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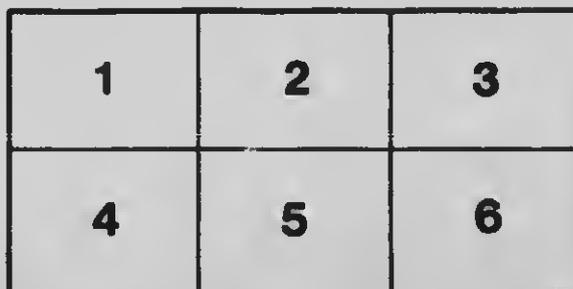
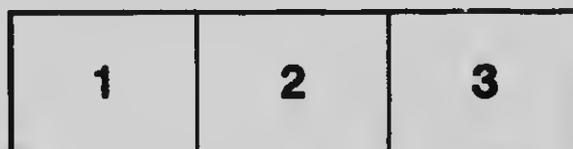
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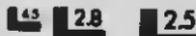
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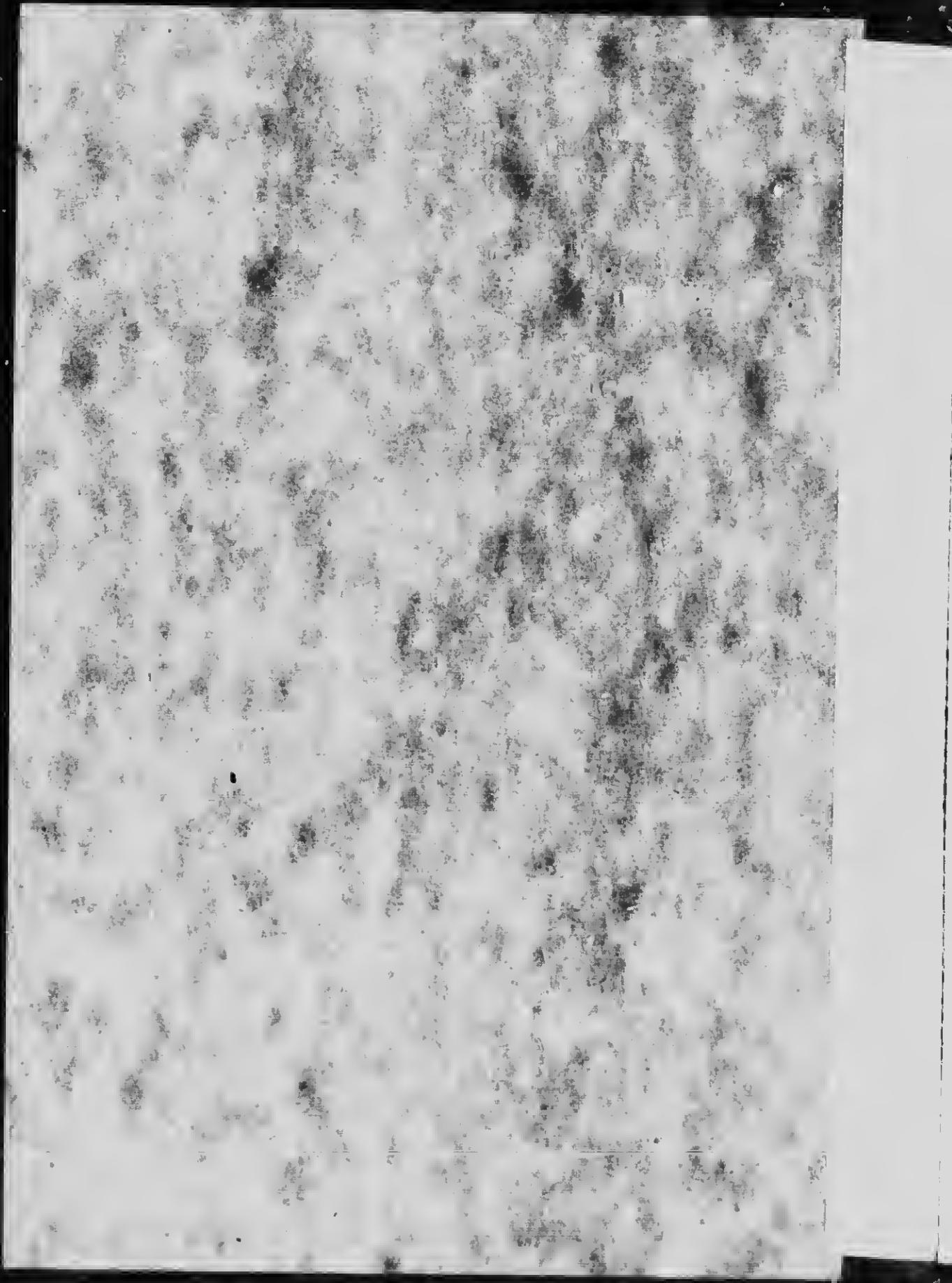
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THE
British North American
League

1849

BY
CEPHAS D. ALLIN



PAPER READ BEFORE THE
ONTARIO HISTORICAL SOCIETY

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The British North American League, 1849.

BY CEPHAS D. ALLIN.

Preface.—The origin of the British American League and some phases of its early development have already been traced in considerable detail in a recent work entitled "Annexation, Preferential Trade and Reciprocity," in the preparation of which the present writer had a part. It is the aim of this brief monograph to supplement that treatment by a more complete study of the origin of the League, the course of its political development and of the cause or causes of its somewhat mysterious disappearance. In conclusion, an attempt is made to determine, with as impartial a mind as possible, the extent of its contribution to and influence upon Canadian history and politics.

The writer wishes to acknowledge his indebtedness to Mr. George M. Jones, of Toronto, for valuable assistance in the preparation of this monograph.

Introduction.—But little is known of the British American League, though for a short time it played an important part in Canadian politics. Two views have found expression as to its origin and character. The first, that of Sir John Macdonald, voices the sentiment of the Conservative party, in ascribing to the League the honor of determining the course of Canadian history.

"Our fellows," declared Sir John, in explanation of the Montreal annexation manifesto, "lost their heads. I was pressed to sign it but refused and advocated the formation of the British American League as a more sensible procedure. From all parts of Upper Canada and from the British section of Lower Canada and from the British inhabitants in Montreal representatives were chosen. They met at Kingston for the purpose of considering the great danger to which the constitution of Canada was exposed. A safety valve was found. Our first resolution was that we were resolved to maintain inviolate the connection with the Mother Country. The second proposition was that the true solution of the difficulty lay in the confederation of all the provinces. The third resolution was that we should attempt to form in such confederation, or in Canada before confederation, a commercial national policy. The effects of the formation of the British American League were marvellous. Under its influence the annexation sentiment disappeared, the feeling of

irritation died away and the principles which were laid down by the British North American League in 1850 are the lines on which the Liberal (conservative party has moved ever since."

The second view is that of his Liberal opponent, the Hon. Alexander Mackenzie, who presents the League in a most unfavorable light.

"The Montreal disturbances ultimately gave birth to a new organization under the name of the British North American League. The Association was a queer mixture of Tories and Annexationists and comprised all the disappointed items. Like King David's famous army at the cave of Adullam, "Every one that was in distress and every one that was discontented gathered themselves" to the meetings of the League. The *Globe* and *Liberal Journals* generally greeted the new political mongrel with a storm of ridicule. They were dubbed 'Children of the Sun.' After one brief attempt to effect something by their meeting at Kingston, the concern collapsed from the sheer rottenness of its material. They advocated extreme Toryism and extreme disloyalty and finally threatened to drive the French into the sea."

The British North American League.—The grant of responsible government proved the undoing of the Tory party. For many years, the Tories had considered themselves the only loyal party; and they believed that they had merited by their loyalty the favor of the successive governors of the colony and the staunch support of the Colonial Office. But the old order of things had passed away. The day of special privileges in church and state was over. The free spirit of democracy was abroad throughout the land. New principles of social and political liberty were in the ascendency. In the election of 1848, the Tory party went down to a crushing defeat, but fighting bitterly to the end. They could not easily reconcile themselves to the new experience of seeing their disloyal opponents seated on the Treasury bench and monopolizing the places of honor and profit under the Crown. In the bitterness of defeat they took up the cry of French domination and carried the flaming torch of racial and religious hatred throughout the Province. The aftermath of this dangerous agitation, the assault on the Governor General and the burning of the parliament buildings at Montreal, completed the discomfiture of the party. For the moment, the party seemed on the verge of dissolution. The Tory leaders were not equal to the situation; they could neither control the wayward course of their erstwhile supporters, nor formulate a new political program. The rank and file of the party, refusing to foreswear their political principles, wandered around in aimless confusion without an accredited leader or policy. An extreme section of the party, embittered by the series of humiliations they had received from the local and British governments and discouraged as to the future of the country, foreswore their allegiance to the Crown and entered upon an active campaign for annexation to the neighboring Republic. A more moderate group, however, undertook to reorganize the party on a more popular basis and were even ready to adopt some of the democratic principles of their political opponents.

