

American influence on the Confederation Debates was not limited to the fear of armed invasion. American ideas and institutions made their mark as well. Although the Confederation fathers outbid one another in condemning American republicanism, the republican Constitution of the United States fared better at their hands, playing, as it were, to mixed reviews, while top-billing was reserved for the framers of the American Constitution. Let us examine more closely how the Confederation fathers regarded these three crucial elements of the American founding: republicanism, the constitutional text, and the authors of that text.

We have already had occasion to note the pervasive commitment to monarchy among the participants in the Confederation Debates. Consequently, their pejorative references to American republicanism come as no surprise, being simply the opposite side of the monarchist coin. Thus Benjamin Seymour can refer to “all the wild republican theories of our neighbor” while Philip Moore rejects the proposed constitution because “the engrafting of this system of government upon the British Constitution has a tendency to at least introduce the republican system.”⁹⁶ Alexander Vidal, one of the few confederationists who favored referring the proposed text to the people, warned his fellow confederationists that “I am not to be deterred from expressing my views by the taunt of republicanism.”⁹⁷ J.O. Bureau, an opponent of confederation, professed to detect “republican sentiments” among members of the government who had introduced the Quebec Resolutions, whereas Colonel Frederick Haultain, a staunch confederationist, suspected some of his opponents of being “men with annexation tendencies . . . who are inclined toward republican institutions.”⁹⁸ Thus, both friends and foes of confederation used republicanism as a club to beat their opponents. At times American republicanism was identified with democracy, as when David Macpherson predicted that failure to approve the confederation plan would put Canada on an inclined plane leading inevitably to its incorporation into the American union. Canadians would find themselves “plunged