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POLITICAL IDEAS OF THE UPPER CANADA REFORMERS
1867-78

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"BUT in this country . . . what is there for Conservatives to conserve or for Reformers to reform?" The question came from the Bystander, Professor Goldwin Smith, newly arrived in Toronto and writing his current comment in the newly established monthly journal, the *Canadian Monthly and National Review*, in its issue of April, 1872. "What is there," he went on, "to preserve our parties from gradually becoming mere factions, and our country from becoming the unhappy scene of a perpetual struggle of factions for place? . . . For party without party principles inevitably becomes faction; and faction as inevitably supports itself by intrigue, demagogism and corruption."

Regularly in every issue the *Canadian Monthly* kept up this theme of the evils of party in a country where parties were based upon no distinctive principles. In 1874 it was joined by the weekly journal, the *Nation*, the organ of the Canada First movement. Both these journals of the intellectuals pointed out, with a constant succession of fresh examples from the news of the day to illustrate their point, that Canadian governments kept their followers together and themselves in office by a continuous system of bribes to sectional, class, racial, and religious interests, and that this was all that party policy ever meant in practice. Both of them were especially severe upon the Reform leadership of George Brown and the *Globe*. They denounced Brown for trying to maintain a brutal dictatorship over men and opinions in Toronto and Ontario. "Reputations," said the *Nation* of the *Globe*, "oscillated nervously between its black letter and its small pica."¹ Goldwin Smith, unwearied in his efforts to emancipate Ontario from a false and degrading partyism, as he saw it, put money successively into new papers—the *Mail*, the *Liberal*, and finally the *Telegram*—in order to break the domination of the *Globe*. His experiments did not work out very satisfactorily from either the intellectual or the financial point of view. "The *Mail*," he remarked, "has saved us from a dictatorship, though much as we might be saved from typhus by having the small-pox."²

These criticisms of the nature of Canadian party which appeared in the columns of the *Canadian Monthly* and the *Nation* were no doubt caviar to the general, and in the long run they were almost completely ineffective in modifying the course of Canadian party politics. The *Globe* and the *Mail* and their cohorts of local papers across the province were steadily bringing it about that every little Upper Canadian boy and girl should be born into this world alive as either a little Liberal or else a little Conservative. And no Reformer would have admitted for a moment that the struggle between his party and John A. Macdonald's "corruptionists" was merely one of outs versus ins.

Reformers recalled that it was only through party that Responsible Government had been established in Canada; and they believed that the Reform party was still a party with a mission. George Brown was fond of comparing his function as publisher of the *Globe* and leader of

¹The *Nation*, June 4, 1874.

²*Canadian Monthly*, Nov., 1874, 459.

the Grits in the House with that of Cobden and Bright in England, the radicals who brought new ideas into English politics and gave expression to the aspirations of new classes. It was the Cobdens and the Brights who were the creative influences in politics, he said, as distinguished from the mere hum-drum administrators or time-servers who occupied the front benches in Parliament.³ Edward Blake, the rising hope of the Reform party, had this same sense of a mission in politics. He told his audience in his Aurora speech that he preferred to be a private in the advanced guard of the army of freedom; and he concluded that famous "disturbing" address by quoting Tennyson's ode about freedom slowly broadening down from precedent to precedent, and declaring that the political heresy of today, with which his speech was somewhat crowded, might become the political creed of tomorrow.⁴

What then were the ideas and principles which Upper Canadian Reformers regarded as their distinct contribution to the politics of the new Dominion? I propose to discuss first their attitude on purely political and constitutional issues, and then to go on to their conception of Canadian nationalism in its various aspects. The two parts of my paper may be entitled *Parliamentary Government* and *The New Nationality*.

