British Columbia. Annexationists' consistent focus on popular appeals arose primarily from a lack of other viable options in the politics of the colony, and their political success was severely limited by their failure to win significant public support.

Annexationism never managed to gain a foothold outside of Victoria, and even in the capital, the movement never represented more than a significant minority. Nevertheless, annexationists were highly active locally in attempting to sway popular opinion towards their cause. In doing so, they relied heavily on the competitive and highly-politicized newspaper industry in the colony as a medium of political participation. During the 1866 and 1867 annexationist agitations, at least one of the major colonial newspapers openly supported the movement. In 1866 Leonard McClure of the *Evening Telegraph* promoted annexationism, and in 1867 it was James Eliphalet McMillan of the *Morning News*. The two editors, along with a handful of former politicians and business elites, the U.S. Consul, and even members of the Masonic Order acted in loose association as unofficial leaders and organizers of the annexation movement. The tenacity of the movement throughout the critical period is largely attributable to this group of leaders. Nevertheless, as this chapter will demonstrate, they mostly failed to win over supporters or to organize themselves as a coherent political faction in British Columbia.

The first murmurs of annexationism in British Columbia came about earnestly as a response to the legitimate economic hardships and political frustrations on Vancouver Island. By the end of the summer of 1866, even before the union of the colonies was completed, Islanders were growing pessimistic about their future prospects. The terms of the unconditional union, which Vancouver Islanders had fought for earlier in the year, were finalized in August and had heavily favoured the mainland. Rather than a federal union or a merging of institutions as Islanders had hoped, Vancouver Island was to be unceremoniously annexed to the mainland. Representative institutions were to be dramatically scaled back, and Victoria would lose its free port status. Whereas the Island had previously enjoyed a bicameral legislature with a fully-elected lower house, in the new colony Islanders would be allowed to elect only four members to a combined 23-member legislative council of 14 magistrates and only nine elected members. The already destitute Islanders were forced to accept new trade restrictions and were afforded far less political capacity to bring about economic recovery than they had possessed previously. By August, when the unequal arrangement had become inevitable, Islanders, united in regret over the haste in which they pushed for union, were virtually unanimous in a sense of bitter resignation over the continued decline of the colony.

The various newspaper editors on the Island, ever the leaders of public opinion, inundated their readers throughout the late summer and early autumn of 1866 with editorials critical of the terms of union and of the political complacency which had allowed the mainland to gain such advantageous terms. In each of the three major newspapers on Vancouver Island, editorials and letters reflected a mood of defeatism and powerless resentment toward the mainland. The *Daily British Colonist and Victoria Chronicle* and the *Nanaimo Tribune*, however, cautioned their readers that there was nothing more that could be done, and that union was a necessary step,

despite their subordinate position. This mood was best expressed by D. W. Higgins in the *Colonist* in a series of articles throughout August and September. One editorial, published in late September, summarized the heavy cost of union for Vancouver Island in clear terms, with Higgins lamenting that “We relinquished our rights of self-government, sacrificed a liberal constitution, and transferred the seat of government, for what?”¹ Nevertheless, he believed union necessary, cautioning that “We have made the bed and so we must lie in it... Things cannot become much worse than they are. Let us rather make up our minds that they have arrived at that stage where the mending is supposed to commence.”² This sentiment matched that of the editor of the *Nanaimo Tribune*, who hoped that the “withering blast” would soon pass, and eventually lead Vancouver Island “to a respectable status amongst the colonial possessions of Her Majesty.”³ Unsurprisingly, mainland papers also encouraged Islanders to support union.⁴ Of all the newspaper editors in the colony, only Leonard McClure, the editor of the *Daily Telegraph*, disapproved of union altogether. His resolute opposition to union and to the relinquishment of liberal institutions eventually led him to endorse annexation to the United States as the only means to prevent the total collapse and depopulation of the colony.

Though most Islanders opposed the terms of the Union bill, McClure was alone among editors in his belief that Union would accelerate the financial and demographic decline of the colonies. McClure wrote a series of articles which were increasingly critical of the political stagnancy of Vancouver Island and which asserted the impossibility of solving the issues facing the colony without first establishing a more liberal form of government.⁵ As a member of the

¹ *Daily British Colonist and Victoria Chronicle*, September 27, 1866, p. 2.

² *Ibid.*, September 25, 1866, p. 2.

³ *Nanaimo Tribune*, September 1, 1866, p. 2.

⁴ *New Westminster British Columbian*, September 12, 1866, p. 2.

⁵ *Victoria Evening Telegraph*, 12 August 1866, p. 2; H. Keith Ralston, “McCLURE, LEONARD,” in *Dictionary of Canadian Biography*, vol. 9, University of Toronto/Université Laval, 2003–. Accessed December 8, 2015, http://www.biographi.ca/en/bio/mcclure_leonard_9E.html.

Vancouver Island Legislative Assembly, McClure had experienced the low political capacity of the Island government first-hand. Something of a radical democrat, McClure's primary interest as a politician was the advancement of representative institutions. He had been a critical figure in the movement to remove James Douglas as the absentee governor of the mainland, and during his time in the Legislative Assembly he had been highly critical of the arbitrary powers given to the appointed Upper House.⁶ To his regret, he had also been a key figure in negotiating for swift and unconditional union between the two colonies. McClure had envisioned an equal federative union between the two colonies, and was dismayed and disillusioned by the unequal and politically regressive terms which were finally negotiated by August of 1866. For him, union under the terms provided represented an intolerable backwards step that would lead to the total depopulation and abandonment of the colony.⁷ This set him distinctly apart from his colleagues who begrudgingly accepted the loss of political power in exchange for the hope of economic survival. McClure's editorials in August criticized the "ripvanwinkelism" and resigned inaction of Islanders, and called for colonists to vigorously oppose the disastrous terms of the Union bill and to campaign for reciprocity with the United States.⁸

McClure's enduring regard for representative institutions and his growing disillusionment with colonial politics led him naturally towards annexationism. As the news editor's pessimism over the economic and political future of the colony grew, so did his skepticism over Great Britain's willingness to overcome its indifference and bring about the radical institutional change which he believed was necessary. McClure's articles through to the end of the summer reflected

⁶ *Victoria Evening Telegraph*, July 13, 1866, p. 2.

⁷ *Ibid.*, August 16, 1866, p. 2; H. Keith Ralston, "McCLURE, LEONARD," in *Dictionary of Canadian Biography*, vol. 9, University of Toronto/Université Laval, 2003-. Accessed december 8, 2015, http://www.biographi.ca/en/bio/mcclure_leonard_9E.html.

⁸ *Victoria Evening Telegraph*, August 16, 1866, p. 2.

a clear rhetorical evolution towards the outright endorsement of annexation. In mid-August, as his work grew increasingly critical of the Imperial Government, he began to hint at a superior alternative.⁹ On August 12, in an article encouraging residents of both colonies to unite against “gubernatorial dictation” of the terms of Union, he suggested that if the government failed to accommodate colonists, British Columbians should “bury national sentiment and look for a connection that will be more profitable and less humiliating.”¹⁰ On August 16th, in an article summarizing the dire state of affairs in the colony, McClure suggested that, had the region been developed under the government of the United States, it would almost certainly be in much better condition than it was under Britain.¹¹ On the 21st, in an article entitled “Confederation or Annexation,” McClure conjectured that the only way to compel Imperial authorities to treat British Columbia with anything but “cynical indifference” would be to demonstrate the “immense material advantage” which it might have with the United States rather than with British North America.¹² In this article, McClure endorsed the distant option of confederation with Canada over that of annexation. Nevertheless, he concluded that, if colonists approached Britain in a “business like, sensible way” either course could be advantageous, especially with the question of annexation having “taken hold of the public mind”.¹³ This latter observation is quite revealing and suggests that at least some proportion of the public was similarly discussing annexationism at this time. However, there is virtually no acknowledgment of any such mood in any other newspaper. The *Colonist* briefly mentioned the possibility of annexation the same day, noting that it was “moot” as Britain would never agree, but made no implication that there was

⁹ Ibid., August 12, 1866, p. 2, August 15, 1866, p. 2.

¹⁰ Ibid., August 12, 1866, p. 2.

¹¹ Ibid., August 16, 1866, p. 2.

¹² Ibid., August 21, 1866, p. 2.

¹³ Ibid.

any local support for the idea.¹⁴ Whatever measure of annexationist opinion existed in August appears to have been nascent. If annexation was being discussed by colonists, no one but McClure was commenting on it publicly.

On September 10th, McClure completed his steady evolution towards open annexationism. In an article entitled “Our Future Prospects” he called for full reciprocity with the United States, even if it meant becoming “part and parcel of the Republic”.¹⁵ If this could not be accomplished, he proposed, individual colonists ought to consider emigration to the United States.¹⁶ McClure was aware of the expansionist discourse in the United States regarding the acquisition of British North America, and was confident that they would agree to take the colony if it was relinquished by Britain. Further, McClure firmly believed that the Queen would acquiesce to annexation if a united body of colonists formally requested that they be allowed to leave the Empire.¹⁷

McClure’s September 10th article was the first direct endorsement of annexation by a public figure in British Columbia. The article solidified the *Telegraph* as an annexationist publication and established McClure as the first public face of annexationism in British Columbia.

McClure’s public endorsement of annexation, and his affirmation that it was not only a superior option to union but was also realistically attainable, brought the issue to the forefront of public discourse and gave rise to the first annexationist agitation of the critical period.

Though the first wave of annexationism in the colony was short-lived, it attracted genuine support from a minority in Victoria. Immediately following McClure’s article, the *Colonist* began to take notice of the presence of annexationists in the city. On September 12th, Higgins

¹⁴ *Daily British Colonist and Victoria Chronicle*, August 23, 1866, p. 2.

¹⁵ *Victoria Evening Telegraph*, September 10, 1866, p. 2.

¹⁶ *Daily British Colonist and Victoria Chronicle*, September 27, 1866, p. 2.

¹⁷ *Victoria Evening Telegraph*, September 10, 1866, p. 2. The notion that Britain would give up the colony in the face of a popular annexation movement was pervasive throughout the critical period, and factored strongly into the arguments of both British Columbian annexationists and American expansionists.

wrote for the first time about the movement, stating that “Of all the schemes concocted in the mad brains of political humbugs, this is the wildest and most ridiculous.” Higgins contended that “it cannot and will not be carried out, and the sooner the people settle down to that belief, the better.”¹⁸ The tone he established in this first article remained consistent for the next five years. Through the rest of the month, Higgins periodically took note of the annexationist presence while McClure continued to tailor the *Telegraph* specifically for an annexationist audience. By virtue of his public position, McClure was the most well-known figure attached to the movement in 1866, and he explicitly used the *Telegraph* as a vehicle to advance the cause of annexation.

Due to the quality and availability of sources, it can be difficult to accurately identify annexationists who were not public figures or news editors. However, from the editorials in the *Colonist* and the *Telegraph*, it is clear that McClure was far from the only person in Victoria to favour annexationism in the autumn of 1866. The United States Consul, Allen Francis, wrote to United States Secretary of State William Henry Seward about the movement at this time, but his account is highly unreliable. Francis, who throughout the period consistently and dramatically overstated support for annexation in the colony, wrote on September 15, 1866 that two-thirds of colonists in Victoria were annexationist. Francis based his estimate on “personal observation, as well as [from] public remarks.” which at the very least suggests that there was some level of discussion of annexation occurring at this time¹⁹ Nevertheless, annexationists attracted very little attention in September 1866. Dr. J. S. Helmcken, whose memoirs provide a fairly detailed portrayal of the shifting politics of the critical period, did not comment on their presence at this

¹⁸ *Daily British Colonist and Victoria Chronicle*, September 12, 1866, p. 2.

¹⁹ Francis to Seward, 15 September 1866, Despatches from the United States Consul in Victoria, 1862-1906. National Archives microfilm publications. T ; microcopy no. 130. National Archives and Record Service General Services Administration, 1957.

time, nor did the Governor of Vancouver Island, Arthur Kennedy. Mainland news editors, who tended to be extremely watchful of affairs in Victoria, were similarly silent.

What little notice colonists took of the annexation movement in September 1866 was almost exclusively directed at McClure and his editorials. Colonists in 1866 overwhelmingly considered McClure to be the movement's sole leader and mastermind.²⁰ This was partly due to his status as an editor and former legislator. McClure was well-known in Victoria and naturally drew the attention and ire of his competing editors and former political colleagues. To a significant degree, however, McClure's prominence as an annexationist leader also seems to have been the result of a deliberate effort by other Victorian annexationists to remain anonymous in order to avoid public scrutiny. As prominent voices in the colony such as Higgins made it quite clear that annexationism was unwelcome within the mainstream of colonial politics, annexationists in 1866 rightly became nervous that public endorsement of annexation might cause their reputations to be ruined among the majority of pro-British colonists who regarded the movement as treasonous.²¹ It was clear that for the movement to advance, supporters would need to coordinate themselves, and test the waters to determine the degree to which colonists might be open to their platform. On the evening of September 29th, 1866, McClure, in conjunction with a group of nameless annexationist colleagues, held a public meeting to discuss the future of the colony and the possibility of annexation.

The annexation meeting was among the most defining events in the history of the movement. Unfortunately, many of the specific details of the proceedings are difficult to discern. The nature of the competitive and heavily-politicized newspaper industry in Victoria was such that there are

²⁰ *Daily British Colonist and Victoria Chronicle*, October 2, 1866, p. 2, October 5, 1866, p. 2, October 6, 1866, p. 2. Virtually all of the letters to the *Colonist* and *Columbian* complaining of annexationists referenced McClure specifically as the leader of the movement.

²¹ *Daily British Colonist and Victoria Chronicle*, September 12, 1866, p. 2, September 27, 1866, p. 2.

two primary competing records of the events which transpired in the Victoria Theatre that Saturday evening. D.W. Higgins published his anti-annexationist version of the events in the *British Colonist*, while McClure championed his own perspective in the *Daily Telegraph*. These newspapers provided the only full accounts of the meeting, and presented very similar narratives, if not judgments. Mainland newspapers did not take significant notice of the meeting, nor did the *Nanaimo Tribune*. Governor Kennedy did not write about the meeting, while the Governor of British Columbia, Frederick Seymour had not yet returned to the colony from Britain. Thus, no official correspondence references it. No other officials or observers seem to have kept records of the event, and no historians have described it in any detail. Apart from the competing summaries of Higgins and McClure, as well as the various letters by participants which were published in their respective papers, the only source on the event is the testimony of libel trial between Higgins and Charles Bedford Young, a former member of the Vancouver Island Assembly, over an article which Higgins published a few days after the event. Though the various participants describe the details of the event very differently, almost every single person who attended the meeting agreed that it was a disastrous farce and an embarrassment to all who attended.

It is not clear whether McClure himself masterminded the annexation meeting or if he was encouraged to organize the event by other anonymous annexationists. McClure claimed repeatedly that he did not organize the meeting alone, and all accounts agree that McClure expressed confusion at several points during the meeting over the absence of his co-organizers.²² The meeting was called on extremely short notice, the notification having only been published in the *Telegraph* the day before, and suffered from a lack of proper planning. McClure intended to

²² Ibid., October 1, 1866, p. 2, October 2, 1866, p. 2, October 3, 1866, p. 2; *Victoria Evening Telegraph*, September 30, 1866, p. 2.

gather supporters in order to move a resolution endorsing reciprocity and representative government at any cost, even if it meant joining the United States. Unfortunately for the annexationists, the meeting appears to have been the only thing of interest which occurred in Victoria that evening. In addition to McClure's supporters, the meeting attracted numerous anti-annexationists, public officials, and a large contingent of bored and possibly drunk residents who collectively attempted to disrupt and shut down the meeting. This volatile combination of fully six hundred Victorians crowded into the tiny "Theatre Royal", constructed of two adjoining barns on the corner of Government and Yates Street for what Higgins later described as "the merriest, oddest, and the most supremely ridiculous failure in the public meeting line that has yet taken place in this colony."²³

The meeting was an unmitigated disaster from the very beginning. In the absence of McClure's mysterious annexationist colleagues, the group was unable to find a willing chairman, and for nearly an hour audience members amused themselves by loudly calling out individual attendees and accusing each other of disloyalty. William Leigh, the City Clerk, eventually accepted the chairmanship, but failed to control the audience. Leigh called for the promoters of the meeting to step forward to explain its purpose, but in their absence several anti-annexationists took to the stage to voice their loyalty to the crown and their disapproval of the meeting. Eventually, amid a chorus of cheers and heckling, McClure was called to the stage to explain the meeting and to introduce his resolution. At the podium, he noted for the second time that evening that he "did not see the gentlemen present who were to move the resolutions or take the chair", and began to introduce his argument for annexation. McClure explained that the conditions in the colony were intractable, and that without political privileges, Vancouver

²³ Edgar Fawcett, *Some Reminiscences of Old Victoria* (Toronto: William Briggs, 1921), 23; *Daily British Colonist and Victoria Chronicle*, 1 October 1866, p. 2.

Islanders were without a means to solve their problems. “Reciprocity with the United States and a cheap and liberal form of government were desired” and these could not be attained while the colonists were “reduced to the position of serfs”.²⁴

As McClure attempted to present his argument, the audience grew more unruly. Edward Graham Alston, Vancouver Island’s Registrar General, and Alexander Watson, the Colonial Treasurer, had taken up positions by the gallery door. They and their supporters and employees attempted to disrupt McClure by coughing loudly and yelling out of turn. As McClure finished his speech and asked Leigh to read the resolution to the audience, Alston advanced to the podium and tried to speak over Leigh to prevent the resolution’s introduction. This intervention brought about even greater confusion as annexationists, anti-annexationists, and government supporters alike erupted into argument and began to leap onto the stage. Leigh attempted to reassert control to put the resolution to the audience, but was interrupted by Watson who handed him a written amendment. Perhaps unwisely, Leigh immediately read it aloud to the room. The amendment proposed “-that this meeting do now dissolve with three cheers to the Queen”.²⁵ The cheer was taken up loudly and enthusiastically by the audience, and many of the individuals who had come only to disrupt the proceedings, considering themselves victorious, began filing out of the theatre. Leigh resigned his chairmanship in disgust and joined the departing crowd as McClure and Alston argued on the stage. Captain Edward Stamp, another former M.L.A, and a veteran of the Crimean War, stood up to replace Leigh as Chairman, and the meeting once again resumed.²⁶

The second iteration of the annexation meeting went only slightly better than the first. Stamp called upon the audience to be respectful, and granted McClure and Alston fifteen minutes each

²⁴ *Victoria Evening Telegraph*, September 30, 1866, p. 2.

²⁵ *Daily British Colonist and Victoria Chronicle*, October 1, 1866, p. 2.

²⁶ *Ibid.*

to speak for their respective positions. McClure proceeded first, asking the audience, rather uncontroversially, if they believed in the benefits of reciprocity and cheap, liberal government. Attempting to ease his listeners toward the idea of annexation, he had only just begun to address the topic itself when Stamp announced that his time was up. Alston subsequently took up the podium to a loud chorus of cheers and hisses. His attempt to speak was drowned out by hecklers. With the departure of the large group of loyalists, the balance in the audience between loyalists and annexationists had evened out, and annexationists took their turn to disrupt their opponents. Alston worked to make himself heard over the clamour of the audience, but his task grew continuously more difficult as the crowd once again descended into chaos. Some members began to argue and brawl openly, while others attempted to rush the stage, only to be pulled back by their peers, and at least one piece of fruit was lobbed at the podium. This time the chairman and speakers were entirely unable to curtail the mob, and even after Stamp resigned his chair and declared the meeting over, the absurd scene was only ended when the gas lights in the theatre were turned off. This gesture proved effective, and most of the audience filed out of the darkened building, once again under the assumption that the meeting had been successfully suppressed.²⁷

The annexationists were not to be deterred, however. Approximately one hundred-fifty people remained in the theatre, C. B. Young was appointed chairman, and the meeting resumed. McClure returned to speaking in favour of annexation, and finally was able to read the resolution in its entirety. The resolution itself called for reciprocity and liberal government, and featured a pledge to formally petition the Queen to either bring about the changes demanded or to make arrangements for the colony to be transferred to the United States. Notably, annexation itself was featured as an ultimatum and not the goal itself. Higgins later claimed that nobody had seconded

²⁷ Ibid.

the motion to take up the resolution. Other observers were equally unsure as to whether procedure had been followed, however John James Cochrane, another former M.L.A. testified later that it had been a surveyor named Robert Layzell.²⁸ McClure's speech led Cochrane to stand up to voice his objection that as a fellow M.L.A of Vancouver Island, McClure would endorse such a traitorous course of action. This accusation incited an odd and somewhat childish exchange of insults between the two men which was only broken up by Young after Cochrane used "unparliamentary" language in calling McClure a liar.²⁹ The resolution was placed before the audience and was taken up by either "a small majority" (according to Higgins), or "an overwhelming majority – in a proportion of five-to-one" (according to McClure). The meeting ended with a cry of three groans for the *British Colonist* (which were either doleful or feeble), and three cheers for the *Daily Telegraph* (which could have been either deafening or sickly).³⁰

The annexation meeting was the first and most public discussion of the possibility of joining the United States to be held in Victoria during the critical period. Although the proceedings were largely characterized by respectable individuals engaged in thoroughly embarrassing conduct, the full scope of the events of the evening are vital to understand the first wave of annexationist agitation in the colony. Regarding the membership of the movement itself, the competing accounts of the meeting present a great deal of valuable information. The fact that the audience

²⁸ *Daily British Colonist and Victoria Chronicle*, December 15, 1866, p. 2. Cochrane added further details about his memory of the meeting when he testified in Young's libel trial. On October 8, 1866 Young launched a libel lawsuit against Higgins over a letter which he had published on October 2nd. Young testified in December that he was not an annexationist despite his favouritism for McClure near the end of the meeting. The Jury ruled in favour of Higgins. [*Daily British Colonist and Victoria Chronicle*, October 8, 1866, p. 3, December 15, 1866, p. 2, December 16, 1866, p. 2]; Information on Layzell's profession from: R. W. Sandwell, *Contesting Rural Space: Land Policy and Practices of Resettlement on Saltspring Island, 1859-1891* (Montreal: McGill-Queen's University Press, 2005), 249. There is very little information about this individual. He did not sign the 1869 petition, and his name does not appear again in any newspapers or other records which I have found.

²⁹ *Daily British Colonist and Victoria Chronicle*, December 15, 1866, p. 2.

³⁰ The October 1st editorial in the *Colonist* and the September 30th article in the *Telegraph* agreed on most details of the meeting although their use of adjectives is very different throughout and a point of particular interest.

demanded that McClure represent the annexationist argument further suggests that he was perceived by Victorians to be the leader of the annexationists. However, McClure's lack of preparedness to act in this capacity, and his grumbling over his mysterious colleagues strongly suggest that this was not really the case. His conduct in the planning and execution of the meeting suggest that he was genuinely taken back by the non-attendance of his peers, and that he had not intended or prepared to lead the event. McClure was a well-respected news editor and politician in British Columbia, and he was anything but an incompetent leader. It seems highly unlikely that he would have acted the way he did had he not had dramatically different expectations regarding attendance at the meeting.

As McClure never identified his absent colleagues by name, there is no way to determine their identities. No documents were signed by supporters of the resolution at the September meeting, and the 1869 annexation petition is the only official document which contains the names of avowed annexationists. Nevertheless, the most likely candidates among known annexationists who were active during the critical period were Henry Heisterman and his colleagues from the Vancouver Masonic Lodge No. 421. Willard Ireland briefly described the membership of the masonic lodges in British Columbia in a follow-up article to his analysis of the 1869 annexation petition. Of several masonic organizations in the colony, the Vancouver Lodge No. 421 was the most ardently annexationist.³¹ Though they are best known as the originators of the 1869 annexation petition, Heisterman and his colleagues were present in the colony throughout the entire critical period and were among the only known annexationist organizers who were not otherwise public figures in the community. In addition to being the

³¹ Willard E. Ireland, "A Further Note on the Annexation Petition of 1869," *British Columbia Historical Quarterly* Vol.5(1) (January, 1941): 72; J. B. Kerr, *Biographical Dictionary of Well-known British Columbians; with a historical sketch*. (Vancouver: Kerr & Begg, 1890), 184.

Secretary for the Masonic Lodge, Heisterman was the President of the Victoria Verein, a German-Austrian voluntary association, and ran a successful real-estate and finance business.³² Heisterman was well-connected in the community, and likely already knew McClure through the latter's activities as an M.L.A. McClure's final act as a representative was a day-long filibuster intended to block a bill which would open land sales to foreign speculation, an issue in which Heisterman was heavily invested.³³ Though there is very little evidence, there are no other known figures or groups who were actively promoting annexationism during the period. McClure's conduct during the meeting strongly suggests that Heisterman and his friends, or a group very much like them, were actively promoting annexationism beyond of the public spotlight.

Though its organizers failed to materialize, the public meeting served its purpose in bringing together the supporters of annexationism in Victoria. The fact that the meeting was eventually successful and the resolution was passed demonstrates that there was at least some proportion of rank-and-file annexationists in Victoria in the autumn of 1866. By the third iteration of the meeting after the gas had been turned off, the annexationist faction almost certainly made up the majority of the approximately 150 people remaining. Even Higgins, who celebrated the meeting's earlier failures, admitted in his account that the resolution was eventually passed and that the crowd expressed its support for the *Daily Telegraph's* politics. Though it is unclear how large a majority voted in favour of the resolution, at least 70 to 120 annexationists were in

³² Heisterman's role in the German Verein in Victoria is briefly mentioned in *Daily British Colonist and Victoria Chronicle*, 5 December 1866, p. 3. His role as Secretary of the Masonic Lodge is mentioned in *Daily British Colonist and Victoria Chronicle*, 20 June 1866, p. 3; Details regarding Heisterman's business can be found in Kerr, 183-184; and in "Henry Frederick Heisterman" St. Andrew's Church in the Heart of Victoria's Victoria. Accessed December 8, 2015, http://web.uvic.ca/vv/student/st_andrews/heisterman.php/.

³³ H. Keith Ralston, "McCLURE, LEONARD," in *Dictionary of Canadian Biography*, vol. 9, University of Toronto/Université Laval, 2003-. Accessed December 8, 2015, http://www.biographi.ca/en/bio/mcclure_leonard_9E.html.

attendance by the close of the meeting that night. Though this figure represents a tiny proportion of the population of Victoria, which was somewhere between 2000-4000 people in 1866, nevertheless, it demonstrates that there was a genuine annexationist element in the city who were sufficiently invested in the movement to not only attend a public meeting and “out” themselves politically, but who were willing to sit through several hours of drunken heckling in order to vote for the resolution.³⁴

The newspaper debate which erupted in the aftermath of the September meeting is highly significant in revealing how annexationists organized and expressed themselves during this time. The rhetoric of loyalty and the respective strategies used by annexationists and loyalists in advancing their positions will be discussed in chapter two, however the heavy reliance by both sides on newspapers as a medium of public debate is itself significant. The highly-developed newspaper industries on both Vancouver Island and the Mainland, profoundly partisan during the critical period, were deeply engrained in the political culture of the two colonies. Editors frequently used their newspapers as a platform to maintain their political careers which in turn placed them in a favourable position to receive lucrative government printing contracts.³⁵ Colonists on both sides of the Georgia Strait placed an extremely high value on their local “sheet” and tended to display considerable loyalty for individual newspaper editors, most of

³⁴ Richard E. Neunherz. “Hemmed In”: Reactions in British Columbia to the Purchase of Russian America” *The Pacific Northwest Quarterly*, Vol.80(3), (1 July 1989): 102. Though the population of Victoria at this time is a question of speculation due to the lack of census data and a migratory population, Neunherz wrote that the population of the whole of British Columbia was 13,624 in 1861 and had declined to 8,631 in 1866. The population of Victoria noted above is an estimate based on these numbers.

³⁵ *Daily British Colonist and Victoria Chronicle*, December 24, 1866, p. 2; Editors who used their newspapers to sustain their political careers included Amor De Cosmos, who founded the *British Colonist* before selling it to Higgins in 1863, John Robson of the *British Columbian*, and Leonard McClure of the *Evening Telegraph*. Other politicians, including C.B. Young, maintained regular columns; see Madge Wolfenden, “The Early Government Gazettes.” *British Columbian Historical Quarterly*, Vol. 7 (July 1943): 188; Merrill Distad, “Serials” in *History of the Book in Canada Volume II, 1840-1918*, ed. Yvan Lamonde, Patricia Lockhart Fleming and Fiona A. Black (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2004), 298.

whom possessed a certain degree of local fame and/or infamy stemming from their heavily politicized and public identities. Even before the meeting, many people in the colony considered McClure to be the singular leader of the annexationists due to his editorship of the annexationist newspaper; very little attention was paid to other politicians or leading Victorians who may have been active in the movement. One author complained about this phenomenon in the *Colonist*, writing that McClure was “merely an instrument in the hands of Young and others in his kidney(sic), who thrust him forward while they steal off and hide in dark corners, to escape responsibility”³⁶ Ownership of the printed word was among the most important arenas of political power in British Columbia, and annexationists and their opponents relied on the medium of daily newspapers to discredit one another and sway the public to their respective causes.³⁷ In a colony with a high degree of political consciousness but with no formal political parties and a largely nascent electoral culture, colonists gravitated towards newspapers as a primary locus of political association and expression.

The primacy of newspaper as a medium of political organization in the colonies held especially true for supporters of annexationism. This was exemplified during the meeting itself, in which, at the close of both the second and third session, annexationists led a round of groans for the *Colonist* and cheers for the *Telegraph*. As their opponents toasted the Queen, annexationists celebrated their newspaper as their main rallying entity. This behaviour partially attests to the importance of newspapers in colonial politics in general, but it speaks in particular to the high degree of political alienation which annexationists faced in Victoria.³⁸ With the final

³⁶ *Daily British Colonist and Victoria Chronicle*, October 3, 1866, p. 2.

³⁷ This “partisan press” dynamic is similar to that which was seen in Quebec after the introduction of Responsible Government. See: Gilles Gallichan “The Newspaper in Quebec: Partisan to Commercial” in in Lamond, Fleming, Black, ed., 304; See chapter two for further details on the rhetoric of the annexation debate.

³⁸ The use of the written word as a means of empowerment by otherwise disenfranchised groups is not unprecedented in Canadian history. Less than a decade later, Louis Riel’s supporters in Manitoba, and the Women’s Suffrage movement in Central Canada also came to rely heavily on print as a means of political expression. See: Eli

closing of the Legislative Assembly and no hope of sending a representative to the soon-to-be established Legislative Council, annexationists had very little hope to participate meaningfully in the official politics of the colony. Moreover, after the comedy of errors that was their first attempt at a serious meeting, annexationists seem to have relented before the suppressive tactics of loyalists. After September there were no further attempts to hold an annexationist public meeting in the colony. With no other means for annexationists to formally organize themselves, the local annexationist newspaper served as the centerpiece of the movement during the critical period. The medium of the newspaper served to unite annexationists as a community and allowed them to maintain their participation in the conversation over the colony's future. The drawback to their focus on newspapers was that it made it difficult for annexationists to accurately gauge the popularity of their cause (a problem which actually worked to their advantage in the later years of the movement). Furthermore, as it was a necessarily public medium, annexationists who were invested in the community risked public backlash by participating in the annexationist press. Because of this, there was a noticeable disconnect between the public figures advancing annexationism rhetorically and the prominent merchants who attempted to organize political activism from the margins of public awareness.