The Reform party likewise was in a process of disintegration. Upon accession to office the old struggle between the radical and conservative elements of the party broke out anew. The radical or Clear Grit wing, who derived their political opinions for the most part from the United States, were resolved to introduce the principles of American democracy into the whole social and political organization of the country. The conservative element, on the other hand, which was more influential in the councils of the government, were averse to any further important constitutional changes. They were alarmed at the spread of republican doctrines within the party and sought to check these dangerous tendencies; but their efforts were far from successful.

In England the whole theory and practice of colonial government had been rapidly changing. After a hard struggle the economic dogmas of Adam Smith had triumphed over the ancient principles of the Mercantile School. The theory of colonial monopoly first gave way to the more enlightened policy of preferential trade. The mother country granted a preference to colonial products and received a corresponding preference in colonial markets for British products. But with the adoption of the tenet of free trade, the whole system of imperial preference was swept aside. However beneficial were the results of the change of policy to England, there can be little doubt but that its effects at first were disastrous to the colonies.

In Canada, the withdrawal of the colonial preference inflicted a crushing blow on the industrial and mercantile community. "Temporary insolvency was the price the Canadians paid for the triumph of English free trade." Much of the capital of the country had been tied up in infant industries which owed their existence to the protective policy of the mother land, and which were not yet strong enough to face the open competition of the world. The Boards of Trade of the province raised their voices in loud protest against the ruinous policy of the English government. In a letter to the Colonial Secretary, Lord Elgin bitterly described "the downward progress of events. These are ominous words. But look at the facts. Property in most of the Canadian towns, and more especially in the capital, has fallen 50% in value during the last three years; three-fourths of the commercial men are bankrupt owing to free trade. A large proportion of the exportable produce of Canada is obliged to seek a market in the United States. It pays the duty of 20% on the frontier. How long can such a state of things be expected to endure." The local government could render no assistance for it was itself on the verge of bankruptcy. But all these pleadings were in vain. The English government was obdurate and absolutely refused to reconsider its fiscal policy. The unsympathetic attitude of the home authorities drove the colonists to extreme measures. Goaded on by anger and despair, a section of the business community turned for relief to the policy of annexation to the United States.

In England, a new school of political philosophy had arisen which was destined to exercise a powerful influence on imperial affairs. The doctrine of free trade was only one feature of the program of the Man-

chester School. The leaders of the School detested the whole system of imperialism as inimicable to the interests of democracy in England and as destructive to the growth of the spirit of colonial nationalism. The colonies seemed to them to be a happy hunting ground for Tory place hunters, a useless financial burden on the British treasury, an occasion of international discord and a grave danger in time of war. They accordingly advocated the emancipation of colonies from imperial control and their elevation to the rank of free and independent states.

The new political doctrines were received with mingled praise and condemnation in the colony. The Reformers, who had waged a long and apparently hopeless battle against the autocratic officials of Downing Street, were naturally strongly inclined towards the new principles. Although a majority of them were not prepared to go so far as to advocate or accept the principle of separation, they were ready to welcome any doctrine which held out the promise of an enlarged measure of colonial autonomy. But to the colonial Tories, the new dogmas, which placed a stigma on their time honored tradition of loyalty, were wormwood and gall. They could not hear without resentment the open suggestion that the colonies would confer a favor on the mother land and do themselves a service by peacefully cutting the painter. The Canadian public read the signs of the times. There seemed but one conclusion, said the *Montreal Gazette*. "All parties are convinced that the policy of England to leave the colonies to themselves in politics and commerce. The withdrawal of colonial protection was followed by the invitation to the colonies to abolish their system of preferential duties. These steps indicate an intention of directing colonial education towards total independence."

Out of the strife of parties and races, the economic distress and social discontent, and the revolutionary change in English political thought and policy arose a new political organization, the British North American League. It would have been strange indeed if the turmoil of men's minds had not given birth to a new political party, with a brand-new set of principles especially designed for the moment. The public were anxiously looking for relief from their distress. No aid or assistance was forthcoming from any existing authority. "There is," declared the *Montreal Gazette*, "a presentiment of approaching change. At no time has there been greater disaffection or so strong a desire for something different. Men know what they feel without particularly analyzing the causes or tracing them to their sources, although they may not be able to determine definitely the objects they desire or the means of attaining them."

The prime mover in the new organization was the Hon. George Moffatt, an influential member of the Conservative party in Montreal, and a prominent business man of well known moderate views. A strong local society was formed in that city which was made the headquarters of the League. The local executive resolved to start at once an active campaign for the organization of similar associations throughout the country. To this

end, an address to the public was prepared setting forth in detail the social, economic and political evils from which the province was suffering and calling for a provincial convention to deal with these conditions. The address expressly disclaimed any intent to dictate or suggest a political program for the convention. To the convention itself was intentionally reserved the sole right of determining all matters of policy for the League. Upon one question, however, the question of separation, the address came out positively; there should be no impairment of the imperial connection.

The objects of the League were designedly left in a state of vague uncertainty in the hope of attracting all the discordant and disaffected spirits of the country. Notwithstanding the loyalist pretensions of the address, the association in Montreal did not hesitate to admit a large number of annexationists to membership and even honored some of them with important executive offices. At one time it appeared as if the annexationists might capture the local organization and turn it to their own purposes. The loyalist members were thoroughly frightened at the turn of affairs, so much so that the Hon. George Moffatt, according to local rumor, threatened to resign the presidency of the association unless the question of annexation was excluded from discussion at the approaching convention. The struggle between the two factions came to an issue in the election of delegates to the Kingston convention. The loyalists were victorious in the battle of ballots; only one of the five delegates elected being a member of the annexationist group. After this defeat, many of the annexationists withdrew from the association with a view to the formation of a distinct annexation society.

Thanks to the efforts of Mr. Thomas Wilson, a local association was formed in Quebec. The League, he explained, was a non-partisan body whose primary purpose was to devise a means of rectifying the economic and political evils of the country. All persons were welcomed into membership whatsoever their political or religious beliefs. In Quebec, as in Montreal, annexationists joined the association in large numbers and several of them were duly elected to the local executive council. Mr. Wilson, who was chosen president of the local association, came out strongly in favor of a protective policy for Canadian labor and industry and for a legislative union of the British American provinces. He further advocated some radical modifications of the provincial constitution, in particular, the election of the members of the legislative council and the independence of the local parliament, save where imperial interests were involved. While professing the strongest attachment to the motherland, he declared that he would not sacrifice the interests of Canada to maintain the British connection; and he expressly declined to pledge the convention in advance to the maintenance of the imperial tie. But the views of Mr. Wilson by no means reflected the general sentiment of the members of the local association.

In the Eastern Townships, among the Anglo-Saxon population, several branches of the League were formed, mainly out of the remnants of

the old Tory party. In this part of the province, the League was strongly affected by anti-French influences, but some evidences of annexation sentiment were also to be found among the members. Only one of the associations, however, namely, that at Melbourne, came out openly for annexation.

By the French Canadians, the League was regarded with the greatest suspicion. To them, it appeared as the legitimate successor of the old Tory party from whose tyrannical rule they had but recently escaped. And undoubtedly there was considerable occasion for this suspicion, since in its origin and personnel the League was closely associated with the agitation against their race and religion. In many places the primary object of the League was proclaimed to be to unite the English population in a political bond in order the better to oppose the domination of the French in politics. The French-Canadian leaders and press did not fail to exploit this feature of the League's activity to their own political advantage as a means of solidifying the vote of the French electorate.