I. PARLIAMENTARY GOVERNMENT

First of all we may list a group of reforms which all tended to make more effective the machinery of government by public opinion. Representation by population was achieved in the B.N.A. Act, and this, Reformers claimed, rightly enough, as a great Reform victory. They were alert to attack Macdonald's breaches of the principle when he gave the new western provinces of Manitoba and British Columbia more seats than their population warranted; and they indignantly pounced upon him when he made use of these pocket-borough seats for his own party purposes.⁵

In order to make the electoral system fair and honest, Reformers also fought for the introduction of the ballot, for the system of having all elections in a general election take place on the same day, and above all, for the trial of controverted elections by judges instead of by packed election committees in the House of Commons. In all these campaigns they were triumphant by 1874 against Macdonald's opposition. They insisted also on the franchise being fixed by each province for itself because the provincial legislators were the best judges of who were fitted to vote in their own provincial community. In Ontario they added an income franchise to the already low property franchise, and gave the vote to farmers' sons who lived at home and couldn't qualify otherwise with either income or property. That is, they established a system pretty close to manhood suffrage. Some Reformers were prepared to go still further. Edward Blake in his Aurora speech proposed

³See, e.g. editorials on Nov. 28, 1873, and Dec. 29, 1874.

⁴"A National Sentiment!" *Speech of Hon. Edward Blake, M.P., at Aurora, with the comments of some of the Canadian press thereon* (Ottawa, E. A. Perry, Elgin Street, 1874).

⁵"Those six British Columbia constituencies—those six wretched outrages on justice and decency—created in 1871 by Sir John Macdonald for precisely such work as the present," exclaimed the *Globe* (Sept. 2, 1872) on the news that Sir Francis Hincks, defeated in Eastern Canada, had been provided, through the intervention of the Lieutenant-Governor, with a seat in British Columbia.

compulsory voting and minority representation based on the Hare system as two reforms which he thought the party should take up. David Mills crusaded against the appointed Senate and in 1875 persuaded the House of Commons to agree with him, though his party, then in office, did nothing about the matter. And George E. Casey was beginning his long campaign for Civil Service reform.

The two supreme constitutional issues, however, on which Reformers saw themselves as fighting to the death against John A. Macdonald and his system were those of the strict interpretation of the new federal constitution and the securing of the independence of the legislature from undue executive influence.

To the Grits Confederation, from the constitutional point of view, meant primarily two things—representation by population; and provincial autonomy, with a clear-cut separation of provincial from federal affairs. After 1867 they were constantly in arms against any interference by Ottawa with matters of local Ontario concern, and against all policies which tended to blur the distinction between general federal affairs and local provincial affairs. Their main indictment of John Sandfield Macdonald was that he permitted himself and his government in Toronto to become mere adjuncts of the Ottawa government. They instituted at once an assault upon the system of dual representation by which the same individual could sit in both provincial legislature and Dominion Parliament, and they succeeded in abolishing it. John A. Macdonald's interference with Ontario legislation through the disallowance power was watched with a hostile eye.

"There is as yet no satisfactory way of disposing of cases of dispute as to the authority of Federal and local legislatures," said the *Globe* on December 24, 1868. "It is not desirable to have such questions settled by the Minister of Justice. He is by no means a safe depository of so much power." "There is need for a court to deal with unconstitutional or illegal legislation . . .," it said on November 11, 1869. "If Confederation is to be a success the present arrangements must be changed."

But the Reformers were politicians looking for votes as well as constitutional purists. Their "hands off" attitude toward federal interference in Ontario affairs did not deter the provincial government from interfering in Dominion affairs. Blake persuaded the Ontario legislature to pass a resolution calling for justice upon the murderers of Scott at the Red River, and his government offered a reward for their apprehension. While they denounced John A. in Ottawa for intervening to assist John Sandfield's government to get elected in 1867 and 1871, still when the Dominion elections came on in 1872 Oliver Mowat felt no constitutional scruples in adjourning the Ontario legislature in order that its Reform majority might go out and campaign for Mackenzie and Blake. "The true lover of his province," remarked the *Globe* with some unction (January 19, 1874), "must love the whole Dominion on the principle that true patriotism begins with home and kindred, and radiates from thence in ever widening circles till the whole nation is embraced."