Public debate over annexationism and over the events of the September meeting continued through October, but began to wane significantly as colonial union was finally implemented in November. Now officially British Columbians, Victorians faced a host of new problems and political issues. As annexationists appeared to lack direction after their performance at the meeting, public attention quickly turned towards the issue of the capital selection. McClure continued to publish articles criticizing the undemocratic colonial government and comparing the

Maclaren "Resistance, Rebellion, and Print in the Northwest" in Lamond, Fleming, Black, ed., 344; and Veronica Strong-Boag "Print and the Promotion of Women's Suffrage", in Lamond, Fleming, Black, ed., 351.

financial success of the politically liberal United States to the “destitution” of England, but his efforts did not translate into further political activities on the part of the annexationists.³⁹ In the wake of their failure to mount a credible opposition to Union or to present a clear plan for achieving their aims, the annexation movement began to decline considerably. By the end of November, the finances of the *Telegraph* had deteriorated such that McClure was forced to suspend publication entirely. Annexationists were a minority in the city, and McClure’s business was severely impacted by his reputation for disloyalty and his overt appeals to his own readership that they should consider leaving the colony.⁴⁰ Less than a month later, McClure took his own advice. Like several other failed journalists in Victoria, he emigrated from the colony to San Francisco, where he became editor of the *Times*.⁴¹

With the demise of the *Telegraph* and the question of the capital occupying the minds of editors and politicians on the Island, annexationists in the colony were voiceless and thus very easy for loyalists to ignore and mischaracterize. The *Colonist*, now the only newspaper of any consequence in Victoria, made almost no mention of annexationism through the early months of 1867; neither did its mainland counterpart, the *Columbian*. Even an article entitled “Reciprocity and Confederation”, published in early January, made only a passing, cryptic reference to the movement which had so completely captured public attention only three months earlier. With union an accomplished fact and confederation still well beyond the horizon, the colonists turned

³⁹ *Victoria Evening Telegraph*, October 26, 1866, p. 2, November 13, 1866, p. 2.

⁴⁰ *Daily British Colonist and Victoria Chronicle*, December 24, 1866, p. 2; Wolfenden, “The Early Government Gazettes”, 188.

⁴¹ Wolfenden, “The Early Government Gazettes”, 183; Edward Cleveland Kemble and Helen Harding Bretnor. *A history of California newspapers, 1846-1858*. (Los Gatos CA: Talisman Press, 1962), 131. The *San Francisco Times* was a minor newspaper in a city that boasted a dozen daily publications. It was also known as *Town Talk; Nanaimo Tribune*, October 13, 1866, p. 2. A private letter reprinted from the *Telegraph* listed several former Victorian printers and labourers who had found success in San Francisco. Emigration was a major problem in British Columbia during this time as a significant proportion of the population of the colony migrated south for better opportunities. See F. W. Howay, W. N. Sage and H. F. Angus, *British Columbia and the United States: The North Pacific Slope from Fur Trade to Aviation*. (Toronto: The Ryerson Press, 1942), 189.

their attention firmly towards local politics. Annexationists remained united by their opposition to the terms of colonial union. However, with no new transformative issue at the forefront of colonial politics, there was no clear momentum or viable strategy for them to bring about the annexation of the colony or to win support among its residents. Without a coherent plan and without McClure and the *Telegraph* to give voice to their cause, annexationism largely ceased to be a political movement by the end of 1866.

The state of remission into which the annexation movement fell in December lasted only a few short months. Through the first quarter of 1867, annexationism appeared to have become but a footnote in Victorian history, but at the beginning of the spring, several factors emerged to ensure its revitalization. On March 29th, the British North America act was proclaimed by Queen Victoria, signalling the imminent confederation of the eastern British North American colonies. The next day, United States Secretary of State William Howard Seward completed negotiations to purchase Russian America. The Alaska Purchase, which completely altered the geopolitical makeup of the Pacific coast by leaving British Columbia surrounded to the north and south by the United States, took colonists completely by surprise. The first news of the purchase, published in the *Colonist* on April 4th, provoked renewed anxiety among colonists over the precarious position which British Columbia occupied on the Pacific in relation to its much larger neighbour.⁴² In making the Alaska Purchase, the United States, already known for its expansionist proclivities, demonstrated for the first time its willingness to expand north of the 49th parallel. Colonists wondered how Britain could have allowed Alaska to be taken by the United States, a sentiment which contributed further to the growing sense among British

⁴² *Daily British Colonist and Victoria Chronicle*, April 4, 1867; Dorothy Blakey Smith ed. *The Reminiscences of Doctor John Sebastian Helmcken*. (Victoria: University of British Columbia Press, 1975), 242.

Columbians that they had been forgotten by the Imperial government.⁴³ Even government officials, notorious for their unflinching loyalty to Britain, took pause at the news of the Alaska Purchase. Alston wrote that British Columbians felt “isolated from British sentiments” and worried that Britain would not protect them from American expansion.⁴⁴ For observers in British Columbia, the possibility that they may become the victims of American expansionism, even against their will, appeared plausible, and perhaps even inevitable.

In the last week of April, as colonists grappled with the implications of the Alaska purchase, the worst fears of loyalists seemed to be confirmed as colonial newspapers reported on a confidential despatch which had been published in New York the week before. The despatch, based on incorrect and overly-optimistic intelligence, announced that Seward was in negotiations with Lord Stanley to acquire the western half of British Columbia.⁴⁵ The rumor of the Seward-Stanley negotiations further inflamed the sense of pessimism and vulnerability among colonists regarding their geopolitical status. Even as Britain consolidated its eastern North American colonies, it seemed believable to many that the Home Office might seek to rid itself of its isolated and inconvenient pacific holdings as a cheap means of dispensing the Alabama Claims.⁴⁶ The Alaska Purchase and the Seward-Stanley rumor created a perfect storm of pessimism and anxiety in the colony such that open discussion of annexation again became a possibility and annexationists once again engaged in political agitation in British Columbia.

While annexationists were certainly encouraged by what appeared to be a favourable international climate, local political and economic issues remained at the heart of the

⁴³ Neunherz, “Hemmed In”, 104.

⁴⁴ Ibid.

⁴⁵ *Daily British Colonist and Victoria Chronicle*, April 25, 1867, p. 2; *New Westminster British Columbian*, April 27, 1867, p. 2; *Victoria Morning News*, April 25, 1867, clipping from Scrapbook, James E. McMillan Manuscripts, British Columbia Archives and Records Service.

⁴⁶ Neunherz, “Hemmed In”, 103.

movement's resurgence. In the first six months of colonial union, as little had been done to solve the major systemic problems facing British Columbia, the colony continued to decline both financially and demographically. As it had been in 1866, annexationism in its 1867 iteration was ultimately a movement of reluctance motivated by political alienation and economic desperation. The international diplomatic situation and the possibility of American expansionism merely paved the way for annexation to stand once again as a clear and immediate solution to the local troubles of British Columbia. Though many colonists looked toward the imminent confederation of the eastern colonies as their economic salvation, as the local and international situation grew increasingly bleak for British loyalists, a significant proportion of colonists, including some who had not supported the movement in 1866, began to view annexationism as the only viable solution to the British Columbia's problems. To ardent annexationists who had participated in the movement's first iteration, the new situation must have seemed to be an incredible stroke of good fortune. Unbeknownst to British Columbians and even to annexationists themselves, their own activities in 1866 had been a major factor in turning the attention of the United States toward the colony.

The mysterious despatch which spawned the rumors of the Seward-Stanley negotiations was based on faulty information; the two statesmen were not, and had never been, in active negotiation over the sale of British Columbia. However, Seward had attempted multiple times to reach out to Stanley in relation to the purchase of British Columbia as recompense for the Alabama Claims. Britain had repeatedly voiced its refusal to negotiate over British Columbia, and had given no direct indication to Seward that they would ever be open to doing so. However, due to his particular faith in the inevitable spread of republicanism across the continent and of the Manifest Destiny of the United States, Seward remained hopeful that Britain would relent in

the face of a powerful annexation movement in British Columbia.⁴⁷ Seward's continued efforts to acquire the colony in spite of British refusal were sustained in no small part by intelligence from Allen Francis regarding the Victoria annexation movement. Only two days after the public meeting in September, Francis transmitted the issue of the *Telegraph* which covered the proceedings to Seward. Throughout 1866 and the beginning of 1867, he routinely transmitted editorials and penned despatches which included vastly exaggerated reports of the popularity of the annexation movement.⁴⁸

Seward's diplomatic strategy was strongly influenced by Francis's reports. The Secretary hoped that purchasing Alaska would further strengthen the British Columbian annexation movement and in turn provide him sufficient leverage to compel British authorities to enter formal negotiations over the sale of the colony.⁴⁹ The faulty intelligence published in the New York despatch was an indirect consequence of Seward's stubborn diplomatic efforts which were sustained by his misconceptions about the popularity of the annexation movement.⁵⁰

Spectacularly, the efforts of McClure and his colleagues in September were rewarded as the resolution which was passed at the end of the public meeting actually influenced the foreign

⁴⁷ See chapter three for a more thorough explanation of Seward's particular aims regarding British Columbia and the annexation movement.

⁴⁸ Francis to Seward, September 15, 1866, October 1, 1866, April 13, 1867, April 23, 1867, Despatches from the United States Consul in Victoria, 1862-1906. National Archives microfilm publications. T ; microcopy no. 130. National Archives and Record Service General Services Administration, 1957. Francis' reports usually featured his own estimate of the fraction of residents of Victoria who favoured annexation. In mid-September he guessed it was two-thirds of the population, and after the meeting he claimed it to be three-quarters. As suggested by Charles John Fedorak, these figures appear to be either random guesswork or perhaps a concerted effort to encourage Seward to annex the colony. [Charles John Fedorak, "The United States Consul in Victoria and the Political Destiny of the Colony of British Columbia, 1862-1870." *BC Studies*, no 79, (Autumn 1988): 16.] Francis' numbers are wholly unbelievable. Were three-quarters of Victorians indeed annexationist at the end of September, more people would have made note of it, and the public meeting would certainly have gone very differently. For more details on Seward's efforts in relation to British Columbia and the American predisposition to believe in the popularity of annexationism, see chapter three.

⁴⁹ David E. Shi, "Seward's Attempt to Annex British Columbia, 1865-1869" *Pacific Historical Review*, Vol.47(2) (1 May 1978): 223, 224.

⁵⁰ Walter Stahr, *Seward: Lincoln's Indispensable Man* (New York: Simon and Schuster Paperbacks, 2012), 498-499; Shi, "Seward's Attempt", 222, 227.

policy of the United States via Francis' consular reports. The rumors of negotiations between Seward and Stanley, though false, were nevertheless to a certain degree an indirect result of the efforts of a few dozen annexationists in Victoria. On April 25th the echoes of the September meeting returned to Victoria in force, resurrecting the annexation movement and sparking the most significant annexationist agitation of the critical period.

Among the most notable of the annexationist converts in 1867 was James Eliphalet McMillan, who came to fill the void left by McClure as the unofficial voice of the annexation movement. McMillan moved to Victoria from the mainland in February of 1867 as part of an effort to expand the operations of the *British Columbian* onto Vancouver Island.⁵¹ The *News* was McMillan's first paper as proprietor and editor, although he had worked alongside Amor De Cosmos on the *Colonist* before joining John Robson on the *British Columbian* early in 1866. McMillan had not been strongly political throughout his career as a journalist and editor, and his personal politics seemed to alter to suit whichever paper hired him.⁵² When he established the *News* in Victoria, it was McMillan's first opportunity to exert complete control over the politics of a newspaper. Though by the end of April the *News* replaced the *Telegraph* as the main voice of annexationists in the colony, there is no indication that McMillan had initially planned for the paper to advance an annexationist platform or that he had intended to become an annexationist leader when he first arrived in Victoria.

⁵¹ *Daily British Colonist and Victoria Chronicle*, February 22, 1867, p. 3.

⁵² As a writer for the *Chronicle* before it merged with the *Colonist* McMillan wrote at least one pro-confederation article. *Victoria Daily Chronicle*, December 11, 1864, clipping from Scrapbook, James E. McMillan Manuscripts, British Columbia Archives and Records Service; As a writer for *The Columbian*, only a few months before he started the *News* and became an annexationist, he wrote a scathing article about the Alabama claims in which he accused the United States of endorsing Fenian raids and suggested Britain should "appeal to arms" to resist the claims. *New Westminster British Columbian*, December 12, 1866, clipping from Scrapbook, James E. McMillan Manuscripts, British Columbia Archives and Records Service.

Throughout the first months of its life, the *News* did not assume a strong political position on Governor Seymour and his administration or the colony's political future. Robson and McMillan had intended the *News* to compete with the "pernicious influence of the *Colonist* by assuming a mild and dignified tone" and McMillan was largely successful in this effort in his earliest issues.⁵³ It is difficult to accurately assess the changing politics of the *News* over time as only a handful of the publication's issues have survived. The vast majority of the surviving legacy of the *News* has been saved in McMillan's cherished scrapbook, in which he collected a handful of his most politically-charged editorials. Given the scarcity of surviving issues and articles from McMillan's paper, the *Colonist* and the *Columbian* are often the best gauge of his shifting political perspective. Higgins and Robson were quick to criticize the *News* over any point of disagreement. Both of McMillan's former bosses, being fervently anti-annexationist, took any excuse to publically condemn annexationist "traitors" in the pages of their respective publications. As such, their silence on the issue in relation to the *News* in its earliest months is extremely telling. It was not until the end of April, after the despatch was published, that McMillan began to publish pro-annexation articles and his contemporaries began to criticize him for it.

When news of the Seward-Stanley negotiations reached the Island, McMillan was very quick to support annexation. His April 25th article announcing the negotiations was couched in a rhetoric of loyalty to Britain, but he nevertheless predicted that a transfer of British Columbia to the United States "would be received by a large majority of people of this colony, of every nationality, with a feeling of unmingled satisfaction", given the history of under-appreciation

⁵³ *New Westminster British Columbian*, April 6, 1867, p. 2.

with which Britain had regarded the region.⁵⁴ By Wednesday of the next week, McMillan abandoned the safety of loyalist posturing and situated himself more firmly on the annexationist side. He published an “exposé” which criticized the “fence-sitting” of the *Colonist* and the *Islander* with regard to annexationism, and ridiculed the two papers for “blowing hot and cold” on the “vitaly-important” issue.⁵⁵ By the week’s end, McMillan had completed the *News*’ political transformation, stating clearly on Friday, May 3rd that the colony would be “immensely benefitted” should Britain accept Seward’s offer of British Columbia’s annexation to the United States⁵⁶

Still, it is unclear whether or not McMillan himself had always been an annexationist or if local and international developments had led him to convert alongside his paper in April. Choosing not to openly advocate joining the United States in his first months as editor was certainly a sound business decision for McMillan as he was attempting to establish himself in a new market in competition with a well-regarded and established publisher. Annexationism was still in remission in February, and the failure of the *Telegraph* was fresh in the minds of colonists.⁵⁷ Still, none of the editorials from McMillan’s scrapbook which he had penned during his years at the *Colonist* or *Columbian* endorsed annexation, despite his later public insistence that they had.⁵⁸ Furthermore, his new political views seemed to have taken Higgins and Robson

⁵⁴ *Victoria Morning News*, April 25, 1867, clipping from Scrapbook, James E. McMillan Manuscripts, British Columbia Archives and Records Service.

⁵⁵ *Victoria Morning News*, May 1, 1867, clipping from Scrapbook, James E. McMillan Manuscripts, British Columbia Archives and Records Service. *The Vancouver Islander* was a weekly Sunday newspaper published using the facilities of the *Colonist*. It tended to feature short fiction and issues of local interest rather than engage in the politics of the colony. It did publish one article in favour of confederation, which McMillan attacked it for, but apart from that it was not a meaningful presence in the editorial politics of Victoria.

⁵⁶ *Victoria Morning News*, May 3, 1867, clipping from Scrapbook, James E. McMillan Manuscripts, British Columbia Archives and Records Service.

⁵⁷ *New Westminster British Columbian*, April 6, 1867, p. 2.

⁵⁸ On May 3rd 1867 McMillan attempted to refute accusations of hypocrisy by claiming that he had no creative control and thus could not advance annexationism at the *Columbian*. Interestingly, he noted in the article that he had saved in his scrap-book a few past “leaders” which he wrote at the *Columbian* at times when Robson was away, and that Higgins should ask to view them if he still did not believe that McMillan had always been an annexationist.

by surprise. Once McMillan did emerge as an annexationist, he was repeatedly criticized by his former colleagues for his mercenary politics and changeability.⁵⁹ Though it is impossible to determine his thoughts for certain, the bulk of the evidence suggests that McMillan was either not annexationist until 1867, or that if he was, he hid it very well. Whether he was a true believer or an opportunist, in the summer of 1867 McMillan emerged as a leading annexationist in Victoria, taking up virtually the same role that McClure had occupied six months earlier. Unlike his predecessor, however, McMillan was not alone among journalists in riding the tide of public enthusiasm for annexationism in the summer of 1867.

Newspapers editors seem to have been particularly affected by the sudden popularity of annexationism. Alongside the *News*, the *Nanaimo Tribune* came out in favour of annexation in May, while C. B. Young ceased writing for the *Colonist* as Monitor and began writing annexationist editorials for the *News*.⁶⁰ For a brief moment at the end of April, even Higgins was apparently affected by the mood taking hold in Victoria.⁶¹ On April 29th, he published an article entitled “Is Annexation the only Panacea” in which he suggested he could speak for “nine out of every ten men in the colony” in stating that colonists would “welcome Annexation to the United States in preference to continuing in a state of poverty and wretchedness.” This was not really an endorsement, however. In the same article Higgins predicted that immediate confederation with

Victoria Morning News, May 3, 1867, clipping from Scrapbook, James E. McMillan Manuscripts, British Columbia Archives and Records Service. He may not have been sincere in this offer at the time, as the articles in the book from McMillan’s time at the *Columbian* clearly demonstrate his then-opposition to Fenianism and the efforts of the United States to extract land for the Alabama Claims. Overwhelmingly, McMillan seems to have turned to annexationism as a business strategy. It is also interesting and amusing to note that McMillan was personally very proud of his scrapbook. Higgins frequently mentioned McMillan’s “Famous Scrapbook” as he mocked him in the pages of the *Colonist*. [*Daily British Colonist and Victoria Chronicle*, May 4, 1867, p. 2, May 6, 1867, p. 3, May 11, 1867, p. 2.]

⁵⁹ *Daily British Colonist and Victoria Chronicle*, May 22, 1867, p. 2; *New Westminster British Columbian*, May 4, 1867, p. 3.

⁶⁰ *Daily British Colonist and Victoria Chronicle*, May 27, 1867, p. 2.

⁶¹ *Daily British Colonist and Victoria Chronicle*, April 29, 1867, p. 2; *New Westminster British Columbian*, May 18, 1867, p. 3; *Nanaimo Tribune*, June 20, 1867, p. 2. The only *Nanaimo Tribune* issue which survives from the summer of 1867 is that of July 20, but the *Colonist* and *Columbian* all agreed that it became annexationist at the start of May.

Canada was the only real means by which the colony may emerge from a “condition of hopelessness” while averting the need to ally itself with a “foreign power”. Higgins soon regretted publishing that article after he explicitly endorsed confederation near the end of May. For the rest of the year he was constantly accused of hypocrisy by loyalists and annexationists alike. Regardless, the fact that Higgins entertained the idea of annexationism for even a moment is a powerful demonstration of the desperate mood in the colony at the time.⁶²

It was not only journalists who found themselves seriously considering the merits of annexation in the summer of 1867. During this time, the measure undoubtedly grasped the public imagination as a viable alternative to the deplorable conditions of the colonial status quo. Numerous observers throughout British Columbia commented on the excitement in Victoria over the news of the Seward-Stanley negotiations and provided their estimation of the relative popularity of the movement and its origins. Overwhelmingly, non-journalists were united in portraying the 1867 agitation as being composed primarily of foreign-born and American residents of the city, who had the support of only a few British subjects. William Tolmie, the Chief HBC factor in Victoria and a former Vancouver Island M.L.A, reported in July that annexation was “entertained by some British, but by more foreign-born residents of Victoria.”⁶³ Helmcken, later recalling the agitation of 1867 in his memoirs, similarly observed that the annexationists in Victoria at that time were primarily foreign-born. He noted that the movement

⁶² A few historians have pointed to the April 29th article to suggest that the *Colonist* was on the fence about annexation at the beginning of May. Shi, “Seward’s Attempt”, 225; Neunherz, “Hemmed In”, 105. Even if the article is taken as an endorsement of annexation (as other editors took it to be), Higgins published another article on May 2nd in response to McMillan’s May 1st article which firmly stated his opposition to joining the United States. The April 29th article is certainly significant in portraying the public mood at the beginning of the summer and in demonstrating that Higgins saw the status quo as sufficiently desperate that even annexation was superior, but it is not a true endorsement of annexationism as a political platform. [*Daily British Colonist and Victoria Chronicle*, April 29, 1867, p. 2, May 2, 1867, p. 2; *Victoria Morning News*, May 1, 1867, clipping from Scrapbook, James E. McMillan Manuscripts, British Columbia Archives and Records Service.]

⁶³ Neunherz, “Hemmed In”, 106.

was primarily made up of Americans, though “many Britishers agreed with them” and that they considered the economic benefit of annexation to be superior to that which could be gained by confederation.⁶⁴ More tellingly, he observed that Americans in the colony had taken to publicly boasting following the Alaska purchase that they “had sandwiched B. Columbia and could eat her up at any time!!!” Even Governor Seymour observed the optimism of Victoria’s American residents and its effects. In a despatch to Lord Carnarvon, he wrote that “the exuberant confidence of the Americans in the future, depresses the minds of the English inhabitants of the Colony” and was contributing to the sense among colonists that Britain did not care about them.⁶⁵ In no small part, the 1867 iteration of the annexation movement seems to have been propagated by overtly celebratory Americans in Victoria who were optimistic for further territorial gains after the Alaska purchase. Their open discussion of “disloyal” ideas in the city may have encouraged others who were skeptical of British rule to voice their opinions more openly and thus likely contributed to the annexationist “mood” in the city at the time.⁶⁶

Like their British counterparts, American observers also noted that annexationism was mostly supported by foreign-born residents. However, perhaps as a result of their optimism following the Alaska Purchase, they also tended to estimate the overall popularity of the movement far more generously. While British observers universally agreed that a large annexationist agitation existed in Victoria they nevertheless tended to characterize it as a minority composed largely of foreign-born residents. Americans, on the other hand, were convinced that the vast majority of colonists favoured annexation.⁶⁷ Allen Francis was perhaps the most notorious for this. His

⁶⁴ Smith ed. *Helmcken*, 242.

⁶⁵ Seymour to Carnarvon (Parliamentary Under-Secretary), April 17, 1867, National Archives of the UK, 5839, CO 60/28. The Colonial Despatches of Vancouver Island and British Columbia 1846-1871. Ed. James Hendrickson and the Colonial Despatches project. Victoria: University of Victoria. Accessed December 9, 2015, <http://bcgenesis.uvic.ca/getDoc.htm?id=B67067SC.scx>.

⁶⁶ Smith ed. *Helmcken*, 243.

⁶⁷ The particular ideological underpinnings of this perception are described in chapter three.

reports in 1867 resembled his earlier despatches in presenting a highly optimistic view of the annexation movement. He observed that, with the exception of colonial officials and the *Colonist*, Vancouver Island supported annexation “with great unanimity”.⁶⁸ He took a central role in encouraging annexationist sentiment after the Alaska Purchase. In addition to his regular reports, Francis drafted a document congratulating Seward on the purchase, and circulated it throughout Victoria for signature by American residents.⁶⁹ Another American, W. Carey Johnson, a lawyer from Oregon, observed that “all the Irish, Germans, and other naturalized subjects” favoured annexation, and though British subjects were more cautious to avoid being considered disloyal, even they would likely favour annexation if it was offered.⁷⁰ Last, a pair of U.S. Navy officers who spent a few months in Victoria near the end of the summer reported to their superiors that two-thirds of the city supported annexation, while the foreign population was “unanimously in favour”. They claimed that the only anti-annexationists were government officials and a few other British residents who supported the administrators.⁷¹

The numerous conflicting accounts of the level of support for annexationism in the colony make it very difficult to accurately gauge both the actual level of support for annexationism in the colony, and the demographic makeup of the annexation movement. The only concrete list of supporters of the movement is the 1869 annexation petition. As described by Willard Ireland, the petition revealed that the majority of annexationists at that time were British subjects. The

⁶⁸ Francis to Seward, April 13, 1867, Despatches from the United States Consul in Victoria, 1862-1906. National Archives microfilm publications. T ; microcopy no. 130. National Archives and Record Service General Services Administration, 1957.

⁶⁹ Francis to Seward, July 2, 1867, Despatches from the United States Consul in Victoria, 1862-1906. National Archives microfilm publications. T ; microcopy no. 130. National Archives and Record Service General Services Administration, 1957.

⁷⁰ Neunherz, “Hemmed In”, 105. Neunherz’ study of the reactions to the Alaska purchase tends to be overly credulous of American sources, however he found many direct quotes which are valuable in characterizing how Americans felt about annexationism at the time.

⁷¹ *Ibid.*, 109.

petition was signed mostly by naturalized subjects of German and Jewish descent, along with a handful of British and American residents.⁷² Unfortunately, as the petition came at the very end of the volatile critical period it likely represents a slightly different demographic reality than would have existed in 1867. Nevertheless, it is possible to draw a few conclusions about the 1867 movement. Unlike elsewhere in British North America, annexationism in British Columbia was not a movement characterized by minority religious groups. Though there were many Jewish members, the Christian leaders of the movement at the time, Henry Heisterman and James McMillan, were not members of any minority denomination.⁷³ Heisterman, most notably, was an active member of St. Andrew's Presbyterian Church, having acted as a member of the Board of Managers as Treasurer.⁷⁴ As President of the German Verein and of the Vancouver Freemasons, he also was closely involved with affairs at the Synagogue of Congregation Emanu-El. The Synagogue was said to be the first building for which Heisterman's chapter of Masons laid the cornerstone, and was one of the meeting places for the Verein in Victoria.⁷⁵ Though there is no concrete evidence, Heisterman's personal influence may have been a major factor in inspiring the large proportion of German and Jewish annexationists in the colony. As a group, they shared fewer sentimental ties to Britain than ethnically British or Irish colonists, and thus were more likely to be moved by the purely economic promise of annexation to the United States.

⁷² Willard E. Ireland, "The Annexation Petition of 1869" *British Columbia Historical Quarterly*, Vol. 4, No. 4 (October, 1940): 281

⁷³ "James Eliphalet McMillan" Hale and Watson Ancestors. Accessed December 8, 2015, <http://www.halefamily.ca/p1038.htm>. McMillan had listed himself as a Methodist in the 1861 Ontario census. He lived in Bowmanville at the time.

⁷⁴ "Henry Frederick Heisterman" St. Andrew's Church in the Heart of Victoria's Victoria. Accessed December 14, 2015, http://web.uvic.ca/vv/student/st_andrews/heisterman.php/.

⁷⁵ "The Synagogue of Congregation Emanu-El." *The edges of Time: Cornerstones and Time Capsules of Early Victoria*. Accessed December 14, 2015, http://web.uvic.ca/vv/student/edges_of_time/synagogue.html]; *Daily British Colonist and Victoria Chronicle*, December 5, 1866, p. 3. Details for other individuals, including Leonard McClure, C.B. Young and M.W. Waitt have proven elusive.

Americans appear to be another consistent presence within the movement. Throughout the period, citizens of the United States were both a constant base of support for annexationism, and a convenient scapegoat for loyalists as the architects of the movement. While many observers in the colony claimed that Americans made up most of the support for annexationism in the colony, this assertion seems overblown.⁷⁶ Not only were they a minority of signatories of the 1869 petition, they also appeared in lesser numbers in the various anti-confederation documents which annexationists supported. Furthermore, as Americans were steadily leaving the colony throughout the entire period, they likely were not numerous enough by 1867 and 1869 to account for the noise and bluster which the movement produced at those times. As admitted by Helmcken and confirmed by Ireland, most annexationists were British subjects. Though there was a disproportionate amount of German and Jewish residents, the movement nevertheless contained a significant proportion of ethnically British and Irish residents of Victoria.⁷⁷ These seem to have been drawn largely from the highest and lowest echelons of society. As shown by Ireland, the most disaffected of colonists, those whose fortunes had been lost after the collapse of the Gold Rush, were drawn to annexationism for the material benefits which it promised.⁷⁸ Similarly, as shown by the prominent role of Heisterman and his colleagues, who were mostly business owners in Victoria, annexationism was popular among those individuals who stood to benefit financially from the elimination of barriers to trade with the United States. Annexationism in British Columbia was fundamentally a movement of reluctance which was sustained by economic concerns. Because of this, annexationists were united by class more than they were by religion or ethnicity.

⁷⁶ *New Westminster British Columbian*, January 15, 1868, p. 2; *Daily British Colonist and Victoria Chronicle*, January 21, 1868, p. 2.

⁷⁷ Smith, *Helmcken*, 242; Ireland, "The Annexation Petition of 1869", 281-282.

⁷⁸ Ireland, "The Annexation Petition of 1869", 281-282.

Like the demographics of annexationism in 1867, the actual level of support which the movement enjoyed at the height of the agitation is somewhat difficult to discern. In his study of British Columbia's reaction to the Alaska Purchase, Richard Neunherz concluded that annexationists most likely comprised a majority of the population, as that was what most observers seem to have believed.⁷⁹ However, the lack of clear political accomplishments by annexationists during the summer of 1867, and the swift decline of the movement from the public consciousness at the end of the summer, suggest that its supporters may have only represented a vocal minority even in Victoria. Despite the enthusiasm in the city, and the optimism among annexationists and American observers, the annexation movement in 1867 simply did not amount to very much. While this failure was partially the result of the success of the opponents of annexationism in discrediting the movement, as will be discussed in Chapter 2, the meagre efforts of annexationists themselves during the summer is a clear indicator of the overall weakness of the movement, even at its height. Annexationists were unsuccessful in their major attempts at political activism during the summer, and they were only able to maintain the strong journalistic presence which they won at the end of April for a few short months.

For supporters of annexationism, May of 1867 appeared to be their moment of opportunity. The international climate was favourable to their cause, half of the newspapers on Vancouver Island supported the movement, and a not-insignificant proportion of residents of Victoria were openly advocating annexationism. Curiously, annexationists did not strongly capitalize on their momentum during that month. No meetings were held in May, and a petition was not drafted for circulation in Victoria until July. The first major political overture on the part of annexationists

⁷⁹ Neunherz, "Hemmed In", 109. Neunherz' conclusions seem to be based on a fairly generous interpretation of the observations of Helmcken, Seymour, and Tolmie, none of whom definitively stated that a majority of islanders were annexationist.

was not until May 21st, when McMillan announced his immediate departure for San Francisco to meet with Leonard McClure to discuss a grand diplomatic effort to bring about the annexation of the colony.⁸⁰ McMillan planned to meet with leaders in San Francisco in support of the annexation movement, and then proceed to Washington in an effort to present the case for annexation to President Grant.⁸¹ Unfortunately, the specific details of McMillan's mission are unclear. No issues of the *News* which might have discussed the trip have survived, and, perhaps tellingly, McMillan did not save any of his articles announcing or describing his journey. Based on the articles and letters published in the *Colonist* and *Columbian*, however, it seems that McMillan was quite public about his plans, and that it was generally understood within the colony that his mission was meant to benefit the annexation movement.⁸²

Despite the ambition of his declared intentions, McMillan's trip was rather short. The editor spent roughly two weeks in San Francisco before returning to Victoria seemingly empty-handed around June 7th. Higgins and his audience mocked the brevity of McMillan's trip, and began to speculate McMillan had never intended to go to Washington, but had instead been soliciting funds from interests in San Francisco to prop up the finances of the *News*.⁸³ According to Robson, even annexationists admitted that the trip of their "plenipotentiary-extraordinary" fell short of their expectations.⁸⁴ It seems that McMillan's grand plans to meet with Grant were nothing more than political grandstanding. Regardless of whether he was genuinely on a mission to negotiate for annexation, or merely begging for funds, McMillan may have been premature in travelling to San Francisco to meet with McClure. Not only did the two not travel to Washington

⁸⁰ *Daily British Colonist and Victoria Chronicle*, May 22, 1867, p. 3.

⁸¹ Wolfenden, "The Early Government Gazettes", 190; *New Westminster British Columbian*, May 29, 1867, p. 3.

⁸² *New Westminster British Columbian*, May 29, 1867, p. 3.

⁸³ *Daily British Colonist and Victoria Chronicle*, June 7, 1867, p. 2.