But it was in Upper Canada, as was to be expected, that the League made the greatest progress. In every city and in all the considerable towns and villages of the west, a local association was formed. The membership was recruited almost entirely from the ranks of the Tory party, although here and there a few annexationists and an occasional disgruntled Reformer were to be found. The new organization was especially welcomed by the moderate or conservative element among the Tories. For some time past, they had been restless under the oligarchical rule of the old Family Compact and dissatisfied with the reactionary opinions of some of the High Church leaders of the party. The recent disgraceful proceedings at Montreal had overwhelmed them with humiliation, and they were glad to escape from the stigma which attached to the old party name and organization. The League held out to them the promise of a more progressive party. Many of the High Church Tories likewise joined the new organization, partly with a view to influencing its policy, but mainly in the hope of finding in it an effective instrument for overthrowing the hated Reform administration. The Toronto Patriot and the Hamilton Spectator, the leading organs of the old Family Compact group, vied with the Toronto Colonist, the mouthpiece of the moderate element of the party in commending the League to the hearty support of their political friends. The annexationists who slipped into the local associations were recruited from several different sources. They were either democratic young Tories like Mr. H. B. Willson, son of the former speaker of the Upper Canada Assembly, Tories by tradition, democrats by conviction, and annexationists by self interest; or they were extreme partisans, ultra Tories whose feelings of loyalty had been outraged by the liberal sympathies of the Governor General and the bland indifference of the Colonial Office to their demands; or they were ultra Protestants, who fearful of the consequences of French domination, believed that the only way in which they could save their race, language and religion from destruction was by a union with the great Anglo-Saxon nation to the South; or they were members of the business community who saw

in the open markets of the United States the only escape from financial insolvency. With the majority of the annexationist or quasi-annexationist members of the League a political union with the neighboring Republic was as yet but an *arriere pensee*, an ultimate resort in case all other remedial measures should fail. Only a small number of the group were active propagandists; and even these, in order to obtain a more favorable hearing, found it advisable to limit their propaganda to the advocacy of the principle of elective institutions and a possible separation from Great Britain. The few stray Reformers who threw in their lot with the League were, for the most part, either disappointed and splenetic office seekers, or extreme radicals who were thoroughly disgusted with the conservative policy of the Reform government. The overthrow of the Baldwin administration was in the judgment of the latter, a condition precedent to any real progress towards a true social and political democracy.

An active campaign was undertaken by the leading Tory papers, in conjunction with a few of the local associations, on behalf of the League. The Hamilton association issued an address similar in character to that of the Montreal branch setting forth in somewhat lurid colors the deplorable political and social conditions of the country and especially emphasizing the danger of French domination. Little attempt was made by the press or the responsible leaders of the League to set forth in detail the objects of the League. A few of the leading papers of the party, however, took occasion to repudiate any connection of the League with the annexation movement. For the most part, the League devoted itself to the task of stirring up popular discontent against both the local and English governments. The party press was particularly severe in its attack on the extravagance and pro-French tendencies of the provincial ministry and in its criticism of the unjust and destructive fiscal policy of the Whig party in England. Such discussions as took place within the several associations were mainly concerned with the questions of independence, French domination, and the future constitution of the province. The question of a separation of Upper and Lower Canada, a union of the British American colonies and the political and commercial relations of the colonies with England and the United States were also taken into consideration but aroused much less interest.

Meanwhile the Reformers had been watching the course of the League with jealous eyes. They were quick to seize upon the nondescript character of the League and the annexation tendencies of some of the leaders in Lower Canada as the most vulnerable point of attack. Under the leadership of the *Toronto Globe*, the entire press and party took up the partisan cry that the League was at heart an annexationist body, and that the Tories of Upper Canada had sold themselves into the hands of a band of conspirators at Montreal.

The election of delegates to the convention aroused considerable interest throughout the province. The two principal questions at issue were separation from the mother country and an elective legislative council. In Lower Canada the contest was particularly keen in regard to the first of these questions. The loyalists were almost uniformly

successful in the several associations and sent a majority of delegates pledged to the maintenance of the British connection. But although opposed to annexation, the delegates were for the most part strongly favorable to a revision of the constitution according to more democratic principles.

In Upper Canada, where the League mustered its chief strength, the overwhelming sentiment of the members was opposed to both independence and annexation. Only two or three avowed annexationists were fortunate enough to command the suffrages of a majority of their fellow members, and even they owed their election to their personal popularity or to the advocacy of other issues than independence or annexation. Mr. H. B. Willson, for example, the most prominent annexationist in Upper Canada, was chosen as a delegate by the Saltfleet Association, largely owing to his earnest campaign on behalf of the principle of the popular election of legislative councillors. In a public statement to the press, he frankly admitted the feebleness of annexation sentiment in the west. The question of annexation, he declared, "would not be broadly broached by its advocates at the convention, but the preliminaries, separation and independence, might be proposed as more likely to win general support." In fact, the result of the election of delegates effectually disposed of the question of separation in advance, and the annexationist leaders were wise enough to accept the verdict.

But on the question of elective institutions there was a much severer struggle within the associations between the progressive and conservative elements of the party. The former put up a valiant fight for the popular election of members of the upper house, and in some of the associations were successful in electing their candidates, but in the majority of the local branches the old Tory party, which still clung to the nomination principle, were victors in the contest.

On July 26, 1849, the delegates assembled at Kingston. The convention was a veritable cave of Adullam in its membership, representing almost every section of the public save the French Canadians. Tories, Annexationists, Orangemen and Radicals sat side by side. There were about 150 delegates in attendance, the great majority of whom were from Canada West. Although the representatives from Lower Canada were comparatively few in number, they wielded an influence altogether out of proportion to their voting strength. The leaders of the Lower Canadian delegation, Messrs. Mack and Montgomerie of Montreal and Mr. Wilson of Quebec, were men of more than average ability and of pronounced and somewhat advanced opinions on the questions of the day. The majority of the delegates from Upper Canada were High Church Tories, but there was a respectable minority of moderate conservatives and a few radicals who played an important part in the deliberations of the convention. Prominent among the delegates from Canada West were Messrs. Gowau of Brockville, Murney of Belleville, Duggan and Vankoughnet of Toronto, Gamble of Vaughan, Willson of Hamilton, MacDonnell of St. Catharines, Dixon of London, Ermatinger of St. Thomas, and Strachan of Huron. The Hon. J. A. Macdonald was one

of the delegates from Kingston, but did not take a very active part in the proceedings.

The moving spirit of the convention was J. W. Gamble, the leader of the progressive element of the Tory party. He was actively supported on the floor of the convention by Thomas Wilson of Quebec and O. R. Gowan, a prominent Orangeman, who had distinguished himself by the violence of his attacks on Lord Elgin. The stalwart or ultra Tory group had no outstanding representative in the convention, but Messrs. Murney, Ermatinger and Rollaud MacDonald could always be counted upon to defend the traditions of the party. Between these extreme wings stood the moderate group who were principally concerned about formulating a popular but conservative program which would unite all factions of the party and appeal to the sound judgment and patriotism of the country.

The Hon. George Moffatt was chosen chairman of the convention and Messrs. Mack and Brooke, Secretaries. The debates were carried on behind closed doors, none but members being admitted, but the press was furnished by the secretaries with a copy of the proceedings.

The struggle between the progressives and the stalwart or Family Compact factions broke out at the very outset on a resolution of Mr. Thomas Wilson in favor of an elective legislative council. This was met by an amendment by Mr. Ermatinger setting forth in fervid language the loyalty of the convention to the Crown and the principles of the British constitution. On behalf of the resolution, it was maintained that the electorate were dissatisfied with the existing constitution, that some changes of a popular nature were imperatively demanded in order to bring it into accord with public opinion and that the election of legislative councillors would not only secure the independence of the upper chamber from ministerial coercion but would produce an abler and more conservative body of men. Some of the delegates from Lower Canada were particularly severe in their arraignments of the political and economic policy of the imperial government and were correspondingly eager for such an amendment of the local constitution as would prevent the undue interference of Downing Street in colonial affairs. But to the majority of delegates from Upper Canada the resolution appeared to be a departure from the true principles of the British constitution and to be a dangerous step toward separation and the adoption of the republican institutions of the United States. All the speakers, however, agreed in condemning the government for packing the Legislative Council in order to carry the Rebellion Losses Bill. After a spirited debate the amendment was carried by 89 to 19.

