

“would involve a delay which could not be compensated for by any benefit proposed to be derived from such a course.” He allowed, however, that “the subject would present a different aspect” in the event that at a later date there should be “numerous petitions in favor of an appeal to the people.”⁵⁹

As the debates drew to a close, however, the confederationists changed their position on timing. On Saturday, 11 March 1865, the Legislative Assembly finally voted to approve the Quebec Resolutions. When the same body reconvened the following Monday, John Cameron, a supporter of the text, surprised his colleagues by offering a resolution requesting the Governor General to “be pleased to direct that a constitutional appeal shall be made to the people” before the text is dispatched to London for “the consideration of the Imperial Parliament,”⁶⁰ Thomas Parker, who, like Cameron, had voted for the Resolutions on the previous Saturday, opposed the Monday morning resolution to submit the text to the people before it went to London. Timing was his principal concern. “If the resolutions were to be referred to the people at all,” he said, “it should have been before they received the sanction of the House.” He asked rhetorically, “Are we to turn round today and reverse what we did on Saturday last?” He would have favored recourse to the people earlier, “but not now, after their [the Resolutions’] deliberate sanction by the House; to do so would stultify the Legislature.”⁶¹ Thus Parker opposed recourse to the people at the end of the debates because it was too late, whereas his fellow confederationist, Fergusson Blair opposed it at their beginning because it was too early.

The confederationists’ reluctance to answer directly the argument for consulting the people was underscored in their determination to expand the variety of procedural considerations they relied upon to sidestep the intrinsic merits of the issue. These additional procedural matters included (1) efforts to have resolutions calling for consultation ruled out of order; (2) complaints about the expense such consultations would involve; (3) and, most importantly, a constantly recurring theme that there was no need to consult the people in a formal referendum or an election because they had already been