⁸⁴ *New Westminster British Columbian*, May 29, 1867, p. 3, June 15, 1867, p. 2.

together, McClure turned out to be far less optimistic than McMillan about the relative popularity of annexationism in British Columbia. In an article published on June 7th, Higgins wrote that the *San Francisco Times*, of which McClure was editor, had published a piece stating that British Columbians, if they were indeed serious about annexation, ought to hold a public meeting and circulate a petition in order to demonstrate their credibility to the United States.⁸⁵ Though McClure's failing health may have been a factor in McMillan's early return, the former editor of the *Telegraph* was only one of a great many news editors in San Francisco and there is no indication that McMillan convinced anyone else in the city to support his cause. Other than the *Times*, no newspapers in San Francisco wrote about McMillan's trip specifically, although throughout the summer they frequently commented on the annexationist mood in Victoria and the "liberal" views of McMillan and his paper.⁸⁶

Apart from the lack of response in California publications, the largest indication that McMillan was unable to marshal significant support from San Franciscans was the financial failure of his newspaper less than a month after his return to Victoria. McMillan announced on Sunday, June 23rd that he would be reducing publication and converting the *News* from a daily to a weekly published every Sunday. The competitive nature of the news industry in the colony may have been a factor in the *News*' failure, as it was not as well established as a printer in Victoria as Higgins (though the *Colonist* was distinctly anti-government in the summer of 1867 and was certainly not receiving significant assistance or contracts from Seymour's government

⁸⁵ *Daily British Colonist and Victoria Chronicle*, June 7, 1867, p. 2; Kemble and Bretnor, *A history of California newspapers*, 131. The *Times* was a minor paper in San Francisco, but it was one of only a handful which published a weekly edition which was circulated along the breadth of the Pacific Coast. Though Higgins had a fairly clear agenda in writing this article, it is reasonable to assume that he was conveying the actual content of the editorial, particularly given McClure's past predilection for public meetings and his experiences in learning the limits of annexationist support in British Columbia the hard way.

⁸⁶ *San Francisco Daily Alta California*, July 25, 1867, p. 2, June 2, 1867, p. 2.

even after the latter's relocation to Victoria).⁸⁷ It may also have been that advertisers did not want to be associated with annexationists and feared reprisal from loyalists throughout the colony, or that McMillan merely failed to properly manage his finances. Regardless, even at the supposed height of annexationist support in the colony, McMillan was unable to finance the city's unofficial annexationist paper. Though McMillan remained in business and continued to publish annexationist articles in the *Weekly News* on Sundays until 1870, as early as July he had ceased to be a factor in the annexation movement.⁸⁸ In McMillan's relative absence, the editorial presence of annexationism was significantly diminished. The relatively obscure *Nanaimo Tribune* was the only newspaper on Vancouver Island still publishing articles advocating annexation (or at least reciprocity).⁸⁹

Whether McMillan's San Francisco trip was a poorly-conceived attempt at genuine political activism or the desperate efforts of a political opportunist the credibility of the annexation movement suffered for it. The skepticism of San Franciscan observers regarding the viability of the annexation movement, McMillan's inability to rally annexationists in Victoria into an organized and constructive political movement, and the short tenure of the *News* as an overtly-annexationist daily all strongly suggest that the colony boasted fewer annexationists than many observers believed. As powerful as the idea of annexation had been in May, by end of June the political movement had proven itself to be little more than a flash in the pan. McMillan had been even less successful than McClure in converting public enthusiasm to genuine activism. He had called for a public meeting and for an annexation petition to be drafted shortly after his return to

⁸⁷ *Daily British Colonist and Victoria Chronicle*, December 24, 1866, p. 3.

⁸⁸ Wolfenden, "The Early Government Gazettes", 190.

⁸⁹ *Nanaimo Tribune*, July 20, 1867, p. 2; Neunherz, "Hemmed In", 108.

Victoria, but nothing immediately came of it.⁹⁰ After returning from San Francisco, McMillan did not engage in any direct leadership activity as McClure had done in 1866. On a weekly publication schedule, the *News* was unable to act as a rallying or organizing entity for annexationists, and McMillan was unable to act as an annexationist public figure. At its height, the *News* was generally embraced as the colony's primary annexationist organ, and McMillan was connected to certain prominent annexationists such as C. B. Young.⁹¹ By July, he was firmly outside of the loop regarding the continued political efforts of annexationists in the colony. The clearest indication of this is his non-participation in the drafting and circulation of the July 1867 annexation petition.

Around July 2nd, several weeks after McMillan had tried and failed to call annexationists to action, a petition addressed to the Queen finally began circulating in Victoria.⁹² Its text referenced the financial and political failure of the colony, and requested that Her Majesty allow for the annexation of British Columbia by the United States. After making its rounds of the city and stopping for a time at the United States Consulate, the petition was sent to Britain sometime after July 13th where it appears to have been lost and forgotten.⁹³ Seymour made no mention of the petition to his superiors, Imperial authorities did not respond to it, and there is no actual indication that they ever received it. Nevertheless, despite its negligible impact, the petition is

⁹⁰ Walter N. Sage, "The Annexation Movement in British Columbia" *Transactions of the Royal Society of Canada*, Third Series, Volume XXI, Section II, (1927): 102.

⁹¹ *Daily British Colonist and Victoria Chronicle*, December 15, 1866, p. 2, May 24, 1867, p. 2. CB Young stopped writing as "Monitor" in the *Colonist* by the summer of 1867, and began openly writing articles for the *News*. The May 24, 1867 edition of the *Colonist* contains a reproduction of a *News* article explicitly written (and blatantly plagiarized from *Harper's Weekly*) by Young. There is unfortunately no evidence either way to connect McMillan to Heisterman or other masons. It is likely that McMillan was not close with them, as he was not invited to sign the 1867 petition.

⁹² Francis to Seward, July 2, 1867, Despatches from the United States Consul in Victoria, 1862-1906. National Archives microfilm publications. T ; microcopy no. 130. National Archives and Record Service General Services Administration, 1957.

⁹³ *Ibid.*; *Daily British Colonist and Victoria Chronicle*, July 13, 1867, p. 3. The latest reference to the petition still being in the colony is in the *Colonist* on July 13th.

important as one of the only tangible political accomplishments of the annexation movement in the colony and as an indication of the questionable influence of annexationism at its supposed height. A copy of the text has survived in Allen Francis' consular files, but the petition itself cannot be located; thus it is unknown who signed it or originated it. However, based on the various reactions to the petition of the most prominent annexationists in the city, the most likely candidates are again Henry Heisterman and the Freemasons of the Vancouver Lodge No. 421 who went on to originate the 1869 petition.

By design, the annexation petition of 1867 received little fanfare as it circulated the city. Though Francis viewed it at the beginning of the month, it was not until July 10th that the petition was noticed by journalists. Higgins published a short notice announcing that the petition was making its rounds "on the sly" in the care of a "broker who is supposed to receive a commission on each signature".⁹⁴ A follow-up article on the 13th reported that the petition had been a "fizzle", and suggested that it might have been more constructive to petition for cheaper government than for annexation.⁹⁵ It was not until Sunday that the *News* was able to chime in. McMillan attempted to ridicule Higgins, confidently insisting in his article that no such petition existed. He wrote that an annexation petition "has never been prepared, that we are aware of, nor has any one been asked to sign such a paper, and hence what has never had an existence cannot very well be said to have proved a complete fizzle."⁹⁶ That McMillan not only did not know about the petition before reading about it in the *Colonist*, but that he apparently was unable to subsequently confirm its existence is extremely telling. McMillan had no remaining influence in

⁹⁴ *Daily British Colonist and Victoria Chronicle*, July 10, 1867, p. 3.

⁹⁵ *Ibid.*, July 13, 1867, p. 3.

⁹⁶ *Victoria Morning News*, July 14, 1867, clipping from Scrapbook, James E. McMillan Manuscripts, British Columbia Archives and Records Service.

annexationist circles after the near-demise of his newspaper, and was definitely not the petition's originator.⁹⁷ He may not have even managed to sign it.

Although the only surviving copy of the petition is in the consular files and it cannot be decisively proven that Francis did not draft the petition on behalf of annexationists in the colony, it is unlikely that he was its originator. Francis claimed to have learned of the petition from a friend who had brought it to his office and allowed him to transcribe it. Francis was certainly among the earliest to view it, however. His transcription of the petition is dated "July", and his despatch to Seward reporting its existence was dated July 2nd. The "friend" to whom Francis referred in his despatch was probably M. W. Waitt, a member of the Masonic Lodge and an acquaintance of the Consul.⁹⁸ Though the two petitions differ in their wording and addressee, they are very similar in tone, emphasizing a reluctant need for annexation in spite of the petitioners' loyalty to the Empire, and evincing an understanding that the Queen desired her subjects to be happy, even if it meant separation.⁹⁹ Both petitions reveal a deep skepticism of the viability of confederation and of the willingness of Canada and Great Britain to make the necessary expenditures to ensure a successful union. The method of circulation, whereby the drafters attempted to avoid publicity through the use of a third-party, is also consistent between the two documents.¹⁰⁰ Though it remains a question of speculation, it seems very likely that the

⁹⁷ Sage, "The Annexation Movement", 102-103. Sage assumed in his 1927 work that McMillan had been behind the petition as McMillan had called for a public meeting and a petition shortly after his return from San Francisco.

⁹⁸ Francis to Seward, April 20, 1867, Despatches from the United States Consul in Victoria, 1862-1906. National Archives microfilm publications. T ; microcopy no. 130. National Archives and Record Service General Services Administration, 1957; Ireland, "A Further Note", 71-72; Ireland, "The Annexation Petition of 1869", 276. Heisterman was the first signatory of the 1869 petition, which Ireland suspected he and his colleagues had drafted, while M.W. Waitt was one of a handful of individuals who signed Allen Francis' letter of congratulations to Seward for the Alaska purchase.

⁹⁹ Francis to Seward, July 2, 1867, Despatches from the United States Consul in Victoria, 1862-1906. National Archives microfilm publications. T ; microcopy no. 130. National Archives and Record Service General Services Administration, 1957; Ireland, "The Annexation Petition of 1869", 276.

¹⁰⁰ *Daily British Colonist and Victoria Chronicle*, July 10, 1867, p. 3, November 13, 1869, p. 3.

same group who were behind the 1869 petition organized the 1867 petition as well. Between the identified signatories of the 1869 petition and the handful of publically-known annexationists active in the colony, only Henry Heisterman and his Masonic colleagues were sufficiently organized in July of 1867 to have originated the annexation petition.¹⁰¹ Apart from the Masons, nobody in the colony possessed the necessary combination of resources and anonymity to have drafted and circulated the document without ever being identified by Higgins or other anti-annexationists. Publically-known individuals who endorsed annexation at one time or another, like C.B. Young or Joseph Pemberton (a former MLA who wrote a selection of annexationist letters to the *Colonist* at the start of 1870) are unlikely to have organized the petition so discreetly or of obscuring their involvement from the Press. Further, neither they, nor any other public figure, signed the 1869 petition. This would seem an odd omission had they organized a similar effort in 1867.

The petition was the last tangible accomplishment of annexationists in 1867. Like McMillan's San Francisco mission, it did very little to advance the goals of the annexation movement. Though the summer of 1867 was undoubtedly the annexationist "moment" in British Columbia, the movement was poorly organized and entirely unable to inspire meaningful political activism in the colony. Nevertheless, the great success of the 1867 iteration was to place annexationism at the forefront of public discourse in the colony. Even as the major annexationist voices in the colony were silenced and loyalists successfully pushed annexation once again into the fringes of political acceptability, public awareness of annexationism after the summer of 1867 remained high in the colony and abroad. As articulated by Walter Sage in his original 1927 article, annexationists had "made a noise out of all proportion to their numbers."¹⁰² Even after the rumours of the Seward-Stanley negotiations were finally discredited at the end of July, loyalists

¹⁰¹ Ireland, "The Annexation Petition of 1869", 282; *Daily British Colonist and Victoria Chronicle*, January 26, 1870, January 29, 1870.

¹⁰² Sage, "The Annexation Movement", 109.

throughout British Columbia continued to comment on the pernicious and enduring annexationist sentiment in the colony which threatened to return to the forefront at any time.¹⁰³ McMillan, though he failed as a popular leader, can be credited as one of the chief architects of the spectre of annexationism which spread from the colony throughout Britain and the United States from the autumn of 1867 until the end of the critical period. His articles were referenced and reprinted abroad, and his work contributed to the false notion that the colony housed a powerful annexation movement after 1867.¹⁰⁴ Just as McClure's public meeting had been a local failure which provoked a meaningful response internationally, the loud clamouring of McMillan and his colleagues in 1867 had profound and widespread consequences, both locally and globally, which existed largely outside of their control. Ironically, even as McMillan's work disseminated throughout the English-speaking press, his own views (or perhaps merely his interests) turned once again to confederation after December 1867.¹⁰⁵ The *News* stood alongside the *Colonist* and the *Columbian* as confederationist publication until November 1869, when McMillan once again returned to the annexationist fold in time to promote the 1869 annexation petition.

Though the idea that annexationism represented a threat to the confederation movement remained after the summer, by August, annexationists were no longer participating in the discussion over the colony's future. No annexationist letters were published through 1868 and most of 1869, and there is no evidence of any direct activism for annexationism between the summer of 1867 and the autumn of 1869. However, many annexationists actively supported the anti-confederation movement in the intervening period, and, as is explored in chapter two, their presence had a meaningful effect on the movement's fortunes. It was not until the autumn of

¹⁰³*New Westminster British Columbian*, September 11, 1867, p. 2.

¹⁰⁴*New York Times*, Jun 26, 1867, p. 4. See chapter three for more on the international press response to annexation in British Columbia.

¹⁰⁵*Daily British Colonist and Victoria Chronicle*, December 2, 1867, p. 3.

1869, more than two full years after the 1867 petition, that annexationists began to once again openly participate in colonial politics. A final ripple of annexationist sentiment arose in Victoria in October in response to the more direct efforts of Britain and Canada to bring British Columbia into Confederation. As the remaining annexationists in the colony saw the accelerating progress of the confederation movement in British Columbia, and the steady progress in the rest of British North America to facilitate the negotiations, they engaged in a final effort to secure the annexation of the colony to the United States. Echoing the beginnings of the annexationist agitation in 1867, the tipping point for annexationists in 1869 was the publication of a secret government despatch which afforded the residents of Victoria a glimpse into British colonial policy. The message in question, which this time was both genuine and intended for wide publication, contained the instructions of the Colonial Secretary, Lord Granville, to the new Colonial Governor, Anthony Musgrave. The message was intentionally published in the *Government Gazette* on October 30th, and clearly stated Britain's intention to bring British Columbia into Confederation. Though it had long been an open secret, the despatch was the first official, public statement of policy by Imperial Authorities regarding the colony's political future and of their desire that British Columbia join confederation.¹⁰⁶ This statement was intended both to strengthen the confederation movement in the colony, to allow colonists to engage more clearly and openly with authorities regarding their "wishes and judgments" in relation to the colony's future.

¹⁰⁶ Ireland, "The Annexation Petition of 1869", 282; Musgrave to Granville, October 30, 1869, National Archives of the UK, 13573, CO 60/36. The Colonial Despatches of Vancouver Island and British Columbia 1846-1871. Ed. James Hendrickson and the Colonial Despatches project. Victoria: University of Victoria. Accessed December 15, 2015, <http://bcgenesis.uvic.ca/getDoc.htm?id=B69219.scx>. Though this was the first explicit statement, it had been generally understood that William Gladstone's government supported confederation. See chapter three for further details.

Though the despatch was welcomed with great enthusiasm by confederationists, it also inspired annexationists to make a final effort to thwart the seemingly inevitable destiny of the colony. In mid-November, a few weeks after the despatch was published, a new Annexation Petition was drafted and circulated in Victoria, almost certainly by Henry Heisterman and the members of the Masonic Lodge.¹⁰⁷ An article published in the *San Francisco Morning Bulletin* connected the petition directly to the despatch. The article relayed the words of Vincent Colyer, the American special Indian Commissioner for the Alaska tribes, who was responsible for transmitting the petition to Grant. Colyer stated clearly that “the feeling in favor of annexation [received] new impulse from the recent note of Earl Granville, urging the British Columbians to affiliate with the Canadian Dominion.”¹⁰⁸ In a letter attached to a supplementary list of signatures to be forwarded to Grant, Heisterman complained to his colleague W. H. Oliver that confederation was, “from all accounts intended to be forced on [the colony]” by Britain, and that there was little they could do to resist without support from the United States.¹⁰⁹

The newspaper response to the Granville Despatch and to the final annexation petition was surprisingly vibrant. The petition was first mentioned in an anonymous letter published in the *Colonist* on November 12th, in which the author noted that it was being circulated quietly by a foreign-born resident of Victoria.¹¹⁰ On November 15th in the again re-branded *Weekly Victoria Evening News*, McMillan reproduced the petition’s fully text and wrote in favour of annexation.¹¹¹ This was followed in turn by a short note in which the *Colonist* both mocked McMillan for his continued patronage of annexationism, and dismissed the petition as “a sublime

¹⁰⁷ Ireland, “The Annexation Petition of 1869”, 276. As stated previously, Heisterman’s was the first signature attached to the petition, and all ten members of the No. 421 Masonic Lodge were among its 43 initial signatories.

¹⁰⁸ *Ibid.*, 273.

¹⁰⁹ *Ibid.*, 274.

¹¹⁰ *Daily British Colonist and Victoria Chronicle*, November 13, 1869, p. 3.

¹¹¹ *Ibid.*, November 16, 1869, p. 3. Higgins noted that McMillan did not list the signatories, but made no mention of other content.

bit of cheek”.¹¹² Unlike in past agitations, in 1869 no editors other than McMillan were reckless enough to personally endorse annexationism or to align their publications with the annexationist cause. This time, the annexationist perspective was given voice primarily through letters to the editor published by Higgins in the *Colonist*. Perhaps as a means of demonstrating to confederationists the continued gravity of the annexationist threat, Higgins devoted a great deal of attention and editorial space to publicizing the annexationist perspective.¹¹³ Like Colyer and Heisterman, these letters also pointed to the direct pressure from Britain towards confederation as a major source of distress among annexationists. Notable among annexationist advocates who wrote to the *Colonist* was J.D. Pemberton, another former M.L.A. Pemberton was an annexationist, but did not consider his beliefs inherently disloyal. He wrote, in part, to counter the notion that Musgrave was a “partisan, instructed to effect confederation with Canada whether the people desire it or not”, and to argue that Britain would allow British Columbians to decide whether or not they wished to join Canada.¹¹⁴ In arguing for annexationism and the right of British Columbia to choose its destiny, he noted that if indeed the Colonial Secretary intended to force the hand of the colony, such a tone might impel its residents to “think of throwing the tea overboard.”¹¹⁵ Helmcken, as a loyalist anti-confederationist, was also motivated to write to the *Colonist* to voice his objection to the direction of British policy. He noted that if Canada intended to force British Columbia to join, colonists ought to hold off as long as possible for better terms.¹¹⁶ As was the case in 1867, events and policies outside of the colony acted as the

¹¹² Ibid.

¹¹³ Donald F. Warner. *The Idea of Continental Union: Agitation for the Annexation of Canada to the United States 1849-1893*. (Kentucky: University of Kentucky Press, 1960.), 138. Higgin’s focus on annexationism in January was also partially a response to an article in the *London Times* which suggested annexation might be a more natural solution for British Columbia. Despite the apparent reaction to the article, annexationists themselves continued to focus on the Granville despatch.

¹¹⁴ *Daily British Colonist and Victoria Chronicle*, January 26, 1870, p. 2.

¹¹⁵ Ibid., January 29, 1870, p. 2.

¹¹⁶ Ibid., November 20, 1869, p. 2.

primary impetus for annexationist activity in Victoria. Annexationists were aware of the diplomatic forces acting upon them and were sustained by developments in that sphere, whether they were favourable or not.

The 1869 annexation petition received barely more than one-hundred signatures, and came far too late to have any real effect on the discourse in British Columbia. As will be described in detail in chapter three, the petition was met with significant interest and enthusiasm among expansionists in the United States. In Britain, however, the only thing it accomplished was to demonstrate that the annexation movement was effectively dead.¹¹⁷ On the instructions of Granville, Governor Anthony Musgrave had previously acted cautiously in his support for confederation out of concern that a significant proportion of colonists might be annexationists or otherwise oppose union with Canada.¹¹⁸ Due to the peculiar global reach of the annexationist Victoria press in 1867, British policymakers had previously had an inflated sense of the popularity of annexationism. One of the intentions behind the publication of the despatch was for it to act as a test of the political divisions in the colony to determine how receptive colonists would be to confederation.¹¹⁹ By demonstrating that they could only find a few dozen supporters of the movement, even in Victoria, Heisterman and his colleagues revealed their own weakness to Imperial authorities. Following the petition the Colonial Office was able to more confidently accelerate its efforts to bring British Columbia into confederation with the knowledge that the colonists were more or less in favour.¹²⁰ By the end of the month, Rupert's Land had been

¹¹⁷ See chapter three for more on the reception to the petition in the United States and Britain

¹¹⁸ Granville to Musgrave, August 14, 1869, National Archives of the UK, CO 398/5. The Colonial Despatches of Vancouver Island and British Columbia 1846-1871. Ed. James Hendrickson and the Colonial Despatches project. Victoria: University of Victoria. Accessed December 15, 2015.
<http://bcgenesis.uvic.ca/getDoc.htm?id=B697084.scx>.

¹¹⁹ Ibid.

¹²⁰ Ireland, "The Annexation Petition of 1869", 283. Musgrave wrote to Thornton in February stating that he had felt the petition had not received enough signatures to warrant a response and that to his (incorrect) knowledge no British subjects had signed it. Whether or not the petition itself demonstrated to Britain the weakness of the

transferred to Canada, and British Columbia had gained a new neighbour in the sprawling Dominion. Yet again, the legacy of the annexation movement in British Columbia was realized in the surprising intersection between the local and the global. As will be described in more detail in chapter three, high-level British policy engendered a local response from annexationists in the colony, which, despite their miniscule voice, demanded a reaction in turn.

By the next year, annexationism was well and truly dead and confederation was almost universally accepted as inevitable. As an indication of how far outside the mainstream annexation had fallen, James McMillan, out of work since the end of November, joined *Amor de Cosmos* in June of 1870 in establishing the *Daily Standard*. The new paper promised to support responsible government, and to “offer the best advice” to the public of the advantages and disadvantages of confederation, looking upon Canada with a cautious and critical eye.¹²¹ By summer of 1870, what few annexationists remained inhabited the distant fringes of public discourse. Confederation was almost assured, and even the fiercest of its former opponents were forced to adapt their positions to remain relevant.

The British Columbian Annexation Movement was not really a coherent faction within British Columbian politics but rather a loose association of interested parties. Public figures, particularly newspaper editors, rose to informal leadership positions within the movement and drew the attention of colonists towards annexationism and to themselves as public figures. McClure, McMillan, and to a dramatically lesser extent, Pemberton and Young, stood as the

annexation movement, its poor showing in the colony along with the absence of any other reaction on the part of annexationists was a clear indication to the Colonial Office that they were a non-factor in British Columbia and could be ignored. This conversation is also appended in: Granville to Musgrave, December 31, 1869, National Archives of the UK, CO 398/5. The Colonial Despatches of Vancouver Island and British Columbia 1846-1871. Ed. James Hendrickson and the Colonial Despatches project. Victoria: University of Victoria. Accessed December 15, 2015, <http://bcgenesis.uvic.ca/getDoc.htm?id=B697113.scx>.

¹²¹ *Victoria Daily Standard*, June 20, 1870 (first issue). McMillan’s work on the *Standard* represented his third effort in supporting confederation, having previously been in favour before 1867, and once again through 1868 and most of 1869.

faces of annexationism at various moments in the critical period, and their public presence and influence brought annexation into the mainstream of public discourse and rallied annexationists toward various abortive projects of political activism. These leaders had fleeting tenures, however, as the disapproval of the majority tended to come with dire personal and financial consequences. The evidence suggests, however, that the key to the movement's endurance in British Columbia was not the activities of its most public leaders but instead the efforts of those acting in the margins of public awareness. More than anyone else, the members of the Vancouver Masonic Lodge No. 421 were the chief organizers and agitators for annexation. From the first public meeting in which McClure's "mysterious colleagues" failed to attend, to the final 1869 petition, the annexation movement lived and died with the activities of Henry Heisterman and his wealthy colleagues. These powerful Victorians harnessed their connections and political clout to marshal the resources of individuals like Allen Francis and Vincent Colyer to effect the annexation of British Columbia. Their failure to achieve their goals, despite their connections, was due to their inability to capture the loyalty and support of the majority of colonists in British Columbia. Even with Secretary of State Seward actively supporting the movement, it never managed to win over more than a minority of colonists in Victoria, and there was never any real public pressure directed at Britain or the United States in favour of annexation.

This chapter has attempted to discern the popularity and degree of political engagement of the annexation movement across the critical period. In identifying the major leaders and political activities of the movement, as well as the international and local context in which they operated, the major influences and factors which inspired the annexationist agitation in British Columbia are revealed. In turn, the relative degree to which annexationism can accurately be described as a "movement" throughout the colonial period of British Columbia is better contextualized. Chapter

two will expand on this idea, exploring the rhetorical scope of annexationism and of its ideological opponents, as well as the surprising influence of the “spectre” of annexationism on the confederation debates. In assessing the critical period through this lens, chapter two seeks to better contextualize the failure of annexationists to win over a majority of colonists, and to fully assess the impact of the annexation movement on the political outcomes in British Columbia.

Chapter Two

“Offshoots of the Annexation Chimera”: The Spectre of Annexation in the Politics of British Columbia, 1866-1870

This chapter will assess the loyalist response to annexationism, and investigate how the rhetoric of the annexation debate in British Columbia amplified the apparent importance of the movement among colonists. This, in turn, had notable connotations in the confederation debates as the narrative of latent annexationism was harnessed by the confederation movement against those who did not wish to become Canadian. While annexation debates overlapped the confederation debate significantly within the overarching political conversation of the critical period, they were not one and the same. Confederation was certainly the primary alternative to annexationism in British Columbia, but loyalists were far from unanimous as to whether they wished to become Canadian or remain a Crown Colony. The question of Confederation or Annexation in the context of the debates of the critical period is better understood in terms of two separate but overlapping debates: that of whether or not to join Confederation, and that of whether or not to ask for annexation. Although the two options were frequently compared against one another, this was not always the case.

This chapter will disentangle the complex debates of the critical period, and demonstrate the key role which the outcomes of the annexation debate played during the confederation debate of 1867-1870. Even as annexationists were soundly defeated in 1866-1867, their lingering presence in the colony, and the looming spectre of American expansionism which the movement heralded, played an important role in the contest between confederationists and anti-confederationists. The strategies which loyalists adopted to rhetorically undermine the annexation movement subsequently enabled confederationists to harness the narrative of annexation in order to

undermine their ideological opponents. Just as eastern Canadian imperialists had done with the issue of continental integration, British Columbian confederationists invoked the spectre of annexationism as rhetorical tactic against opponents of union with Canada.¹ The rhetorical contours of the annexation debate, and the tactics which loyalists used to suppress the annexation movement, had lasting effects on the discourse in the colony, effectively undermining loyalist opposition to Confederation.

As a movement and political platform in the colony, annexationism was both inwardly- and outwardly-focused. Annexationists, operating within the logic of global diplomacy, simultaneously attempted to appeal to colonists to gain support locally while directly engaging with Britain and the United States to negotiate for the colony's cession. Annexationists, understanding the gravity of their platform, employed realist political rhetoric in both the local and diplomatic spheres as a means of obfuscating the outward disloyalty of the geopolitical upheaval which they endorsed. The argument for annexation was consistently expressed in two distinct ways during each wave of annexationist agitation: that of the immediate economic necessity of joining the United States; and that of the reluctant inevitability of annexation as a result of British apathy and/or incapacity. Annexationism in British Columbia was almost never expressed in terms of republican or anti-Imperial values. To appeal to loyal British subjects and to mitigate imputations of disloyalty, annexationists couched their arguments in a rhetoric of regret, citing the unwillingness of British authorities to do what colonists believed was in their power to do to rescue the failing colony. Annexationism was expressed as a desperate alternative in the short-term to the total depopulation and subsequent absorption of the colony in the

¹ Damien-Claude Bélanger, *Prejudice and Pride: Canadian Intellectuals Confront the United States, 1891-1945*. (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2011), 150.

medium-term. By moving swiftly and enthusiastically toward their inevitable destiny, annexationists hoped that British Columbians might once again prosper.

Though the annexationist argument proved compelling among non-British residents and, oddly, among both the wealthiest and poorest of Victoria, most British Columbians were not convinced. Annexationism, ultimately a movement of bet hedging, had little hope of success in a colony built on the risky adventurism of gold miners and the patriotic colonialism of British settlers. In countering annexationism, anti-annexationists primarily appealed to British loyalist sentiment in the colony and the optimistic possibilities of Confederation. To some degree, however, they also engaged with annexationism on the same economic and realist grounds as their opponents. Loyalists employed accusations of disloyalty and treason alongside detailed arguments predicting the economic instability of the United States and the optimistic prospects in Britain and Canada. This overall strategy of supplementing economic arguments with loyalist posturing, combined with an ongoing effort to silence annexationist voices in the colony, proved to be an effective means of countering annexationism. Even after the annexation debate wound down, confederationists relied on similar tactics to promote union with Canada.

As demonstrated in Chapter One, whether by the strength of their efforts or the changing shape of international relations, loyalists had resoundingly won the annexation debate by the autumn of 1867. Annexationism was reduced to a quiet murmur, eclipsed by the growing excitement over the notion of a transcontinental British North America. Nevertheless, the annexationist excitement of 1866-1867 had left an indelible mark on the colony, and the threat of annexation remained at the forefront of the minds of its opponents. After the debate over annexationism died down, public discussion of the movement took on a dismissive, yet careful tone, as if any serious acknowledgment of annexationism might bring about a sudden and terrible

resurgence. Throughout the confederation debate, annexationism was less a political movement than it was a lurking spectre. Most British Columbians saw the idea not as a practical or realistic option, but rather as a dire consequence if Britain remained complacent or if the colony failed to join Confederation on fair and equitable terms. There were still annexationists in the colony, but their voice had been effectively drowned out and marginalized by the large majority of loyalists by 1868.

The uncertain popularity and political capacity of the latent annexation movement afforded it significant rhetorical and narrative power in the latter half of the critical period as an unknown quantity in the politics of the colony. However, as the movement lacked a credible voice to represent its interests after the summer of 1867, very little of this power belonged to annexationists themselves. During the confederation period, confederationists attempted to harness the ephemerality and malleability of the annexationist threat to direct the narrative of annexationism in support of their cause. These efforts seem to have been somewhat cynical in nature, but only to a point. Until the doomed Annexation Petition of 1869 made its rounds in Victoria, there was no clear indication of how many annexationists there actually were, or of the degree to which anti-confederationists may have secretly harboured annexationist sympathies. Throughout the confederation debate, the spectre of annexation was a constant rhetorical undercurrent existing on the margins of the formal deliberations over terms and timing. Though both sides attempted to use annexationism to benefit their positions to some degree, confederationists found themselves far better placed than their opponents to harness the narrative of annexation to strengthen their arguments. The looming threat of American expansionism, of which local annexationism was regarded as a malignant symptom, undermined the anti-confederationist position, and allowed confederationists to monopolize the discourse of loyalty

and to instill in their arguments a sense of urgency and necessity. At the same time, annexationist support for the anti-confederation movement proved poisonous. By associating themselves, even unintentionally, with annexationists, anti-confederationists increasingly were forced to hedge their arguments in favour of remaining a crown colony so as not to appear disloyal. This granted significant rhetorical leverage to confederationists who found the accusation of annexationism a useful tool in undermining their opponents. Thus, though the rhetoric of annexation only made up one small element of the overall confederation debate, its role therein remains one of the most significant historical legacies of annexationism during the critical period.

In assessing the role of annexationism within the confederation debates, it is necessary to first analyze the role of the annexation debates as a rhetorical antecedent. The rhetoric of annexationism in the colony, and the strategies which loyalists adopted to counter the annexation movement, heavily informed the shape of the later confederation debates, and enabled confederationists to harness the threat of annexation in order to undermine their ideological opponents. As demonstrated in Chapter One, annexationism in British Columbia was never an ideologically republican movement. Colonists turned to annexation in response to economic desperation in the face of high tariffs, a distant and disinterested home government, a bloated and inefficient colonial government, and undemocratic institutions which offered little hope of meaningful reform. Annexationism was fundamentally a movement of reluctant necessity which embraced the promise of short-term economic salvation by a foreign power over the increasingly-dim and distant possibility of renewed Imperial assistance. This core geo-political perspective remained relatively consistent throughout each annexationist agitation, and was expressed similarly in each of the major annexationist resolutions and petitions, as well as in letters and editorials published by annexationists during the critical period.

