

Confederation has never been discussed since 1869, there was once since then, when it seemed almost a certainty for Newfoundland, and that without any discussion whatever among the people.

I should first remark that during the years 1869-95, there had been undoubtedly a weakening in the prejudices against Canada, and, in certain portions of the Island the feeling grew strong that we would have been better off in the Dominion. Things were not going well, and many felt that it was a mistake not to have united with the rest of British North America. Then, in 1894, came a great financial disaster. In that year the Bank crash took place. It was a dark hour for Newfoundland. In our failures we always regret what we did not do that we might have done; and any other course but the one in which failure is met with, generally seems to the disappointed the wise and happy one. Newfoundland now felt convinced without argument that, in the Confederation, no such troubles would have come upon her; which, in this case, was undoubtedly true. Canada knew this also. On both sides the Gulf it was thought that Newfoundland could never raise herself again, and that Canada was her only hope. In her discouragement and hopelessness she came to seek a place to trust her troubles with sister Dominion; but not without bringing something besides trouble to offer to her prospective comforter, for she had advantages to balance her defects, many and grievous though they were.

It may be that Canada thought she had grave reason to be reluctant to take on herself the responsibility of bringing Newfoundland, as she then was, into Confederation. But certain it is that she not only seemed reluctant to act, but she acted as if she felt certain that she had it all in her power to make whatever bargain she wished with her neighbour. And certainly it was a hard bargain she tried to drive. Newfoundland took this as an expression of Canada's feelings towards her. She interpreted it as an attempt to punish her in her hour of weakness and woe for her past obstinacy. Sickened and broken in spirit over her troubles, she was now disgusted with the littleness of her big neighbour. Her pride was wounded, and her spirit revived. She recalled her delegates, and few of her people did not applaud her action; even in their distress. It will be some time ere that same people will entirely forget the Canada of 1895.