The fact was that the Reform constitutional philosophy, with its demand for a clear-cut separation of Dominion from provincial affairs, neglected the most important element in the situation, the party system. Federal Reformers and provincial Reformers depended upon one another for strength and success; they had a common interest in weakening

John A. and his supporters in the federal or in the provincial field as the case might be. The party system made mutual interference by province and Dominion with one another's affairs inevitable.

A major issue in this controversy over Dominion-provincial relations during this first decade was raised by the question of "better terms" to Nova Scotia. The Reformers as strict constructionists opposed Macdonald's procedure in granting relief to Nova Scotia.⁶ Blake, defeated at Ottawa, carried his efforts so far as to get the Ontario legislature to pass a resolution for an Address to the Crown requesting an amendment to the B.N.A. Act which would make clear that the Parliament of Canada should have no power in future to disturb the established financial relations as between the Dominion and the several provinces.

"Better terms" were only one instance of what Reformers found to be a chief vice of Macdonald's system of government, his practice of spending federal revenue for purely local purposes in order to keep the members from Quebec and the outlying provinces lined up on the right of Mr. Speaker. And all this improper expenditure might be prevented, as the *Globe* was constantly pointing out, if the Ontario delegation at Ottawa would only stand firm. It was chiefly with Ontario's taxes that Macdonald was bribing the other provinces, and Ontario had almost half the seats at Ottawa. But inevitably to these other provinces this reiterated appeal of the Grit organ for Ontario solidarity appeared only as an acute case of selfish Ontario sectionalism. Alas, it has not been only in the 1870's that the citizens of the different provinces of Canada have found that the most congenial method of contributing to a national spirit is to denounce the sectionalism of their neighbours.

The second great constitutional issue was the independence of the legislature, a good Whig cause which Reformers in Canada had long made their own. Ever since the 1850's the Grits in opposition had felt that the British Cabinet system, as applied to a government busy with the construction of railways and public works, gave too much power to the executive. At the Quebec Conference in 1864 George Brown proposed a constitution of checks and balances for Ontario based on that of an American state.⁷ In the end Ontario and the other provinces got miniature responsible governments. But Reformers still remained suspicious of undue power and influence in the hands of the executive. Blake introduced a series of bills both at Toronto and at Ottawa for the independence of Parliament. The issue on which he finally defeated Sandfield Macdonald in 1871 was Macdonald's policy of taking power to his government to distribute a lump sum for the assistance of local

⁶The *Globe*, in an editorial of June 15, 1869, entitled "The Constitution in Danger," declared: "The doctrine [of the government] proclaims a new era of jobbery and log-rolling. . . . The effect of the vote is to destroy the federal character of the Union. . . . The question in debate was not even whether or not these new advantages should be conferred on Nova Scotia; but it was whether so grave a reversal of the fundamental conditions of the Union Act could be effected by an Act of the Dominion Parliament, or must emanate from the Imperial Parliament. . . . Throughout the whole debate not one reason was advanced why this latter course should not have been followed. . . . The Ministers had deliberately resolved to break down the constitution . . . and were chuckling in anticipation of keeping themselves in office by buying up Constituencies and their Representatives. . . . An impudent attempt to bring back all the evils and discordances of a Legislative Union."

⁷Joseph Pope, *Confederation, being a Series of Hitherto Unpublished Documents Bearing on the British North America Act* (Toronto, 1895), 74.

railways without allowing the legislature to pass on the details of how much was to be allocated to each railway.

But it was at Ottawa, of course, that the great crisis in the relations of executive and legislature developed, in connection with the Pacific railway enterprise. The Macdonald government in 1872 took blanket powers to choose between two rival companies seeking the charter, to create a new company if necessary and make a contract with it, to fix the terms on which cash and land subsidies should be transferred to the company, and all this to be done without further consultation of Parliament. In vain did the Reform opposition draw attention to the abuses that might take place when the executive was granted such unchecked discretionary powers. In vain did they point to past scandals in the relations of Macdonald & Co. with the Grand Trunk and the Intercolonial. In vain did they move that no directors or shareholders in the new Pacific Railway Company should be allowed to hold seats in either House of Parliament. The issue, as the *Globe* put it, between them and Macdonald was that between "government by Orders in Council and government by the representatives of the people."⁸