Within this overarching context of the imminent failure of the colony, the priorities and demands of annexationists differed to varying degrees. Annexation promised economic renewal in the form of the elimination of trade barriers and new immigration and investment, but also political renewal in the form of a supposedly cheaper and more representative form of government. Most annexationists seem to have been motivated chiefly by economic concerns, but others, most prominently Leonard McClure, came to support the movement in the promise of a swift return to more democratic institutions.² That said, not even McClure expressed his support for annexation in terms of republicanism. The resolution which he put forward at the September 1866 public meeting called principally for “the immediate restoration of our political rights, with the full measure of Responsible Government, and the best efforts of Her Ministers to obtain for this colony reciprocity with the United States.”³ McClure’s resolution demanded annexation only if responsible government and reciprocity could not be achieved under British rule. Although his editorials suggest that he believed reciprocity without annexation was impossible, McClure’s body of writing consistently supports the notion that he would have been perfectly happy under British rule so long as more effective and democratic institutions were implemented in British Columbia.⁴ This sentiment appears to have been common among supporters of the movement. According to their public statements and arguments, annexationists in the colony did not care whether they were British or American, so long as they could have free trade and democratic government.⁵

² H. Keith Ralston, “McCLURE, LEONARD,” in *Dictionary of Canadian Biography*, vol. 9, University of Toronto/Université Laval, 2003–. Accessed December 8, 2015, http://www.biographi.ca/en/bio/mcclure_leonard_9E.html; *Victoria Evening Telegraph*, August 12, 1866, p. 2.

³ *Victoria Evening Telegraph*, September 29, 1866, p. 2.

⁴ See Chapter One for further details; McClure was undoubtedly an annexationist, and the resolution was understood to be in support of annexation. However this was due to his belief that it was the only option, not out of an overriding desire to be American.

⁵ Francis to Seward, July 2, 1867, Despatches from the United States Consul in Victoria, 1862-1906. National Archives microfilm publications. T ; microcopy no. 130. National Archives and Record Service General Services

McClure's basic premise that nationality was secondary to the colony's needs and that liberal institutions were a pre-condition for economic renewal came to define the reluctance and pessimism inherent in the politics of British Columbian annexationism. Most annexationists claimed that they did not actually wish to become American. Rather, they believed it was necessary and inevitable due to the incapacity or unwillingness of Britain to meet the needs of the colonists. Annexationists believed that by willingly joining the United States, they would be able to secure better terms and recover faster than if they first allowed themselves to fall into a state of depopulation and poverty.⁶ This overall pessimism regarding the colony's fortunes and the perceived apathy of the home government was the main unifying factor for supporters of annexationism. Even in 1867, with the possibility of confederation standing as an alternative to "annexation or depopulation", annexationists argued that Canada's low population, its great distance from British Columbia, and the difficulty of the intervening terrain ensured that, in the words of the originator of the 1867 annexation petition, "it is doubtful that the benefits to arise therefrom will be felt for many years."⁷ The inherent pessimism of annexationism is perhaps most visible in its adherents' frequent exhortations of their enduring loyalty to the British Crown. Though they called for the severance of Imperial ties, annexationists consistently claimed that, "Every feeling of loyalty, and every cherished sentiment of our hearts prompts us to cling to our present connection with our mother country."⁸ Still, they saw "no other feasible help out of our

Administration, 1957; Willard E. Ireland. "The Annexation Petition of 1869." *British Columbia Historical Quarterly*, Vol. 4, No. 4 (October, 1940): 271; *Daily British Colonist and Victoria Chronicle*, May 3, 1869, p. 2; *Victoria Morning News*, May 3, 1867, clipping from Scrapbook, James E. McMillan Manuscripts, British Columbia Archives and Records Service.

⁶ *Victoria Evening Telegraph*, September 16, 1866, p. 2.

⁷ Francis to Seward, July 2, 1867, Despatches from the United States Consul in Victoria, 1862-1906. National Archives microfilm publications. T ; microcopy no. 130. National Archives and Record Service General Services Administration, 1957.

⁸ This text is from the 1867 petition, but the sentiment can be similarly found in McClure's resolution and many of his articles. *Victoria Evening Telegraph*, September 9, 1866, p. 2, September 10, 1866, p. 2.

present difficulties than by being united with [the neighbouring American population].” Even the final 1869 petition, though it was addressed to President Ulysses S. Grant, began with a statement of the Memorialists’ “most profound feelings of loyalty and devotion to Her Majesty and Her Majesty’s Government.”⁹ In keeping with the tone of reluctance, the Memorialists regretfully observed that they were “constrained by the duty we owe to ourselves and our families” and thus were forced to ask for the severance of ties with the Mother Country. Even as they united behind the notion of the failure of British rule on the shores of the Pacific, annexationists desperately clung to the rhetoric of loyalty and patriotism in constructing their arguments.

Whether or not annexationists actually held a sentimental link to Great Britain, their frequent exhortations of loyalty may have been a necessary political tactic in a city whose residents overwhelmingly felt such a connection. During each annexationist agitation, loyalists in Victoria endeavoured to silence the movement, both through their anti-annexationist rhetoric and by actively undermining and suppressing annexationist political activities. Regarding the former, loyalists attempted to personally discredit annexationists via accusations of treason and hypocrisy, while demonstrating the superiority of British and Canadian rule to that of the United States. From McClure’s earliest articles endorsing annexation in September 1866, to the final wave of annexationist postulation in January of 1870, loyalists persistently refused to treat the annexation movement as a legitimate political option. Higgins’ first article about annexationism in September 1866 referred to it as a “wild [and] ridiculous scheme” concocted by “mad brain[ed] political humbugs”.¹⁰ Later in the month he went as far as to hint at violence, warning the annexationist “mischief-makers” that they ought to “pause and consider well before they

⁹ Ireland, “The Annexation Petition of 1869”, 271.

¹⁰ *Daily British Colonist and Victoria Chronicle*, September 12, 1866, p. 2.

attempt an outrage that will call down on their ruffian heads a punishment as swift and terrible as it will be exemplary and well-deserved.”¹¹ During the public meeting, annexationists were met with numerous accusations of treason and disloyalty, and Higgins described the event as a “traitorous scheme” in the *Colonist* the following day. Individuals submitting letters were no kinder. One which was published soon after the meeting labeled C. B. Young a traitor for his role as Chairman, and referred to the annexationists in attendance as “treason spouters”.¹² Another called the annexation argument “not only useless, but pernicious and worthy of the highest blame”.¹³ Throughout the period, loyalists emphasized the impossibility of annexation in order to portray the movement’s supporters as nothing more than foolish and misguided traitors.

Supporters of annexationism received no better treatment during the summer of 1867. On May 4, 1867, shortly after McMillan came out in favour of annexation and began to argue that relief under any government was preferable to continued stagnation and decline, Robson wrote in the *Columbian* that the editor of the *News* was “in a terrible strait between loyalty to his Queen and country and the “glittering twenties” of Uncle Sam.”¹⁴ The *Columbian* had been relatively silent in 1866 on the matter of annexationism. By May of 1867, however, Robson became perhaps the loudest voice of all in condemning the movement. In a single issue on June 8, he branded C. B. Young an “annexationist and treasonable person”, called out the editor of the *Nanaimo Tribune* over the impossibility of Britain ever allowing annexation, and described in detail a new lynch law in Missouri which he “commend[ed]...to the consideration of the

¹¹ Ibid., September 27, 1866, p. 2.

¹² Ibid., October 2, 1866, p. 2.

¹³ Ibid. Similar arguments can be found throughout the first half of October, as Higgins devoted an uncharacteristic amount of space to anti-annexation letters.

¹⁴ *New Westminster British Columbian*, May 4, 1867, p. 3.

Morning News.¹⁵ On June 20th he lamented that the *News* had “abandoned itself to the advocacy of treason and the promulgation of misrepresentation.”¹⁶ As detailed in Chapter One, Robson was so fervently anti-annexationist that he even considered Higgins to be an annexationist based on the ambiguous wording of a single article, and persisted in publically accusing his fellow confederationist editor of treason until the *Columbian* ceased publication in 1869.¹⁷ Even after Higgins came out against Annexation by the beginning of May, and reiterated with “considerable satisfaction” his denunciation of “the believers in the Annexation movement” as traitors. Robson remained unconvinced. Despite overwhelming evidence to the contrary Robson never dropped the accusation that Higgins was annexationist. At certain times Higgins reciprocated, once accusing Robson of endorsing the sale of Vancouver Island to the United States in response to an argument which was almost certainly facetious.¹⁸

Alongside accusations of treason and efforts to dismiss the legitimacy and feasibility of the annexationism as a platform, loyalists attacked the character and credibility of annexationist leaders, and personally blamed them for the condition of the colony. As McClure advanced his annexationist platform as a solution to the unpopular terms of colonial union, loyalists attacked him for his past political efforts as a Vancouver Island M.L.A. Pro-union loyalists criticized McClure for his role in ousting Douglas from the mainland and separating the colonies in the first place. Loyalists who were less optimistic about the terms attacked the editor of the *Telegraph* for his central role in negotiating the unconditional union earlier in the year.¹⁹ During

¹⁵ Once the United States seemed to be actively negotiating annexation, loyalists continued to argue that it was impossible, claiming that Britain would never allow it, rather than that the United States did not want them, as they had in 1866.

¹⁶ *New Westminster British Columbian*, June 19, 1867, p. 2.

¹⁷ *Ibid.*, March 11, 1868, p. 2. [*Daily British Colonist and Victoria Chronicle*, January 21, 1868, p. 2].

¹⁸ *Daily British Colonist and Victoria Chronicle*, May 4, 1867, p. 2.

¹⁹ H. Keith Ralston, “McCLURE, LEONARD,” in *Dictionary of Canadian Biography*, vol. 9, University of Toronto/Université Laval, 2003–. Accessed December 8, 2015, http://www.biographi.ca/en/bio/mcclure_leonard_9E.html. McClure had actually resigned his post and ran for re-

the meeting McClure was attacked from both sides and roundly blamed for the colony's poor state and the impending unequal union.²⁰ In 1867, McMillan received very similar treatment. Though he was not a politician and could not be directly blamed for the status of the colony, loyalist editors and letter-writers blamed the *News*, not only for inciting support for annexation, but for deliberately misrepresenting and maligning the condition of the colony to readers abroad so as to hasten its decline. Robson complained that McMillan (and Higgins, in his view) were scaring immigrants away, lamenting that "Victoria Journals have warned all the world to stay away from [the] country...it is no wonder that the Colony is now suffering the consequences."²¹ In another article, he observed that Canadian leaders were getting the wrong idea about the colony thanks to McMillan and Higgins.²² In Victoria, an individual writing under the name "A Merchant" wrote to the *Colonist* complaining of McMillan's efforts to malign the prospects of the colony, arguing that the people were "not going to be frightened out of it by the drivelling of the disappointed drone of the *News*."²³ The idea that McMillan was personally destroying the colony reached as far inland as Barkerville where George Wallace, the editor of the *Cariboo Sentinel*, accused the "traitor" McMillan of "assuming the rights and privileges of a British Subject in order to betray them."²⁴ In attacking the character and deeds of prominent annexationists, loyalists emphasized the fundamental irresponsibility and self-defeatism of the annexationist position, and the pernicious effects which the mere discussion of annexationism would have on the prospects of the colony and the livelihoods of its residents.

election on the issue of unconditional union, a step which opened him up to serious criticism for turning to oppose the terms.

²⁰ *Daily British Colonist and Victoria Chronicle*, October 1, 1866, p. 2; *Victoria Evening Telegraph*, September 29, 1866, p. 2.

²¹ *New Westminster British Columbian*, August 24, 1867, p. 2, October 23, 1867, p. 2.

²² *Ibid.*, October 16, 1867, p. 2, October 30, 1867, p. 2.

²³ *Daily British Colonist and Victoria Chronicle*, May 11, 1867, p. 2.

²⁴ *Barkerville Cariboo Sentinel*, May 27, 1867, p. 2, May 30, 1867, p. 1.

In attempting to discredit annexationism, loyalists did not limit their efforts to the public leaders themselves. Editors and prominent members of the community attempted to characterize the annexation movement as an American-led and American-funded effort to undermine the colony. This argument played off existing fears of Americanization and of the constant encroachment on British territory by American settlers and entrepreneurs to build a narrative that annexationists were traitors who served a foreign government. McMillan's San Francisco trip was the most obvious target of these criticisms. The *Colonist* and *Columbian* both published articles which charged McMillan with serving the business interests of San Francisco, while the *Cariboo Sentinel* accused the editor of being funded by Americans and of being an active participant in their effort to take over the colony.²⁵ In relation to McMillan's call for an annexation petition in late May, Higgins printed an article written by an individual under the name of "Briton", who complained that the idea was an "absurd proposition" inspired by "renegade Englishmen in San Francisco" and "American Greenbacks".²⁶ In describing both the 1867 and 1869 annexation petitions, Higgins made particular note of two rumours: that a foreign agent was assisting the annexationists to circulate and find signatories for the documents, and that annexationists were paying people in the city for their signatures.²⁷ Though loyalists used these accusations to attack and undermine annexationists, to a certain extent such tactics were a reflection of a genuine, growing concern that Americans were supporting the movement. Even Governor Seymour appears to have believed this, noting in a despatch to the Colonial Secretary, the Lord of Buckingham and Chandos, that there was a "systematic agitation going on in this town for annexation to the United States [and] it is believed that the money for its maintenance is

²⁵ *Daily British Colonist and Victoria Chronicle*, June 7, 1867, p. 2; *New Westminster British Columbian*, May 29, 1867, p. 3; *Barkerville Cariboo Sentinel*, June 13, 1867, p. 2.

²⁶ *Daily British Colonist and Victoria Chronicle*, May 18, 1867, p. 3.

²⁷ *Ibid.*, July 10, 1867, p. 3, November 13, 1869, p. 2-3, November 18, 1869, p. 2.

provided from San Francisco.”²⁸ The notion that annexationism was part of a larger American scheme to annex the colony initially grew slowly as American interest in British Columbia increased. By the beginning of 1868 became a major source of anxiety surrounding the threat of annexation.

Yet another loyalist tactic to counter support for annexationism in the colony was, in surprising contrast to their other strategies, substantive debate in consideration of the relative merits of joining the United States. Loyalists and annexationists, in comparing the conditions in the United States to those of Canada and Britain, attempted to demonstrate the economic superiority of their favoured system.²⁹ On June 5, 1867, Robson complained that “Victoria annexationists have for some time past been publishing statements and statistics of the most fallacious and deceptive character, in order to demonstrate the marvellous advantages...[of] annexation.”³⁰ Throughout the summer, he countered with statistics of his own and republished various articles written in the United States that were critical of the state of affairs in the Republic. He asserted that the fiscal policy of the United States was a “desperate experiment,” observed the decline in American production since the end of the Civil War, and predicted that “Nothing short of radical reform in the management of the Government...can save the great majority of people [of the United States] from bankruptcy and the country from repudiation and consequent dishonor.”³¹ These sentiments were echoed by Higgins. Noting that taxation in the United States was significantly higher than in British Columbia, he argued that the American tax

²⁸ Seymour to Buckingham, June 26, 1867, National Archives of the UK, 7989, CO 60/28. The Colonial Despatches of Vancouver Island and British Columbia 1846-1871. Ed. James Hendrickson and the Colonial Despatches project. Victoria: University of Victoria. Accessed December 8, 2015. <http://bcgenesis.uvic.ca/getDoc.htm?id=B67074PR.scx>.

²⁹ For the annexationist side of this, see McClure September 10, 1866, p. 2; *Victoria Morning News*, June 21, 1867, Sept 1, 1867, clipping from Scrapbook, James E. McMillan Manuscripts, British Columbia Archives and Records Service.

³⁰ *New Westminster British Columbian*, June 5, 1867, p. 3.

³¹ *Ibid.*, July 13, 1867, p. 3, August 10, 1867, p. 2.

burden would become an even greater strain on the colonial treasury than Seymour's oversized government.³² Similarly, despite the worsening depth of the economic depression, both Higgins and Robson published fairly optimistic predictions throughout the annexation debates suggesting that the imminent economic forecast was bright for the colony.³³ Robson went so far as to enthusiastically predict that the mines, including Big Bend, which by 1867 had become a famous disappointment, would soon begin to produce gold at an unprecedented rate.³⁴ These upbeat portrayals of the colony's prospects likely were directed to some degree at the annexationists' appeal to the inevitability of annexation in the face of the continuing economic and demographic decline of the colony, and were further strengthened after April 1867 as particularly forward-thinking loyalists raised the prospect of confederation in opposition to the notion that annexationism could not be prevented.³⁵ The stark contrast between the general unwillingness of loyalists to acknowledge or legitimize the annexationists on one hand and their rhetorical engagement as to its merits on the other suggests that despite their claims to the contrary, loyalists considered annexationism to be a serious problem.

The loyalist effort to discredit annexationists and to demonstrate the impossibility and inadvisability of union with the United States likely discouraged some residents of Victoria from supporting the movement. However, their rhetorical efforts seem to have been secondary to their active suppression and exclusion of the movement from colonial politics. Like their efforts to portray the United States in a negative light, the systematic efforts of the loyalist faction to prevent annexationists from organizing in the colony strongly suggests that they were genuinely

³² *Daily British Colonist and Victoria Chronicle*, May 21, 1867, p. 2, July 10, 1867, p. 2.

³³ *Ibid.*, July 10, 1867, p. 2, January 3, 1868, p. 2, January 11, 1868, p. 2.

³⁴ *New Westminster British Columbian*, May 11, 1867, p. 3, August 14, 1867, p. 2.

³⁵ *Daily British Colonist and Victoria Chronicle*, December 23, 1867, p. 2. It is notable that they largely ceased to praise the economy of the colony once anti-confederationists began to argue that the colony could stand on its own rather than join Canada.

anxious over the possibility of a popular movement. The 1866 public meeting is the most obvious example of this. The first organizational effort of annexationists was attacked by loyalists and government officials who twice halted the meeting using violent and disruptive tactics.³⁶ Even at that early stage in the period, annexationist leaders were unwilling to show themselves in public for fear of reprisal, and the conduct of loyalists seems to have sent a clear message that annexationism was not welcome in the community. As discussed in Chapter One, there were no further public meetings held by annexationists, even at the height of the movement in May of 1867. The failure of the *Telegraph* and the *News*, which excluded annexationists from a vital means of organization and political and social participation, also seems to have been the product of loyalist agitation. McMillan, complaining that he was excluded from valuable printing contracts by frightened officials who would not align themselves with an annexationist publication, and cited his exclusion from this patronage as the reason he was unable to continue publishing his paper as a daily.³⁷

Though McMillan and McClure likely received the worst of it, ordinary residents of the colony also appear to have been targeted. Loyalists were clear in their desire that annexationists should leave the colony. Furthermore, there appear to have been considerable social consequences for individuals who were “outed”. One man in Nanaimo wrote a letter to the *Columbian* desperately disavowing annexationism and asserting his loyalty to Britain. He explained that a correspondent of the *New York Herald* had published annexationist extracts alluding to a conversation with a Nanaimoite connected to the company for which he worked. He begged Robson to publish his heartfelt promise that he was not the individual in question in the

³⁶ *Daily British Colonist and Victoria Chronicle*, October 1, 1866, p. 2; *Victoria Evening Telegraph*, September 29, 1866, p. 2.

³⁷ Richard E. Neunherz. "'Hemmed In': Reactions in British Columbia to the Purchase of Russian America" *The Pacific Northwest Quarterly*, Vol.80(3), (1 July 1989): 108.

hopes that he would not be unjustly branded as an annexationist by the community. The letter's tone suggests that being so identified would have serious consequences for his business and livelihood, and implies that prominent newspaper editors were by no means the only victims of the public exclusion of annexationists in the colony. The notion that loyalists were actively engaged in a campaign of suppression of annexationism is also consistent with the cautious strategy adopted by Heisterman and company in relation to the annexation petitions. Rather than publically seek out signatures, a tactic which would have reached more potential supporters, the petitioners employed a third party to circulate the documents quietly so as not to arouse any conflict with loyalists.³⁸ Further, the petitioners purportedly met with serious difficulties in delivering the 1869 petition to President Grant due to loyalist efforts to suppress the document. T. G. Phelps, the individual who forwarded the secondary list of signatures for the 1869 petition to President Grant, noted that multiple copies of the petition had been circulated, but that "with the exception of the one enclosed, were destroyed by parties in the interest of Confederation."³⁹ A letter from Heisterman to Oliver similarly noted that "due to the hostility of the Canadian Newspaper here, [the list] was not sent [along with the petition]."⁴⁰ In general, the stark contrast between the various accounts of the popularity of annexationism by observers in the colony and the almost complete absence of political activism by the movement during its various peaks of popularity speaks volumes as to the success of loyalists in preventing the annexation movement from taking root in British Columbia.

It is difficult to determine the actual degree to which the activities of the loyalist faction were responsible for the sudden decline of the annexation movement at the end of the summer of

³⁸ *New Westminster British Columbian*, February 12, 1868, p. 2.

³⁹ Ireland, "The Annexation Petition of 1869", 273.

⁴⁰ *Ibid.*, 274. "Canadian Newspaper" refers to the *Colonist*.

1867. However their systematic vilification and suppression of annexationism and its supporters almost certainly played a significant role. By December 1867, annexationism had become such a taboo in Victoria that McMillan himself converted once again to support confederation. Further, both C.B. Young and Heisterman's Masons ceased to openly advocate annexationism in favour of working with the anti-confederation movement.⁴¹ The exclusion of annexationists from traditional sources of power and organization effectively silenced the movement, but it also contributed strongly to the problem of quantifying the actual degree of support for annexationism in the colony and their capacity to convert residents to their cause and appeal to the United States for annexation. This problem was further complicated by the fundamental approach by which loyalists had confronted the annexation movement. In taking such a hard line against annexationism, loyalists inadvertently contributed to a narrative which aggrandized the movement's actual political relevance and capacity. Even as they dismissed the priorities and capabilities of the movement in their arguments, loyalists treated annexationism as a real and existential threat. Their dismissive rhetoric was thoroughly undermined by their comprehensive efforts to subvert and suppress the movement. This contrast suggests that loyalists harboured a distinct anxiety regarding the political future of the colony and the annexationists' potential for success.⁴² In the aftermath of the annexation debate, this anxiety formed part of the foundation of a narrative construct which overstated the continuing threat of the movement and of the possibility of being absorbed by the United States: the so-called spectre of annexation. Many of the contextual aspects of the spectre of annexation borrowed directly from arguments used against the annexation movement in 1866-1867 as loyalists feared the connotations which those

⁴¹ *Daily British Colonist and Victoria Chronicle*, February 5, 1868, p. 3, September 22, 1868, p. 2.

⁴² Throughout the confederation debates Higgins and Robson continued this pattern, at times reflecting dismissively on the continued presence of a few annexationists, at other times blaming them for most of the major victories of the anti-confederation movement.

arguments held for the likelihood of the colony being annexed, and as external developments in Anglo-American relations highlighted the ongoing threat of American expansionism.

The spectre of annexation in British Columbia embodied the lingering anxieties over annexationism in both the local and foreign contexts. Foremost among the external factors which contributed to the renewed concern over annexation was the ongoing Anglo-American diplomatic tension over the Alabama Claims. The negotiations, which had remained open as part of Seward's less-than-subtle desire to annex the Pacific Coast, had become increasingly tense as Charles Sumner and Congressional Republicans intensified their annexationist posturing and turned Manifest Destiny into a party issue.⁴³ At the same time, the Alaska purchase had instilled in some quarters of the American public a renewed enthusiasm for territorial expansion. Newspapers across the country accelerated their speculation as to the inevitability of the annexation of British North America and endorsed a territorial settlement for the Alabama Claims.⁴⁴ Just as local annexationism had fallen into remission, American zeal for Manifest Destiny was reaching a fever-pitch, renewing among colonists the sense that, unless positive action was taken, the Americans likely would capitalize on British Columbia's isolation and poverty in order to annex it. As annexationist sentiment grew in the United States, the British Columbian press took note.⁴⁵ Throughout the period newspapers eagerly printed any indication that the Americans were actively attempting to take the colony from Britain. In combination with the lingering apprehension among colonists surrounding local annexationism, the external threat

⁴³ Maureen M. Robson. "The Alabama Claims and the Anglo-American Reconciliation, 1865-71" *Canadian Historical Review*, v42(1), (March 1961): 2; Joe Patterson Smith, "American Republican Leadership and the Movement for the Annexation of Canada in the Eighteen-Sixties" *Report of the Annual Meeting of the Canadian Historical Association / Rapports annuels de la Société historique du Canada*, vol. 14(1), (1935): 70-71.

⁴⁴ Smith "American Republican Leadership", 71.

⁴⁵ *New Westminster British Columbian*, March 11, 1868, p. 1, May 27, 1868, p. 2; *Victoria British Columbian*, April 6, 1869, p. 2, April 21, 1869, p. 2, & others; *Daily British Colonist and Victoria Chronicle*, November 25, 1867, p. 2, January 8, 1868, p. 2, February 14, 1868, p. 3, & others. (Note that Robson moved his paper to Victoria in February 1869 due to the continued decline of New Westminster after Victoria was chosen as capital.)

of American expansion formed the basis of the spectre of annexation in British Columbia throughout the period, and became the context through which the annexation movement was re-interpreted in relation to the confederation debates.

The growing sense of uncertainty surrounding the state of Anglo-American relations contributed to an intellectual shift in British Columbia in which loyalists began to reinterpret the local annexation movement in a way which further amplified its apparent dangers. Over the course of the critical period, loyalists increasingly recognized the growing threat of American expansionism and the uncertain potential of the local annexationists as a singular force pulling the colony from the British orbit. To a certain extent, this perception was well-founded. As demonstrated in Chapter One, the most powerful annexationist agitation in British Columbia was a direct response to rumors of American efforts to annex the colony. Similarly, through the activities of Allen Francis and other agents and observers, the activities of British Columbian annexationists influenced the American effort in a meaningful way. While British Columbians did not always succeed in identifying the actual nature of the relationship or the degree to which local and foreign annexationism were related, over the course of the critical period colonists grew to understand that the two were connected in some way. This fundamental reconceptualization of annexationism and the tendency of loyalists to overstate the actual degree of connectedness of the local and foreign annexation threats contributed heavily the idea that annexation was a credible and imminent threat to the colony.

The most obvious example of the developing idea that annexationism was connected to American expansionist pressures were the rumors that the movement was funded by the United States and supported by foreign agents. As mentioned previously, loyalists began associating the internal and external threats of annexationism in 1867 when McMillan travelled to San Francisco

to marshal American support and funding for British Columbian annexationists. McClure had been largely immune to this accusation as the leader of the movement in 1866 due to his long history in the colony as a politician. This was not the case for McMillan who was readily and perhaps rightfully accused of cynically serving the interests of San Francisco annexationists. Though almost certainly a necessary response to loyalist suppression, McMillan's activities in San Francisco, as well as the surreptitious methods by which the annexation petitions were circulated, left those efforts vulnerable to accusations that they were American-funded and American-engineered efforts to undermine the colony. Though the notion was likely conceived as a jab at local annexationists, the idea that Annexationism was part of a foreign plot fed into the notion that it remained a threat to British Columbia.

The idea that annexationism was a foreign imposition was further sustained by the ubiquitous, yet incorrect, perception among British Columbians that most annexationists in the colony were Americans or other foreigners. Governor Seymour noted a report to Lord Buckingham that one of the main factors supporting the "systematic agitation" of annexationism was that the colony was "gradually being occupied by Citizens of the United States."⁴⁶ Similarly, Higgins, Robson, and after December 1867, McMillan, routinely commented on the latent annexationism of "the foreign element" and of the "fenian type" in their efforts to de-legitimize anti-confederationist sentiment in Victoria.⁴⁷ In January 1868 Higgins reprinted an article from the *Hamilton Spectator* which noted the annexationist tendencies of "American residents in the Colony" only

⁴⁶ Seymour to Buckingham, June 26, 1867, National Archives of the UK, 7989, CO 60/28. The Colonial Despatches of Vancouver Island and British Columbia 1846-1871. Ed. James Hendrickson and the Colonial Despatches project. Victoria: University of Victoria. Accessed December 16, 2015.
<http://bcgenesis.uvic.ca/getDoc.htm?id=B67074PR.scx>.

⁴⁷ *Daily British Colonist and Victoria Chronicle*, December 2, 1867, p. 3, November 16, 1869, p. 3. McMillan became a confederationist in December 1867, and remained one until 1869 when a new wave of annexationism caused him to switch back, possibly in hopes of selling more papers.

represented a minority and that most colonists would support confederation.⁴⁸ The same month, Robson confidently asserted that, as only a handful of “sealy Britishers” could possibly back annexationism, it was mostly “foreigners, chiefly Americans” who had supported the movement.⁴⁹ Helmcken also came to view the lines of debate in this way. He was more nuanced than the confederationist editors, but still pointed primarily to Americans as the base of support for the movement. He noted that “[annexationist] sentiment existed among the Americans of course – and they played their part – [but] many Britishers agreed with them.⁵⁰ While the conventional wisdom among loyalists in the colony that Annexationism was American-driven was widespread, this view is inconsistent with Willard Ireland’s analysis of the 1869 petition which noted that annexationism was primarily supported by German and Jewish naturalized subjects and British-born residents of the city, along with only a small number of Americans.⁵¹ Similarly, a petition denouncing the Yale convention, circulated in the autumn of 1868, was signed mostly by permanent residents, with only a small supplementary list of Americans and other foreigners.⁵² That colonists understood otherwise strongly suggests that their perception of local annexationism was coloured by their anxiety over the growing discourse of Manifest Destiny to the south. Americans had been leaving the colony steadily since 1866, and though the Americans who remained were naturally annexationist, every indication suggests that they did not compose a plurality of the annexationist faction.⁵³

⁴⁸ Ibid., January 21, 1868, p. 2.

⁴⁹ *New Westminster British Columbian*, January 15, 1868, p. 2.

⁵⁰ Dorothy Blakey Smith ed. *The Reminiscences of Doctor John Sebastian Helmcken*. (Victoria: University of British Columbia Press, 1975), 242.

⁵¹ Ireland, “The Annexation Petition”, 271.

⁵² Though this was an anti-Confederation petition, it was signed by many annexationists, including a majority of the members of the Vancouver Lodge, five of whom were naturalized British Subjects. The total proportion of annexationist signatories is open to speculation. See below.

⁵³ Neunherz, “Hemmed In”, 107-111. Neunherz’s work suggests that Americans were enthusiastically annexationist. The inflated perception which American observers had of the popularity of the movement suggests that as a group they were virtually unanimous on the subject. As usual, there are no solid numbers on the actual rate of American

Just as they viewed annexationism to be sustained in large part by the direct intervention of Americans and American money, loyalists also viewed support for annexationism as an essentially reactive product of American political and economic pressure in the region. In January 1868, Higgins wrote that one of the benefits of uniting in confederation with “a stirring, energetic, and sagacious people” would be in “protecting [the colony] against that commercial supremacy of a foreign country on the pacific coast, which has almost forced the mercantile portion of our community to see in annexation the only remedy to our commercial depression”⁵⁴ Robson, ever focused on his crusade against Higgins and convinced that his colleague was one of the leaders of annexationism in the colony, observed that “the bogus telegram that Stanley and Seward were negotiating for the transfer of British Columbia” had been the impetus for his colleague’s alleged treason.⁵⁵ Amor de Cosmos and the other confederationist leaders also seem to have understood annexationism to be a product of American pressure. In their Confederation Memorial which was addressed to Ottawa and signed on March 25, 1868, the members of the Confederation League observed that while most people in British Columbia supported confederation, “there is a small party in favor of Annexation to the United States, and if it were practicable or possible, their numbers would be increased.”⁵⁶ Though the memorial was directed towards Canadian policymakers and likely was an attempt to marshal the spectre of annexation

exodus, but as a group with few ties to the town as it declined in population they were almost certainly a major component of the emigration problem. Robson made note that this exodus was still occurring as late as March 7, 1868. That they universally consisted of a small, supplementary minority in annexationist/anti-confederationist documents suggests that they were not main instigators of annexation in the colony, contrary to the perceptions of confederationist editors. For more on the uncertainty surrounding the American exodus see F. W. Howay, W. N. Sage and H. F. Angus, *British Columbia and the United States: The North Pacific Slope from Fur Trade to Aviation*. (Toronto: The Ryerson Press, 1942), 189

⁵⁴ *Daily British Colonist and Victoria Chronicle*, January 25, 1868, p. 2.

