

# The Jubilee of Confederation

By Edward Porritt

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Had there been no war, the whole of the English-speaking world would have shared with Canada in the celebration on July 1, 1917 of the Jubilee of Confederation. I am aware when I use the term English-speaking world that the United States is included. But the United States cannot be omitted. Great Britain and Canada shared in the celebration of the centennial of the American Republic in 1876 and in 1905 the semi-centennial of the opening of the first American canal and lock at Sault Ste. Marie was regarded by the Washington and Ottawa Governments as worthy of an international celebration. With these celebrations of 1876 and 1905 as precedents it may be taken for granted that had there been no war the celebration of the Jubilee of Confederation could not have been otherwise than international in scope and character.

Americans who know the history of their country would desire that the celebration should be treated as a North American event, if for no other reason than because the United States has gained much by Confederation. Canadians often overlook the fact that the creation of the Dominion, and its political and material development since 1867 have brought advantages not only to themselves, to Great Britain, and to the other dominions, but also to the great nation that Sir Richard Cartwright was wont to describe as Canada's only neighbor. It is worth while recalling a few of these advantages to make good the claim that the Jubilee of Confederation is an occasion for rejoicing all over the English-speaking world.

## Canada Previous to Confederation

Before 1867 the northern neighbors of the United States were the British North American provinces. Starting from the Atlantic coast and traveling westward, these provinces were Nova Scotia, Prince Edward Island and New Brunswick. Next came Quebec, the old French province; and west of it Ontario. West of Ontario was a stretch of two thousand miles of country with few inhabitants and no organized government. Since Confederation, Manitoba, Saskatchewan and Alberta have been carved out of this vast territory; and in these provinces to-day there are over 1,400,000 people; half a dozen large cities; twenty-five million acres under grain; and 13,500 miles of railway.

At Confederation all this territory, and much more to the west and north of it, was the domain of the Hudson's Bay Company. The company ruled it in its own fashion. Few interests except its own had been permitted to establish themselves in it; and from the western border of Ontario to the Pacific Ocean, the company was supreme. On the coast and on Vancouver Island incomers from England and Scotland had been establishing themselves since 1840, and the province of British Columbia had come into existence. But all told at Confederation there were only three and a half million people in the British American provinces, and there was no city with a population of more than 50,000.

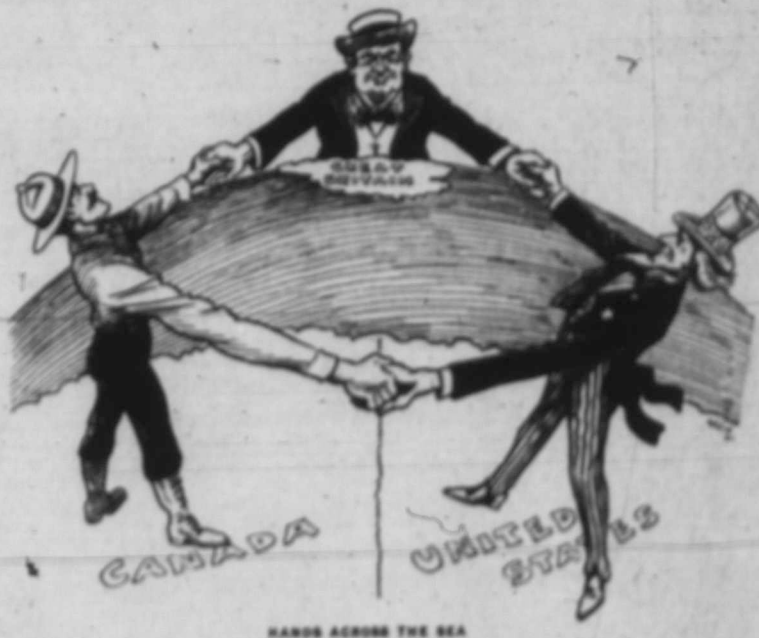
## Interwoven Interests of Neighboring Nations

In this Jubilee year of Confederation the population of Canada is seven and a half millions. Three railways stretch across the continent from tide-water on the east to the Pacific coast; and there is a magnificent waterway—partly lake, partly river and partly canal—from Montreal on the St. Lawrence to Fort Arthur and Fort William at the head of Lake Superior.

Before 1867 the United States had as its northern neighbors half a dozen provinces for the most part emerging from a backwoods civilization. After 50 years of Confederation it has a nation as its neighbor—a nation with a political and social civilization as fully developed as its own. The United States has profited enormously from the development of the Dominion of Canada. Materially it has profited much more than Great Britain; for proximity and similarity of needs and tastes in the two countries have given to the United States the lion's share of Canadian trade. Politically the United States has also profited from the rise of a great English-speaking neighbor on its northern border. The advantage of such a neighbor may be realized by recalling the turmoil in Mexico of the last five or six years and the uselessness and the large expenditure thereby entailed on the United States and contrasting this with the good and neighborly relations of the United States with Canada that have ruled since the disturbing issues arising directly or indirectly out of the Civil war of 1861-65 were finally and satisfactorily settled.

Confederation is the outstanding landmark of Canadian history. With the political development of the country during the fifty years since that great event most Canadians are familiar. With the events leading up to Confederation and making it possible, not so much is known. In the accompanying article Edward Porritt reviews the most significant phases of pre-Confederation history.

