

The great political movement of the time was the confederation of British North America. To complete the union our Island was necessarily included in the scheme; Sir Frederick and Sir Ambrose Shea were sent as our delegates to the great confederation conference, and returned with a draft of the terms on which we might become united with the Dominion. The proposals to unite our destinies with Canada, were not received with enthusiasm. The main question was one of terms; what would Canada give us in return for surrendering our independence? The offer from the Dominion on the all-important subject of a railway and a steam ferry has hitherto been vague and uncertain; but even if any such tangible offer had been made before 1869, looking back now at the excited condition of our population on the subject, I very much doubt if any terms would have been accepted. The anti-confederate party were strong in numbers, powerful in organisation, and their leader, Mr. Charles Fox Bennett, showed himself a most able and indefatigable political campaigner. The awful tales that were told about taxation, about ramming the new-born babes down Canadian cannon, "bleaching their bones on the desert sands of Canada," had a tremendous effect on the simple out-harbour people. There still lingers amongst them a traditionary remembrance of the sufferings their forefathers endured from the French Canadian and Indian raids made in the seventeenth and eighteenth century, and this partly accounts for their dread of Canada; Irish national feeling, their hatred of the Union, brought about by fraud and bribery, was also appealed to. The result was an overwhelming defeat for the Confederate party; they were simply annihilated, and from that day to this Confederation has never been put forward before the country as a practical political question.

Both from an Imperial and Colonial point, the union of the British North American Colonies is a consummation devoutly to be wished; it is all a question of terms. There are, however, some objections to union. Since the death of the great Sir John A. McDonald there is no statesman in Canada strong enough to guarantee us such terms as we would accept. There are also great drawbacks in Canada's protectionist tariff; the Dominion is a fish producer and not a fish consumer; our business relations and our future market lie with the United States; the customers and consumers of our inexhaustible fisheries are the sixty-three million Americans. Canada's latest move on the Blaine Bond Convention has alienated the feelings of many Newfoundlanders who were formerly Confederates.