⁵⁵ *New Westminster British Columbian*, January 25, 1868, p. 2, February 8, 1868, p. 2.

⁵⁶ Viscount Monck to Buckingham and Chandos, March 7, 1868, House of Commons Parliamentary Papers, 19th Century House of Commons Sessional Papers, Papers on the Union of British Columbia with the Dominion of Canada, p. 6 1868-69 (390) XLIII.341.

to motivate the British and Canadians to move swiftly on the confederation issue (as will be explored further in Chapter 3), the wording nevertheless demonstrates that British Columbians understood that support for annexation in the colony was heavily influenced by the expansionist political activities of the United States.

The contextual intersection between annexationism and American expansion cut both ways. Just as annexationism was understood to be in some ways a product of American pressure, local annexationists were blamed for encouraging the expansionist proclivities of American policymakers and for spreading the perception that British Columbia was annexationist. Like other facets of the spectre of annexation, this idea borrowed from previous arguments used by loyalists against annexationism in 1866-1867. The idea that annexationist posturing would bring about greater American pressure was not significantly discussed until after the apparent defeat of the movement, either because this relationship had not yet been considered, or because it amounted to an acknowledgment of the efficacy of annexationist tactics. However, as described above, loyalists frequently complained that the annexation movement was frightening off immigrants and directly undermining the colonial economy by publicizing their complaints for the world to see. By the beginning of 1868, the echoes of the 1867 annexationist agitation began to return to the colony via international press. In light of the perceived danger posed by American expansionist tendencies, loyalists were genuinely unsettled by the realization of the global reach enjoyed by the annexationist press in Victoria.

Though loyalists were almost certainly unaware of the more significant ways in which American expansionists were encouraged by annexationism, particularly in relation to the activities of Francis and Seward, they had a fairly sophisticated understanding of the effect which the annexation movement had on American observers. Robson focused on the way in

which *Morning News* articles and the infamous *Colonist* article were repeated throughout the American press as evidence that British Columbia wanted annexation. In January he summarized several articles from the American press that confidently affirmed that annexationism represented the unanimous opinion of the colonists. In doing so, Robson made particular note of the way they cited the *Morning News* and the *Colonist* as the main annexationist organs in the colony.⁵⁷ In March, as the difficulties over the Alabama Claims continued to mount, he complained that, in the event of a war with the United States, “from the injudicious aspirations for affiliation which have sometimes lent a disloyal hue to the press of Victoria, the Americans might even fancy they would be welcomed here as the deliverers of a country writhing under the heel of tyranny.”⁵⁸ Both Higgins and Robson also devoted significant editorial space to the travels of Alfred Waddington, a railway promoter who left British Columbia for Canada and Britain at the height of the annexationist agitation in 1867. Waddington was unaware that the mood had shifted away from annexation, and the British Columbian editors complained that he was spreading incorrect information which would encourage expansionists.⁵⁹ Throughout the confederation debate, British Columbia newspapers routinely republished annexationist articles from American papers, with the express implication that annexationist agitators had been partially responsible for inciting their publication.

In their effort to identify the relationship between the local annexation movement and the threat of American expansion, the loyalist press in British Columbia became convinced that annexation posed a significant threat to the colony. Though they understood that the annexation movement was deeply in remission, perhaps forever, they remained extremely wary as to the

⁵⁷ *New Westminster British Columbian*, January 15, 1868, p. 3, January 25, 1868, p. 2.

⁵⁸ *Ibid.*, March 7, 1868, p. 2.

⁵⁹ *Ibid.*, August 22, 1868, p. 2; *Daily British Colonist and Victoria Chronicle*, January 28, 1868, p. 1, August 13, 1868, p. 3.

dangers posed by remaining annexationists and their allies in the United States. The spectre of annexation fed on the suspicious incertitude of colonists regarding the precise relationship between the United States and the annexation movement and the connotations thereof. As loyalists became more aware of how the two groups were connected, local annexationism became contextually subsumed into the broader narrative of American expansionism as a dormant but potentially malignant symptom of a larger effort to annex the colony. The particular contours of the spectre of annexation borrowed heavily from the arguments used by loyalists against annexationists in 1866-1867. As a result, during the confederation debates supporters of union with Canada stood to benefit more from the ongoing narrative of an American existential threat to the colony than those who endorsed the status quo.

The confederation debate in British Columbia extended from the end of 1867 roughly until the beginning of 1870.⁶⁰ In comparison to the annexation debate, which arose briefly and intensely in response to major developments surrounding the future of the colony, the confederation debate was considerably more drawn-out, featuring periodic discussion over the entire period, punctuated by brief flare-ups over major events and developments such as the 1868 Legislative Council election. This situation was partially the fault of Governor Seymour and his magistrates, who were ardently opposed to confederation and worked to prevent any meaningful progress. Seymour, unlike Musgrave, did not receive specific instructions to advance the cause of confederation. Further, not wishing to deal with the complicated transition it would bring about, he stalled the negotiation until his death in 1869.⁶¹ The negotiations over the transfer of

⁶⁰ The term “confederation debate” frequently refers to the debates in the Legislative Council in 1868-1869, but has also been used to describe the overall question throughout the period which was discussed formally and informally in a variety of venues. In this analysis the term “confederation debate” and “confederation period” will both be used to refer to the broad conversation among colonists throughout the period over the question of union with Canada.

⁶¹ Susan Dickinson Scott, “The attitude of the Colonial Governors and Officials towards Confederation” in *British Columbia and Confederation*. Ed. W. George Shelton (Victoria: University of Victoria Press, 1967), 146. Anti-

Rupert's Land were another delaying factor. Most parties agreed that confederation could not occur until British Columbia and Canada shared a border, and the various difficulties and bureaucratic hurdles surrounding the land transfer prevented the issue from being decided until it was completed.⁶² The long process of negotiating the Terms of Union with Canada and Britain was another consideration. Confederation could not be guaranteed until the negotiations were concluded, and confederationists were faced with the challenging prospect of rallying and maintaining support for union in the colony while negotiating the best possible abroad. On the anti-confederationist side, the road to victory was especially unclear. Though they worked to support Seymour's government and to convince colonists that confederation was a poor option, they had no real means of resisting the pressures imposed by Britain and Canada or to prevent confederation in the long-term. In general, the limited capacity which confederationists and anti-confederationists alike possessed to decisively conclude the debate through local activism meant that the question remained open for the entire period.

The confederation debate itself heralded an important shift in political affiliations and alliances between various groups in the colony. During the Annexation debate, the majority of colonists on both the mainland and the Island were united with colonial authorities and HBC workers in decrying the annexationist editors and their noisy Victorian followers. By contrast, the confederation debate set loyalist British Columbians against one another and against their government as they attempted to come to a consensus which reflected their interests and values as British subjects. The issue of confederation was not nearly as clear-cut as that of annexation; until Britain made its preference clear, it was not obvious which option was more "loyal". Many

confederationists also said this in legislative council debates: *Daily British Colonist and Victoria Chronicle*, February 19, 1869, p. 3.

⁶² Scott, "The Attitude of Colonial Governors", 129; *Daily British Colonist and Victoria Chronicle*, April 12, 1869, p. 3.

of the most vocal anti-annexationists, notably Edward Mallandaine and Henry Holbrook, opposed confederation for fear it would increase their political distance from Britain. However, by doing so they found themselves standing against individuals with whom they had formerly been united in opposition to annexationism.⁶³ Unlike annexationists, however, anti-confederationists were not easily suppressed as disloyal traitors. As Victoria was more evenly divided on the issue of confederation than it had been on annexation, anti-confederationists routinely succeeded in holding meetings and publicly circulating petitions.

Another notable rift which differentiated the lines of debate in the confederation debate from those of the annexation debate was that between pro-confederation colonists and their own Government. Bureaucrats and loyalists had worked side-by-side to suppress the annexation movement 1866 public meeting. In 1868, however, the colonial government made every effort to assist the anti-confederation faction. Robson had formerly aligned the *British Columbian* firmly in support of Seymour's administration, but during the confederation debate, he and most other mainlanders stood opposed to their formerly-beloved Governor and his men (and not just because they had made the unforgivable decision to move the capital to Victoria). In opposing confederation, the government was joined by the employees of the Hudson's Bay Company, represented chiefly by J.S. Helcmken, as well as the minority of genuine annexationists that remained in Victoria. In relation to an election late in 1868, McMillan accurately summarized the split on confederation as "Liberals on one side, and the Government officials, the Family Compact, the Hudson's Bay Company, and the Annexationists on the other side."⁶⁴

⁶³ Mallandaine expressed his anti-annexationism in *Daily British Colonist and Victoria Chronicle*, October 2, 1866, p. 2; Mallandaine wrote in opposition to Confederation in *Daily British Colonist and Victoria Chronicle*, February 14, 1868, p. 1; Holbrook wrote in the *New Westminster Mainland Guardian*, October 1869 (exact date illegible), p. 2.

⁶⁴ *Victoria Morning News*, November 8, 1868, clipping from Scrapbook, James E. McMillan Manuscripts, British Columbia Archives and Records Service.

Even as the lines of debate shifted at the start of 1868, one thing that remained consistent was the divide between mainland British Columbia and Vancouver Island. The mainland was consistently and overwhelmingly confederationist throughout the entire critical period. On the Island, support for the movement waxed and waned over time, most notably in Victoria. All of the Island newspapers supported confederation, but despite the best efforts of the various editors, Victorians displayed a significant degree of ambivalence over the prospect of becoming Canadian. Most of the groups which opposed confederation were concentrated in Victoria, and residents of the city were said to have had a generally low opinion of Canadians. In his reminiscences, Helmcken observed that Victorians, “looked down upon Canadians as a poor mean slow people, who had been very commonly designated North American Chinamen.”⁶⁵ Robson suggested that the notorious fickleness of Victorians and their tendency to oppose whatever the residents of the mainland supported was the main reason they opposed confederation.⁶⁶ Robson’s own distaste for the city of Victoria obviously informed his perspective in this regard, however trans-Georgian jealousies may nevertheless have been a factor. Though a pro-confederation consensus in the city seems to have solidified by the end of the debates in 1870, as it is difficult to discern the level of support the movement enjoyed across the period, there were likely times when anti-confederationists represented a majority in Victoria.

Anti-confederationists, or “antis” as they were sometimes called by confederationists in the colony, were united in their genuine trepidation over confederation’s viability. Though their opponents associated the movement with annexationism, and railed against its self-defeatism in the face of American expansionism, anti-confederationists were not merely Government or HBC shills, nor were they all secretly annexationists (though a few certainly were). Throughout the

⁶⁵ Smith, *Helmcken*, 247.

⁶⁶ *New Westminster British Columbian*, July 26, 1868, p. 2.

confederation debate, the anti-confederation position was consistently expressed in both financial and sentimental terms. Many colonists, longing to preserve the direct colonial connection with Great Britain, felt that by joining Canada they would be reducing British Columbia's stature to that of a "colony of a colony". Similarly, anti-confederationists, fearing the colonial independence platform of the "Bright School" in London, worried that confederation was the first step towards weakening and perhaps even severing Imperial ties.⁶⁷ Economically, anti-confederationists combined a sense of optimism regarding their imminent financial prospects with a rejection of the notion that confederation was a necessary pre-condition for reciprocity with the United States and greater Imperial support for the development of the colony.⁶⁸ For the most part, with the exception of cynical bureaucrats and closeted annexationists, anti-confederationists genuinely believed that British Columbia could stand alone in the Pacific as a Crown Colony, and that confederation represented a premature and permanent solution to a problem which might be solved by other means.⁶⁹ Anti-confederationists understood the threat posed by the United States but were confident that Britain would prevent any real efforts to annex the colony, just as London had done by refusing Seward's advances in 1867.

In confronting anti-confederationists, supporters of union with Canada employed a variety of strategies. Amor De Cosmos focused his attention almost exclusively to positively extolling the

⁶⁷ Smith, *Helmcken*, 253.

⁶⁸ At the beginning of the period, anti-confederationists relied on confederationist newspapers to publish their arguments, but in the spring of 1869, *The Mainland Guardian* began publication in New Westminster to advance the anti-confederation position. Notable anti-confederationist writers were "A.B." who was likely Arthur Birch [*New Westminster Mainland Guardian*, September 29, 1869, p. 3, & others], H. Holbrook, a former MLA who later turned to the confederation [*New Westminster Mainland Guardian*, October 1869 (exact date illegible), p. 2, & others], and an unknown individual by the name of "Self-Reliance" [*Daily British Colonist and Victoria Chronicle*, September 21, 1868, p. 2, & others]. Their arguments were entirely based on the notion that the colony did not necessarily need to rush into confederation and ought to be cautious in negotiating with Canada. This may have been a deliberate effort to avoid imputations of annexationism. For the most part, their only reference to annexationism was to caution that Nova Scotia already regretted confederation and wished to leave. Anti-confederationists were remarkably consistent in maintaining this tone throughout the period.

⁶⁹ *New Westminster Mainland Guardian*, September 22, 1868, p. 2.

financial and political benefits of confederation. He formed the Confederation League in May of 1868 along with John Robson and Robert Beaven in order to better organize support for joining the Dominion.⁷⁰ With the possible exception of the characterization of annexationists in the March 1868 Confederation Manifesto, De Cosmos does not seem to have made any effort throughout the period to disparage the anti-confederation movement by raising the spectre of annexationism. Even in the autumn of 1868 when De Cosmos and his running mate were defeated in an election by J.S. Helmcken, De Cosmos continued to evince the positives of confederation and declined to call into question Helmcken's motives, or those of the HBC employees in the colony.⁷¹ As the de facto confederationist leader, De Cosmos established a tone of respect and reconciliation in his efforts to sway anti-confederationists to his side. He published long, technical analyses in the *Colonist* of the political and financial benefit of union with Canada, and respectfully debating the perspectives of anti-confederationist writers such as "A.B." and Edward Mallandaine.⁷² This may have been a necessary tactic given De Cosmos' continuing political aspirations in the divided city of Victoria, or it may have sincerely reflected De Cosmos' political style at the time. Regardless, it was not significantly echoed by his fellow Confederation League founder, John Robson, nor by any of their editorial peers in the colony or their supporters. In the context of annexationism, De Cosmos' style is important to note in order to properly situate invocations of the spectre of annexation as a smaller, secondary facet of a debate which was primarily based in calculations of financial and political outcomes.

⁷⁰ Robert A. J. McDonald and H. Keith Ralston, "DE COSMOS, AMOR," *Dictionary of Canadian Biography*, vol. 12, University of Toronto/Université Laval, 2003–. Accessed December 8, 2015, http://www.biographi.ca/en/bio/de_cosmos_amor_12E.html.

⁷¹ *Daily British Colonist and Victoria Chronicle*, October 24, 1868, p. 2.

⁷² This is best exemplified in a series of long editorials he published in the *Colonist* in February 1868, in which he confronted various anti-confederationist arguments with detailed financial analysis and only minimal reference to loyalty or patriotism. His election speeches in October 1868 also reflect this tone. See *Daily British Colonist and Victoria Chronicle*, February 4, 1868, p. 1, through February 15, 1868, p. 1.

In contrast to *De Cosmos*, the colony's pro-confederation newspaper editors did not limit their arguments to practical questions of the relative merits of confederation. Though they too devoted the majority of their efforts to positively extolling the virtue and inevitability of joining the Dominion, Higgins, Robson, McMillan, and George Wallace eagerly tapped into public anxiety over annexation to discredit anti-confederationists. During the period, confederationist editors made significant use of the spectre of annexation to advance their cause. By harnessing the narrative of the annexation threat, they and their supporters attempted to characterize the anti-confederationist side as having been thoroughly infiltrated by annexationists. Confederationists, relying on their earlier victory in vilifying annexationism, spread rumors that anti-confederationist leaders were secretly annexationist and questioned the ultimate aims of those who wished to remain separate from Canada. Though annexationists certainly aligned themselves with the anti-confederationists, news editors eagerly exaggerated this relationship by portraying the movement as fundamentally compromised. Throughout the period, confederationists harnessed public anxiety over the annexationist presence, as well as the natural inclination of British subjects to distrust the foreign segment of the population in order to cast doubt as to the viability of remaining a Crown Colony and to call into question the underlying motivations of those who opposed confederation. By raising the spectre of annexation, confederationists were successful in casting themselves as more loyal and more truly British than their opponents, and this gave them significant rhetorical leeway in convincing colonists to support union with Canada.

Perhaps the most significant and overarching use of the spectre of annexation by confederationists was to characterize anti-confederationists, the bloated government administration, and annexationists as one interconnected bloc which threatened the colony's

prosperity. Within this broad conceptualization, the actual degree of agency which the annexation movement was said to possess changed constantly in order to suit whichever argument confederationist editors wished while maintaining the notion that confederation would inevitably triumph. With no credible means to determine the remaining support for the annexationism and with the movement largely voiceless, the threat of annexationism could be moulded by confederationists to suit whatever narrative was convenient. When the anti-confederationists were mostly inactive, Higgins was dismissive of the annexation movement, cheerfully describing the annexationists as “enthusiastic spirits delighting themselves and their friends with annexation vagaries”.⁷³ When anti-confederationists were active, Higgins blamed annexationist infiltrators for corrupting the movement and weakening the colony.⁷⁴ Robson similarly vacillated between the notion that annexationism had been nothing more than a passing fad on the Island, demonstrative of the fickle selfishness of Islanders, and the idea that they represented a significant and dangerous proportion of anti-confederationists.⁷⁵

This fluid conceptualization of the continuing relevance of annexationists in the colony can be seen as a continuation of the rhetoric of the annexation debate, during which loyalist assertions about the hopelessness of the annexationist cause belied their genuine concern about its effects. In relation to the anti-confederation movement, annexationists were cast as hidden masterminds. In relation to the threat of annexation itself, however, they were portrayed as hopeless and harmless. This idea of a doomed annexation movement, itself an aimless, reactive symptom of the troubles facing the colony, which was nevertheless corrupting loyalists against confederation

⁷³ Ibid., April 12, 1869, p. 2.

⁷⁴ Ibid., February 5, 1868, p. 2.

⁷⁵ Robson called annexationism a “nine-days wonder” in *New Westminster British Columbian*, March 7, 1868, p. 2, yet persisted in accusing McMillan and Higgins of being annexationist. Around the 1868 election, he frequently commented on the annexationist tendencies of the foreign population [*New Westminster British Columbian*, November 21 1868, p. 3.]. Similarly, he referenced the inevitability of imminent annexation in case confederation was defeated more than anyone else (see below).

was expressed quite succinctly by Higgins in April 1868. He charged that "annexation to the United States is a vagary of the white-washed, a crochet of the Fenian type; a passing straw clutched by but a few of our citizens, rendered desperate by the torpidity of our present government, and is unworthy of the slightest consideration. The arguments for the delay of confederation are the offshoots of the annexation chimera, and should be treated with equal contempt."⁷⁶ This was a powerful statement which is wholly emblematic of the approach which some confederationists took to the debate. Anti-confederationists were systematically delegitimized through their association with annexationists and selfish Government representatives, while all three groups were blamed in different contexts for sustaining and inspiring the others in a misguided plot to defeat confederation.

The argument that anti-confederationists were tainted by association with annexationists is evident in the confederationist response to two significant incidents during the period. The first of these episodes came about in February 1868, several days after a major confederation public meeting, when an anti-confederation petition circulated in Victoria. The petition, which received 164 signatures, was immediately transmitted to the Secretary of State by Governor Seymour.⁷⁷ The text, as reported by the *Colonist*, did not actually contain any reference to annexationism, but instead called on colonists to "delay confederation" until its benefits were assured. Nevertheless, upon learning of the document on February 5, Higgins immediately blamed annexationists, stating that "the document has had its origin with the men who still cling to the wild, delusive hope that England will eventually relinquish her hold on this Colony and hand it

⁷⁶ *Daily British Colonist and Victoria Chronicle*, April 3, 1868, p. 2.

⁷⁷ H. Robert Kendrick, "Amor De Cosmos and Confederation" in *British Columbia and Confederation*. Ed. W. George Shelton (Victoria: University of Victoria Press, 1967), 82.

over to the tender care of Uncle Sam.”⁷⁸ Turning his attention to the government, he observed that anyone who signed the petition was choosing to “Cast their influence in favour of retaining Mr. Seymour...and continuing our expensive and illiberal system of Government for an indefinite period.” In an article the following day, Higgins noted that the handwriting of the petition matched that of C.B. Young, and that one-half of the forty signatures were those of “men who have spouted annexation on every street corner for months, and have done more damage to the country and drive people out of it than all other causes combined.”⁷⁹

As news of the petition spread in Victoria and more details were uncovered, the notion that annexationists were the perpetrators spread. On the 7th, a reader who wrote under the name “An Englishman” echoed Higgin’s charge that C.B. Young, “the great gun of annexation”, had been behind the document, noting that the existence of the petition and the identity of its originator had been “reported all over town.”⁸⁰ The letter-writer lamented that through his trickery, Young had been able to “enlist many loyal Englishmen under his tattered banner” as he attempted to mastermind the continued decline of the colony in support of annexation to the United States.⁸¹ Given Young’s former politics, this may well have been the case. It is entirely unclear whether or not Young was an Annexationist during this period. He had denied the charge under oath in 1866 despite his favourable treatment of McClure at the public meeting, but in 1867 he had written a

⁷⁸ *Daily British Colonist and Victoria Chronicle*, February 5, 1868, p. 2. Higgins’ claim that the petition was mostly signed by annexationists is quite believable given the support which they showed for a similar document which was circulated by J.S. Helmcken later in the year. See footnote 51. Uncharacteristically, Higgins did not comment on that document, save to include it as a paid ad in the *Colonist*. Whether or not confederationists saw the anti-Yale Convention document as an annexationist plot is unknown as no issues of the *News* or the *Columbian* from the weeks surrounding the publication of the document survive, and neither Higgins nor Wallace commented. Nevertheless, this may have contributed to Helmcken’s later reputation for being an annexationist, which as previously mentioned appears to have been propagated by rank-and-file confederationists and not editors.

⁷⁹ *Ibid.*, February 6, 1868, p. 1.

⁸⁰ *Ibid.*, February 7, 1868, p. 1.

⁸¹ Though as with any anonymous letter, the originator could have been Higgins himself, the writing style does not appear similar. Note that this individual also framed the choice as confederation or inevitable annexation, even as early as February 1868.

number of editorials for the openly-annexationist *Morning News*.⁸² Following McMillan's re-conversion to confederation in December, there is little solid indication of whether Young underwent a similar change of heart. According to Robson, Young had been present at a public meeting over the issue of confederation which had been held a few days before the petition was circulated, and had given "a very unpopular speech" on the merits of delaying confederation from which the petition was likely conceived. Robson did not accuse Young of being annexationist at this time, and having not seen the petition himself did not comment on whether or not it was an annexationist ruse. Instead, he devoted editorial space to his continued crusade to brand Higgins as some kind of annexationist mastermind, and wondered why Higgins himself had not signed the petition if it was indeed an effort towards annexationism.⁸³ It is unclear whether or not Young himself had actually decided which alternative to confederation he preferred. Given Robson's hesitance to accuse Young of annexationism, something he did to others frequently and easily, Young was more likely among those colonists who were alarmed by the pace of confederation rather than an annexationist infiltrator. Regardless, as indicated by Higgins and "An Englishman", Young's petition was taken by some as evidence that the anti-confederation movement had been infiltrated and was serving the interests of annexation.

Though Young's petition stands as an interesting display of how annexationism remained at the forefront of the minds of some confederationists, the most significant event in which the spectre of annexation played a role was the October 1868 Legislative Council election. In practical terms the election meant little due to the numerical dominance of appointed magistrates in the Council. Nevertheless, it was fiercely contested in principle over the issue of

⁸² *Ibid.*, December 15, 1866, p. 2, May 24, 1867, p. 2.

⁸³ *New Westminster British Columbian*, February 8, 1868, p. 2. Robson repeated Higgin's claim that the petition was signed mostly by annexationists, but noted that were that the case he would expect Higgins' own name to be on it, as "he is one of the old Annexationists, and a citizen of the United States."

confederation, and was seen by many as a local referendum on the issue. De Cosmos stood as the senior candidate for the pro-confederation side, although he moderated his rhetoric significantly to appeal to the ambivalent Victorian voters, while J.S. Helmcken represented the anti-confederation party. Among British subjects, De Cosmos was likely the favourite, a fact which produced extreme frustration and anti-Government anger when Governor Seymour suddenly and without explanation expanded the franchise to include not just British subjects, but any white man resident in the colony longer than three months. When Helmcken handily won the election, largely due to the support of foreign voters, confederationists, to varying degrees, accused Seymour and Helmcken of courting the annexationist vote to steal the election.

Both before and after the election, confederationists commented on the influence of annexationists in supporting the anti-confederation candidates. In an election speech, De Cosmos stated plainly that he had heard from his supporters that “the election would be controlled by foreign votes – annexation interests would be used” but that he believed the German and Italian residents would nevertheless vote for him.⁸⁴ Higgins was somewhat muted on the issue, but McMillan and Robson were quite vocal. McMillan complained that the anti-confederationists knew the true interests of the foreign population lay in annexation, cautioning that “we do not charge the successful candidates with cherishing annexation sentiments, but that they pandered to the foreign element on this subject there is no doubt whatsoever.”⁸⁵ Reflecting on the election early in 1869, he noted that the “erratic” Helmcken was backed by the foreign element, not because they disliked Canada, but because “they hated England and believed that by defeating confederation they would weaken British influence on this part of the world”.⁸⁶ Robson shared

⁸⁴ *Daily British Colonist and Victoria Chronicle*, October 24, 1868, p. 2.

⁸⁵ *Victoria Morning News*, August 11, 1868, clipping from Scrapbook, James E. McMillan Manuscripts, British Columbia Archives and Records Service.

⁸⁶ *Ibid.*, February 28, 1869.

similar observations, stating that it was not surprising that the foreign element supported the Government Party, but “it is a little bit awkward.”⁸⁷ He used this association to question the motivations of anti-confederationists, cautioning that “we could...accuse those who oppose confederation of disloyalty and of contemplating a dissolution of our connection with the mother country...[but] we will not call them rebels and annexationists at heart. Some of them may possibly be zealous for the British connection”.⁸⁸ He too believed that annexationists had been the deciding force, reflecting that “the selection really turned on annexation, and that makes it more discreditable to the government and Governor Seymour. What makes it more censurable is that it is well-known that the foreign population are annexationists.”⁸⁹ Again in the case of the election, confederationists, relying on existing notions of the sources and motivations of annexationists in the colony, invoked the annexationist presence as an attack against anti-confederationists.

Not only news editors emphasized the connection between the anti-confederation side and annexationists. Following the election, Helmcken gained a reputation as an annexationist. Interestingly, none of the confederationist editors actually accused him of such. Instead, it appears that this reputation grew from the sentiment of the general public, rather than any editorial slandering. As discussed above, Helmcken was not an annexationist, and editors seem to have understood this. They certainly criticized him for consorting with the annexationist element and for aiding their side by delaying confederation, but they understood that Helmcken represented the interests of the Hudson’s Bay Company, not the United States. The closest any editor came to associating Helmcken directly with annexationism came when Robson composed

⁸⁷ *New Westminster British Columbian*, October 28, 1868, p. 2.

⁸⁸ *Ibid.*, October 21, 1868, p. 2.

⁸⁹ *Ibid.*, November 21, 1868, p. 3.

a piece comparing Helmcken's opposition to confederation with a previous statement which the doctor had made to the effect that it was British Columbia's "Manifest destiny...to become a part of the Dominion or to be absorbed by the American States; and the sooner [it was] decided which it shall be the better". Robson attributed Helmcken's apparent abandonment of this principle, along with the majority of the Victoria electorate, opened them up to "charges of inconsistency, if not something infinitely worse".⁹⁰ Robson's hints aside, the fact that editors were largely unwilling to openly accuse Helmcken of being an annexationist makes the fact that he gained this reputation far more interesting. He commented in his reminisces that "somehow or another I got the character of being an annexationist – I suppose because I opposed confederation and talked." He conjectured that this was a deliberate tactic, suggesting that "the character became advantageous to the province – for it extended to Canada." That Helmcken directly attributed his reputation to confederationists, despite the silence of the prominent editors, suggests that rank-and-file confederationists continued to spread rumours that certain members of the community were secretly annexationist.

The discourse of loyalty in the confederation debates was another facet in which the spectre of annexation played a crucial role for the confederation movement. The fact that anti-confederationists were campaigning for the maintenance of the status quo provided confederationist leaders with a unique opportunity to contextualize the confederation narrative within that of the ongoing struggle against annexation as they attempted to demonstrate that confederation was the more "loyal" option. By invoking the possibility of annexation, confederationists argued that continued isolation was impossible in the face of American pressure, and as such, the only way to remain connected to Britain whatsoever was to unite with

⁹⁰ Ibid., October 14, 1868, p. 2.

Canada. The inevitability of American expansion on the Pacific coast had been a cornerstone of the annexationist argument in 1866-1867. Even then, forward-thinking loyalists had responded with their own assertions of the inevitability and promise of Confederation. Confederationist leaders were generally dismissive of the possibility of annexation. Nevertheless, at the height of the confederation period, they relied on the idea that annexation was imminent and inevitable in order to instill in their arguments a sense of consequence and urgency, and to place into question the motivations of the so-called loyalists who wished to defy Imperial authorities by remaining apart from Canada.

Higgins, who tended to avoid this line of argument, continued to maintain the same line as he had in 1867; that annexation was impossible and that annexationism was the purview of misguided fools. Nevertheless, he blamed annexationists for having placed the colony in “depression we are now but slowly recovering from”.⁹¹ On the mainland, however, both Robson and Wallace frequently hinted at the inevitability of annexation in their arguments for confederation, particularly in 1869 after the American Senate rejected the Johnson-Clarendon treaty and as tensions over the Alabama Claims reached their zenith.⁹² Many suspected that the negotiations were being kept open specifically in order to re-introduce territorial concessions into the negotiation. Some, such as Robson, pointed to the prominence of the anti-colonial Bright School in suggesting that Britain might actually allow it. In April 1869, Robson cautioned that “nobody can believe...that this colony can long remain as it is, an isolated patch of British territory sandwiched by the United States”.⁹³ Most crucially, he connected the idea that

⁹¹ *Daily British Colonist and Victoria Chronicle*, May 3, 1869, p. 2, July 6, 1869, p. 2, August 15, 1868, p. 2.

⁹² *Victoria British Columbian*, May 21, 1869, p. 2, April 21, 1869, p. 2.

⁹³ Robson began hinting at this as early as the summer of 1868. In an article on July 22, he observed that in the absence of Britain, the colony would be forced to look for “new connections”. *New Westminster British Columbian*, July 22, 1868, p. 2.

annexation was imminent to the former activities of the annexation movement, reprinting in May the report of the United States Senate Committee on Pacific railways which specifically cited the 1867 annexation petition as evidence that British Columbia wished to be annexed.⁹⁴ In Cariboo, where the nuances of debate in Victoria were less apparent, Wallace consistently framed the choice as confederation or annexation, insisting that “we must either be united to the Dominion of Canada, or annexed to the United States”.⁹⁵ By the end of the period, this tactic appears to have been adopted by the confederationist leaders at large. In September 1869, the *Mainland Guardian* published an article complaining that the confederation deputation, which included, among others, De Cosmos, Robson, and McMillan, had warned the newly-appointed Governor Musgrave that “if the colony were not confederated within two years it would undoubtedly be annexed to the United States”.⁹⁶

Whether or not the belief among confederationists that annexation was an inevitable consequence of rejecting union with Canada was a heartfelt product of the growing fear of annexation or a cynical debating tactic, it proved a useful argument. By dismissing the notion that the colony could remain outside Canada without being annexed, confederationists could charge “antis” of secretly coveting annexation and of working to delay union with Canada with that end in mind. While anti-confederationists could argue that Britain would never allow such an eventuality to occur, they could not so easily dismiss the claim that the colony was more vulnerable to American expansionist proclivities as an isolated British outpost.⁹⁷ Interestingly,

⁹⁴ *Victoria British Columbian*, May 18, 1869, p. 2.