"The present is not merely a selfish struggle between ins and outs. It is the old constitutional question of the people's right through its representatives to control the national legislation and the national expenditure; to prevent Orders in Council and Star Chamber decrees taking the place of Acts of Parliament."⁹

"Railways," said David Mills in the *Canadian Monthly* (November, 1872), "create new political and social forces, which may affect injuriously Parliamentary Government. . . . It may be that it will yet be found necessary for reasons political as well as commercial to make all such works the property of the State. Great railway corporations are the most dangerous enemies popular government has ever had. . . . They have marched their *employés* to the polls as an ancient baron did his vassals to the battlefield. . . . They endanger if they do not destroy the independence of Parliament."

Reform indignation boiled over when the rumours about a corrupt bargain between the government and Sir Hugh Allan were confirmed by the revelations of 1873. The material details of the Pacific Scandal need not concern us here. What is important to note is the constitutional stand taken by Reformers on the way in which the investigation into the whole business should be carried on. Macdonald's delaying manœuvres succeeded in preventing investigation by the Committee set up by the House of Commons, and in August he used the Governor-General's prerogative to transfer the whole case from Parliament to a Royal Commission of nonentities appointed by himself. Blake and Dorion, the Reform members of the Parliamentary Committee, refused to serve on the Commission. Huntingdon and the Opposition witnesses refused to appear before it. On the unconstitutionality of Macdonald's actions and on the critical nature of the issues raised by it the *Globe*, Goldwin Smith, Blake, and the Reform orators, were all agreed. Blake talked of Sir John Eliot and his struggle against the despotism of Charles I; he quoted the Bill of Rights. "There is no parallel in English history," he declared, "for the audacity of the Ministers in breaking up the trial and on the same day creating a tribunal to suit themselves for their own

⁸*Globe*, May 21, 1874.

⁹*Ibid.*, Aug. 3, 1872.

prosecution. . . . It is a high contempt of Parliament. . . . The privileges of Parliament are the privileges of the People, and the rights of Parliament are the rights of the People."¹⁰

II. THE NEW NATIONALITY

One of the things which most impresses a reader of the newspapers and periodicals and pamphlets as well as of the debates in Parliament during the first decade of Confederation is the immense volume of discussion that took place on the implications, practical and theoretical, of the new Canadian nationality. The respective parts to be played by French and English in the building up of the new nation; the problems of extending the nation-state from ocean to ocean; the three great nation-building policies of Pacific Railway, immigration and settlement, and tariff; the character of Canadian civilization as distinguished from British and from American; the future of Canada's relations with Great Britain and the United States, whether the Dominion was to achieve a higher position in the Empire through Imperial Federation or some form of alliance, or whether it was to become a separate independent state, or whether separation from Britain meant inevitable annexation to the United States; all these questions were debated vehemently and endlessly. Canadians have indeed been arguing about them through most of their subsequent history; but one has the impression that they never argued so well as in that first decade, and that nothing new on any of these topics has ever been said since.

The *Globe* was always proud of the fact that from the early 1850's it had been the leader in the campaign for the westward expansion of Canada. It never ceased to preach that the future of Canada depended upon its success in genuinely incorporating the West into the Dominion and developing its resources. It always had more news from the West than from the Maritimes, and generally even more than from Quebec, for it regarded the West as Ontario's proper sphere of influence. It watched with suspicion every step taken by the Macdonald government in its North-West policy. It criticized the first proposed form of government by an appointed council as the setting up of another Family Compact system on the Red River.¹¹ It was on the alert for every bit of evidence that French Catholic influences were trying to construct another little Quebec in Manitoba. At one moment it referred to them as Mrs. Partingtons trying to sweep back the tide of English immigration.¹² "We hope to see a new Upper Canada in the North-West Territory—in its well-regulated society and government, in its education, morality and religion."¹³ At another moment it was proclaiming Manitoba as the Kansas of Canada and hoping that the struggle starting there would not be long and sanguinary as it had been in the United States.¹⁴

From first to last the *Globe* emphasized the vital importance for the future of the Dominion of railway connection on Canadian soil between East and West. "With the construction of the railway the country will be populated by Englishmen; without it by Americans."¹⁵ But at the

¹⁰*Three Speeches by the Hon. Edward Blake, Q.C., M.P., on the Pacific Scandal* (Toronto, 1873), Number Two, Speech at London, August 28, 1873.

