

Additions to Confederation

The Canadian leaders never lost sight of the regions of Rupert's Land, the North-Western Territory and British Columbia, "they foresaw the danger of the rich prairie land falling under foreign control and entertained no doubts as to the necessity of terminating in favor of Canada the hold of the Hudson's Bay Company over these regions."

On December 16th, 1867, addresses were given in the Senate and House of Commons praying for the admission of those territories into the union. Accordingly the British Government passed the Rupert's Land Act, enabling the Dominion to accept the surrender of the territory with all the territorial and other rights conveyed by the original charter of 1670. Cartier and MacDougall went to England to negotiate for the extinction of the rights of the Hudson's Bay Company. It was agreed that the Company should receive £300,000, one-twentieth of the land in the fertile belt, and 50,000 acres around its various trading posts. The Canadian Parliament formally ratified the agreement and the Privy Council of Great Britain surrendered the territory on July 15th, 1870. Unfortunately the establishment of Canadian authority was attended by serious disturbances on the part of the native population in the Red River Valley.

For a number of years the Canadians in the North-west had been in favor of a union with Canada. Joseph Howe, now a member of a Confederation ministry, visited Manitoba in October, 1869. He assured the people they would have the same constitution as the other provinces if they entered the union. The prospect of union with Canada aroused the fears of the Metis led by Louis Riel. They were afraid of being submerged by Canadian immigration. In their fears of union we may discern the sentiments that actuated the people of Quebec and the Maritime Provinces a few years before with respect to confederation. Anticipating the transfer of the territory on December 1st, 1869, a Bill of Rights was drawn up and a provisional government declared by Riel on November 24th, to supersede the rule of the Hudson's Bay Company and oppose the entrance into the country of Governor McDougall, who was on his way to Winnipeg to take over the administration of the North-West on behalf of the Government of Canada. Governor McDougall was held up before he reached Winnipeg and forced to return to Canada. The country was at the mercy of the rebels and it became necessary to send an armed force from Canada of British soldiers and Canadian volunteers to restore peace and order.

The Government of Canada then opened negotiations with the people of Red River. Commissioners were sent to Ft. Garry and delegates sent to Ottawa on behalf of the people, with terms of union.

The outcome of these disturbances was the passing of the Manitoba Act which erected the Red River Settlements and others spread over the plains into a Province with a Governor, a Legislative Council of seven members appointed by the Governor General in Council and