

The Defence of Canada

In the Light of Canadian History

It was in the spring of 1865 that four men sailed from Canada to England as commissioners to confer with the Imperial authorities on the defence of Canada and on other matters. The conference on defence arose out of correspondence during the preceding four years, which showed that the Imperial Government not only expected that Canada would contribute more men and money to build up military power in British America but that such contributions should be made permanent and independent of local parliamentary control. The Duke of Newcastle, the Colonial Secretary, who carried on the correspondence with Lord Monck, then Governor-General, recommended to the Canadian Government some "new form of taxation apart from customs duties," and advised that for the development of this new military policy "its administration and the supply of funds for its support should be exempt from the disturbing action of ordinary politics," and he even had the method ready at hand when he suggested that the money should be taken out of the Consolidated Fund and voted for a period of years to "remove the military question from the arena of party politics."

This was an early step towards the co-ordination of the forces of the colonies under control centralized in London, which in various forms had been under the searchlight of discussion for the past three years. But then there was an emergency—not an emergency arising out of the contingencies of war on distant shores, but an emergency begotten of the sight of armed enemies on the very borders of Canada and of threats whose execution would make a carnage ground of the spreading grain fields of these young Provinces.

The danger of war between Great Britain and some European nation, or between Great Britain and the United States, involving Canada in the conflict was greater in 1865