⁹⁵ *Barkerville Cariboo Sentinel*, June 12, 1869, p. 2, July 2, 1868, p. 4, June 16, 1869, p. 2.

⁹⁶ *New Westminster Mainland Guardian*, September 29, 1869, p. 3.

⁹⁷ Mallandaine insisted “we will never be willingly annexed to the United States” though he apparently did not have an answer for “unwilling” annexation. See *Daily British Colonist and Victoria Chronicle*, February 14, 1868, p. 1; Alston and Trutch in the Legislative Council both commented on the idea dismissively, stating that “they did not think manifest destiny had anything to do with [confederation].” in *Daily British Colonist and Victoria Chronicle*, February 19, 1869, p. 2.

they too attempted to harness public distaste for annexationism as a means of asserting their own superior loyalty to Britain. Just as annexationists had done in 1866-1867, anti-confederationists attempted to strengthen their position and mitigate accusations that they were defying the will of the Imperial government by tapping into the popular discourse of loyalty in the colony. In a Legislative Council debate on Confederation, the Acting Solicitor-General, Thomas L. Wood, in arguing that Confederation offered too close a union with Ottawa, asked if “handing over the entire control of our destinies to Ottawa; would that be Confederation or Annexation?”⁹⁸ He complained that confederationists were attempting to frame the debate in terms of the inevitability of confederation or annexation in order to “terrify us into Confederation – a great mistake in relation to English character.”⁹⁹

Similar arguments were voiced by other anti-confederationists. E. G. Alston raised the notion that confederation was a less “British” option than continued isolation in a brief historical summary of British Columbia which he wrote for the tenth anniversary of the Anglican Mission. In his account, he contended that “The colony has suffered from a certain class of politicians...some even urging annexation to the United States; but the great heart of the people beats with that of England so fervently, that they have rejected the idea of confederation with Canada, preferring the closer union and protection of the mother country.”¹⁰⁰ This was Helmcken’s opinion as well. He wrote that the Bright school had supported Confederation “in hidden language” as a step towards independence from Britain. Most interestingly, he attempted to connect the confederationists’ use of the rhetoric of loyalty to that of annexationists. He observed that American annexationists had “made use of the same argument, shewing it not to be

⁹⁸ Ibid.

⁹⁹ Ibid.

¹⁰⁰ E. Graham Alston, *A Hand-Book to British Columbia and Vancouver Island* (Victoria: B.C. F. Algar, S, Clement’s Lane, Lombard Street, 1870), 5.

disloyal to quit the Empire and join the U.S.”¹⁰¹ Higgins responded to Alston’s comment in the *Colonist* on September 3, 1869, commenting simply that, as Britain wanted confederation, anti-confederation could not possibly be the more loyal option.¹⁰² As Britain favoured confederation, and because union with Canada offered superior protection from the United States, anti-confederationists had little hope of comparing the two, or of using public distaste for annexation as an argument against confederation. Since 1867, confederation had stood as a clear alternative to annexation, and the two options could not easily be rhetorically conflated.

The idea of annexationism had a rocky history in British Columbia during the critical period, both as a political movement and as a rhetorical spectre. From its initial inception in 1866, public awareness and discussion of the movement waxed and waned according to a number of internal and external factors. As support and interest in the movement shifted, however, loyalists in the colony remained steadfast in opposing and suppressing annexationist sentiment. Though their rhetoric was dismissive and exclusionary, their actions in relation to the annexation movement reveal a clear anxiety and apprehension over the possibility that the movement could be successful. The murmurings of Manifest Destiny from the south created a sense of uncertainty over the future of the colony. This situation, in turn, led loyalists to treat the small, reluctant annexation movement as a serious threat. Even after their success during annexation debate, loyalists remained wary of the lingering annexationist presence and of the possibility that it might still be capable of decisive action. Similarly, the annexation movement of 1866-1867 was blamed for encouraging the American expansionist rhetoric which threatened the future of the colony. As the line between local and American annexationism blurred, confederationists came to rely on the ephemerality of the annexation threat to sway the colony towards a swift union

¹⁰¹ Smith, *Helmcken*, 253.

¹⁰² *Daily British Colonist and Victoria Chronicle*, September 3, 1869, p. 2.

with Canada. Relying on their earlier tactics, confederationists cast doubt as to the motivations and allegiances of anti-confederationist politicians, and framed the debate as a fundamental choice between confederation and inevitable annexation.

This chapter has attempted to chart the argumentation of loyalists in British Columbia in relation to annexationism in order to determine the indirect role which the British Columbian annexation movement played in the confederation period and the discourse over the critical period more broadly. Though it is impossible to determine the degree to which this argumentation was effective, its use demonstrates that annexationism undoubtedly remained in the minds of colonists during the period, and played a relevant, if small, role in shaping the tone of the confederation debate. Though the external threat of annexation proved a driving and decisive factor in establishing the spectre of annexation, colonists consistently connected the external threat to the local movement, and thereby conferred upon it a degree of undue power and legitimacy. This, in turn, allowed confederationists to cast the movement as a hidden antagonist which was said to be cynically aiding anti-confederationists in a bid to bring the colony into the American orbit. As a secondary outcome, when the annexation movement did briefly return at the end of 1869 through the editorials of “Anglo-Saxon” and J.D. Pemberton and in the form of the 1869 petition, colonists were predisposed to once again reject annexation and treat it as a threat to British rule.

Chapter Three

“The Question of their Annexation is Only a Question of Time”:
The spectre of British Columbian annexationism as a consideration in the Anglo-American
contest for the Pacific Coast, 1866-1870

The British Columbian annexation movement was both a minority political agitation which periodically emerged in the politics of the colony, and a constant intellectual presence which subtly affected the tenor and direction of the conversation over the future of British Columbia. Building on this idea, chapter three will explore two issues: how the narrative of annexationism in the international context differed quite dramatically from its counterpart in the colony; and the role and significance of the British Columbian annexation movement in British and American diplomatic policy during the critical period. The presence of the annexation movement, however small and powerless it was in the local context, was a significant consideration in Anglo-American diplomacy in relation to British North America and the Pacific Coast. As American expansionists endeavoured to monopolize the region and prevent the union of the British North American colonies, and as Britain and Canada negotiated the entry of Rupert's Land and British Columbia into Confederation, the question of the direction of popular sentiment in the depressed colony became a central consideration. From policymakers to the general public, virtually all interested parties shared the understanding that Britain would never allow its colonies to be coerced into annexation. However, most agreed that should a British colony wish to leave the empire, colonial authorities would not force it to remain. In the case of British Columbia, it was generally understood that the colony would not be forced to join Confederation against its will, and, should the colonists earnestly desire annexation to the United States, that Britain would make arrangement for this to occur.

This core assumption, held to varying degrees by the majority of diplomatic stakeholders, defined the shape of the Anglo-American contest for British Columbia and the role of the annexation movement therein. The annexation movement mattered in Anglo-American diplomacy, and the activities of local annexationists played a central role in propagating the notion that British Columbia housed a powerful and popular annexation movement. International observers paid close attention to the activities of the annexation movement as they determined their diplomatic strategies in the region. Over the course of the period, they increasingly came to share a highly inflated view of the popularity and relevance of the annexation movement. This perception emerged from a variety of sources, including overly-enthusiastic British and American observers in the colony, the loudly annexationist Victoria press of 1867, and the various annexation petitions, and was of immense diplomatic significance. Working under the notion that Britain would not force a people who wished to become American to remain in the Empire, Americans eagerly publicized any indication that annexationism was popular in British Columbia so as to benefit their efforts to secure the colony. Meanwhile, British authorities, wary of American expansionist tendencies, cautiously overestimated the movement as they worked to secure the colony's entry into Confederation.

Though the United States had considered the economic and strategic benefits of securing the entirety of the Pacific Coast long before the British Columbian annexation movement existed, and Britain had long desired to see British Columbia united with Canada, the idea that British Columbia might prefer annexation affected the policies of the two powers in a number of direct and tangible ways. In the United States, the presence of annexationism led policymakers to suspect that acquisition British Columbia might not just be preferable or ideal, but actually practicable. Beginning with Seward in 1867, American policymakers under both the Andrew

Johnson and Ulysses S. Grant administrations extended and exacerbated the negotiations over the Alabama claims in hopes of securing territorial concessions in British North America. Seward and other expansionist politicians directed their diplomatic strategies during this period towards nurturing and supporting annexationism in British Columbia in order to better position themselves to acquire it from Britain as part of the Alabama Claims. Policymakers passed various resolutions to demonstrate their willingness to accept British Columbia as a state, citing its support for annexation, and used the existence of annexationism as an argument to convince Britain to cede the colony.

From the British perspective, annexationism affected Imperial diplomatic policy both indirectly as a consequence of the shift which it heralded in American policy, and directly as the Colonial Office attempted to account for the movement as it worked to secure the entry of British Columbia into Confederation. The presence of annexationism in British Columbia initially brought about significant ambivalence within the Britain's Conservative government as to the value of attempting to hold onto the expensive colony. After 1869, however, the spectre of annexationism in British Columbia impelled Gladstone's Liberals to devote more attention to the colony and proceed more cautiously to guarantee their continued position in the west. As this chapter will demonstrate, the British Columbian annexation movement was far more relevant in the broader diplomatic sphere than it ever was locally. Ironically, the most significant reaction to its presence was one which ensured its ultimate failure as Britain resisted the renewed American pressure towards territorial cession and successfully delivered the colony into Confederation.

Several key underlying diplomatic trends and assumptions in both Britain and the United States converged to exaggerate the importance of the tiny British Columbian annexation movement. In the United States, transatlantic tensions with Britain which arose during the Civil

War mingled with a renewed enthusiasm for continentalism and territorial expansion. Finding voice with prominent statesmen such as Seward, as well as the radical wing of the Republican Party, American expansionism during this time was defined by a decidedly sunny iteration of Manifest Destiny which stressed the inevitability of the peaceful expansion of republicanism over the continent. During this period, Americans eagerly awaited the acquisition of Canada and the territories to the Northwest into the American fold. However, few outside of the Fenian Brotherhood seriously contemplated armed conflict with Great Britain to secure the territories, and few supported the idea of paying for them. Americans emerged from the Civil War with a renewed faith in their republican values and their nation's grand destiny.¹ This confidence came to define the particular conception of Manifest Destiny which gripped the American populace during the Reconstruction era. Expansionism during this time was primarily expressed idealistically, in terms of the inherent desire for liberty of the people of the continent and the anticipated failure of the Dominion, and called for a fundamentally passive policy towards annexation. As described by historian Reginald C. Stuart, American authors described continentalism during this period in terms of the inevitable social development of mankind towards republicanism, and of the alignment of common interests which would, "by the simple force of political gravitation" naturally united the continent under the American flag.² One writer in this tradition, J. B. Austin, conjectured that "Manifest Destiny can be so attained that its processes will be entirely peaceable and harmonious while accompanied by the enthusiastic support of whole populations."³ The American approach to expansion in the Reconstruction era,

¹ Reginald C. Stuart, *United States Expansionism and British North America, 1775-1871*. (North Carolina: The University of North Carolina Press, 1988), 223.

² *Ibid.*, 222.

³ *Ibid.*, 223.

a reflection of their confidence and optimism in the superiority of their institutions and way of life, strongly influenced their perception of their monarchical neighbours to the North.

As observed through the ideological lens of Manifest Destiny and republican triumphalism, the British provinces seemed like an impermanent and unnatural Imperial imposition which stood in opposition of the universality of American ideals.⁴ In confronting British North America, American expansionists were extremely confident that the colonial population would eventually unite in realizing the superiority of republican values. Whereas racial and cultural differences caused Americans to doubt the value and wisdom of expansion to the South, the natural affinity which they perceived between themselves and British North Americans sustained their faith that the two peoples would inevitably be united. For the most part, Americans understood the colonials to be “a hardy and industrious population, of the same origin of our own, speaking the same language, and imbued with the same social and political ideas, and already used to self-government”.⁵ Americans were frustrated by Canada’s continued adherence to outdated Imperial institutions, and eagerly watched for its people to develop a more continental outlook.⁶ Throughout the period, the idea of Manifest Destiny predisposed Americans to be particularly credulous and supportive when it came to rumours of Canadian annexationism, and this affected their perception of annexationism in British Columbia.

This idealistic “something for nothing” conception of American Manifest Destiny relied entirely on the natural development of popular annexation movements across the continent. Annexation without conquest or purchase necessitated that the objects of American territorial

⁴ James Doyle, *North of America: Images of Canada in the Literature of the United States, 1775-1900*. (Toronto: ECW Press, 1983), 149.

⁵ Stuart, *United States Expansionism*, 223.

⁶ Gordon T. Stewart, *The American Response to Canada Since 1776*. (East Lansing: Michigan State University Press, 1992), 78.

ambition consented to being acquired. This was particularly crucial in the case of the British colonies, as it was generally understood that Britain would not agree to relinquish its North American territory unless the residents thereof overwhelmingly expressed their will to leave the Empire.⁷ This idea was expressed clearly in August of 1867 by Charles Francis Adams, the American Minister to Britain. Responding to Seward's ongoing efforts to acquire British Columbia, Adams warned the Secretary of State in August of 1867 that "the maintenance of the connection with Canada is a matter of pride with the British nation" which would never consent to its severance, except, possibly, if "the voluntary sentiment of the population inhabiting that wide region, [were] generally and clearly declared in favor of separation".⁸ American editors also seem to have come to this conclusion. The *Daily Alta California*, in a February 8, 1868 article, suggested that "It is...probable that if the people of British Columbia shall force her to a direct decision she would consent to the cession of that colony...on such terms as would at the same time satisfy her pride and diminish her budget."⁹ This sentiment was similarly articulated by Grant's Secretary of State, Hamilton Fish, who, on the assurance of Sir Edward Thornton, informed his colleagues that "Great Britain is quite willing to part with Canada when the latter requests it, but will not cede it, in any negotiations, as a satisfaction for any claim, nor until Canada herself unequivocally expresses her wish for separation."¹⁰

In articulating this idea, American journalists and policymakers were repeating various hints which they had received from British statesmen and journalists over the course of the period, many of whom had little optimism about the future of Britain's North American possessions.

⁷ Allan Nevins, *Hamilton Fish: The Inner History of the Grant Administration* (New York, 1936), 300.

⁸ David E. Shi, "Seward's Attempt to Annex British Columbia, 1865-1869" *Pacific Historical Review*, Vol.47(2) (1 May 1978): 229.

⁹ *San Francisco Daily Alta California*, February 4, 1868, p. 2; A similar article in 1866 noted that "it is well known that the English Government has no great desire to retain possession of her American colonies. [*San Francisco Daily Alta California*, July 4, 1866, p. 1].

¹⁰ Lester Burrell Shippee, *Canadian-American Relations, 1849-1874* (New York: Russell & Russell, 1970), 205.

Throughout the critical period, the idea that Britain would not oppose a popular annexation movement in British North America but would vociferously oppose American purchase or conquest was propagated by numerous British politicians.¹¹ Among these were various officials involved in colonial and foreign affairs from the Conservative Government of Benjamin Disraeli, which ran until the end of 1868, and from William Gladstone's Liberal administration. Several prominent individuals, including Thornton, Lord Clarendon, C.B. Adderley, and Frederic Rogers, at various times publically voiced a certain fatalism regarding the future of the North American colonies, which seemed to suggest that they believed annexation to be inevitable.¹² This pessimism was seized upon by American expansionists who were eager to confirm their idealistic predictions.

In publically voicing their Imperial skepticism, these officials were joined by a sizeable wing of the British Liberal party, which represented the "Little England" school of colonial policy. The "Little Englanders", who also came to be popularly known as "the Bright School" after John Bright, one of its most influential proponents, supported self-government for developed settler colonies, and at times expressed a certain eagerness to be rid of the financial and administrative burden of British North America. While this group did not necessarily promote separation, it did not consider it worthwhile to force the continuation of colonial relations if it was no longer necessary.¹³ Bright expressed this most clearly in 1865, stating that he had "no dread of

¹¹ Shi, "Seward's Attempt", 219.

¹² Seymour to Buckingham, July 15, 1867, National Archives of the UK, 8565, CO 60/28. The Colonial Despatches of Vancouver Island and British Columbia 1846-1871. Ed. James Hendrickson and the Colonial Despatches project. Victoria: University of Victoria. Accessed December 8, 2015. <http://bcgenesis.uvic.ca/getDoc.htm?id=B67090.scx>. (Note that the conversation in question is appended to the despatch, and is discussed in detail later in this chapter.); Shippee, *Canadian-American Relations*, 206; Willard E. Ireland. "The Annexation Petition of 1869" *British Columbia Historical Quarterly*, Vol. 4, No. 4 (October, 1940): 286.

¹³ Gregory Claeys. *Imperial Sceptics: British critics of empire, 1850-1920*. (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2010), 35. British Columbians almost exclusively referred to Little Englandism as the "Bright School" or by name as "John Bright". The latter was possibly used as a sarcastic replacement of "John Bull" to imply that England no longer cared about the colony.

separation, but [he] would avoid anything likely to provoke it".¹⁴ For the most part, even this group did not outright support annexation of British North American by the United States. Nevertheless, their vocal pessimism towards Canada's prospects seems to have disseminated widely enough that many Americans and British North American colonists concluded that Britain was willing, or indeed eager, to divest itself of its colonies.¹⁵ Goldwin Smith may have been the most decisive in this line of thinkers in convincing Americans of this idea. He directly hinted to Seward as early as April of 1865 that "unless [British] statesmen adopt a different policy," Canada was likely to "fall into your hands of itself, perhaps before you want it."¹⁶ British newspapers, including the *Times of London*, similarly indicated that policymakers might bend according to public opinion in the colonies.¹⁷ Though it is somewhat doubtful that Britain would have indeed been moved in the face of a strong annexation movement in any of their North American colonies, Americans believed this would be the case, and they acted accordingly.

Between the murmurings of the Bright school and the enduring notion that Britain was neglecting its most western colonies, both American expansionists and British Columbian annexationists maintained that the Empire placed very little value on maintaining its pacific colony.¹⁸ This perception encouraged both groups in their respective efforts. The idea that an

¹⁴ Ibid.

¹⁵ Maureen M. Robson. "The Alabama Claims and the Anglo-American Reconciliation, 1865-71" *Canadian Historical Review*, v42(1), (March 1961): 3; In British Columbia many saw the fact that Britain allowed the Alaska Purchase to occur as evidence that London had no interest in maintaining the colony. Dorothy Blakey Smith ed. *The Reminiscences of Doctor John Sebastian Helmcken*. (Victoria: University of British Columbia Press, 1975), 243; See also Donald F. Warner, *The Idea of Continental Union: Agitation for the Annexation of Canada to the United States, 1849-1893*. (Lexington: University of Kentucky Press, 1960), 131.

¹⁶ Shi, "Seward's Attempt", 219.

¹⁷ Ibid.

¹⁸ As shown in Chapter One, British Columbian annexationists themselves had relied on this notion as a cornerstone of their policy. McClure had argued in detail in 1866 that Britain would not force its colonists to remain unfree if they earnestly desired to be connected to the United States, and a similar sentiment was expressed in each annexation petition. One skeptic writing in the *Colonist* argued that this had never happened before, and was highly

apathetic Britain could be moved to consent to annexation by the sustained pressure of a popular annexation movement was highly compatible with the notion that such a movement was likely or inevitable, and Americans eagerly assimilated it into their expansionist strategy. Though their policy was informal, Americans were anything but passive in awaiting the development of popular annexationism in British North America. Though the respective ideological currents in Britain and the United States oppositely valued British possessions in North America, they shared a similar view of the importance of colonial self-determination. As a result, the presence of the British Columbian annexation movement was greatly amplified as a consideration Anglo-American diplomacy. Viewed through the lens of Manifest Destiny, annexationism in British Columbia sustained American optimism that they could foster further support for the movement by economically and politically isolating the region, and that the Alabama Claims could be leveraged to secure the territory from Britain.

Though both Britain and the United States were interested in the state of public opinion in British Columbia, the colony's isolation and volatile politics significantly complicated any effort to accurately gauge the views of its residents. As demonstrated in previous chapters, British Columbians themselves sometimes had difficulty discerning the popularity of annexationism or confederationism at any given time, as support for various platforms tended to rise and fall swiftly and dramatically throughout the critical period. Even from the vantage point of New Westminster, Robson frequently was unaware of certain developments in Victoria and at times had a highly skewed understanding of the state of affairs across the Georgia Strait. Between the volatile colonial politics, the polemical and ideologically fluid press, and the practical isolation of the colony, what little information actually reached outsiders was frequently outdated or

unlikely, but this did not appear to phase annexationists. See *Daily British Colonist and Victoria Chronicle*, October 6, 1866, p. 2.

entirely wrong. It is thus unsurprising that foreign observers rarely possessed an accurate understanding of the politics of British Columbia. Regarding Americans specifically, their particular ideology predisposed them to believe any rumours of annexationism which emerged from the colony.

Americans consistently overestimated the popularity and importance of the British Columbian annexation movement. As described in chapter one, this was demonstrated most famously in the case of Allen Francis, whose despatches to Seward included vastly exaggerated portrayals of the degree of support which the movement enjoyed. Though several authors have been uncritical of Francis' estimates, Charles John Fedorak has argued that Francis deliberately misled his superiors to encourage them to annex the colony.¹⁹ Though this may have been partially the case, Francis' overestimation of annexation was likely mostly genuine. As proposed by Reginald Stuart, "Like Israel Andrews in Montreal of 1849, Francis generalized from the particulars he knew and drew false conclusions."²⁰ Francis travelled in the urban commercial setting which housed many of the annexationist clique of Heisterman and Waitt, and had always been heavily involved in promoting American interests in the colony. In the early 1860s he had been reprimanded for firing off salutary rounds for Independence Day after being warned against doing so by the colonial government. In 1867, he eagerly congratulated Seward for his purchase of Alaska with a memorial signed by several American residents of British Columbia.²¹ Francis

¹⁹ Charles John Fedorak, "The United States Consul in Victoria and the Political Destiny of the Colony of British Columbia, 1862-1870." *BC Studies*, no 79, (Autumn 1988): 16. Shi and Neunherz are relatively uncritical of Francis' accounts of support for annexationism in their narratives.

²⁰ Stuart, *United States Expansionism*, 236.

²¹ Francis to Seward, April 20, 1867, Despatches from the United States Consul in Victoria, 1862-1906. National Archives microfilm publications. T ; microcopy no. 130. National Archives and Record Service General Services Administration, 1957; Kennedy to Cardwell, 5 July 1866, National Archives of the UK, 8277, CO 305/29. The Colonial Despatches of Vancouver Island and British Columbia 1846-1871. Ed. James Hendrickson and the Colonial Despatches project. Victoria: University of Victoria. Accessed December 8, 2015. <http://bcgenesis.uvic.ca/getDoc.htm?id=V66049CO.scx>.

viewed the colony through the same idealistic lens as other American expansionists, and his position put him in contact with a demographically disproportionate number of Americans, many of whom held similar views of their grand destiny on the continent.²² As Charles Neunherz has noted, virtually all of the Americans who were present in the colony during the critical period overestimated the support for annexationism in their accounts. In his despatches, Francis likely reflected an overall mood among American observers. They wanted to believe that the movement was large and would continue to grow, and they fundamentally misunderstood British Columbian annexationism to be a republican movement rather than the product of economic discontent.

The particular attention which Francis has enjoyed from historians is largely a product of his high position and his direct connection to Seward. Francis was among the most prominent individuals who popularized the idea that British Columbia was annexationist, and he was also among the earliest to do so. Just as successive phases of annexationism in British Columbia came about as a result of developments in American and British diplomatic policy, American expansionist efforts were encouraged and sustained by concrete indications of the popularity of annexationism in British Columbia. Few Americans outside of the colony took notice of McClure's iteration of annexationism in 1866, but Francis diligently forwarded several issues of the *Telegraph* to Seward and repeatedly indicated to him that annexation was supported by the

²² Note that a similar pattern occurred in the rest of British North America as American agents like I. D. Andrews, Walker, and Potter, consistently overestimated annexationism as a result of associating primarily with groups who supported it in British North America. See Shippee, *Canadian-American Relations*, 17; Joe Patterson Smith, "A United States of North America – Shadow or Substance?" *The Canadian Historical Review*, Vol. 26(2), (June, 1945): 112; Joe Patterson Smith, "American Republican Leadership and the Movement for the Annexation of Canada in the Eighteen-Sixties" *Report of the Annual Meeting of the Canadian Historical Association / Rapports annuels de la Société historique du Canada*, vol. 14(1), (1935): 69.

vast majority of the colonists.²³ By 1867, Seward was convinced that British Columbians were united in eagerly awaiting annexation, and this had a profound effect on his continued efforts to negotiate the cession of the colony from Britain. Though his views on expansion had shifted throughout his career, Seward's expansionist policy in the immediate post-Civil War period was heavily influenced by the idealistic current in American continentalism at the time.²⁴ Like many of his colleagues, he firmly believed that British North America would eventually join the United States by its own volition, and that conquest or purchase were poor choices.²⁵ Seward was less patient than many of his countrymen, however, and viewed expansion through a strongly economic lens. Desiring to secure the entire Pacific coast to monopolize trade with Asia, Seward was wary of the threat which the westward expansion and consolidation of British North America posed to American interests in the region.²⁶ As such, Seward was keenly interested in the continued growth of the annexation movement, and took decisive action to increase its influence.

Seward's purchase of Alaska was by far the most grandiose of his diplomatic efforts regarding British Columbia. As described by David Shi in his comprehensive analysis of Seward's efforts in relation to the colony, the Secretary coveted Alaska as part of a larger plan to convince Britain to acquiesce to the colony's annexation to meet the Alabama Claims. At various times, Seward admitted that he viewed the Alaska Purchase through the broader lens of the

²³ Francis to Seward, September 15, 1866; Francis to Seward, October 1, 1866, Despatches from the United States Consul in Victoria, 1862-1906. National Archives microfilm publications. T ; microcopy no. 130. National Archives and Record Service General Services Administration, 1957.

²⁴ Seward had been an anti-expansionist for some time in the antebellum period due to his disdain for slavery, while during the war itself, in his famous "April Fools" memorandum of 1861, he had recommended to Lincoln that a war could be provoked with Britain to secure the colonies. By this time, however, he seems to have been convinced that popular will was the key to annexation. See Walter Stahr, *Seward: Lincoln's Indispensable Man* (New York: Simon and Schuster Paperbacks, 2012), 453; Smith, "American Republican Leadership", 115.

²⁵ Shi, "Seward's Attempt", 218; Stahr, *Lincoln's Indispensable Man*, 453.

²⁶ Stewart, *The American Response to Canada*, 77.

annexation of the entire Northwest, and that he believed that the purchase would inspire British Columbians to unite in favour of annexation.²⁷ Seward clearly understood that popular annexationism was the key to convincing Britain to relinquish the colony, and that British Columbia was the most vulnerable and valuable of the British North American provinces. Shi characterizes Seward as unerringly devoted to his goal of annexing British Columbia through the Alabama negotiations, despite Adams' continued insistence that Britain was unlikely to accede to a territorial cession. At its core, Seward's expansionist policy was based around the notion that British Columbia possessed an annexation movement which could be induced to grow. He embarked on his policy under the assumption that colonists were awaiting the proper moment to voice their latent support for annexation. As demonstrated in chapter one, however, the response in the colony was not nearly as strong as he had hoped, and the anti-annexationist reaction proved far more powerful. Though British authorities were quite unclear as to the level of support for annexationism throughout the period, the annexationist agitation of 1867 had provided no obvious indications that the movement represented any real consensus. In the absence of a clear will towards annexationism in the colony, British authorities had little incentive to entertain Seward's repeated prodding over the territory. In this view, the failure of Seward's policy was both a consequence of his own assumptions about annexationism and his incomplete understanding of the actual political situation in the colony. Nevertheless, it remains clear that the British Columbian annexation movement played a crucial role in encouraging American expansionist efforts.

In his stubborn efforts to pressure British Columbia into the American orbit, Seward was reflecting a more aggressive school of American expansionism which emerged from the

²⁷ Shi, "Seward's Attempt", 223, 224.

idealistic principles of mainstream continentalism that was applied to British Columbia in the aftermath of the Alaska purchase. Even before there were any real indications of annexationist sentiment in British Columbia, many Americans advocated a more active role in securing the Northwest. This group supported the Alaska purchase as a tangible step towards the economic and political encirclement of the entire region. In describing the purchase, an article in the *Chicago Evening Journal* predicted that “being surrounded by the United States will tend to strengthen and tighten the cords that were already drawing the province into the folds of the American Union.”²⁸ Similarly, the *Daily Alta California* predicted that “The cession of Russian-America must hasten an explosion. It will unite all parties outside of the mere Administration faction into an American party, and end, we apprehend, in making good the late rumor of the intended transfer of British Columbia to the United States.”²⁹ This confident mentality was also reflected in Congress. Benjamin Loan of Missouri, a moderate Republican who opposed the purchase, complained about the prevailing view of his colleagues of Alaska as a “millstone” which would grind British Columbia towards annexation. Voicing his “most earnest protest against taking position in Alaska for the purpose of appropriating British Columbia by force,” he insisted that “if we ever acquire British Columbia it will not be by the grinding process, but most likely we will buy it as we have done in the case of all our other acquisitions.”³⁰ The Alaska purchase, and the response in the colony, awoke a broader section of Americans to the possibility of popular annexationism in British Columbia. After the summer of 1867, the idea that Americans could proactively empower latent annexationism in British Columbia by pressuring

²⁸ Stuart, *United States Expansionism*, 236.

²⁹ *San Francisco Daily Alta California*, May 5, 1867, p. 1.

³⁰ Representative Loan, speaking on HR. 1096 on July 7, 1868, 40th Cong., 2nd Sess. *Congressional Globe* v. 39 pt. 4, 3808.

the colony towards greater economic integration with the United States brought together a broad group of actively expansionist Americans.

As explored in Chapter One, the Alaska purchase, and more crucially, the rumours of Seward's negotiations over the colony, provoked the most powerful annexationist response that arose in British Columbia. Unlike the smaller agitation in 1866, which was only observed by Americans close to the colony and did not become a topic of public discussion in the United States, the 1867 movement was defined by its noise and its capacity to project its voice abroad. Americans learned of the agitation in Victoria from a variety of sources. Allen Francis, who continued to pen highly optimistic accounts of the movement, was joined by several other official observers, including a pair of naval officers on their way to Sitka who were present at the height of the agitation.³¹ At the behest of their superior officer, they presented a detailed report of the annexationist sentiment in the colony, which specifically mentioned the 1867 annexation petition among other annexationist influences. This report, which was accompanied by other officers' accounts, was forwarded to the War Department.³² Furthermore, as the population of Victoria was in steep decline in 1867, news of the movement likely spread swiftly along the Pacific coast by the steady flow of emigrants whose fortunes had faded in the depressed city.

Newspapers were another central component in spreading the idea that the colony was annexationist. In publicizing annexationist sentiment in British Columbia, Americans paid little mind to the brevity of the movement's period of popularity. The *New York Times* published an editorial on June 26 which celebrated the annexationist mood in the colony, and which noted optimistically that all of the major Island newspapers supported annexation.³³ In truth, this article

³¹ Richard E. Neunherz. "'Hemmed In': Reactions in British Columbia to the Purchase of Russian America" *The Pacific Northwest Quarterly*, Vol.80(3), (1 July 1989): 109.

³² *Ibid.*

³³ *New York Times*, Jun 26, 1867, p. 4.

was published three days after McMillan had announced that the *News* would reduce publication to a weekly schedule, while the *Colonist* had never been annexationist to begin with.