¹¹*Globe*, Aug. 31, 1869.

¹²*Ibid.*, Nov. 17, 1869.

¹³*Ibid.*, June 2, 1869.

¹⁴*Ibid.*, May 3, 1870.

¹⁵*Ibid.*, March 23, 1870.

same time it denounced Macdonald's extravagant bargain with British Columbia. The promise to build a transcontinental railway within ten years over territory that had never been surveyed, with an eastern terminus in a community of only four million population, and a western terminus in a community with practically no population at all, and with hardly any population in between to provide local traffic, seemed to Reformers an insane policy. And the revelations of the Pacific Scandal convinced them that Macdonald had been more intent on a conspiracy to entrench himself in office than on a business-like enterprise of nation-building.

When Mackenzie took over the wreckage of the Pacific scheme the *Globe* supported him steadily in his policy of advancing gradually, always insisting that the essential step was to establish communication over Canadian soil with the Red River and that the rest, rail communication with British Columbia, could come later as circumstances would permit. A group of Reformers, of whom Blake was the chief, became even more cautious than this. The financial difficulties caused by the depression after 1873 alarmed them as to the future financial stability of the country if the Pacific enterprise should be persisted in. "If under all the circumstances," said Blake at Aurora in 1874, "the Columbians were to say: 'You must go on and finish this railway according to the terms, or take the alternative of releasing us from the Confederation,' I would—take the alternative!" Blake had also earlier expressed willingness to release Nova Scotia if she remained obdurate in her opposition to Confederation. In the end it was not the opposition of the Blake group but the depression which prevented the Mackenzie government from getting very far forward with the Pacific enterprise. But their failure left an impression that Reformers were not quite so keen as they ought to be on the project of a Dominion from sea to sea.

The tariff issue did not, of course, come into Canadian politics with Confederation. But almost immediately after Confederation, from 1870 on, the magic phrase "A National Policy" began to appear in tariff discussions. The *Globe* always emphasized that pure free trade was not an issue in Canada, since some kind of revenue tariff was a necessary feature of the Canadian fiscal system. In its view the real issue was whether Canada was to grow and attract settlers by making herself a cheap country to live in as contrasted with the United States, and by devoting herself to the agricultural, lumbering, fishing, and mining industries which were natural to her. When the extra duties of 1870 on certain commodities were taken off in 1871, the *Globe* repeated with approval David Mills' epitaph: "Died, aged 11 months, the National Policy!"¹⁶

Brown's attitude on tariff questions came out most completely in the discussion of his own Draft Reciprocity Treaty of 1874 with the United States. The Brown treaty, in fact, while it never came into force, caused or coincided with a crystallization of Canadian opinion about the tariff. Before 1874 nearly everybody in a vague general way had been in favour of Reciprocity. But Brown's negotiations showed that no new treaty would be considered by the Americans unless it included a wide range of manufactured goods in addition to natural products; and the announcement of the schedules in his proposed treaty brought

¹⁶*Ibid.*, April 15, 1871.

the organized manufacturers into the field against it. Significantly enough they were supported by the *Canadian Monthly* and the *Nation*.

The *Globe* pointed out (July 23, 1874) that Canada's agricultural industry surpassed in importance all other economic interests put together, and that next to it came lumbering, fishing, shipping, and mining, and that none of these objected to the treaty. "All these great branches of industry will be benefitted by having a market of forty million thrown open to them. . . . The alarm has come entirely from the manufacturers, and these are more frightened than hurt. . . . Will it [the treaty] give a new impetus to our national industry? Will it increase our foreign commerce? . . . Will it set at rest all troublesome questions with our great neighbours for a quarter of a century and give peace in our time? We have not the shadow of a doubt that it will do all this." "The manufacturing interest may not be small hereafter," replied the *Canadian Monthly* (September, 1874). ". . . we are in a state of development and we must guard and cherish the acorn for the sake of the future oak." But this conception of a "national tariff" as a dynamic instrument for national development seemed to most Reformers only a camouflage for the most selfish kind of protection of special interests. In 1876 the Mackenzie government almost took the plunge of raising the tariff in order to balance their budget, but having drawn back then, they tended thereafter to become more and more dogmatic in their free-trade utterances. It was Macdonald and the Conservatives who capitalized on the national idea in the tariff.

