

Although the Confederation Debates provide many passages echoing the sentiments of the authors of the letter to Bulwer-Lytton, they also provide, however illogically, many passages anticipating Clyde Wells's statement as well.

Despite the nearly universal support among the delegates for the monarchy and the no less universal rejection of both republicanism and democracy, the issue of whether the Quebec Resolutions should somehow be ratified by the people of Canada revealed a curious commitment to the notion that the legitimacy of a major constitutional change requires some sort of popular consent.

Naturally, the opponents of the Quebec Resolutions pressed this argument ceaselessly. They hoped that some sort of referendum, or even a new election, focused exclusively on confederation, would open the proposed text to a careful public scrutiny which its most controversial measures could not withstand. They knew, for instance, that the confederation document was exceedingly vulnerable on the grounds that it called for a legislative council--later to be renamed the Senate--whose members were to be appointed for life by the Crown and whose number could not be increased. This measure was a concession to the Maritime Provinces and enjoyed little support in Canada where, as of 1865, the members of the upper house of Parliament, the "legislative council," were elected.

The opponents of confederation knew that if they could rivet the attention of the people on the appointive senate and other unpopular measures, the supporters of the constitution might have to accept some amendments to the proposed Quebec Resolutions. This, they surmised, would set off a chain reaction in the Maritime Provinces which would demand further changes and thereby unravel the whole scheme. Thus the question of the need for recourse to the people was of considerable strategic importance throughout the debates. It was a point on which the friends of confederation could not yield an inch. The interesting point for our purposes is to review the arguments both sides made in support of their respective positions.