



The taking of Quebec by the British in 1759, by Henry Smyth.

It All Began in 1759

Many English-Canadians evidently look on the French-Canadians as just another minority, like Italian-Canadians or West Indian-Canadians or Ukrainian-Canadians, and fail to fathom why the language of only one is given status. This attitude is a denial of history.

Stanley Meisler, *The Atlantic Monthly*.

Canada stopped being a French colony in 1759 when General Wolfe defeated General Montcalm on the fields of a man named Abraham.

The 60,000 Catholic French-speakers who became British subjects would maintain their culture, their civil law, their church and their identity. They would remain a majority until the late eighteenth century when refugees from the American Revolution poured into Canada. In 1791 the Constitutional Act divided the country into French-speaking Lower Canada (the future Quebec) and English-speaking Upper Canada (the future Ontario). Each had its own legislature but

both were vulnerable to vetoes from London. In 1834 Louis-Joseph Papineau, leader of the *patriotes*, persuaded the Lower Canada assembly to pass the Ninety-Two Resolutions, listing specific grievances against the Crown. When they were ignored, Papineau led an abortive rebellion. In 1841 the British Parliament reunited Upper and Lower Canada, giving English-speakers a permanent edge in the common parliament, since all of the representatives from Upper Canada and a few from Montreal would always be English.

In 1867 the British North America Act joined the colonies of Canada, Nova Scotia and New Brunswick in Confederation. Both French and English were established as official languages.

The first Prime Minister, John A. Macdonald, tried with some success to keep the French and English speakers in harmony but as the western prairies opened up, the balance of population tilted heavily in favour of the English speakers. In 1885 Louis Riel, the leader of the M tis (half French, half Indian), who were resisting the reset-



Sir John A. Macdonald



Louis-Joseph Papineau



Louis Riel