The proceedings of the second day opened with the resolution by O. R. Gowan in favor of adequate protection for the manufacturing and industrial interests of the province both as an end in itself and as a means of building up a large and profitable market at home for the agriculturists. Mr. Gowan dwelt particularly on the desirability of having a steady local market for farm produce. He attributed many of the woes of the

colony to the unsatisfactory character of the English market and looked forward hopefully to the time when Canada would be entirely self-contained, when she would do all her own manufacturing, and consume practically all the produce of her farms. Messrs. Gamble, Eriaatinger and Wilson supported the resolution in strong speeches. The loss of the English market, it was urged, had forced upon the province the necessity of developing an independent fiscal policy of its own. The feeling of the convention was especially strong against the English government for the withdrawal of the imperial preference, the loss of which was held responsible for most of the colony's woes. In the minds of some of the members the policy of protection was as much a measure of retaliation against Great Britain as a measure for the promotion of Canadian industry and trade. The resolution won the hearty support of the convention and was carried unanimously.

The afternoon session was devoted mainly to a general arraignment of the policy of the government. A resolution by Mr. Gowan in favor of retrenchment was the innocent occasion of a sharp tilt of the speaker with some of the members of the old Tory party. In the course of an unsparing criticism of the different items of the civil list, Mr. Gowan referred rather disrespectfully to the generous liberality of the Family Compact to its own members. This reflection called forth a strong protest from several members of the convention, particularly from Mr. Murney, who staunchly defended the English policy of paying adequate salaries to the servants of the Crown. But the storm proved to be only a tempest in a tea-pot, for after some further desultory remarks by Hon. J. A. Macdonald and others, the resolution was agreed to unanimously.

Two other general resolutions condemnatory of the policy of the government were adopted without opposition after a somewhat perfunctory discussion. The sorry condition of the province, according to Mr. Strachan, was due primarily to the subserviency of the government to their French-Canadian supporters as evidenced by the payment of rebels and the usurpation of the Governor General's authority by Mr. Lafontaine. As a climax to the general condemnation of the ministry, a resolution was presented in favor of the impeachment of Lord Elgin. But the more moderate members of the convention realized that the reputation of the League would be endangered by the adoption of such an extreme measure and they accordingly opposed the motion on grounds of political expediency and constitutionality. Mr. Backus had little difficulty in demonstrating that the resolution was based on false constitutional principles, since under the system of responsible government the Governor General had no option but to accept the advice of the Cabinet and to sign the Rebellion Losses Bill. But Lord Elgin was not permitted to escape scot-free from the wrath of the Tories. A somewhat milder resolution, in which a demand for the recall of the Governor General was coupled with a declaration of unfaltering attachment to the British connection, was carried despite a good deal of opposition. The English government was, likewise, brought to task in a resolution expressing regret that Her Majesty had been unwisely advised to assent to the Rebellion Losses Bill.

The proceedings of the day were brought to an end by the unanimous adoption of a resolution of Mr. Gowan in favor of the formation of a central association with affiliated branches throughout the province.

The third day was given up to the discussion of the most important subject which came before the convention, namely, the union of the provinces. Mr. John Duggan presented a resolution "That in the opinion of this convention a union of all the British North American provinces would most materially conduce to the prosperity of those colonies and to the integrity of the British Empire." In an able speech in support of the motion, Mr. Duggan pointed out, at the outset, some of the fatal defects of the existing constitution. The Act of Union had been a sorry failure; its principal result had been to hand the administration of the province over to the French. Upper Canada was helpless, for the English Government would not consent to a dissolution of the union; and even though the union were dissolved, she could not maintain an independent existence because of the fatal lack of an outlet to the sea. The idea of a federal union of the American colonies was by no means new. It had been advanced by Earl Houlderness in 1755 as a means of resisting the threatening aggressions of the French. A union of the British American provinces would, he maintained, not only establish the supremacy of the Anglo-Saxon race in Canada, but would raise the colonies to a higher national plane, would open up a larger field for industry, talent and ambition, would augment the strength and resources of the mother land, instead of burdening her as at present, and would set up an equipoise to the preponderant power of the United States in America. If, he concluded, he were obliged to choose between French domination and annexation, he would unhesitatingly choose the latter, a view which found considerable support among the members. In supporting the resolution, Mr. Dixon made the interesting statement that a gentleman of the highest standing and, moreover, intimately connected with the present ministry, had thrown out to him the hint that a federal union of the provinces was under consideration by the government as the best possible solution of the ills of the colony, and might soon be carried into effect if time and circumstances seemed propitious.

But the scheme did not have smooth sailing. An amendment was proposed by H. B. Willson in favor of an inter-provincial union in conjunction with colonial representation in the imperial parliament. He desired to see the present unwieldy colonies divided up into a number of small states, to each of which would be entrusted the management of its own municipal affairs. Matters of general concern to the colonies would then be reserved for the British Parliament to which the several colonies would send representatives. He believed that there were only two courses open to the British American colonies, incorporation into the empire or annexation to the United States. Of these alternatives he preferred the former. The scheme of imperial representation, however, was strongly opposed by Mr. Thomas Wilson on the ground that it would necessarily entail on the colonies a share of imperial expenditure which they were not prepared to bear.

The chief critic of the resolution was Mr. Gowan. He failed to see how a federal union would get rid of French domination. It would, on the contrary, only aggravate the evil, since the French electorate would carry their corporate organization into federal elections, while in the proposed province of Quebec the English population would be left in a hopeless minority at the mercy of their French-Canadian neighbors. He thought that at some future date it might be expedient to divide the country up into a number of small provinces, and then to effect a federation; but at present he did not deem it advisable for the convention to go further than to appoint a number of delegates for the purpose of consulting with representatives from Nova Scotia and New Brunswick as to whether a union was possible and desirable.

The suggestion was quickly taken up by Mr. Breckenridge of Kingston who moved as a substitute motion that delegates be appointed to meet at Montreal and consult with delegates from Nova Scotia and New Brunswick concerning the practicability of a union of all the provinces, and to report back to the next convention of the League the results of their deliberations. The favor with which this resolution was received induced Mr. Duggan to withdraw his original motion and Mr. Willaou his amendment thereto. The Breckenridge resolution now had the floor all to itself.

In supporting the resolution, Mr. Gamble declared that he was at heart in favor of the independence of Canada provided the consent of Great Britain could be obtained. Although he would have preferred to see a popular amendment of the local constitution and would even have supported the policy of annexation in preference to an inter-colonial federation, nevertheless for the sake of harmony he was prepared to forego his personal opinions and come out in favor of the scheme for a federal union. Several other leading delegates, including Messrs. Baekus, Wilson and Vankonghnet, strongly supported the resolution on various grounds. Such a union, it was contended, was the only alternative to annexation, and was, moreover, the best preparation for the day when Great Britain should cast off the colonies, or when the colonies themselves, having attained to the full status of manhood, should desire to separate peacefully from the mother land and to assume among the powers of the earth the separate and equal station to which the laws of nature and of nature's God entitled them. Mr. Montgomerie welcomed the proposed union as the most effective means of overcoming the predominant influence of the French. He threw out the further interesting suggestions that there should be a re-adjustment of boundaries in the proposed federation, that the Hudson Bay Territory should be brought under the control of the federal government and that the powers of the local legislatures in the union should be carefully restricted in order to build up a strong federal government.

The scheme of a federal union, it must be admitted, commended itself to the delegates, less on its own merits as a distinctly national policy than as a utilitarian measure well designed to meet the immediate necessity of the time. To the ultra Protestants, it appealed as a means

of overcoming the domination of the French; to the imperialists, it held out the hope of preserving the British connection; to the nationalists, it prepared the way for the country's independence; to the business men, it presented the prospect of a wider market, and to the opportunists, it appeared as a likely means of escape from a horrible embroglio. Thanks to the combination of these discordant elements, the resolution was agreed to unanimously. Throughout the debate, it will have been observed, the majority of the speakers, notably Mr. Duggan, wisely refrained from any express declaration as to whether the union in view should be a federal or a legislative one.

The following representatives were selected to meet the maritime delegates: Moffat, Gamble, Gowan, Breckenridge, Vankoughnet, Montgomerie, R. MacDonald, Crawford, Stuart and Young. To these were subsequently added H. B. Willson, T. Wilson, Vansittart, Duggan, Dixon and Walton.

On the last day of the convention two resolutions were quickly and unanimously adopted. The first condemned the government for packing the Legislative Council and censured the Colonial Secretary for furnishing blank mandamuses for the purpose. The second, which was moved by Mr. H. B. Willson and seconded by the Hon. John A. Macdonald, referred the question of colonial representation in the imperial parliament to the committee on federal union.

