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THE DAY WE CELEBRATE

ON July 1, 1917, two confederations came on the world. One is now fighting the other in Europe. The Canada of 1917 is fighting the Germany of 1917 because, on the same day and date fifty years ago, Canada became a federation of five provinces, and the modern German Empire was made possible by the North German Bund. How the two things ever came to happen on the same day and date nobody knows.

But we know the difference between the two. "The North German Bund," we read in a book called *The German Empire*, "was erected on July 1, 1867. The North German Bund brought its Constitution into the world with it."

The last sentence is worth noticing. This Bund was born with a full set of teeth. The Bund baby of 1867 blinked over Europe and grinned like the dragon in *Siegfried*. It seemed to know that fifty years later it would be drinking the world's blood.

The Federation of Canada was not born with teeth. It had no constitution to impose on as much of the world as possible. It had just as much constitution as the various provinces allowed it to have and no more. The North German Bund was Prussia writ large. The Canadian Confederation was the spirit of unity among a diverse and far-scattered set of peoples all in possession of responsible government which they had to fight Family Compacts to get.

And that Federation of the Five Provinces in 1867 was one of the biggest pieces of constructive statesmanship in politics the world ever saw. It affected about as many people as the original Thirteen Colonies that rebelled against George III and a trifle more than the same extent of country. That unity was the work of brainy men, headed by one of the cleverest state-craftsmen in the world, the equal of Bismarck without the club, of Disraeli without the colonial pessimism. Had there been in any of the south German States a John A. Macdonald, or a Joe Howe, or a George Etienne Cartier, that North German Bund would have backed up into its Prussian hole and left the world in peace in 1917. Because Bismarck and the old King of Prussia had the club handed down from Frederick the Great, the Bund was able to gobble up the other German States, to ravage France in the Franco-Prussian War in 1871 and in 1914 to set the world on fire.

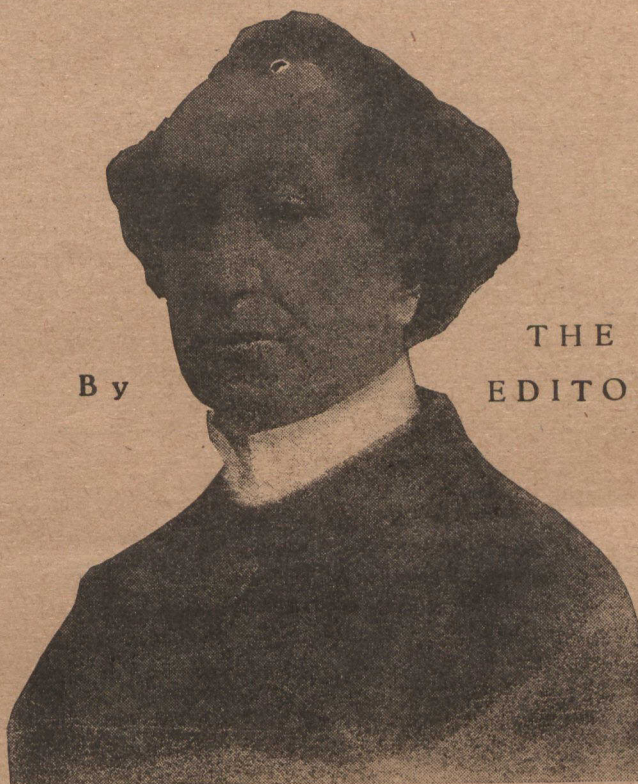
THE central idea embodied in the German Empire founded in the Bund of 1867 was well expressed long ago by Macaulay, who said of Frederick the Great:

"That he might rob a neighbour whom he had promised to defend, black men fought one another on the coasts of Coromandel and red men scalped one another on the shores of Lake Superior."

Multiply that statement by High Explosives plus Espionage and you have what the modern German Empire, born on our Canadian national birthday, in 1867, means to the world in 1917.

There is another Political Act which we can't help but bear in mind when we try to get a just notion of the British North America Act. That is the

*Including the Country, the Whole Country
and Nothing but the Country—For the
high aims of National Unity achieved by
the great men of the past and handed down
to the men of the present.*



By

THE
EDITOR

Declaration of Independence, which is fundamentally opposite to the Bund. The object of that Declaration was to prove that all men are born free and equal, and afterwards to prove that all men are not entitled to an equal degree of freedom. But it gave the United States a chance to enact one great civil war in support of the doctrine, and has now made it possible for the same country to engage in a ten times bigger war to prove that the German Confederation has no right to make a slave state of the rest of mankind.

The business of Canadian Confederation was to secure the unity of five separate provinces and to give an overseas dominion the right to govern itself under a paternal flag, accompanied by a fair percentage of millionaires and knighthoods.

The Federation of our five original provinces in 1867 was a strictly Canadian business. The Act known as the British North American Act was British. The act of getting that Act was the work of the people of Canada. This is important. The B. N. A. Act may be a second cousin to the Reform Bill and the Act of Grace and the Magna Charta; but so far as we are concerned it has a great deal more to do with the Act of Union and the Quebec Act.

Keeping Canada a unity, which is the main political programme in 1917, has, we may surmise, nothing to do with the unity of the British Empire; neither with the unity of Great Britain. They had their own troubles getting the United Kingdom and the troubles of keeping it united are not all over.

Certain Canadians, fifty years ago, had their troubles getting a united Canada, and the business of keeping it united has been going on ever since. On an average, about once every ten years something has happened that tried to pry Confederation asunder, and to break up the unity achieved by that master builder, John A. Macdonald. In the first place, Quebec never would have gone in but for certain guarantees and the fact that Sir Georges Etienne Cartier was as great a patriot as Macdonald. The day Macdonald unveiled a statue of Cartier in Ottawa he said,

"Cartier was as bold as a lion. He was just the man I wanted. But for him Confederation could not have been carried."

Macdonald preferred a legislative union of the five provinces. Cartier objected. The French-Canadians pinned their faith to Cartier, who pinned his to Macdonald, the leading author of the Great Political Compromise.

When engaged in the business of nation-making, let us not forget that modern Canada was born in a Compromise. Had Macdonald got his way we should have had but one Parliament in Canada from which later on other legislatures might have been evolved, leaving the supreme power in the Federal Constitution. This would have suited Upper Canada very well. It would have been very unpopular with Lower Canada and the Maritime Provinces, just as unpopular with British Columbia and later with Manitoba, Saskatchewan and Alberta. In framing Confederation, we did manage to avoid going so far as the framers of the Declaration of Independence in giving most

of the power to the various States. We also steered clear of the other extreme, by which Germany put all the power in the hands of Prussia.

Owing to the Great Compromise of 1867, it has been absolutely impossible to Prussianize any province in this country, whether Government wanted it or not. In one matter alone the Founders of Confederation were more lax than the Declarationers of Independence. They left education, crown lands, forests and mines under the control of the original Five Provinces. That was part of the Compromise.

NOW, the last place in which to get a reviving sense of what Federation means to Canada is Ottawa—except when some blowsy M. P. rises to make Parliament sit up in the name of the whole country, no matter what happens to his party. On such occasions Ottawa is more like the Canada that used to be when Joe Howe wore a tall white hat to a political meeting. Otherwise I prefer the old slab culvert that used to cross the town line just in front of where an immigrant lad that I knew learned to bucksaw Canadian cordwood. One Sunday morning, day before Dominion Day, not long after the National Policy was born, this lad sat on the culvert instead of going to church. He watched a little clean snake of water wending its way to the plains, and as he heard the faint old Coronation tune of the saw-millers and the bush farmers he was as glad he had come to Canada as a boy is at his first