Americans pass in and out of Canada, and Canadians in and out of the United States, almost as freely as the people in one of the provinces pass in and out of an adjoining province. More than half of the grain crop of the prairie provinces—in the crop year of 1915-1916 it was 103,000,000 bushels—is exported overseas by way of Buffalo and thence to New York and other American ports on the Atlantic. Hundreds of thousands of Americans and Canadians read the same newspapers and the same magazines. Even larger numbers of each nation see the same plays and the same moving pictures. Americans in thousands frequent the summer resorts in the mountains, on the lakes and on the sea shore in Canada. In a word, American and Canadian life is fundamentally so similar and so interwoven, and the United States profits so much from this interweaving of social life, transport and commerce, that Canada's Jubilee of Confederation celebrates an event of importance to both divisions



HANDS ACROSS THE SEA

of the English-speaking race on the North American continent.

For the people of Canada, of Great Britain, and of the overseas dominions, Confederation, regarded in its various aspects, represents the greatest and most beneficent overseas achievement of the British race from the Reformation of 1517 to the beginning of the great war in August, 1914. It marks Great Britain's supreme success as a colonizing power in these four hundred years. It marks her success in establishing in the dominions of Canada, New Zealand, Australia, South Africa and Newfoundland, democratic political institutions that are characterized by the stability, order and liberty that since the revolution of 1688 have been the outstanding features of political institutions in Great Britain.

There are two eras in the history of Great Britain as a colonizing power. The first dates from the reign of Queen Elizabeth, when England began to acquire overseas possessions. It ended with the successful revolt of the American colonies in 1776-1783. The second era began in 1783, when conditions growing out of the loss of the thirteen American colonies, and in particular the plight of forty thousand United Empire Loyalists, compelled Great Britain to turn her attention at once to the development of the northern half of the American continent, the half that remained to her after peace had been made with the newly-created American Republic. This era extended from 1783 to the great war, from which a third era in the history of the British Empire will begin.

The second era thus extended over 131 years. But there are well-marked divisions in this long era. One epoch extended from 1783 to 1840. The other from 1840 to 1914. It is the second of these epochs in which Canadians and Newfoundlanders, along with Englishmen, Scotchmen, New Zealanders, Australians and South Africans, take pride. The reason for this pride is obvious. All the real achievements of the era of 1783-1914—the achievements that make the celebration of the fiftieth anniversary of Confederation of the British North American provinces an event of importance to the whole English-speaking world—belong to the second of these epochs. They belong to the period of 1840 to 1914; for while from 1783 to 1840 Great Britain was given some attention to the development of what were then small colonies in British North America, Australia, New Zealand and South Africa, no success was attending their political development.

No success could attend political development in these colonies in these 57 years—1783 to 1840—because the system that was being followed by the British parliament and by the colonial office in London had not in it the elements of enduring success. It is true that between 1783 and 1840 all the then-existing provinces of British North America gained parliamentary institutions. Each province had its legislature. Each legislature had its senate and assembly. The assembly was popularly elected, and the electoral franchise was so wide and democratic that every man in the colony who had a homestead could vote at elections. There was no servile class that was excluded.

## Legislative Assemblies Powerless

The common weakness of all the legislative assemblies of this epoch was that under the constitutions framed in London, the assemblies were powerless. It was their function to originate bills for raising revenue. But they had no power over expenditure of the revenues when it had flowed into the treasuries of the provinces. If a legislative assembly passed a bill affecting the internal economy of the province—a bill for education, or for road-making, or for any municipal purpose—it had to run the gauntlet of three over-riding authorities, any one of which would defeat or veto it.

First came the legislative council, or upper house of the legislature. The members of this senate were named by the governor—usually an army officer, or a steady office-seeker—sent out by the colonial office in London. Many of the members of the legislative councils were themselves office-holders in the province. They were judges or treasurers, or government surveyors, holding offices that were in the gift of the governor or of the colonial office.

Unlike the members of the legislative assemblies the councillors were in no degree responsible to the electors. They were responsible only to the governor. Most of them, in their capacity as members of the legislative council, did as they were told by the governor. In the event of a bill passing both the assembly and the legislative council it was in power of the governor to veto it without assigning reasons; and usually the governor was in league with the clique of the small governing class that really ruled the province, and ruled mostly for their own material gain. Even if the bill passed the assembly and the council, and secured the assent of the governor, it could at any time within two years be vetoed by the colonial office in London.

## A Dreary and Stagnating Epoch

The governor, moreover, came out to a province with long and detailed instructions from the colonial office. In these he was told what he must do and what he must not do. The domestic policy of the province in its smallest details was thus determined in London; and in accordance with the general colonial policy of Great Britain in the years from 1783 to 1840 there was a range of subjects—in particular trade, commerce and navigation—in which there could be no effective action by either the legislature, or the executive council that was associated with the governor in the political management of the colony.

Over the executive council the popularly-elected legislative assembly could exert no more influence or control than it could over the cabinet in Downing Street. The governor called into the executive council whom he liked, without the least regard to the desire of the legislative assembly; and in all the provinces, as the Earl of Durham emphasized in his report on Canada in 1838, the members of the ex-

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