But there was one other question which came up for frequent discussion, notwithstanding the desire of many of the members to suppress its consideration, namely, the question of annexation. The question, in fact, occupied altogether too prominent a place in the public mind to escape some consideration in the convention. Only a handful of the delegates were open and avowed annexationists. For practical purposes they were a negligible quantity. But there was a larger group who considered annexation in a serious light as a possible policy in case all other remedial measures should fail. There was still another section of the convention, ultra Tories for the most part, who though hostile to a union with the United States, were ready to use the annexation cry as a weapon with which to frighten or coerce the English government into a compliance with their demands.

In the debate on the resolution in favor of the election of legislative councillors, the question of annexation was incidentally brought up by the opponents of the elective principle. In a subsequent debate on the organization of the League, the question was directly raised by Mr. Backus, one of the most radical of the Montreal delegates, who declared, "If we are to be told by every succeeding government in England that we are nothing in their eyes, that we are at perfect liberty to go whenever it is our interest to do so, let us raise ourselves at once to the standard of a nation." This frank declaration which was greeted with mingled cheers and disapprobation, brought the speaker into conflict with the loyalist members and he was compelled to defend himself against the charge of being an annexationist. "Annexation," he explained, "ought to be

adopted only as a final resort in case all other measures should fail to bring relief."

The unpatriotic sentiments of Mr. Backus and other semi-annexationist delegates called forth from the loyalist members, as we have seen, a strong resolution expressive of the unfaltering attachment of the convention to the British flag. Several of them, particularly Mr. Parsons of Beauharnois, and Mr. Ruttan of Cobourg, attacked the annexation movement in severe terms. The former declared that the convention was under an obligation to vindicate its loyalty against the false representations of their political opponents who had not only misled their supporters as to the real objects of the League, but had also led the American public to expect that the convention would come out in favor of the independence of Canada. No greater calamity than annexation could befall a British subject; but even annexation was preferable, in his judgment, to the introduction of American institutions into a British colony. Mr. Ruttan bitterly assailed the policy of annexation on the ground that it would introduce the accursed institution of slavery into the province and reduce the people of Canada to the level of the slave-holders of the South. The inhabitants of the United States, together with the citizens of France, should be made to realize that Canada would ever remain an integral part of the British Empire.

A clever attempt was made by Mr. Wilson of Quebec and his colleague from Saltfleet to sidetrack the resolution in the interests of their annexationist friends, but the loyalists would not be gainsaid and pressed the issue to a vote. The annexationists did not venture to contest the matter further and the resolution was carried unanimously.

But the question would not drop. It again cropped up in the discussion of the resolution on a union of the provinces. Mr. Duggan, it may be remembered, supported the scheme of an intercolonial federation on the ground that it would give a national character to the British American provinces and enable them to maintain an independent position alongside the great republic. In his judgment, however, annexation was a lesser evil than French ascendancy. The ultra Tories of Upper Canada were particularly vigorous in their denunciations of annexation, though some of them, particularly R. Macdonald of St. Catharines, and Strachan of Goderich, were not averse to threatening the English government with separation unless it would reverse its anti-colonial policy. The loyalists, they declared, might be driven into the arms of the American republic by a continuance of the unfriendly attitude of the Colonial Office.

The most interesting speech of the convention was that of Mr. Gamble, who did not hesitate to declare himself a Canadian nationalist. He was of the opinion that a union with Great Britain, similar to that of the Ionian Islands, would be best adapted to the needs of Canada. Although the policy of annexation held out undoubted material advantages to the province, nevertheless, the vast majority of the inhabitants could not be tempted to lay aside lightly "their inherited British feelings." Annexation could only be regarded as a dernier ressort. He was of the

opinion that before many years had elapsed the slavery issue would rend the United States in twain. Some of the northern states would then desire to form a union with Canada. "The topography of the country and the natural sequence of events marked this out as our ultimate fate." Mr. Wilson likewise indulged in some interesting speculations as to the future of the province. The time, he believed, was close at hand when Great Britain would throw off the colonies as useless encumbrances. She had already deprived them of all the commercial advantages of the imperial connection and would not hesitate much longer to forego the political advantages she now enjoyed at their expense. Canada, he concluded, should prepare for independence.

The proceedings of the convention showed conclusively that the overwhelming majority of the delegates had no sympathy with the cry for annexation. Undoubtedly many of the delegates were deeply incensed at the conduct of the English government and were prone to express their indignation in harsh and somewhat defiant terms, but nevertheless they could not be induced to foreswear their allegiance or to countenance the seditious proceedings of the annexationists of Montreal. Here and there among the delegates a few low murmurs of disaffection were to be heard, but there was little evidence of a spirit of open disloyalty.

On the motion of the Hon. J. A. Macdonald, a resolution was adopted expressive of the gratitude of the convention "to those members of the House of Lords and House of Commons who had recently come forward to advocate the cause of the loyal people of the colony and had thereby allayed much irritation and convinced the people that their wrongs would be righted when properly laid before the people of England." A vote of thanks was also extended to Messrs. MacNab and Cayley for the efforts they had made on behalf of the loyalists of the colony while on their mission to England.

The election of officers for the ensuing year resulted in the selection of a respectable, if not imposing, body of men, fairly representative of the varying shades of opinion within the League and of the different sections of the province.

President, Hon. George Moffatt, Montreal.

Vice-Presidents—

Hon. William Allan, Toronto.

John Young, Hamilton.

J. R. Forsyth, Kingston.

Thomas Wilson, Quebec.

Colonel Prince, Sandwich.

Hon. William Morris, Montreal.

Secretaries—

Corresponding—W. G. Mack, Montreal.

Recording—Helder Isaacson.

Treasurer—H. E. Montgomerie, Montreal.

Executive Committee—O. R. Gowan, J. W. Gamble, John McGillis, (Glengarry), Daniel Gorrie (Montreal), David G. Sloan (Melbourne), Geo. Duggan (Toronto), J. G. Vansittart (Woodstock), John Langton (Peterbor.), William Stewart (Bytown), R. Harvey (Maitland).

The work of the convention was completed by the adoption of the following address to the people of Canada:

FELLOW-COUNTRYMEN:

Events so momentous as those which have given birth to this great Provincial Association, have been hitherto unparalleled in the history of this colony.

From the early settlement of the United Empire Loyalists in this Province, until a recent period, its people have evinced an attachment to the Parent State unsurpassed by that of any other colony of ancient or modern times. During a long period, chequered by adversity and prosperity, the people of Canada have in war rallied around the flag of their forefathers, and in peace have endeavored to cement the union with their fatherland by the strongest ties of amity and interest. In return for this devotion, the British Government long extended to the colony a commercial preference in her markets.

The harmony which so long existed—interrupted by an abortive rebellion—was again restored at its close, and the progress of the Colony became almost unexampled under the fostering influence of a wise Imperial Legislation. But, unhappily for Great Britain—an Empire whose Colonies are the strong arm of her power—she has recently opened her ports to foreign nations upon equal terms with her colonies, thus virtually excluding us from her markets, by throwing us into a ruinous competition with those to whom her ports are more immediately and cheaply accessible. In her promulgation of free trade principles, she has lost sight of the interests of her Colonies, with the view of obtaining from all nations reciprocal free trade, and thereby inundating the world with her manufactures.

This new policy of the Empire has recently produced in Canada its inevitable results. Unprotected by an adequate tariff, we have continued to consume a vast amount of British manufactures, whilst our produce, the principal source upon which we rely for their payment, has rarely entered the British markets except at a sacrifice. The result has been a monetary pressure, extensive bankruptcy, and general distress.

Coincident with these disastrous circumstances, a storm arose in our political horizon, which has threatened, and still threatens, to shake the foundations of our social fabric. The legislature, ruled by a faction, (which, for the retention of place and power, has kindled afresh the animosity of rival races) has legalized the principle of rebellion, and has prepared to increase the public debt at a moment of great financial embarrassment, by a provision for the payment of the traitors of 1837 and 1838.

These grievances roused thousands from a state of torpor and inaction. Your fellow-subjects, convinced that a crisis had arrived when it behoved every inhabitant of Canada to exert himself for the regeneration of his country, and rescue it from commercial and political thralldom, met and by combined action established the "British American League." This body extended its ramifications throughout every part of the Province. It established a system of representation by which delegates were to be sent to a General Convention at Kingston. That Convention, assembled by the free election of the Leaguers, according to an established constitution, after this exposition of its origin, now appeals to you to co-operate with the League in the great object it has in view for the welfare of our country.

