

pendence had little to fear politically from closer association with Canada which, at that stage in history, was very British indeed, especially in contrast with the United States. In spite of this, the desire to remain independent overwhelmingly carried the day.

When confederation again emerged as a real possibility it was the Canadian Government which proved shortsighted over terms. The issue first re-emerged in 1888 when Sir John A. Macdonald, thinking that Newfoundland's mounting financial difficulties might be generating renewed interest in closer association with Canada, attempted to arrange a fresh conference in Ottawa to negotiate confederation.⁵ This effort proved abortive but seven years later, in 1895, when Newfoundland's financial situation had become critical, the Newfoundland government made overtures to Ottawa.

By this time Sir Mackenzie Bowell was Prime Minister of Canada. The consequent negotiations failed because the Canadian Government could not meet Newfoundland's financial demands without, as it saw it, conceding to Newfoundland terms which would be out of line with those granted to the existing provinces, notably the maritime provinces. This strangely foreshadowed the doubts Mackenzie King entertained two generations later, the difference being that at the later stage sufficient flexibility had been built into the Canadian federal system to allow imagination to bridge the gap. In 1864 and even more in 1869, though there was little flexibility, there had been imagination. In 1895, there was neither, with the result that, in terms of practical politics, confederation went into limbo for half a century.

This did not mean that the issue was forgotten, at least on the Canadian side, and the British Government, whenever there seemed to be an opportunity, carefully dusted off the pro-confederation policy which it always held in readiness on its official shelves. An opportunity seemed to present itself in 1906, when the Newfoundland Government of Sir Robert Bond, a staunch anti-confederationist, was beginning to find itself in political difficulties.

In the whole of North America, this was the era of the big tycoon — the railroad magnate, the mining promoter, the banker. In some areas, Newfoundland included, it was also the era of a fairly open connection between religion and politics, most notably in a tendency for political opinion to divide along Roman Catholic and Protestant lines. At the same time, it was a period in which the British Government was prone to treat former colonies, no matter how fully self-governing, quite arbitrarily in regard to anything to do with external relations. It did not take the Governor General of Canada and the Governor of Newfoundland, and through them the British Government, very long to form the opinion that, with a little luck, the combined influence of the railway and mining interests and the Canadian banks, all of which were considered to be against Sir Robert

⁵ In this initiative, Sir John was advised and encouraged by A. B. Morine, a Nova Scotian who had emigrated to Newfoundland and who quickly espoused the cause of confederation. He was the first of several rather curious Canadian lobbyists who, during the next two decades, tried to promote confederation, the sale of Labrador or some other scheme likely to be of benefit to them or to the interests they covertly represented.