Industrialization raised some other problems in the new nation besides that of the tariff, problems to which the *Globe's* response is interesting. As Upper Canada passed out of the pioneer stage, differentiations in economic functions became more obvious, and class divisions began to emerge. In the 1870's Ontario farmers began to form Granges to look after their social and economic interests, in imitation of their neighbours in the mid-western states. The *Globe* was not too sure about the Granger movement.

"The denunciation of middlemen may have some reason in the Western States . . . but we are not aware that the same thing can be said of Canada. . . . Let the Grangers point out the 'tyrant monopolies' against which they propose to make war and we shall help them with all our hearts and all our energy."¹⁷

"The farmers of Ontario have, so far as we are aware, no special grievances. So large a portion of the real government of the country is controlled by municipal organization that the people may be said to have it almost literally in their own keeping." Still, it concluded that the movement might have good effects socially in making farm life more attractive, and it bestowed a qualified blessing on it.¹⁸

Quite otherwise was it with the movement among the industrial workers in the towns. Trade Unionism raised the *Globe's* suspicions from the start. *Globe* editors were well grounded in all the arguments of the orthodox economics proving that unions couldn't in the long run raise real wages which were determined by the impersonal operation of the laws of demand and supply.

In the spring of 1872 Brown had to deal with this problem in a prac-

¹⁷*Ibid.*, June 8, 1874.

¹⁸*Ibid.*, Sept. 25, 1874.

tical way, in a famous dispute with his own printers which caused much unholy glee among his enemies and made both political parties for the next few years anxious to pose as the friend of the workingman. The trouble came as part of a nine-hours movement which was sweeping over the industrial workers in Eastern Canada and of which the chief leader was a man named Trelvellick, an English trade-unionist. "It is," said the *Globe*, announcing the printers' strike, "in obedience to foreign agitation carried on by paid agents who have nothing to lose as the result of their mischievous counsels that the printers of this city have succumbed."¹⁹

It can hardly be said that in this country there is such a thing as a capitalist class, much less, like that of England, a capitalist class socially separated from the working-man, closely united with a territorial aristocracy, and in conjunction with that aristocracy wielding overwhelming power. . . . Oppression of the working class such as was revealed in England by the Mines and Factories reports, is in Canada morally impossible. The only thing that here threatens the kindly relation between employer and the employed, and the industrial prosperity of the country, is the gratuitous introduction from the old country into Canada of those industrial wars which were the natural consequence of the antagonism of classes and the depressed condition of the workingmen of England but which have no justification here. . . . We may destroy our happiness by inoculating our industrial system with the maladies of a distant country and an alien state of society.²⁰

The *Globe*, as a liberal paper, does not perhaps show up too well in these early incidents of the class struggle in Ontario. It should be added, however, that its news despatches and editorials on the Paris Commune show a remarkable detachment from *bourgeois* prejudices, and that, during the early 1870's, it printed occasional articles on Karl Marx, his doctrines and his International Association of Workingmen, which, if they were read, must have given the *Globe's* readers of those days a considerably better understanding of Marxism than their grandchildren could have obtained from its successor in the 1920's and 1930's.

What was the bearing of the new nationality upon the relations of colony and mother country? This was the question which caused most trouble to Reformers amongst themselves, for on this question they were deeply divided and they fought out their differences in public. The differences divided the party into two wings, a Brown wing and a Blake wing, and the two groups remained imperfectly reconciled long after the 1870's.