INHABITANTS OF CANADA:

You are nominally enjoying the privileges of a free constitution—you are in reality chained down by circumstances which wrest from you the exercise of these privileges. You are told that you are fostered by a liberal and prudent government—in reality your efforts for the encouragement of home industry, have been checked in too many instances by hasty and inconsiderate legislation.

The true elements of your country's wealth—the certain indices of her prosperity—can only be developed by the adoption of measures which will fill her cities with the busy hum of industry—make her streams the outlets of that wealth which will be poured forth from the loom and the foundry, and the teeming harvests of her soil, and the produce of her primeval forests.

For the attainment of these results it is essential that a Tariff carefully and considerately adopted, should be so proportioned and levied as to afford just and adequate protection to every industrial class—the agriculturist, the manufacturer, the mechanic—so as to build up the prosperity of the farmer and the artizan side by side with the growing wealth of the manufacturer—so as to create a Home Market for Home Industry, and enrich together consumer and producer. The present Tariff is utterly inadequate to produce results so manifestly essential to the interests of our country.

THE PRESENT GOVERNMENT IS PLEDGED TO FREE TRADE PRINCIPLES.

The public expenditure is conducted with a reckless disregard of economy. The excessive salaries of public officers, now increased in number, together with the lavish expenditure of the Legislature, are entirely disproportioned to the financial resources of a young and overburdened country, and unnecessary to the efficiency of the public service. The authorized publications of this Convention, when laid before you, will disclose the facts on which we ground our assertion.

The fostering protection of a good government, to which you all have an inalienable right—which should be the guardian of the public



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peace, the bulwark of social order—has been daringly displaced by the dominion of race and faction, introducing the elements of civil discord.

A law has been passed by the present ministry so monstrous a principle that has excited strong abhorrence and disgust in the minds of the loyal people of this colony. That measure, in its naked deformity, has met with no approval. It has been carried merely because the British members of the government dared not to oppose the determined will of the French leader. By sanctioning that measure His Excellency the Earl of Elgin has brought the royal authority into contempt—has disturbed public tranquility, and it is our firm opinion that his continuance in his high position cannot conduce to public peace or prosperity.

An insidious attempt made by the present ministers to increase the French Canadian representation in Parliament by so arranging the electoral districts of Lower Canada as to distribute the British inhabitants in small numbers among overwhelming bodies of the French, we regard with the most profound apprehension, as calculated to perpetuate that civil discord which has tended so much to the ruin of this great province.

A gross violation of constitutional usages has been perpetuated, and a precedent sought to be established which, if it be made a precedent, will have for ever destroyed the independence and utility of the Legislative Council. That body, according to true constitutional law, has distinct legislative functions. It is not intended as the mere register of the decrees of the Legislative Assembly. But the government now in power, in order to carry a particular measure, and in open violation of this principle, suddenly elevated to that House a number of persons of doubtful merit, and previously unknown in public life. By our constitutional law, her most gracious Majesty is alone invested with the authority to make appointments to the Legislative Council—a law, which if carried out, would effect a salutary check over the unscrupulous use of power in the colony—notwithstanding which, her Majesty's principal Secretary of State for the Colonies, transmitted to the Colonial Government blank writs of mandamus, thereby surrendering up into improper hands his sovereign's high prerogative.

The present ministry have also attempted to force upon the country a measure by which members of influential men would be deprived of the elective franchise, while the same franchise in Lower Canada was by law extended to a particular class, to whom in the western province the like privilege was denied.

INHABITANTS OF CANADA.

Fearlessly asserting the truth of our declarations, and appealing to heaven for the justice of our cause, we lay before you these statements on subjects which have engaged our attention. For the most part new to the discussion of public affairs, and not invested with legislative powers, this assembly can only deliberate upon such things as seem to be for your welfare. The attainment of that welfare must be confided to the individual energies, exertions and enthusiasm of every man among you.

who would rather behold his country flourishing under paternal, than droop under the withering influence of factious legislation.

Before recommending to you the great questions you should adopt as your watchwords, we earnestly exhort you to shake off now and forever that apathy and indifference which at several momentous crises in public affairs have paralyzed your energies, and which it would seem that moments like these, when all minds are unsettled, can alone arouse to exertion. Perfect in every part of the country a complete and permanent organization. Let every British Society of this League become a deliberative body, so as to prepare its future delegates for the deliberations of this Convention. Endeavour to soften down political asperities and sectional animosities, and to unite all men for the welfare of this our common country.

Three subjects amongst those which have engaged our deliberations stand prominently forth—demanding your earnest attention.

By the first of these—a union of all the British American provinces—it has been proposed in this Convention to lay the foundation for making this country a great nation upon a solid and enduring basis.

Impressed with the weight of such a measure, but uncertain as to the sentiments of the sister colonies, this Convention has proposed a conference with those provinces by a delegation of some of its members; meantime it recommends this great question to your mature deliberation.

The second great movement in which we invite your co-operation is that for retrenchment and economy in the public expenditure.

The third is that still more great and vital movement we are prepared to make in favour of protection to home industry.

Inscribe these glorious rallying cries upon your banners—glorious because they will elevate your country from failure to success, from ruin to prosperity. They will unite with you eventually all honest men, all men of reason and true patriotism. Keep them before you in all your assemblies—procure for them the assent and advocacy of your neighbours. Support no man at the hustings who will not pledge himself to wise and salutary retrenchment—who will not agree to raise his voice in favour of protection. So shall you elevate this your country into a great nation of freemen, fostered by and in amity and connection with Great Britain, preserving her time-hallowed institutions, adopting her old trade principles, under which she has flourished for centuries, and her people have grown the richest on the face of the globe—those great trade principles which in the neighbouring union have also been adopted, and have established that mighty and prosperous nation. Forsake these principles, neglect this advice—then prepare to behold your country, notwithstanding the great advantages which God has given you—her boundless forests a source of exhaustless wealth for ages, her noble lakes, and splendid rivers, the natural highways of a nation's commerce—notwithstanding her unlimited water power, her extensive tracts of rich arable land, her immense mineral resources, her industrious and intelligent

population—prepare, we say, to behold your country reduced to a state of misery, degradation, discord and poverty.

To endeavour to avert such calamities is the duty of every freeman of every lover of his country; and it should also be his high privilege to Rouse yourselves, then, to action; organize—agitate these questions and rescue your country from present and impending evils.

Wm. Gordon Mack,
W. Brooke, Joint Secretaries.
Kingston, 31st July, 1849.

G. MOFFATT,
Chairman

The proceedings of the conference had been followed with much interest by the people throughout the province. To the Tory loyalists in particular, the patriotic resolution of the convention brought great satisfaction, for at one time they had almost feared lest the League should be committed to annexation. "We dreaded," said the Montreal Transcript "lest a handful of disappointed politicians should drag their party, and it might be the country, into the arms of the republican confederation. Had this folly been committed our opponents would have won a great triumph. Had the question been even seriously discussed, the result would have been most injurious to the country. But thanks to the good sense of the League, the question was shelved. Not even the sense of injustice could extort such a thought from an assembly of British colonists." The moderate conservatives were almost equally pleased at the successful formulation of a good party platform which promised to commend itself to the public by reason of its safe and statesman-like proposals for meeting the country's ills. The more radical members of the League were undoubtedly disappointed at the conservative attitude of the convention, but they comforted themselves with the thought that time was on their side and that their fellow members could not hold out much longer against the democratic tendencies of the day.

To the Reformers, the results of the convention were a great disappointment. They had hoped and even anticipated that the convention would either break up in discord or would commit itself to the policy of independence or annexation. But their prognostications were falsified. The convention had brought its deliberations to a happy conclusion, and demonstrated its loyalty to the empire, had set forth an attractive political program, had perfected its organization and was preparing for a vigorous campaign against the government. The policy of the League could no longer be flagrantly misrepresented and its supposed treasonable objects held up to scorn and ridicule. Henceforth the League had to be reckoned with as a serious and determined foe of the government.

