

Although the League cannot claim the honor of originating the project of an intercolonial union, nevertheless it is entitled to the credit of attempting to popularize the project and make it a distinct political issue. The proposal was undoubtedly premature for the people of Canada and the Maritime Provinces were strangers to one another. Their social and economic relations with each other were much less intimate than their relations with either Great Britain or the United States. A national consciousness had not yet arisen. An imperial citizenship was the all-sufficing bond of union. The plan of a federal union was attractive in appearance, but it failed to commend itself to the general public as a practical measure of relief. The community at large were not interested in constitutional experiments; they demanded immediate and effective remedies for the country's ills. No attempt had been made to instruct them as to the advantages of a federal union or as to the principles of a federal constitution. They were entirely in the dark in regard to the national significance and imperial importance of such a measure. They called for bread and the League was apparently offering them a stone. It is little wonder, under these circumstances, that the policy of the League failed to commend itself to the electorate. Within a few brief months, the whole scheme of federation was practically forgotten though a few individuals attempted to revive it somewhat later. But the efforts of the League were not entirely fruitless. Thanks to the League's propaganda, the Canadian public were familiarized with the idea of a federal union and were made conversant with some of the chief advantages of a confederation. The seed which was then sown on unfavorable soil sprang up and bore abundant fruit a few years later in the Confederation of Canada under the British North America Act of 1867.



*Shaw Library*