Nevertheless, to his chagrin, Higgins' famous estimate that nine-tenths of the colony favoured annexation was repeated throughout the American press.³⁴ As late as January 1868, an article in the *San Francisco Alta California* noted that "a gentleman lately from British Columbia" had informed them that the majority of British Columbians, including British subjects and voters, supported annexation. This article was reprinted in the *New York Times* in February, more than six months after the annexationist agitation had run its course.³⁵ Even when news of the progress of the confederationists was discovered, the American press downplayed their significance. After the 1868 Yale Convention, the *Daily Alta California* assured its readers that confederationist sentiment was not unanimous and that many in British Columbia still favoured annexation.³⁶ As a result of American optimism and their selective focus, the global influence of the annexation movement and of McMillan's small, narrowly-circulated paper was dramatically amplified. By the end of Johnson's administration, Americans, more convinced than ever that their efforts on the Pacific were bearing fruit, were confident that British Columbia would soon belong to them.

In the intervening period between the 1867 and 1869 annexationist agitations, Americans remained faithful that the majority of colonists wished to become American. During this time, the western states began to exert pressure on the United States Federal government to act in support of annexation. The California Legislature passed a resolution urging the Federal Government to secure the territory before Britain could create "a Kingly Empire along our entire

³⁴ *New Westminster British Columbian*, 15 January 1868. Robson noted specifically that this appeared in the *Times* and the *Herald*, as well as some papers in San Francisco. James Gordon Bennett, the editor of the *Herald*, was an outspoken annexationist, and likely did not mind that the *Colonist* had since loudly and repeatedly come out against annexation, if he was even aware.

³⁵ *New York Times*, Feb 2, 1868, p. 4.

³⁶ Stahr, *Lincoln's Indispensable Man*, 500.

northern border and between us and our new possession in Alaska".³⁷ In Washington, western representatives supported various abortive annexation resolutions, including one by George Millar of Pennsylvania in November 1867, and another by Minnesota Senator Alexander Ramsay in December.³⁸ The latter resolution, which was directed at all of British North America, provided financial incentives for regions wishing to be annexed in order to further nurture popular support for annexation. For the most part, however, expansionists remained an interested minority, sustained by politicians in the west with more direct economic interests in annexation, and those in majority-Irish districts who used Anglophobia to win votes.³⁹

Despite the lack of broadly-based popular will, expansionists employed various means of hastening the natural progress of British Columbian annexationism. In 1868, a small group of actively expansionist policymakers, including Seward, briefly discussed the notion of constructing a northern railway line in order to further strengthen their economic connection with British Columbia and to disincentivize the construction of a rail connection to Canada. A report of the United States Senate Committee on Pacific Railways argued for the necessity of this northern line by making direct reference to the 1867 annexation petition as evidence of an annexationist consensus in the colony. The committee argued that, if the colony was connected to the United States by a railway, British Columbians "will become so Americanized in interests and feeling that they can be in effect severed from the new dominion, and the question of their annexation is only a question of time."⁴⁰ Several members of Congress endorsed the idea. In July 1868, Ramsay framed the question in terms of the need to outpace Britain and to continue to

³⁷ Warner, *The Idea of Continental Union*, 134.

³⁸ *Ibid.*, 135.

³⁹ Smith, "American Republican Leadership", 72.

⁴⁰ *Victoria British Columbian*, May 18, 1869, p. 2; United States Congressional Senate Committee on Pacific Railroads, United States, 40th Congress, 2nd Session. 1868-1869 "The Policy of Extending Government Aid to Additional Railroads to the Pacific by Guaranteeing Interest in their Bonds." *Report of the Majority of the Senate Committee on Pacific Railroad*. February 19, 1869. (Washington: Government Printing Office, 1869): 21.

pressure the colony towards the United States. Implicitly invoking the Alabama negotiations, and calling attention to “popular sentiment in favour of annexation to these states” in the colony, he observed that “the railway question is... vitally germane to the whole scope of an international treaty.”⁴¹ In 1869 the question was again invoked as William Windom of Minnesota predicted that a northern rail line would “prevent any attempt to build one by the British Government, and will guaranty the speedy annexation of British Columbia to the United States without conquest or purchase.”⁴²

Though Seward had endorsed the railway line and had urged American capitalists to buy territory in Rupert’s Land in anticipation of its annexation, by the end of his term he was far less confident that he could convince Britain to relinquish the colony.⁴³ Wanting to be rid of the negotiations before his tenure was finished, Seward ordered his negotiator, Reverdy Johnson, to forward agreeable terms to Britain.⁴⁴ Seward threw out the indirect damages which he hoped would force a territorial concession altogether, and accepted arbitration for the private claims in relation to the damages caused by the *Alabama*. The Johnson-Clarendon Treaty was finalized in January 1869 with the new British Liberal government and awaited ratification by the Senate under the incoming President Grant. However, by the beginning of Grant’s term, Congressional Republicans were sufficiently energized by their expansionist platform that they were unwilling to let their most credible means of securing new territory be dispensed with so easily. In April 1869, Charles Sumner delivered a long and polemical speech to Congress which denounced Britain’s role in exacerbating the Civil War. He contended that the acknowledgment of the South as a belligerent and the construction of warships had prolonged the war and caused over two

⁴¹ Senator Ramsay, July 27, 1868, 40th Cong., 2nd Sess. *Congressional Globe* v. 39 pt. 5, 4501.

⁴² Representative Windom, January 5, 1869, 40th Cong., 3rd Sess., *Congressional Globe* v. 39 pt. 1, 187.

⁴³ Shi, “Seward’s Attempt”, 233.

⁴⁴ Amos Elwood Corning, *Hamilton Fish*. (New York: The Lanmere Publishing Company, 1918), 61.

billion dollars' worth of damages, both in private and "national" claims.⁴⁵ Shortly after, he suggested publicly that if Britain was unwilling or unable to pay such a hefty sum, it should relinquish British North America as a territorial concession.⁴⁶

Sumner's speech has been looked upon as a turning point in the Alabama Claims negotiations.⁴⁷ His powerful rhetoric played a central role in convincing the Senate not to ratify Seward's treaty, which was rejected by a 54-1 vote, and in extending the Alabama claims negotiations for another two years. Though he did not explicitly state it in his speech, Sumner was motivated by many of the same impulses towards Manifest Destiny as his colleagues. Like Seward, Sumner had opposed territorial expansion before the Civil War due to his anti-slavery politics. He also shared Seward's belief that the key to annexation of British North America lay in the popular will of its people.⁴⁸ Sumner was of the opinion that international treaties were capable only of transferring the sovereignty of territories, not of people, and was motivated in part by the notion that a popular annexation movement could be created in the north.⁴⁹ Sumner had intimated at some point in 1866 that he believed annexation to be popular among British residents of the eastern colonies, and in his travels in England he had spent significant time with John Bright and other anti-colonial British politicians.⁵⁰ Though his speech was not directed at British Columbia per se, it opened the door for continued diplomatic posturing for the region.

⁴⁵ Charles Sumner, "The Alabama Claims." *Speech of the Honourable Charles Sumner, Delivered to the Executive Session of the United States Senate on Tuesday, April 13th, 1869, Against the Ratification of the Johnson-Clarendon Treaty for the Settlement of the Alabama and Other Claims*. (London: Stevens Brothers, 1869), 26. Accessed December 15, 2015, https://archive.org/details/cihm_49103.

⁴⁶ Ibid.; Corning, *Hamilton Fish*, 65.

⁴⁷ Shippee, *Canadian-American Relations*, 204.

⁴⁸ Stuart, *United States Expansionism*, 223.

⁴⁹ Ibid.

⁵⁰ Smith, "American Republican Leadership", 73. According to Smith, Joseph Howe indicated in a letter to Lord Stanley on August 7, 1866 that Sumner believed that annexation was popular at that time.

Furthermore, as a key propagator of Anglophobia, Sumner was an important influence within the powerful American reaction to the 1869 annexation petition.

As demonstrated in Chapter One, the 1869 annexation petition, at best, was of tangential relevance to affairs within British Columbia. Similarly, as will be explored later in this chapter, it went relatively unnoticed by the Colonial Office. Having obtained barely one hundred signatures, few could reasonably argue that the document constituted a substantial representation of popular will. That Americans nevertheless treated the petition as clear evidence that the colony yearned for annexation is perhaps the single strongest indication of their supreme eagerness during this period to have their belief in their Manifest Destiny confirmed. The petition was lauded throughout the American press, and several publications reprinted the text of the document in full.⁵¹ The *New York Times* noted that the document had been shown to Grant and Sumner, and that both men had desired to make their support known to the memorialists. Reflecting the usual expansionist idealism, the article asserted that “England...is fast seeing the uselessness and impracticability of a European empire in this hemisphere.”⁵² Similarly, the *Olympia Tribune* in Washington boasted that the petition “has already received a long list of names, to which additions are being daily made” and predicted that “Not less than five hundred signatures...will be obtained before the memorial is forwarded to Washington.”⁵³ Americans, observing the petition through the lens of their characteristic optimism, treated it as a serious indication of the state of public feeling in the colony.

Expansionist policymakers similarly took note. The petition received significant attention as a tangible sign of the progress of British North America towards republicanism. Zachariah

⁵¹ Ireland, “The Annexation Petition”, 284.

⁵² *New York Times*, Dec 31, 1869, p. 1.

⁵³ *Daily British Colonist and Victoria Chronicle*, November 24, 1869.

Chandler, repeating Sumner's argument for the use of Alabama Claims for territorial concessions, noted that "British Columbia with one loud voice sends up the desire of her people to be admitted into this great nation."⁵⁴ Washington's Legislature passed an annexation resolution in response to the petition, while Oregonian Senator Henry Corbett delivered a long speech to Congress in favour of the "re-annexation" of British Columbia in which he referred to the petition several times.⁵⁵ Emboldened by the petition, expansionists in 1870 were certain that British Columbia would imminently soon join the United States. One California Representative, Aaron Sargent, even referenced the colony's inevitable annexation as part of an unrelated naval appropriation bill.⁵⁶ Beginning in 1870, the petition served as the inspiration behind a renewed effort to secure the annexation of British North America. Americans reacted to the petition through the same optimistic lens through which they predicted it. As word of the document spread, expansionists united in support for the British Columbian annexationists and looked to the President for action.

Though President Grant and Secretary of State Hamilton Fish had serious reservations about Sumner's Anglophobic rhetoric, they nevertheless supported the principle of using the Alabama Claims to ensure a territorial concession from Britain.⁵⁷ Before the annexation petition was published, Fish's tone regarding the claims was firm yet conciliatory. His September 25, 1869 instructions to the American Ambassador to Britain, John Lothrop Motley, included a lengthy summary of the state of the negotiations and of the basis for the American demands. Fish, emphasizing that the primary desire of Grant's administration was "restoring the much desired relations of perfect cordiality," assured Her Majesty's Government that they would not attempt

⁵⁴ Senator Chandler, April 22, 1870, 41st Cong., 2nd Sess. *Congressional Globe*, v. 42 pt. 4, 2886.

⁵⁵ *San Francisco Daily Alta California*, January 21, 1870, p. 1.

⁵⁶ Representative Sargent, May 17, 1870, 41st Cong., 2nd Sess. *Congressional Globe*, v. 42 pt. 4, 3540.

⁵⁷ Shippee, *Canadian-American Relations*, 206.

to impose a deadline on the negotiations, but would patiently wait until Britain was prepared.⁵⁸ Grant had suggested that, were the Alabama claims allowed to remain open indefinitely, Britain might eventually be convinced to dispense of them by the transfer of British North America.⁵⁹ In this view, their conciliatory tenor was a mask for their long-term territorial ambitions, which were predicated on the assumption that Britain would inevitably divest itself of its territory in North America. However, in his negotiations, Motley failed to convey the proper tone.⁶⁰ Fish's instructions, which Motley presented in full to Thornton and Clarendon, repeatedly referenced the numerous wrongs and indemnities which the United States felt had been perpetrated by Britain. The Foreign Office reacted to the document with dismay. Its representatives were frustrated that the United States had rejected the Johnson-Clarendon treaty, but had presented no new means by which Britain might address the numerous claims for damages which the Americans had now presented them.⁶¹ As the tenor of the negotiations became more heated, in part due to missteps by Motley, the annexation petition appeared to present a possible solution. Fish immediately turned to the possibility of using the petition to accelerate the negotiations towards a territorial concession.

At the beginning of 1870, Fish engaged in a brief effort to sound out the British government to determine whether or not the petition could be used to support the peaceful annexation of British Columbia. Fish's 1870 instructions to Motley referenced the annexation petition directly in relation to the uncertain state of the Alabama negotiations.⁶² In a letter written on January 17,

⁵⁸ Fish to Motley, September 25, 1869, House of Commons Parliamentary Papers, 19th Century House of Commons Sessional Papers, North America. No. 1 (1870). Correspondence respecting the "Alabama" claims: 1869-70, p. 10, 1869-1870 [C.22], LXIX.439.

⁵⁹ Shippee, *Canadian-American Relations*, 205.

⁶⁰ Corning, *Hamilton Fish*, 69.

⁶¹ Clarendon to Thornton, November 6, 1869, House of Commons Parliamentary Papers, North America. No. 1 (1870). Correspondence respecting the "Alabama" claims: 1869-70, p. 12, 1869-1870 [C.22], LXIX.439.

⁶² Ireland, "The Annexation Petition", 284.

1870, Fish explained to Motley that he had spoken with Thornton several times regarding the likelihood of annexation. Thornton had, at various occasions, “expressed the willingness of the British Government to terminate its political connection with the provinces on this Continent, whenever it should appear that a separation was desired by its present dependencies.”⁶³ Fish noted that he had suggested to the British Ambassador that the “desire indicated by these petitioners, taken in connection with the troubles in the Red River or Selkirk Settlement, and the strong opposition to confederation manifested in the Maritime Provinces”⁶⁴ might be enough to warrant separation. In his instructions, he enclosed the full text of the petition, and urged Motley to “avail yourself of every opportunity to obtain information as to the real sentiments of the British Government on the question of the separation of the colonies.”⁶⁵

As explored by Willard Ireland in his famous article, Motley eventually raised the issue of the annexation of British Columbia in relation to the petition in a lengthy and informal conversation with Lord Clarendon. Though Motley did not record the details of the conversation, he alleged that Clarendon was mostly receptive. Clarendon had reported that “a pro-colonial feeling had of late got up in certain quarters and rather energetically manifested” but he agreed “without regret” that it was likely that British Columbia and the other North American provinces would eventually become American. Thus, he intimated that Britain might accept this so change long as the United States did not attempt to hasten the process by force.⁶⁶ Though prospects seemed hopeful, the conversation did not amount to anything. Motley did not on attempt to use the petition as evidence of pro-annexation feeling in British Columbia, and the effort seems to have had little effect on the overall negotiations. At the very least, Fish’s interest in British Columbian

⁶³ Ibid.

⁶⁴ Ibid., 285.

⁶⁵ Ibid.

⁶⁶ Ibid., 286.

annexationism was recognized by Granville when he requested further information about the petition from Musgrave in February in response to concerned despatches from Thornton, who apparently took the petition far more seriously than the rest of the British Government.⁶⁷

Although Fish was certainly thinking along the same lines as his predecessors in sounding out the British Government as to whether they believed the petition constituted grounds for annexation, he was not nearly as zealous as Seward had been, and he ultimately came to reject the aggressive bent of Sumner and the Congressional expansionists. For its part, Gladstone's government rejected the idea by ignoring the petition altogether, and Fish did not bring it up again. Nevertheless, Fish's brief foray into Sewardian negotiating tactics clearly demonstrates that the petition, and the idea of harnessing popular annexationism as an argument towards compelling Britain to accept territorial cession through the Alabama Claims, was briefly a significant consideration in Fish's diplomatic strategy.

Fish's brief effort to approach British authorities regarding the annexation petition may have resulted from a lack of accurate information. Fish did not understand the actual state of opinion in the colony which, by the beginning of 1870, strongly favoured confederation. Further, Fish was driven to be overly optimistic as to the level of anti-colonial feeling among British authorities by Thornton, who appears to have been similarly misinformed. Thornton's assurances that Britain was willing to relinquish the colonies reflected the pessimism of the mid 1860s. Moreover, the importance that Thornton ascribed to the document was clearly out of step with the rest of the Home Government, which by that point had a fairly clear picture of the situation in

⁶⁷ Granville to Musgrave, February 3, 1870, National Archives of the UK, CO 398/5. The Colonial Despatches of Vancouver Island and British Columbia 1846-1871. Ed. James Hendrickson and the Colonial Despatches project. Victoria: University of Victoria. Accessed December 8, 2015. <http://bcgenesis.uvic.ca/getDoc.htm?id=B707008B.scx>.

British Columbia.⁶⁸ Clarendon's reference to the "pro-colonial feeling" in his conversation with Motley reflected a shift in British thinking towards British Columbia which led the newly-elected Liberal government to reject any territorial concessions and to actively counter the British Columbian annexation movement. As the Foreign Office dealt with Fish's final weak overtures towards annexation, the Colonial Office was hastening the entry of British Columbia into Canada. In this development, British Columbian annexationism again played a role. Just as American policymakers took inspiration from the movement in their continual attempts to secure a territorial concession from Britain, the spectre of annexationism in British Columbia motivated Gladstone's Liberal government to devote more attention to British Columbia than their Conservative predecessors had in order to ensure the colony's entry into Confederation.

The United States confronted British Columbian annexationism in a complex and deeply ideological manner which built from and reinforced core assumptions within their national self-understanding. In contrast, the British Colonial Office viewed the movement in a far more straightforward and pragmatic fashion. Though it seemed natural to many observers that an annexation movement would arise in British Columbia and that such a development could cost Britain the colony, the Colonial Office under Lord Buckingham-Chandos was somewhat ambivalent when Seymour first reported the presence of the movement in June 1867.⁶⁹ A short correspondence between members of the Colonial Office in relation to the development of annexationism in British Columbia was attached to a reply to Governor Seymour dated July 15,

⁶⁸ Ibid.; Musgrave to Granville, March 7, 1870, National Archives of the UK, 3869, CO 60/38. The Colonial Despatches of Vancouver Island and British Columbia 1846-1871. Ed. James Hendrickson and the Colonial Despatches project. Victoria: University of Victoria. Accessed December 8, 2015. <http://bcgenesis.uvic.ca/getDoc.htm?id=B70023CP.scx>.

⁶⁹ Seymour to Buckingham, June 26, 1867, National Archives of the UK, 7989, CO 60/28. The Colonial Despatches of Vancouver Island and British Columbia 1846-1871. Ed. James Hendrickson and the Colonial Despatches project. Victoria: University of Victoria. Accessed December 8, 2015. <http://bcgenesis.uvic.ca/getDoc.htm?id=B67074PR.scx>.

1867. The tone of the correspondence, written in mid-September 1867, reflected a certain cynicism regarding the financial needs of the colony and the motives behind Seymour's reports of annexationism. Frederic Rogers, the Permanent Under-Secretary of State for the Colonies, acknowledged that annexationism was an expected development in the colony, and observed that "it is no doubt true that high taxation, distress and want of assistance from home will probably cause the American population of the Colonies to press for annexation."⁷⁰ Nevertheless, he was ambivalent. The question of colonial expenses was of primary importance to Rogers in his valuation of the colony. He cautioned that, if allowed to build, the pressure of annexationism "would soon become irresistible except at a cost far greater than the fee simple of the colony."⁷¹ Believing, much like the Americans, that annexationism would continue to grow in the colony, he proposed that "the question to be (in the long run) is B.C. to form part of the U.S. or of Canada; and if we desire to promote the latter alternative, what form of expenditure or non-expenditure is likely to facilitate or pave the way for it."⁷²

Rogers' colleagues evinced a similar skepticism as to whether it was worthwhile to expend any significant time or money to maintain the colony. Adderley replied that "it seems to me impossible that we should long hold B.C. from its natural annexation. Still we should give & keep for Canada every chance."⁷³ Despite this, he suggested that it might be worth relinquishing the colony if Britain could secure a valuable trade before it was naturally lost. He noted that "Our U.S. Minister should keep his ears open for any overtures of equivalents in exchange of this territory. Immediate reductions [in the Civil List] and new taxation are inevitable, and what will

⁷⁰ Ibid.

⁷¹ Seymour to Buckingham, July 15, 1867, National Archives of the UK, 8565, CO 60/28. The Colonial Despatches of Vancouver Island and British Columbia 1846-1871. Ed. James Hendrickson and the Colonial Despatches project. Victoria: University of Victoria. Accessed December 8, 2015. <http://bcgenesis.uvic.ca/getDoc.htm?id=B67090.scx>.

⁷² Ibid. (this correspondence is appended to the July 15 Despatch).

⁷³

be the consequences.” Though Colonial Secretary Lord Buckingham agreed with his colleagues that the question of finances would ultimately decide their policy towards the colony, he was more optimistic that the colonial finances could be restored to good order without further upheaval angering the colonial public.⁷⁴ Nevertheless it is clear from this correspondence that the Conservative Colonial Office did not place a great deal of value on the colony at this time. The noncommittal tone of Rogers and Adderley in reference to preserving British Columbia for Canada, and their willingness to entertain the possibility of allowing annexation in order to save money, strongly suggest that the question of the cost of maintaining British Columbia was more important at this time than its strategic value on the Pacific. For the Conservatives, the spectre of annexationism in the colony seems to have sustained this perspective, just as the Americans had hoped it would. Had the Foreign Office not been so steadfast in rejecting Seward’s proposal, he may have found warm reception from the Colonial Office.

The pessimism indicated by the Colonial Office in its September 1867 correspondence, and its belief that annexationism was likely to continue to spread, may have been the product of the many indications which were reaching London during this time of the movement’s popularity. Governor Seymour was a major source of these reports. Following his initial warning in June near the end of the agitation, he continued to emphasise the growing popularity of annexationism in his despatches. In autumn he twice raised the spectre of annexationism in hopes of receiving financial support, even though he likely knew that the movement had significantly quieted since July. He warned on September 25, 1867 that “the annexation feeling prevalent in Victoria will be

⁷⁴ Seymour to Buckingham, September 28, 1867, National Archives of the UK, 11761, CO 60/29. The Colonial Despatches of Vancouver Island and British Columbia 1846-1871. Ed. James Hendrickson and the Colonial Despatches project. Victoria: University of Victoria. Accessed December 8, 2015. <http://bcgenesis.uvic.ca/getDoc.htm?id=B67131.scx>.

stimulated by the contrast of the total self-reliance imposed upon us and the absence of all assistance from Home.”⁷⁵ Three days later, in another despatch, he warned that “Our Republican neighbours are now sending military garrisons to the territory recently purchased from Russia and I can assure your Grace that the colonists are beginning to contrast not over favourably the manner in which they are treated by the Imperial Government with that accorded by the authorities in Washington to the remotest citizens of the United States.”⁷⁶ The Colonial Office was mistrustful of Seymour’s reports of annexationist sentiment, given that they came alongside requests for more financial support. Rogers had warned his colleagues about this in their September correspondence, predicting that “if the colonists find the annexation threat [is] satisfactory in extracting money from us they will plunder us indefinitely by it.”⁷⁷ On the other hand, despite their transparently self-serving tone, Seymour’s reports were corroborated by several other sources emerging from the colony.

Just as it had in the United States, news of the annexation movement in British Columbia reached Britain in the autumn of 1867 through the dissemination of news articles and from the testaments of prominent travellers. For the most part, these reports were out-of-date or highly exaggerated. Most British publications, not as unanimous as their American counterparts as to the degree of popularity of annexationism, correctly described the British Columbian movement as a small faction with limited influence that was powerfully outnumbered by supporters of

⁷⁵ Seymour to Buckingham, September 25, 1867, National Archives of the UK, 1268, CO 60/29. The Colonial Despatches of Vancouver Island and British Columbia 1846-1871. Ed. James Hendrickson and the Colonial Despatches project. Victoria: University of Victoria. Accessed December 8, 2015. <http://bcgenesis.uvic.ca/getDoc.htm?id=B67128AS.scx>.

⁷⁶ Seymour to Buckingham, September 28, 1867, National Archives of the UK, 11761, CO 60/29. The Colonial Despatches of Vancouver Island and British Columbia 1846-1871. Ed. James Hendrickson and the Colonial Despatches project. Victoria: University of Victoria. Accessed December 8, 2015. <http://bcgenesis.uvic.ca/getDoc.htm?id=B67131.scx>.

⁷⁷ Seymour to Buckingham, July 15, 1867, National Archives of the UK, 8565, CO 60/28. The Colonial Despatches of Vancouver Island and British Columbia 1846-1871. Ed. James Hendrickson and the Colonial Despatches project. Victoria: University of Victoria. Accessed 8 December 2015. <http://bcgenesis.uvic.ca/getDoc.htm?id=B67090.scx>.

confederation. Nevertheless, the frequent mention of the presence of annexationism by correspondents in the colony and in republished articles from British Columbian and American newspapers suggested that the movement had become a problem. In this regard, the extreme confidence regarding the inevitable growth of annexationism among sources in the United States seems to have affected British perception of the movement as well. In the autumn of 1867, numerous papers reprinted an article from the *New York Herald* which alleged that “The press and people of Victoria are outspoken in favour of annexation...It is said, also, that Mr. Seward has his eye on British Columbia, and that he wishes to make a settlement with England for the Alabama claims by annexation of that territory.”⁷⁸ Though some correspondents, notably those of the *London Morning Post*, assured editors that annexation was a minority, American sources repeated in Britain suggested a dire state of affairs.⁷⁹

British papers, like American Journals, were too far removed from affairs in the colony to be aware of the rapidly-changing state of public opinion. As annexation declined in the colony, British sources continued to present it as highly popular. *The Morning Post* referenced this general attitude in January 1868, repeating that “the story has for some time been circulated here that the inhabitants of British Columbia are anxious for the annexation of their province to the United States.” Echoing the conventional pessimism regarding the fortunes of the colony, the article noted that “Their isolated condition might very naturally incite such a wish.”⁸⁰ Bad intelligence from the colony continued to propagate to Britain throughout the rest of the year and

⁷⁸ Numerous local newspapers carried this article or noted that the *Herald* had said this was the case. These include, but were not limited to: *The Leeds Mercury*, June 26, 1867, p. 4; *The Preston Guardian etc*, June 29, 1867, p. 2; *The Essex Standard, and General Advertiser for the Eastern Counties*, July 03, 1867, p. 4; *Glasgow Herald*, August 8, 1867, p. 3; *Pall Mall Gazette* (London), August 7, 1867, p. 8.

⁷⁹ *Morning Post* (London), September 10, 1867, p. 5. In December the paper similarly wrote about the *New York Herald's* article, though it did not state whether or not it endorsed this point of view. *Morning Post* (London), December 4, 1867, p. 6.

⁸⁰ *Morning Post* (London), January 1, 1868, p. 6.

into 1869. In July 1868, a correspondent in New Westminster informed the *Liverpool Mercury* that only days after Victoria was named the capital of the colony, the “leading paper” on the Island had featured a long article favouring annexation.⁸¹ The dearth of information which editors had to work with seems to have amplified their idea of the popularity of British Columbian annexationism within the British press. The Anglican Bishop of British Columbia commented on this problem during a trip to Britain in September 1869. He clarified that “that which English people might see mentioned in newspapers as to a desire for annexation to the United States on the part of British colonists was entirely without foundation,” and that the colonists remained loyal and anxious for confederation.⁸² Even before the 1869 annexation petition was published, news of the annexation movement propagated uncritically in the English-speaking press to the point that it became highly exaggerated and entirely divorced from the situation in the colony.

The press was not the sole avenue by which the idea that British Columbia was annexationist came to outlive the actual annexation movement. As described in Chapter Two, Alfred Waddington, a former Vancouver Island M.L.A. and railway promoter, had left British Columbia at the height of the 1867 annexationist agitation to promote his Bute Inlet transcontinental railway route to financiers and politicians in Canada and Britain.⁸³ After speaking before a Parliamentary Committee in Ottawa in December of 1867, he proceeded to Britain where he

⁸¹ Oddly enough, Higgins actually had published a rather bizarre article on May 28, 1868, the day in question, in which he asserted that annexationists ought to support confederation, as it was more likely that an independent Canada would fall to annexation pressures than would a closely-connected Crown Colony. The correspondent’s characterization of the Victoria press and of the state of politics in Victoria is entirely based on trans-Georgian jealousies, but was nevertheless printed abroad. *Liverpool Mercury*, July 18, 1868, p. 6; *Daily British Colonist and Victoria Chronicle*, 28 May 1868, p. 2.

⁸² *Morning Post* (London), September 23, 1869, p. 2.

⁸³ *Daily British Colonist and Victoria Chronicle*, January 28, 1868, p. 1; W. Kaye Lamb, “WADDINGTON, ALFRED PENDERELL,” in *Dictionary of Canadian Biography*, vol. 10, University of Toronto/Université Laval, 2003–. Accessed December 8, 2015, http://www.biographi.ca/en/bio/waddington_alfred_penderell_10E.html.

engaged in various efforts to promote his route. In describing British Columbia, Waddington consistently emphasised and exaggerated the presence of annexationism. To some degree, this was almost certainly a self-serving effort to infuse his arguments with a sense of urgency in response to American murmurs regarding a northern route. However, as Waddington had been present in Victoria throughout the 1867 annexationist agitation, he spoke as a first-hand witness to the most active period of British Columbian annexationism. On January 1, 1868, a letter written by Waddington which contained a “graphic description” of the politics of the colony was published in the *Liverpool Journal of Commerce*. According to Higgins, who reported on the letter, Waddington’s description of the “Annexation feeling” in Victoria was out of date, and he had neglected to mention that the people of Victoria had “refused to support an annexation organ” in the time since he had left the colony.⁸⁴ Waddington followed his article with a lecture before the Royal Geographical Society, in which he similarly misrepresented the state of politics in British Columbia and raised the spectre of annexation to instill his arguments for a railway with a greater sense of urgency.⁸⁵

Waddington’s lecture, and his proposed railway route, aroused significant attention in London. Not only did he, allegedly, have numerous contacts among those who were “financially of the first class and men of means”, but he was assisted in raising the profile of his proposal by W. B. Cheadle, another prominent explorer with expertise in affairs on the Pacific Coast.⁸⁶

⁸⁴ *Daily British Colonist and Victoria Chronicle*, February 27, 1868, p. 2.

⁸⁵ A. Waddington, “On the Geography and Mountain Passes of British Columbia in Connection with an Overland Route” *Journal of the Royal Geographical Society of London* Vol. 38, (1868): 128. doi:10.2307/1798571.

⁸⁶ W. Kaye Lamb, “WADDINGTON, ALFRED PENDERELL”, 2003. Accessed December 8, 2015, http://www.biographi.ca/en/bio/waddington_alfred_penderell_10E.html. Cheadle co-wrote and published *An expedition across the Rocky Mountains into British Columbia, by the Yellow Head or Leather Pass* along with Viscount Milton in January 1865, and was well-respected in British political circles. His expertise was referenced in the June 9, 1868 debates in which the topic of British Columbia was discussed. [Chichester Fortescue, *Lake Superior and the Pacific &c. Motion for and Address, Commons Sitting of Tuesday, June 9, 1868. House of Commons Hansard, Third Series, Volume 192, cc.1349*].

Cheadle published an article in the *Pall Mall Gazette* on April 15, 1868 which addressed the politics of British Columbia and Waddington's route. Cheadle observed that "British Columbia and Vancouver Island are discontented with their position, and eager to enter the Confederation...But, failing this, all agree in declaring that they would court annexation to the United States rather than remain in their present neglected and isolated condition." Further, he warned that "The Americans are fully alive to the value of the British possessions, and eager for the acquisition of some of them" and that the continued isolation of the colony would only increase annexationist sentiments.⁸⁷ It is unclear what evidence Cheadle had for his claims apart from the rumours in the American and British press. As he had specifically mentioned Waddington's expertise in his article, it is possible that the two conversed at some point and that Cheadle was parroting Waddington's account of the popularity of annexationism.