During the first years after 1867 the spirit of nationalism seemed to many thoughtful Canadians to be likely to supply the dynamic force which would make one great people out of several little parochial provincial communities. "Nationality," said Goldwin Smith in his presidential address at the first dinner of the National Club of Toronto, "will bind the members of the Confederacy together by stronger as well as nobler ties than Sectional Cabinets and Better Terms."²¹ The *Globe* itself in the early years frequently took a holiday from vituperative attacks upon John A. Macdonald to reflect pleasantly upon the growth

¹⁹*Ibid.*, March 26, 1872.

²⁰*Ibid.*, April 1, 1872.

²¹As reported in the *Nation*, Oct. 15, 1874.

of national spirit in the new Dominion. But by 1874, when Goldwin Smith's address was delivered, it had for some years been attacking nationalists with all its artillery. Nationalists tended to propound doctrines of independence. In the first two or three years after Confederation they had been most prominent in Montreal. Sir Alexander Galt, John Young, L. S. Huntingdon, all advocated Canadian independence. The *Globe* sneered at these Montrealers and said their zeal for a new state of existence was chiefly stimulated by the bad state of trade in Montreal (as in 1849).²² The *Globe* itself was fervently and fanatically devoted to the integrity of the British connection. What raised its ire more than Montreal heretics was the constant tendency of Cobdenites and Gladstonians in England to announce unctuously that Canada was perfectly free to leave the Empire if she wished. Separation from Britain, it repeated over and over again, could mean only annexation to the United States. Furthermore, and this was also a much-repeated point, it was undesirable to be constantly suggesting doubts about Canada's position just at the time when all efforts should be devoted to making the new experiment of Confederation work.

But the Treaty of Washington in 1871 raised outspoken criticism all over Canada about the handling of Canadian interests by the British government and the British plenipotentiaries. And nowhere were the criticisms more trenchant than in the *Globe* itself. Just after this came the arrival of Goldwin Smith in Toronto, the founding of the *Canadian Monthly* and the *Nation*, and the launching of the Canada First movement. Talk of a change in imperial relations now found its centre in Toronto. Edward Blake concluded from the Treaty of Washington that if Canada must defer in her external relations to imperial interests, she must have a voice in determining what those imperial interests were; and he began to draw the moral of Imperial Federation. Goldwin Smith was for out-and-out independence. The *Canadian Monthly* and the *Nation* were full of articles about the need for a change, for working out the full implications of nationality. "The authors of Confederation," remarked the *Nation* in disgust, "once appealed to the spirit of nationality. . . . Now some of them tell us that their object was limited and that they set the forest on fire only to boil their own pot."²³ To all this the *Globe's* reaction was to take as violent a loyalist stand as any Tory could have wished. To the *Nation* and the Canada First group this seemed an admirable opportunity for the launching of a new Liberal party which would appeal to the incipient nationalism of the country and make both Brown Grits and Macdonald Tories obsolete. And the leader whom they nominated for the new party was Edward Blake. Blake disappointed their hopes in the end, but it was just when all this discussion was at its height that he made his famous Aurora speech (October 3, 1874), which received more discussion in the Canadian press of the time than any other utterance of that generation.

Our government [he told his Aurora audience, October 3, 1874], should not present the anomaly which it now presents—a government the freest, perhaps the most democratic in the world with reference to local and domestic matters, in which you rule yourselves as fully as any people in the world, while in your foreign affairs, your relations with other countries whether peaceful or warlike, commercial

²²*Globe*, May 3 and 5, 1869.

²³*Nation*, Feb. 26, 1875.

or financial, or otherwise, you may have no more voice than the people of Japan. . . . It is impossible to foster a national spirit unless you have national interests to attend to. . . . The time will come when that national spirit which has been spoken of will be truly felt among us, when we shall realize that we are four millions of Britons who are not free. . . . Tomorrow, by the policy of England, in which you have no voice or control, this country might be plunged into the horrors of a war. . . . The future of Canada, I believe, depends upon the cultivation of a national spirit. . . . We are engaged in a very difficult task—the task of welding together seven Provinces which have been accustomed to regard themselves as isolated from each other. . . . How are we to accomplish our work? How are we to effect a real union between these Provinces? Can we do it by giving a sop now to one, now to another, after the manner of the late Government? . . . Not so! That day I hope is done forever, and we must find some other and truer ground for union than that by which the late Government sought to buy love and purchase peace. We must find some common ground on which to unite, some common aspiration to be shared, and I think it can be found alone in the cultivation of that national spirit to which I have referred.

