

This subdued role contrasts sharply with the dark shadow cast by the United States upon the Confederation Debates of 1865 which took place during the closing months of the American Civil War. One of the major arguments for confederation was the need to prepare for a possible attack from the United States once the war was over. Canadian statesmen of all persuasions knew that the government of the United States was greatly displeased with the sympathetic position of the British Empire toward the southern states throughout the war. Several minor but exceedingly unpleasant border skirmishes had not escaped the attention of thoughtful Canadians. The record of the debates reveals a serious concern that the victorious Union armies might soon invade Canada to settle some scores with the British Empire and even to annex certain sections of British North America. The statements that follow capture the spirit of this concern.

After noting the rapid march of recent events in the American Civil War, Thomas Ryan stated:

Already we hear the great anticipated successes of the North. If the news be true that Charleston has been evacuated, it will be a severe blow to the cause of the South; and if the South be conquered, we know what have been the sentiments toward Canada expressed in the United States for the last three years. They will, perhaps, turn north for further conquests, and try to humble a power which has not in every way met their wishes. We should, at all events, be prepared to meet such a contingency, prepared to repel attack, prepared to defend our homes and the free Constitution under which we live.⁸⁸

John Rose expressed his hopes that peaceful relations could be maintained with the United States, but then warned ominously:

But at the same time we cannot conceal from ourselves the fact that within the last three or four years we have several times been seriously threatened. It is not in the power of any man to say when the cloud, which so darkly overshadows us, may burst in full fury on our heads, and those who have the direction of the destinies of