Though his lecture and his articles were widely-publicised, Waddington's most significant effort in London came in the form of a petition which he addressed to the British House of Commons on May 25, 1868. The petition, which was reprinted in full in the *British Colonist* on August 13, 1868, sought to "bring under the consideration of your honourable House certain facts in connection with [British Columbia] which are of such magnitude that they may ultimately affect the interests of the whole British Nation as regards to commerce with the East".⁸⁸ Waddington outlined how the colony was disconnected from England and integrated with the United States. He noted the lack of direct or postal communication except through the United States, and the necessity of travelling through the United States to easily access the colony. Describing British Columbia as the "key to the Pacific" he explained that "the trade of Victoria has been annihilated, the population has dwindled to a shadow; those that remain are, to

⁸⁷ *Pall Mall Gazette* (London), Wednesday, April 15, 1868, p. 3.

⁸⁸ *Daily British Colonist and Victoria Chronicle*, August 13, 1868, p. 3.

say the least disaffected; and unless some more real interest is evinced for the colony, when the occasion offers, she may be driven to vote for annexation to the United States.” He cautioned that as “The United States are already knocking at the door”, only a transcontinental railway could preserve Britain’s North American possessions.

Though the petition was in many ways an advertisement for Waddington’s railway plans, it resonated with several British Members of Parliament. On June 9, 1868, only two weeks after Waddington presented his petition, Sir Harry Verney, a Liberal MP, spoke in the House of Commons regarding the need to devote greater attention and resources to the western British North American colonies in order to secure their entry into Confederation. Repeating many of Waddington’s arguments, Verney specifically referenced the “enterprising and indefatigable explorer” and his presentation before the Geographical Society. Verney directed the attention of his colleagues to the difficult situation in the North Pacific. He observed that “those distant possessions of the British Crown felt themselves neglected”, and though the people were loyal, they were discontented by the continued disregard of the Colonial Office towards the region. He recommended the immediate transfer of Rupert’s Land to Canada as a means of demonstrating to Pacific settlers that they would not be allowed to be encircled by the United States, and to “put a stop to the depredatory measures” of the Republic. Implicitly addressing annexationism, he warned that “if we permitted the settlement of foreigners in our colonies and did not maintain our sovereign rights, we could not complain of the consequences of such settlement.”⁸⁹

Though Verney did not overtly mention the annexationist sentiment. Another Liberal, Viscount Milton, did. Milton, who had travelled to Victoria in 1865 with W.B. Cheadle, warned that “he had reason to know that there was a growing desire on the part of the colonists to join

⁸⁹ Sir Harry Verney, Lake Superior and the Pacific &c. Motion for and Address, Commons Sitting of Tuesday, June 9, 1868. House of Commons Hansard, Third Series, Volume 192, cc.1338.

the United States; and he for one, could not blame them for entertaining such a wish under the circumstances of the case.”⁹⁰ Like Verney, Milton condemned the continued neglect of the colony by the Colonial Office. Like Waddington, Milton focused his criticism specifically upon the lack of direct communication or convenient travel routes between Britain and the Pacific, which continued to place Americanizing pressure on the colony. Another Liberal, Arthur Kinnaird, noting that the neglect of the colony was a problem, proposed that, in order to help safeguard the colony, Britain ought to “encourage the Government of Canada to form a communication with the Pacific”, something which had already occurred three months previously.⁹¹ Adderley, speaking for the Colonial Office, was largely dismissive of the Liberals’ concerns. He assured his colleagues that the government was aware of the value of British Columbia, and insisted that British Columbia had in fact occupied a disproportionate amount of the attention of colonial ministers. While he agreed that the large foreign population presented certain difficulties regarding the maintenance of sovereignty, Adderley asserted that “the country must remain under the sovereignty of Her Majesty; that, of course [is] essential.”⁹²

Verney’s motion, and the conversation that followed, may have been a turning point in British colonial policy towards the Pacific. Not only did Verney and Milton specifically call attention to the political problems, including annexationism, which Imperial neglect had brought about, the Liberal MPs all identified the issue of American “depredation” as something to be countered. Waddington had brought word of annexationism to Britain at a crucial juncture. When the Liberals won the December 1868 election, the Party was predisposed to treat British Columbia

⁹⁰ Viscount Milton, *Lake Superior and the Pacific &c. Motion for and Address*, Commons Sitting of Tuesday, June 9, 1868. House of Commons Hansard, Third Series, Volume 192, cc.1349.

⁹¹ Viscount Milton, *Lake Superior and the Pacific &c. Motion for and Address*, Commons Sitting of Tuesday, June 9, 1868. House of Commons Hansard, Third Series, Volume 192, cc.1349.

⁹² Adderley, *Lake Superior and the Pacific &c. Motion for and Address*, Commons Sitting of Tuesday, June 9, 1868. House of Commons Hansard, Third Series, Volume 192, cc.1344-45.

and the annexation threat seriously, as it had only recently criticized the handling of the colony by the Conservative government. Whereas annexationism had weakened the resolve of the Conservative government in its approach to British Columbia, it seems to have galvanized the Liberals, who were compelled to adopt a far more cautious policy regarding the colony. Though the Liberals were very much concerned about lowering colonial expenses, they understood that either confederation or annexation would revitalize the region while lessening its dependency on the Imperial government.⁹³ Given the choice between losing the colony altogether and securing it for Canada, the decision to more actively push the colony towards Confederation made financial and strategic sense, even in the face of Britain's highly inflated view of annexationism in the colony. Furthermore, Canada, similarly observing the situation in British Columbia since 1867, had been actively agitating for the Colonial Office to facilitate its union with the western colonies. Canadian statesmen had agreed as early as the Charlottetown Conference of 1864 that the Northwest, including British Columbia, should eventually form part of Canada.⁹⁴ However, in the intervening years, British Columbia itself had been a distant concern, both in terms of its perceived importance and in terms of the geographical obstacle presented by the continued problems surrounding the transfer of Rupert's Land. Lord Buckingham had made it clear in April 1868 that union between British Columbia and Canada could not occur until the intervening territory had been secured, and no Canadian politicians seriously considered attempting to secure British Columbia before acquiring the rest of the west.⁹⁵

⁹³ Arthur Kinnaird, *Lake Superior and the Pacific &c. Motion for and Address*, Commons Sitting of Tuesday, June 9, 1868. House of Commons Hansard, Third Series, Volume 192, cc.1343.

⁹⁴ Donald Creighton, *John A. Macdonald V.I: The Young Politician* (Toronto: The MacMillan Company of Canada Ltd., 1935), 380.

⁹⁵ Viscount Monck to Buckingham and Chandos, 7 March 1868, House of Commons Parliamentary Papers, 19th Century House of Commons Sessional Papers, Papers on the Union of British Columbia with the Dominion of Canada, p. 6 1868-69 (390) XLIII.341.

By the beginning of Gladstone's ministry, Canadians had become more active in promoting confederation with British Columbia. In contrast to certain voices in Britain and the United States, however, they were far less convinced that annexationism was a credible problem. Canadians had heard about the volatile politics of British Columbia from Waddington in December of 1867, when he informed Parliament about the political situation in Victoria. Waddington noted that there had been an annexationist public meeting in 1866, and that when he left the colony "the last cry that he heard was "Confederation or Annexation".⁹⁶ As they did elsewhere, indications that British Columbia housed a powerful annexation movement also reached Ottawa via the press. Reports of annexationism were featured in the *Toronto Globe*, as well as the *Montreal Gazette*, the *Ottawa Times*, and the *Hamilton Spectator*.⁹⁷ Nova Scotian anti-confederationists in particular were eager to display the apparent annexationist tone in British Columbia.⁹⁸ By 1869, the Canadian press had formed a highly muddled view of the situation in the western colony.

Despite the indications they were receiving that annexationism remained popular in British Columbia, by the beginning of 1868, Canadian authorities were in direct contact with confederationist leaders in the colony.⁹⁹ This relationship appears to have been critical in affording Canadian authorities a much clearer understanding of the shifting political situation on

⁹⁶ *Daily British Colonist and Victoria Chronicle*, January 28, 1868, p. 1. Reprinted article from the *Ottawa Times* (no date).

⁹⁷ *New Westminster British Columbian*, January 2, 1869, p. 1. This issue contained an editorial which listed several articles that had been published throughout Canada which Robson believed misrepresented the situation in British Columbia.

⁹⁸ *New Westminster British Columbian*, November 6, 1867, p. 1. Howe purportedly read from the *Victoria British Colonist* in front of a crowd, repeating its statement that "the loyalty of our people has lately been severely shaken; and to become connected to the United States seems to be our inevitable destiny" as an indication of sentiment in British Columbia

⁹⁹ Viscount Monck to Buckingham and Chandos, 7 March 1868, House of Commons Parliamentary Papers, 19th Century House of Commons Sessional Papers, Papers on the Union of British Columbia with the Dominion of Canada, p. 6 1868-69 (390) XLIII.341.

the Pacific. In March 1868, the confederationists forwarded a memorial to Ottawa which detailed their platform and the various obstacles which were impeding the progress of their movement. Among these was the presence of annexationism. Though they cautioned that support for the movement might “be largely increased” if annexationists felt that union with the United States was practicable, they noted that it constituted only a small minority opinion. Further, the memorial clarified that all of the newspapers in the colony actually supported confederation, save for the *Morning News* (which by that point had actually become pro-confederation as well). Though Macdonald was nevertheless wary over the presence of the “annexation party” and the influence of “American adventurers” in the colony, there is no real indication that the rumours of annexationism coloured his policy to any significant degree.¹⁰⁰ Canadian authorities were highly aware of American expansionist efforts in Ruperts Land and on the Pacific, and were already eagerly petitioning Britain to accelerate the incorporation of British Columbia into the Dominion. Though Macdonald mentioned the annexation movement to the Governor General at least one time in relation to the need for haste in securing the west, its presence in British Columbia does not seem to have provided significant additional impetus for Canadian efforts to secure the colony. Canadians understood far more consistently than anyone else outside of British Columbia that confederation was supported by the majority of the population and that annexationists were nothing more than a loud minority in Victoria. This clarity offered a stark contrast to the narrative spreading throughout the United States and Britain. Though Canadians were aware of the dangers posed by American expansionists, and urged Britain to hasten the negotiations to prevent further pressure being imposed from that quarter, Macdonald more

¹⁰⁰ John A. MacDonald to S. L. Tilley, May 2, 1869, Library and Archives Canada, CO 537. Supplementary, Original Correspondence, (MG11-CO537) Microfilm reel B-814, p. 4-14.

accurately understood the primary primary internal obstacle towards confederation to be Seymour's reticence and incompetence, and not a lack of public support.¹⁰¹ With this in mind, MacDonald successfully pushed for Anthony Musgrave, a known friend of Confederation, to succeed Seymour upon the latter's death in June 1869.¹⁰²

Upon his appointment as Colonial Secretary, Granville immediately went to work to secure the confederation of British Columbia with Canada. In doing so, he was exceedingly cautious in raising the subject publicly, as he seems to have been unclear about the relative popularity of confederationism and annexationism in the colony. He suspected that confederationists were the majority, but was uncertain of the threat which annexationism could potentially pose. Aside from the numerous indications from the press and from individuals like Waddington that annexationism was popular, American policymakers had been actively promoting the idea for nearly two years. Granville's concern may have also partially stemmed from a lack of clear knowledge of the colony's demographics. In this he seems to have been influenced significantly by Frederic Rogers, who remained in his post through 1871. In a draft reply to a despatch from Seymour regarding the expansion of representative institutions, Granville endorsed an analysis written by Rogers which suggested that the American population outnumbered the British. Rogers opposed setting up new institutions, not only because they would be merely transitional in light of the likelihood of confederation, but because "the most extraordinary catastrophes may be expected if the Fenians of B.C., in their present state of disorder, are handed over such a government or succession of governments as would arise out of such a legislature as would first emerge on giving to B.C. such representative institutions as the present composition of its

¹⁰¹ Shi, "Seward's Attempt", 227. Alexander Galt cautioned that "If the United States desires to outflank us on the west, we must...lay our hands on British Columbia and the Pacific Ocean. The country cannot be surrounded by the United States."

¹⁰² Warner, *The Idea of Continental Union*, 139.

population renders possible.”¹⁰³ Responding, Granville wrote simply “I agree”.¹⁰⁴ Rogers, who had been present during the height of the period of pessimism regarding British Columbia, seems to have coloured Granville’s view of the colony.

Granville’s concern over the power of the foreign population strongly influenced his initial instructions to Musgrave. In an August 14, 1869 despatch to the new Governor, Granville outlined the need to more clearly discern public opinion in the colony. He wrote that “Her Majesty’s Government have hitherto declined to entertain [the question of confederation]” partially to allow “that the public opinion in British Columbia might have opportunity to form and declare itself”. He clarified that “from the despatches which have reached me, I should conjecture that the prevailing opinion was in favour of union.” Still, he felt it prudent to “for the consideration of the community and the guidance of Her Majesty’s servants” provide “a more unreserved expression of [the government’s] wishes and judgments than might elsewhere be fitting”. He thus instructed Musgrave to publically release the despatch, which contained a lengthy account of the reasons Her Majesty’s Government supported union of the colony with Canada, in order to gauge the public reaction.¹⁰⁵ Once again, Rogers’ influence informed this decision as Rogers had notified Granville in June that he had “been told that the annexationists with Canada are the major party, those with the United States the more stirring – but that an expression of decided opinion on the part of the Home Government in favour of Union with

¹⁰³ Seymour to Buckingham, November 30, 1868, National Archives of the UK, 539, CO 60/33. The Colonial Despatches of Vancouver Island and British Columbia 1846-1871. Ed. James Hendrickson and the Colonial Despatches project. Victoria: University of Victoria. Accessed December 8, 2015. <http://bcgenesis.uvic.ca/getDoc.htm?id=B68125.scx>. (Note that this correspondence is appended to the record of this older despatch).

¹⁰⁴ Ibid.

¹⁰⁵ Granville to Musgrave, August 14, 1869, National Archives of the UK, CO 398/5. The Colonial Despatches of Vancouver Island and British Columbia 1846-1871. Ed. James Hendrickson and the Colonial Despatches project. Victoria: University of Victoria. Accessed December 9, 2015. <http://bcgenesis.uvic.ca/getDoc.htm?id=B697084.scx>.

Canada would not only instill energy and activity into the 1st named party, but would convert many of the latter”.¹⁰⁶

Publically declaring Imperial intent proved to be sound policy. Musgrave immediately published the despatch in the *Government Gazette*, and most of the colonial press followed suit. In his next despatch to Granville, Musgrave provided a more detailed breakdown of the views of the colonists. On the one hand he noted that “A very large proportion both here and on the Mainland, are not British subjects, and not unnaturally would lean rather towards annexation to the United States, if there is to be a change.” However, he happily observed that “the declaration of the policy of the Government appears to give very general satisfaction in the Colony, and I am informed has silenced some idle discussion upon “annexation” to the United States which had arisen from the apprehension that Her Majesty's Government intended to force the Colony into Union with the Dominion at the instance of Canada and without reference to the true interests and wishes of the Colonists.”¹⁰⁷ Buoyed by this news, Granville still instructed Musgrave to continue to proceed cautiously and to only bring the question of confederation to the Legislative Council if he was confident that it would receive favourable reception.¹⁰⁸

As detailed in Chapter One, the most crucial outcome of the publication of the despatch was its direct role in inspiring Henry Heisterman and his colleagues to circulate their annexation

¹⁰⁶ Hankin to Granville, June 15, 1865, National Archives of the UK, 6790, CO 60/36. The Colonial Despatches of Vancouver Island and British Columbia 1846-1871. Ed. James Hendrickson and the Colonial Despatches project. Victoria: University of Victoria. Accessed December 8, 2015.

<http://bcgenesis.uvic.ca/getDoc.htm?id=B69105T2.scx>. (Once again the conversation in question is included in the record attached to this older despatch, though it seems to have been sent on July 19, 1869).

¹⁰⁷ Musgrave to Granville, October 30, 1869, National Archives of the UK, 13573, CO 60/36. The Colonial Despatches of Vancouver Island and British Columbia 1846-1871. Ed. James Hendrickson and the Colonial Despatches project. Victoria: University of Victoria. Accessed December 9, 2015.

<http://bcgenesis.uvic.ca/getDoc.htm?id=B69219.scx>.

¹⁰⁸ Granville to Musgrave, December 31, 1869, National Archives of the UK, CO 398/5. The Colonial Despatches of Vancouver Island and British Columbia 1846-1871. Ed. James Hendrickson and the Colonial Despatches project. Victoria: University of Victoria. Accessed December 8, 2015. <http://bcgenesis.uvic.ca/getDoc.htm?id=B697113.scx>.

petition. Though the document had the effect of temporarily re-invigorating American expansionists in making a final attempt to acquire the colony, for Musgrave and Granville it was a clear demonstration that annexationism was not actually a relevant factor. Musgrave did not even mention the petition to Granville until prompted in February 1870 after Thornton had worriedly transmitted a pair of letters which described the petition, “said to have been signed by a number of residents of Victoria”, to the Colonial Office. Musgrave replied that “the petition in question had been signed by foreign residents of little standing or influence in the colony and was not therefore taken seriously.”¹⁰⁹ He assured Granville that the matter was of no importance, and no action was taken, save to inform Thornton that the petition was not actually an accurate representation of opinion in British Columbia. Though it is unclear whether this went on to inform the policy of Clarendon and Thornton regarding Fish’s and Motley’s inquiries, it almost certainly helped. Musgrave’s acumen as Governor was extremely valuable in moderating the British approach to annexationism in the colony. Clarendon’s conversations with Motley and Thornton’s conversations with Fish revealed that the Foreign Office was operating under false assumptions regarding the popularity of annexationism as late as 1870. As a result of Musgrave’s efforts, the Colonial Office was able to counter the influence of the spectre of annexationism and help moderate the policy of the Foreign Office. As was the case in the Canadian approach to British Columbia, accurate intelligence was the key factor which negated the narrative power of annexationism in the colony. With clear evidence that annexationists were not actually a relevant political faction, British authorities had little cause to entertain the continued efforts of American policymakers towards annexation of the colony, and confederation was all but assured.

¹⁰⁹ As mentioned in chapter one, this was not actually correct. As demonstrated by Willard Ireland, most the signatories were naturalized British subjects of Jewish or German descent, and Americans were the minority. Ireland, “The Annexation Petition”, 271.

As a reflection of the crucial role of Musgrave in providing accurate intelligence to Granville in the face of continued rumours that British Columbia was annexationist, it is interesting to note that the petition did incite a new wave of hand-wringing about annexationism in the British press. The most notable example of this was an article in the *Times of London*, which suggested that, given the natural geographical and demographic connection between British Columbia and the United States and annexationist sentiment in the colony, Britain ought to allow the colony to become American.¹¹⁰ This article caused a small annexationist outcry in British Columbia as it rang through the press, but it was exceedingly brief and did not amount to anything. The *Morning Chronicle*, the *Daily Globe*, and a number of other papers similarly picked up the story of the petition, and continued to mischaracterize the state of public opinion in British Columbia.¹¹¹ In doing so, they were likely again inspired by the relentless optimism of the United States in celebrating the petition as clear evidence that British Columbia yearned to join the Republic. Musgrave's loyalty to Confederation, and his clear communication with the rest of his government, ensured that these rumours were no longer entertained by policymakers in Britain, and the American argument for annexation of the colony largely crumbled.

Thus, the British Columbian annexation movement provoked a far greater response outside of the colony than it ever warranted. The notion that British Columbia might ask for admission to the United States was interpreted within existing narratives in Anglo-American relations, and became a galvanizing factor for policymakers on both sides of the Atlantic. For Americans, it

¹¹⁰ Warner, *The Idea of Continental Union*, 137.

¹¹¹ Granville to Musgrave, December 31, 1869, National Archives of the UK, CO 398/5. The Colonial Despatches of Vancouver Island and British Columbia 1846-1871. Ed. James Hendrickson and the Colonial Despatches project. Victoria: University of Victoria. Accessed December 8, 2015. <http://bcgenesis.uvic.ca/getDoc.htm?id=B697113.scx>. According to Granville, the memorial was printed in full "in the *Morning Chronicle* of the 3rd January and the debate on the subject appears in the *Daily Globe* of the 11th of that month." Similarly the *Glasgow Herald* wrote about the petition and connected it to the Alabama Claims specifically. *Glasgow Herald*, January 20, 1870, p. 2, January 27, 1870, p. 4.

represented the tantalizing notion that British North America might, with only the slightest provocation, bend before the universality of their values. Citizens and statesmen eagerly watched developments in the colony, and jumped on any indication that the annexation movement might become a relevant political force. Though the Alaska purchase and the tense negotiations over the Alabama Claims almost certainly would have proceeded without the additional impetus which the prospect of popular annexationism in British Columbia provided those projects, the presence of the movement was encouraging. Across two successive Presidential administrations, American leaders were pressed by their colleagues and constituents to capitalize on the golden opportunity which the movement seemingly represented. Nevertheless, in the chaotic Reconstruction period, annexationists could never marshal enough popular support for their platform to bring sufficient momentum to bear to secure the colony. At the very least, annexationism proved rhetorically valuable for advocates of expansionism at the time, who firmly believed that Britain would allow them to take the colony if enough annexationist sentiment could be found.

Even as it inspired Americans towards expansionism, the spectre of British Columbian annexationism equally contributed to preventing the annexation of the colony by awakening Britain to the colony's tenuous position. The mixed signals which Britain had displayed in relation to the North American colonies after the Civil War had encouraged American efforts to annex British Columbia. The numerous indications that the population of the colony might imminently organize in favour of leaving the Empire, and the apparent apathy of the Conservative government concerning its possible loss, inspired Gladstone's Liberals to treat the political future of British Columbia with more care. The spectre of annexationism reached British authorities through a wide range sources in British Columbia and the United States, and

appears to have been sustained within the Colonial Office across successive governments by the Permanent Undersecretary for the Colonies, Frederic Rogers. As Canada indicated its desire to unite with the Pacific colony, Granville proceeded cautiously so as to mitigate whatever influence annexationists might have in preventing Confederation. His cautious policy may not have been entirely necessary, however it proved valuable in revealing to all the weakness of the annexationist threat, which had possessed undue narrative influence both in the colony and abroad since the summer of 1867.

Though the annexation movement can be given only partial credit for maintaining the narrative of its power, its presence in the colony was absolutely a relevant consideration in Anglo-American diplomatic strategy at the time. Both powers considered popular sentiment to be a relevant consideration in guiding their policies towards British Columbia. Thus, the bizarre capacity of the narrative of British Columbian annexationism to sustain itself between the brief flare-ups of actual annexationist sentiment in the colony led Britain and the United States to make policy decisions that did not accurately reflect the situation on the ground. This did not affect the two powers equally. For the United States, its incorrect view of annexationism meant that its policies were doomed to fail. In Britain, though it briefly inspired a degree of fatalism within the Foreign and Colonial Offices, it ultimately caused them to adopt a more cautious policy than may have been necessary. Regardless, the British Columbian annexation movement had a not-insignificant legacy in the field of Anglo-American relations.

Conclusion

The British Columbian annexation movement was a minor, disorganized agitation which nevertheless drew great power from the global context in which it found itself. As annexationists reacted to the geo-political consequences of Anglo-American diplomacy over British North America, their activities in turn engendered a diplomatic response. Throughout the critical period, annexationism stood as the focal point of the intersection between global and local forces in the colony. At a fundamental level, this dynamic was a product of the way in which the political power to ultimately determine the question of confederation or annexationism was alienated from the local context during the critical period. With only limited power to decisively secure their preferred political outcomes, colonists necessarily attempted to harness global currents in order to override local political conflicts. Within this context, the comparatively minor annexation movement gained undue power from the way it was perceived by Britain and the United States. The core political calculations of the annexation moment in British Columbia guaranteed that global forces would act upon the local circumstances in the colony. In turn, the tension between the universalizing tendencies of the great powers and the particular circumstances of colonial affairs affected the shape of things in a profound way. Annexationism, in part due to the savvy tactics of its adherents in engaging in globally-conscious political activism, and in part due to the profound geo-strategic significance of their platform, came to be the primary beneficiaries of this complex interaction.

In the case of British Columbian annexationism, glocalization manifested itself as a dialectical struggle between the universalizing assumptions of American expansionism and the march toward continental republicanism on one side, and the highly particularized circumstances

in British Columbia which provoked a disproportionately vocal, yet essentially transitory, annexation movement on the other. The inherent weaknesses of mid-19th century globalizing forces, in terms of travel and communication, allowed the universal and the particular to “talk past” one another in a way which obfuscated the flawed assumptions of both the local and global conceptualizations of annexationism. This interaction, in turn, allowed overly-optimistic actors in both contexts to dramatically overestimate the degree of conceptual symmetry between the two levels. From the perspective of outsiders, within this period of nascent global consciousness, the specific contours of the particularized British Columbian conceptualization of annexationism were easily ignored or subsumed within the larger American narrative of continentalism. When viewed through this universalizing lens, British Columbian annexationism appeared identical to the genuine republican movements elsewhere on the continent, and this error compelled policymakers at the highest levels to make incorrect assumptions and to embark on flawed policy initiatives. In contrast, when the particularized currents of British Columbian annexationism were made evident at the level of global policy, such as in Canada after 1868 and in Britain after Musgrave was made Governor of British Columbia, the policy response to annexationism was particularized in turn to account for the actual circumstances in the colony, and was more impactful and effective as a consequence. Thus, annexationism was able to delay and exacerbate Anglo-American negotiations over the Alabama Claims and to excite a great deal of popular anxiety, but it was not able to make any decisive change. Whatever effects the movement had in either a local or a global context were erased the next year as British Columbia entered into Confederation and Britain and the United States signed the Treaty of Washington.

Though its effects were ultimately minimal, the annexation movement is nevertheless relevant as a reflection of the priorities and ideological assumptions of its observers. In the tension

between the particular and the universal in relation to the annexation movement, the significance of the strongly ideological manner by which the United States confronted British Columbian annexationism is made highly apparent. In Britain, policymakers initially undervalued or misapprehended the particular circumstances which brought about the annexation movement. Instead, they relied upon global trends in North American colonial development as an interpretive lens, and this initially led them to approach the colony with a degree of fatalism. However, these assumptions were not nearly as fundamental to their self-understanding as that of Manifest Destiny in the United States, and British policymakers easily shifted their assumptions as the particular circumstances in the colony were made apparent. In this view, the incorrect assumptions among British policymakers regarding the contours of British Columbian annexationism, particularly before 1869, were largely the product of the practical challenges of intelligence-gathering in the mid-19th century, rather than a consequence of the flawed application of an overriding ideology. In the United States, the opposite appears to have been the case. Viewing British Columbia through a Kantian conception of human social development towards republicanism, the universalizing assumptions of American self-understanding thoroughly drowned out the particular circumstances surrounding annexationism in British Columbia. This ideological approach diluted their policy response and guaranteed the failure of their expansionist overtures. In this view, the failure of American policy towards British Columbia was not so much the product of a lack of clear knowledge but of a willful ignorance predicated on the wishful thinking of republican triumphalism.

The rhetorical and narrative power of the universalist conception of American expansionism was so compelling that even the mostly non-ideological British Columbian annexation movement was led to drastically overestimate their likelihood of success, and to similarly

underestimate the nationalist and Imperialist forces pushing them towards Confederation. Many of the core assumptions of the annexation movement – namely that Britain would willingly give up the colony if it found the colonists to support annexation, and that the United States was desirous of obtaining the colony from Britain through diplomatic negotiations – borrowed from the overriding ideology of Manifest Destiny evinced to the south. Even as British Columbian annexationists expressed themselves particularistically in an effort to articulate a version of annexationism which would be palatable to British loyalists (ie. their refusal to positively identify with republicanism), they understood the inexorable pull of the United States in very similar terms as did American expansionists. Concepts of Manifest Destiny which applied to all of British North America, such as the economic and political dominance of the United States, the expansion of representative institutions, and the fundamental similarity between the peoples on either side of the border were particularized by annexationist writers to address the local problems of Victoria. Throughout the period, despite their ambivalence over becoming American citizens, British Columbian annexationists were driven to action by indications of the external, universalizing, processes of American expansionism as interpreted through the lens of their own particular interests and circumstances. In this way, the local and the global were complicit in sustaining the annexation movement throughout the period.

British Columbian annexationism as an ideological and rhetorical construct similarly exemplifies the intersection between the universal and the particular as embodied in the relationship between the global and the local. The spectre of annexation manifested very differently in the local and international contexts. This contrast again speaks to the differing degrees to which the particular contours of British Columbian annexationism and of Anglo-American diplomacy were apparent between the two spheres. For observers outside the colony,

the spectre of annexationism was made manifest in terms of the apparent popularity of the movement throughout the period. Particular circumstances, such as the economic depression, the perception of sustained colonial neglect, the political and physical isolation of the region, and the natural economic connection between British Columbia and the United States, were raised as arguments to predict and support a universalized conception of British Columbian annexationism. Thus, incomplete knowledge of the local context sustained the mistaken international narrative of British Columbian annexationism as a republican movement which developed as an inevitable consequence of American political and economic dominance. With very little information coming out of the colony, observers gravitated to this interpretation because it appeared to make sense. An identical process occurred in the colony during the Confederation debates. Despite their proximity to the movement, loyalists allowed the global narrative of American expansionism to colour their perspective of local colonial affairs. Though it was apparent to most observers in the colony that local annexationism had gone into remission by 1868-1869, colonists nevertheless assessed its potential for resurgence and its continued role as a hidden saboteur according to their understanding of the powerful American expansionist forces which were being marshalled against the colony. As loyalists increasingly came to view annexationism as a local metastasis of American expansionism, they were led to overestimate its continuing relevance in the politics of the colony.

As this study has shown, at its core, the annexation movement in British Columbia was nothing more than a loose association of interested parties who, for the most part, operated within basic calculations of economic interest in response to what they perceived to be favourable conditions for annexation. Leonard McClure was the nearest thing to a true annexationist ideologue in the colony. The annexationist platform was never articulated in a way

which generated a sufficient degree of positive enthusiasm in British Columbia for becoming an American State. Enthusiasm for annexationism was strongly tied to major developments in Anglo-American geopolitics over British North America. Thus, each successive wave of annexationist enthusiasm was countered by a commensurate wave of anti-annexationist or confederationist fervor. Though the movement was able to gain political significance through its disproportionate voice, annexationists' success in projecting an image of popularity and power can only be partially attributed to their own activities or their enthusiasm for their cause. Though the public meeting and the petitions were undoubtedly an effective means of generating global discourse over the movement, the most decisive mechanisms by which the spectre of annexationism was able to flourish in a global context were entirely distinct from the movement itself. American ideology ensured that British Columbian annexationism was taken seriously in the United States. Expansionist enthusiasm, in turn, propagated the notion of popular annexationism to Britain where it was aided, not by annexationists, but by Imperialists like Waddington and Cheadle. Even in the colony itself, the rhetorical power which annexationism possessed stemmed largely from the arguments of confederationists, while annexationists themselves possessed very little political agency in the confederation debates.

Given annexationists' peculiar alienation from the rhetorical power of their own movement at a very basic level, it is difficult to disagree with the conclusions of Ireland and Sage that the annexation movement itself has not had a significant historical legacy. It certainly seems evident that the fact of the movement's existence was a relevant consideration in turning the attention of Britain and the United States to the colony and in undermining the anti-confederationist faction, but the annexationists themselves never really succeeded in meaningfully engaging with the politics of the colony throughout the period. The profound rift between the annexation movement

and the narrative of annexationism in British Columbia is a fascinating study in the propagation of political narratives in the 19th century in a global context. The global forces by which the idea of annexationism came to be shaped into something which barely resembled the disparate and disorganized annexation movement in Victoria demonstrates the centrality of ideology in shaping the geopolitical landscape of British North America. Further, this process reveals how particular modes of global communication facilitated the spread of rumours and the dissemination of incorrect ideas and assumptions in relation to British Columbia. False, exaggerated, or outdated information was easily transmitted between British Columbia and the wider world. Detail and nuance often proved elusive, and actors possessed very little capacity to verify what newspapers and prominent observers were reporting. In the case of British Columbian annexationism, its inability to attract a real following simply did not matter in relation to the confederation debates in British Columbia or to Anglo-American diplomacy. As incomplete information regarding the movement was disseminated from Victoria, it was recontextualized to fit existing narratives, and thus gained power in those contexts. The idea of British Columbian annexationism mattered, even if the annexation movement itself did not.

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