Soon after the close of the convention, the committee on Union took steps to open up negotiations with the Maritime Provinces for the holding of an intercolonial conference. Owing to untoward circumstances considerable delay was experienced "in the preparation and publication of

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the information which it was deemed necessary to lay before the colonists of the Lower Provinces." The committee found themselves face to face with several serious difficulties at the very outset. The question of a federal union was in its nature essentially a ministerial question. The government alone, either on its own initiative or at the instance of the legislature, was properly in a position to make overtures to, or to open up negotiations with, the governments by the sea in regard to the holding of a conference and the framing of a plan of union. But the League was an unofficial body; it had not even a representative character. Since it had no standing, the governments of the Maritime Provinces might choose to treat its representations as those of an officious and unauthorized body of men.

The situation was rendered all the more difficult by reason of the fact that the League was essentially a Tory organization, whereas the governments of Nova Scotia and New Brunswick were of the Reform party. The attitude of the Hon. Joseph Howe was known to be hostile to the League. Soon after the formation of the League, he had addressed an open letter to the Hon. George Moffatt in which he condemned in unsparring terms the unpatriotic and subversive objects of the League. "We gather from the 'scholastic production' to which your name is attached that a convention called by yourself is to supersede the Parliament of Canada. This movement for dispensing with the services of the legislature, it seems to us Nova Scotians, very naturally generated the idea that the building in which it sat was an encumbrance; and that its books and papers, fraught with occult sciences and varied superstition, were dangerous to the progress of society. Lord Elgin, who stood in the way of Mr. Protector Moffatt, was pelted as a matter of course; and as the old parliament house was too small for the convention, it was very reasonable that the mob should exclaim: 'Burn it down, burn it down; why cumbereth it the ground?' The promulgation of your manifesto and the occurrence of subsequent events take us somewhat by surprise in this benighted province: but nothing appears more natural than the sequence.

"As you have appealed to North Americans in your address, and as the mob of Montreal have favored us with their interpretation of its contents, I am induced to inquire whether it be the true one, and whether pelting the Queen's representative, dispersing our parliaments and burning our books, are to be indispensable preliminaries in joining the British American League?"

Little could be expected from the Tories by the sea. The grant of responsible government in the Maritime Provinces had disorganized the Tories there almost as much as it had their fellow partisans in Canada. They had been thrown out of office and were experiencing the bitter humiliations of a beaten and discredited party. For the moment they were not in a position to render any material support to their friends in Canada, however desirous they might have been to cooperate. To the best of the Committee's knowledge there was not even a political association in Nova Scotia, Prince Edward Island or Newfoundland, with

which the Committee could deal. Personal communications were accordingly addressed "to prominent and influential citizens in Halifax" requesting them to cooperate with the Committee by disseminating throughout these provinces "the printed proceedings of the convention accompanied by circulars written for the purpose of inviting the action of those provinces on the proposition for a union of the colonies." But unfortunately, these efforts were not attended with any success.

The correspondence with New Brunswick, however, was productive of different results. At a meeting of citizens of St. John in July, a New Brunswick Colonial Association was formed, somewhat similar in character to the League. Resolutions were adopted calling for an investigation into the depressed economic condition of the colony, for which the free trade policy of the English government was held primarily responsible, praying for an address to the Queen and Imperial Parliament to secure other markets for colonial products on terms of reciprocity and recommending the opening up of negotiations with the other North American colonies for common action in the matter. The Association also determined to appoint delegates to attend a meeting of the League at Kingston in August. This meeting, however, was postponed to a later date.

The rapid growth of the annexation movement alarmed the leaders of the League and hurried on the negotiations of the Committee. Business conditions on the Lower St. Lawrence, especially in Montreal, were apparently growing steadily worse. A large part of the mercantile community, including many of the commercial and industrial leaders of the city, had lost faith in the country and were looking to the United States for a means of escape from financial ruin. Many of the annexationist members of the League had withdrawn upon the decision of the convention to stand staunchly by the British connection. Economic distress now drove a still larger number of members, who were naturally British in their sympathies, into the open arms of the annexationists. A large proportion of the officers of the Montreal branch dropped out of the association. In Quebec, Mr. Wilson found himself unable to call a meeting of the local association because all the executive save himself had gone over to the annexationists. Throughout the Eastern Townships, secessions were almost equally numerous. Fortunately, in Upper Canada, the bulk of the members remained true to their principles of loyalty. Nevertheless the withdrawal of so many prominent members convinced the Federal Union Committee that some immediate steps must need be taken to carry out the primary object of the League, if that body was to justify or maintain its existence.

As there appeared but little prospect of a favorable response from Nova Scotia, Prince Edward Island and Newfoundland, the Committee resolved to proceed with the holding of a conference at Montreal with the Colonial Association of New Brunswick. To this conference, the Colonial Association sent two members, Hon. John Robertson and Hon. C. Simmonds; while the League was represented by Messrs. Gowan, Crawford, Wilson, Montgomerie and Gamble. The conference took place

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at a most inopportune moment, immediately after the appearance of the annexation manifesto which had aroused the inhabitants of the city to an unwonted degree of excitement. As a consequence, but little interest was taken in the proceedings of the conference. The press scarcely deigned to pay it any attention. In truth, the citizens of Montreal had lost faith in the League and looked upon the idea of a federal union as a mere chimera.

The first meeting of the delegates took place on Oct. 12th. Mr. T. Wilson was chosen chairman. At the very outset, the conference found itself in difficulty for neither party was prepared to do business. All that the delegates could do was to talk matters over in a general way. The representatives of the Colonial Association "were not authorized to act definitely but only to ascertain the views and the opinions of the British American League" and to report thereon to the association. "We were disappointed," the delegates declared on their return, "in finding that the League or Committee were not prepared with any specific plan of proceeding and had nothing definite to submit for discussion. We stated that we had attended upon the invitation of the League and were anxious to be informed of the course intended to be pursued and especially with regard to the terms upon which they proposed to unite the British American colonies and whether they desired a federal or legislative union."

The two principal questions which engaged the attention of the conference were the economic condition of the colonies and an intercolonial union. In regard to the first of these questions the delegates unanimously resolved:

1. "That the commercial evils now oppressing the British American colonies are to be traced principally to the abandonment by Great Britain of her former colonial policy, thus depriving them of the preference previously enjoyed in the British market, without securing any equivalent advantages in any other market."

2. "That these colonies cannot now remain in their present position without the prospect of immediate ruin and that it is the duty of the Imperial government either (1st) to restore to the colonies a preference in the British market over foreign countries, or (2nd) to cause to be opened to them the markets of foreign countries and more especially the United States, upon terms of reciprocity, one or other of which is considered indispensable to the continuance of our present political connection with Great Britain."

Upon the second and more important question of an intercolonial union it was resolved:

"That a union of the British American provinces on mutually advantageous and finally arranged terms, with the concession from the mother country of enlarged powers of self government (including the unrestricted privilege of making laws to regulate and protect their commercial and industrial interests and to reduce the expenditure of the

civil governments to an adequate scale) appears essential to the prosperity of the provinces."

The discussion of the resolution covered a wide territory. It ranged over the whole field of the social life and constitutional position of the colonies, in addition to the more immediate questions of the expediency of a union and the best form of a constitution for the proposed federation. According to the report of the New Brunswick delegates "it appeared that among other reasons in addition to the influence of the united action of all the colonies why they should be united, an opinion existed that the French Canadian population possessed an undue influence in the representative body entirely disproportionate to their wealth and intelligence, an opinion in which all present concurred; and next to acquire the right to regulate the trade, revenues, post office, etc., and the expenses of the government. The League were opposed to a federal union on account of the great expense of such a measure. We frankly told them on behalf of New Brunswick that we could not recommend a legislative union of the colonies unless Canada would consent that the lower colonies should have sufficient influence in one of the deliberative branches of the legislature (the legislative council) to enable them at all times to interpose an effective check to all measures which tended in any way to their detriment. This, upon full discussion, was on all sides considered reasonable and a proposition that Canada ought not and would not oppose.

"There was a great difference of opinion in respect to the details of carrying out any great plan for these provinces, but should a union be really desired by all the colonies, all their conflicting opinions could be easily reconciled. We did not give any decided opinion as to the course which New Brunswick would ultimately pursue and made no pledges whatever."

It was further agreed that deputations from the British American League and the New Brunswick Colonial Association should meet at Halifax, on as early a date as possible, with such gentlemen from the other provinces as might attend "for the purpose of maturing some general plan for uniting the North American provinces" and for restoring their prosperity. The results of the convention were to be submitted to the public of the several provinces for popular approval. The committee of the League likewise agreed to call a second convention of the League to deal with the various questions which had been raised at the conference.

