

Under his successor Sir Charles Metcalfe the process was once again retarded and it was not until Lord Elgin arrived as governor that responsible government was finally achieved. It was in the passage of the Rebellion Losses Bill in 1849 with the consequent furore over its endorsement by the governor and Elgin's refusal to shift responsibility in a matter of purely local concern to the imperial authorities that established completely the custom of responsible government. Extreme Tories sent petitions to England asking Parliament to intervene and demanding the disallowance of the Rebellion Losses Bill. In the end Lord Elgin's course was fully sustained and his offer to resign was refused by the Colonial Office.

By the end of Lord Elgin's administration many of the principles that the reform group had been fighting for so consistently had been recognized. No appointments to office were thenceforth to be made by the governor except after consultation with his cabinet. It was clearly established that the Governor must not identify himself with any specific political party and that he could not interfere in any election. Matters of purely local concern and application were not to be referred to the home government for decision. In Elgin's administration the governor ceased to attend regularly cabinet meetings.

Similar battles to the one in Upper and Lower Canada were being waged on a smaller scale in the provinces by the sea. By 1855 the evolution of responsible government in New Brunswick was entirely completed. In Prince Edward Island it was in 1863 that the legislative council was made elective and thus the last stage of its self government was achieved. In Nova Scotia through the efforts of Joseph Howe responsible government was won by 1848.

Returning to the picture of the two Canadas the union did not bring political stability. In 1864 the opportunity for change came when New Brunswick, Nova Scotia and Prince Edward Island were considering a federal union.

In that year Sir Charles Tupper, Prime Minister of Nova Scotia, after having received the assurance of the British Colonial Office that there would be no interference from the United Kingdom, arranged for the calling of a convention of delegates from the maritime provinces to meet in Charlottetown in September in order to consider plans for legislative union. The deliberations were interrupted at an early stage by the arrival of a delegation of eight members from United Canada who had previously received permission from the Maritime delegates to attend their conference. The Charlottetown convention, in secret session, agreed on a popularly elected Lower House and a system of equal representation in an Upper House. It adjourned to Halifax and St. John and finally postponed further deliberations until a conference of all the British North American provinces could be arranged to meet at Quebec in the following month.

The Quebec convention assembled on October 10 and adjourned on October 28. Its actual working time did not exceed fourteen days and its sessions were held behind closed doors. Thirty two members constituted this constitutional convention which was the first of its kind in the British Empire. The results of the Quebec conference were incorporated in seventy-two resolutions which became the basis of the British North America Act of 1867. The delegates of the Conference promised to get their respective legislatures to ratify the resolutions. The Resolutions recommended a federal union of all British North American provinces under the British Crown. They provided for a federal government and for provincial governments