Blake's speech was delivered on a Saturday. It was not accidental that on the following Monday the *Globe* had only a few words about it but devoted its leading article to a long blistering attack on Canada First. When it did get round to discussing Blake it dismissed his ideas on the position of Canada in the Empire as "interesting and harmless speculation."²⁴ Alexander Mackenzie, the Reform Prime Minister, congratulated Blake in a private letter on his "disturbing" speech; but writing to another correspondent he was more frank and declared that speeches of this kind were unnecessary and that all unnecessary speeches did harm.²⁵ The *Globe* proceeded to discourage such unnecessary speculation by concentrating its heaviest artillery upon Goldwin Smith, and doing its best to commit the Reform party to its own emotional loyalist position. The controversy was to continue at intervals for several years.

Mr. Smith has come into a peaceful community to do his best for the furtherance of a cause which means simply revolution. . . . If national life pulses with any measure of vigour there will be some things instinctively put out of the category of open questions. . . . In Canada we have got so far on the road to nationality that we *have* settled that Queen Victoria is our sovereign, and that the allegiance we owe her is not an impalpable something which may be rendered or withheld according to the determination of any club. . . . The advocacy of Canadian Independence touches every individual in the Dominion in all his dearest and most important relations. It puts all his material, social and religious interests into possible jeopardy. . . . They [the advocates of independence] might be the fathers of a new nationality but they might also . . . be voted simply mischief-makers, whose insignificance and powerlessness were their sole protectors, as these made the community feel that they were not important enough for the traitor's trial or the traitor's doom.²⁶

²⁴*Globe*, Oct. 7, 1874.

²⁵Public Archives of Canada, Alexander Mackenzie Letter Books, vol. 3, Oct. 28, 1874, Mackenzie to John Cameron of the London *Advertiser*.

²⁶*Globe*, Oct. 27, 1874.

The truth is that Mr. Smith is a dreamer, not a statesman. . . . Another Don on another Rosinante. . . . Very many [people] have settled in Canada because they wish to live and die under the British flag. When the time comes that it shall be proposed to haul that flag down, the contest may be fierce—aye, and with all respect to Mr. Smith, bloody. . . . Mr. Smith fancies, in the honest simplicity of his heart, that men in ordinary life can be played with as safely as their representatives on a chess-board.²⁷

How deeply did all this discussion of the meaning of the new nationality sink into the mind of the ordinary Canadian of the 1870's? By the end of that decade it was petering out. It appealed primarily to intellectuals like Goldwin Smith and Blake, and to the small group who found journals of the quality of the *Canadian Monthly* and the *Nation* good reading. But the long severe depression killed off whatever tendencies the average Canadian may have had to play with general political ideas. "It must be owned," said Goldwin Smith sadly in 1877, "that in industrial communities the economic motives are stronger than the political, and that the movement in favour of Canadian nationality had only political motives on its side."²⁸ What he failed to discern was that the national spirit which he was seeking to foster in Canada was being canalized into economic rather than into political channels. A newspaper critic of Blake's Aurora speech had said: "He does not show that it [Imperial Federation] would remove any hindrance to material development or add one dollar to the capital of the country."²⁹ That was it. Material Development. Canadians, big and small, Grit and Tory, were chiefly intent on material development. The big ones had plunged into the great business enterprises of developing the resources of half a continent. And the little ones, as the seventies passed into the eighties and the depression still continued, were finding that the business of making a living absorbed their energies.

²⁷*Ibid.*, Nov. 7, 1874.

²⁸Goldwin Smith, "The Political Destiny of Canada" (*Canadian Monthly*, June, 1877).

²⁹London *Free Press*, quoted in "*A National Sentiment*," 25.