

And now after 50 years of confederation we are in a position to estimate the success of the great experiment. The last of the fathers has passed away and in this, the jubilee year of union, the people of Canada without division of race, creed, interest or political faith unite to revere the memory of the men who founded the Canadian Nation and pay a just tribute to those who were called upon to guide its course through all the multifarious problems that followed in the train of the British North America Act. Real problems existed and still face us—unity between the races, diplomatic and trade relations with the United States; delimitation of federal and provincial rights, cheap and adequate facilities of transportation, the tariff, and our relations to the Motherland and the other overseas Dominions. All centre round the paramount idea of building up a durable and virile nationalism within the Empire that will secure the efficiency of the state without destroying the individuality of the citizen.

In the solution of these problems the present generation will do well to guide themselves in the broad principles that actuated the Fathers of Confederation. They stood for a workable system of government, not for a theoretical constitution; they desired the union of the provinces on the only basis possible—compromise and fraternity. Above all, their hearts were set to maintain our British connection. In this it is hardly too much to say that they converted British statesmen to a new view of empire. When the delegates from Canada visited England in 1865 on behalf of confederation, George Brown wrote back that there was a manifest desire on the part of British statesmen that ere long the British North America Colonies would shift for themselves. Today there are gathered again in London other delegates from every Dominion deliberating on terms of a grander union that will include them all with the Motherland as equal partners in a galaxy of nations around the British Crown.

Time and the irrefutable logic of events has justified the constructive work of the Fathers of Confederation. Fifty years ago some of their actions were misconstrued and much petty criticism was directed against them. But they worked faithfully with the materials at hand and with sincere purpose. "They may sometimes have taken half a loaf where others would have gone hungry by proclaiming their right to the whole, but they welded the Dominion and kept it part of the Empire for which their grandsons were willing to die at Neuve Chapelle, St. Julien"—Courcellette and Vimy Ridge.

