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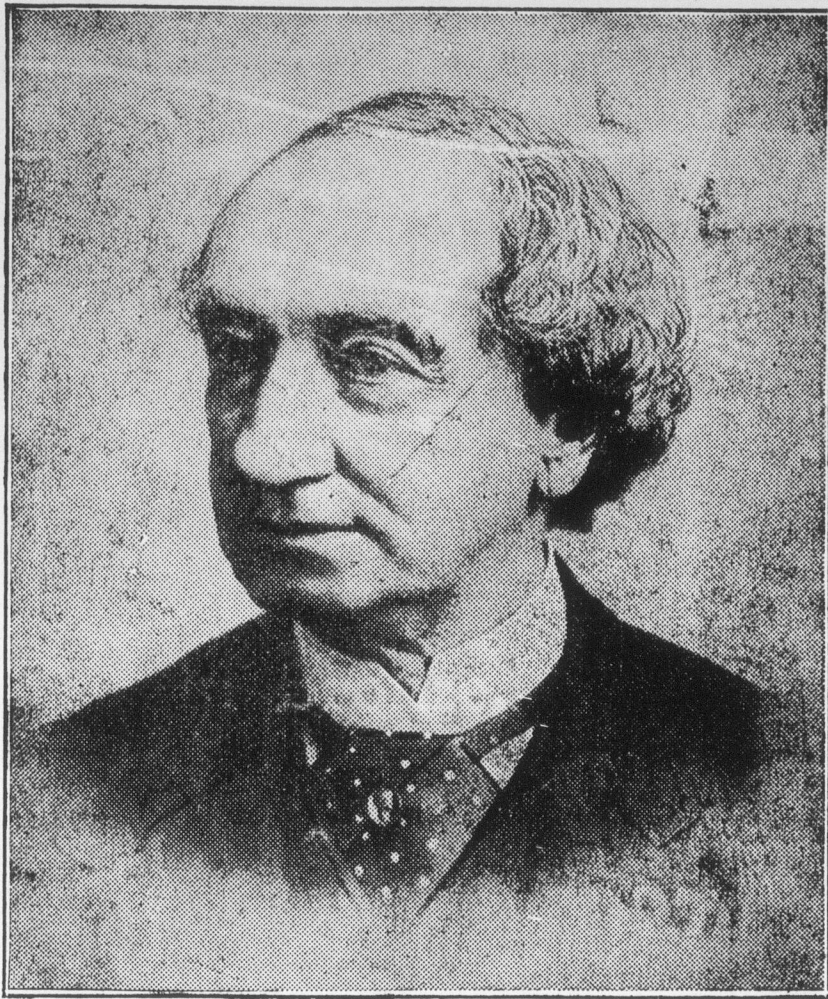
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SIR JOHN A. MACDONALD

Canada's First Premier, whose term of office began shortly after Confederation, the 60th anniversary of which is being observed this year.

Canada's First Premier

Sir John A. Macdonald, the "chief architect" of Confederation, is properly admired for his shrewdness, his broad vision, and his marvellous capacity for leadership. He was loved for his wit, his generosity, and all his warmly human characteristics. He stood for a united Canada, the British connection, and a respect for law that ensured order at a stage of the country's development when lawlessness might easily have been the rule. Though he had great ability for affairs, he served the land he loved through a long life with so little thought of personal profit that in old age he was a poor man.

Ready in compromise, nimble in political strategy, our first premier was far more than an able parliamentarian; he was a statesman to whose foresight Canada owes such enduring benefits as the purchase of the West from the Hudson's Bay Company; the building of the Canadian Pacific Railway that opened the prairies for settlement, and brought British Columbia into the Union; and the adoption of a tariff policy which all succeeding governments have continued, with necessary modifications, to this day.

Above all, his career illustrates the importance in the interests of general harmony of making concessions to divergent elements and minorities that might otherwise become insurgent. Thus early he learned that "you cannot rule Canada without the French," and though an Orangeman, he always considered Quebec's needs to the extent that he always had support from there, and sometimes his chief support. Never was this trait more evident than

when his diplomatic winning of Howe, by offer of better terms, quelled the secessionist agitation in the Maritimes.

Born in Glasgow in 1815, he migrated with his family in 1820 to Upper Canada, where they settled at Kingston. He was educated at the Royal Grammar School which he left at the age of 15 to enter a law office; and was called to the bar at the age of 21. After eight years of practice, he was elected to the Legislative Assembly of Canada in 1844, and continued to represent Kingston in parliament until his death in 1891. His first term of office was in 1847-8 as Receiver-General in the Draper administration. By 1857 he had become Prime Minister in the Macdonald-Cartier ministry. On the defeat of the Tache-Macdonald administration in 1864, he was a prime mover in the formation of the "Great Coalition" designed to carry through the plans for Confederation; and after the resignation of George Brown in 1865, Macdonald was the chief figure in the discussions and bringing into force of the British North America Act. Therefore, at the inauguration of this Dominion in 1867 he was selected to be the first premier; and by force of his genius he held the position, with the exception of Mackenzie's five years of office, until his death.

While his opportunism and his conviviality have been held against him, impartial historians agree that Canada could not have been happier in her first premier, since Sir John A. Macdonald combined the wise vision that knew how to build well for the future, with a strong hand that held discordant elements together in the embryo nation until natural fusion might take place.