

Thomas D'Arcy McGee's high-minded sentiments challenge serious statesmen on both sides of today's Quebec separation issue to maintain a level of public argument worthy of their subject. The subject itself merits the best efforts of ambitious men and women, for on one side there is the creative exhilaration of founding a new nation and on the other the patriotic duty of saving an old one.

Conclusion

To conclude this article, I shall revisit John Ross's extraordinary advice to his fellow legislative councillors that they read the Virginia debates on the ratification of the Constitution of the United States. He mentioned specifically, James Madison, John Marshall, Edmund Randolph, Patrick Henry and Richard Henry Lee. Anyone who followed Ross' advice might have been surprised to discover that two of these five men, Henry and Lee, opposed ratification of the Constitution and a third, Edmund Randolph, somewhat characteristically, straddled the issue by refusing to sign it as a delegate to the Constitutional Convention in Philadelphia and then reluctantly supporting it during the crucial debates in Richmond. Henry, Lee, and, to a lesser extent, Randolph were "Anti-Federalists," i.e., they formed part of the broad, articulate and very able opposition to the proposed constitution. Like most backers of losing causes, the Anti-Federalists were not treated kindly by history.¹²⁶ This began to change, however, as Americans prepared to celebrate the bicentennial of their constitution in 1987. Thanks to the prodigious scholarly efforts of Herbert J. Storing, the writings and speeches of the Anti-Federalists were compiled in a seven-volume work entitled The Complete Anti-Federalist.¹²⁷ Storing made a powerful argument that the Anti-Federalists should be included among the founding fathers of the Republic even though they opposed the constitution which still governs that Republic. His reason was that they contributed substantially to "the dialogue of the American founding." That is, the Constitution of the United States was a product of a great public argument as befits the origins of a free society and the Anti-Federalists formed an