A call was accordingly issued for a convention of the League in Toronto, early in November. All the old issues of the last Convention were again brought up and threshed out in the several local associations. But there were two outstanding questions upon which it was felt that the League could no longer defer a decisive expression of opinion. The recent course of events in Montreal had forced the annexation question most prominently to the front. With annexation was closely associated in the public mind the question of elective institutions. Upon these two

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issues the election of delegates was generally contested. The progressives and the stand-patters again locked arms, this time in a fight to the finish.

Just prior to the assembling of the convention, Mr. J. W. Gamble came out with an open letter to the members of the League in which, after mildly deprecating the policy of annexation on political grounds, he strongly urged the advantages of a protective tariff and elective institutions. Annexation, he admitted, would be preferable to the existing humiliating position of the colonists "as hewers of wood and drawers of water to Great Britain." It would undoubtedly draw capital into the country from the United States but it would not promote the economic independence of the province. "It would merely effect a change of masters by subjecting the industries of the colony to the domination of the United States in place of Great Britain."

The outcome of the election of delegates, so far as the question of annexation was concerned, was never in doubt. A few annexationists were chosen from Lower Canada, but in Canada West the associations came out decisively against annexation. Several of the associations, notably that of Grimsby, specifically instructed their delegates to oppose it at the convention. The selection of Toronto, the center of loyalist sentiment, as the seat of the convention, killed any prospect of a favorable consideration of any project looking to a separation from the mother country.

The battle over the question of elective officials was much more evenly contested. The spirit of democracy had been gaining strength throughout the League. It was no longer possible for the ultra Tories to wave the elective principle aside as a dangerous American innovation. The progressive wing of the party made gains in all directions and came up to the conference in greatly increased numbers.

The conference assembled in Toronto November 1st, 1849, with approximately seventy delegates in attendance. The decided decrease in the number of delegates as compared with the first convention marked a decline in the influence and prestige of the League. The delegates were again a heterogeneous collection of men representing almost all shades of political thought from Toryism to Radicalism, from passionate loyalty to annexation sentiment. Additional interest was lent to the proceedings by reason of the expectation that the convention would deal with the recent annexation movement in Lower Canada and would present a definite policy for meeting the growing dissatisfaction of the country.

At the opening of the convention, Mr. Gamble, who played somewhat the part of floor leader of the House, introduced a series of resolutions calling for remedial measures to allay the political and social discontent of the day. The first of these resolutions luridly pictured the woeful condition of the province. It set out by reciting at length that "exciting and irritating political questions involving the dismemberment of this colony from the empire are openly advocated engendering discontent, discord and fierce political animosities" and concluded by pro-

phesying "anarchy, confusion and civil strife" unless some judicious measures were adopted to calm the unrest of the people. This resolution occasioned a long and animated discussion of the whole political outlook of the colony concerning which the most widely divergent opinions found expression. Some of the speakers objected to the insertion of the reference to the burning of the Parliament buildings without some explanation of the causes leading up to it; others protested against the condemnation of the Montreal manifesto and the censure of the annexationists as likely "to cause several gentlemen belonging to the convention to withdraw." Several of the speakers frankly admitted that the province could not go on much longer as it was, that annexationist sentiment was growing rapidly and that a political union with the United States might needs be accepted as a dernier ressort. To obviate these criticisms, some of the objectionable clauses were expunged, but the resolution was still found so unsatisfactory that Messrs. Gamble and Gowen thought it best to combine forces and recast the whole resolution. A substitute resolution was accordingly presented which declared that "It is the opinion of this convention that these colonies cannot continue in their present political or commercial state." This resolution was carried without opposition.

The second resolution of Mr. Gamble calling upon the Governor General to dissolve the assembly with a view to a general election was withdrawn after some discussion as most of the delegates were opposed to appealing to Lord Elgin for anything, so bitter was the hostility to his Lordship.

The third resolution declared that, since the reforms determined upon at the Kingston convention, namely, protection, retrenchment, and a union of the provinces could not be accomplished without a change in the constitution, it was expedient that the Legislature should authorize the holding of a general convention of delegates from all the provinces to draw up a new constitution for the British American colonies.

In introducing the motion, Mr. Gamble set forth in considerable detail the advantages to the province of a protective tariff. His argument upon this point contained nothing new; it was largely a re-statement of the views expressed in his recent open letter to the League. But on the question of a federal union of the provinces his views had undergone considerable modification since the Kingston convention, for he now came out enthusiastically for an intercolonial union. In his judgment, a large national policy was demanded to stimulate the imagination of the Canadian public. If, he declared, they had a federal government, no more would be heard of annexation, for the province would soon become as prosperous as the United States. An intercolonial conference should be called at once for the country was "on the verge of a revolution." He suggested the partition of Canada into three provinces, which when united with Nova Scotia, New Brunswick, Prince Edward Island and Newfoundland would form a strong, well-balanced federation of seven states. The federal government should be endowed with a rather limited range of legislative powers. To the provinces there should

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be reserved all residuary powers and the entire management of their local affairs. He further proposed to amend the constitution by providing for an elective legislative council and an elective governor. He wanted a governor with a real power of veto and a Legislative Council which would be an effectual check on the Legislative Assembly. These constitutional changes, together with the policies of protection and retrenchment, would, he was confident, bring peace and prosperity to the country and ward off absorption into the neighboring republic.

Mr. Dixon of London moved in amendment that the League should draw up a scheme of union for submission first of all to the people of Canada and the other British provinces, and subsequently, if adopted, to be referred by the several legislatures to the imperial parliament for confirmation.

Mr. Vankoughnet was unable to accept either the original motion or the amendment. He was opposed to the resolution on constitutional grounds because he did not believe that the legislature had the power to delegate authority to the people to appoint delegates to a constitutional convention. He objected to the amendment on the ground that the members of the convention had not sufficient information before them on which to draft a constitution. Messrs. Wilson and Duggan supported the amendment because they believed that such a course would hasten matters and enable the League to lay a definite scheme before the other provinces in case of an intercolonial conference. The New Brunswick delegates, as was pointed out by the former speaker, had expressly declared that the Maritime provinces were looking to the League for political leadership and expected this convention to produce a feasible scheme of union. Mr. Duggan voiced the opinion that there would have been no annexation manifesto if the Kingston convention had acted boldly and had drawn up a definite plan of union. Mr. Gowan and President Moffatt, on the other hand, maintained that the only effective way of reaching the English government was through the local Legislature, the sole constitutional organ which could speak in the name of the province. If the Legislature refused to act, then, in the opinion of the President, the League ought to petition the Governor-General to dissolve the Assembly so as to afford the country an opportunity of expressing itself on the program of the League. If, however, the convention desired to play a more important part in the federal movement, it could draw up a scheme of federation as suggested in Mr. Dixon's amendment. Upon a division, the amendment was declared carried.

Later a resolution was proposed by Mr. Vankoughnet calling upon the local Legislature to take up the question of federation and providing for the appointment of a committee of the League to visit Halifax to take further steps to promote a union of the provinces. Some action, he maintained, should be taken at once on the report of the Federal Union committee. It would be difficult to get men to go to Halifax at this season of the year, but the convention should at least authorize delegates to go. He believed that the local parliament should take up the subject, but he objected to the procedure by which it was proposed that this should

he done. Mr. Dixon, however, opposed the resolution on the ground that the convention, in adopting his amendment, had declared that it was necessary to lay down the principles on which the union should be based before either the people or the Legislature were consulted on the matter. In view of this objection, Mr. Vankoughnet withdrew his motion.

Mr. Dixon thereupon obtained leave to present a series of resolutions setting forth in vague and ill matured terms the general principles upon which the proposed union should be constituted. Briefly stated they were as follows: first, a guarantee of the full enjoyment of social, religious and political freedom; second, absolute equality of interprovincial rights; third, unrestricted free trade between the provinces; fourth, the development of a spirit of common nationality by the nationalization of commerce and the agencies or instruments of public credit by the enactment of a general code of criminal law and of uniform laws in respect to currency and bankruptcy, by the establishment of a well regulated system of postal communication and by a general willingness on the part of the provinces to yield minor advantages for the public good.

At the same time, Mr. Strachan presented the rough outline of a federal constitution for the British American colonies. It provided for a Viceroy to be appointed by the Crown, two Houses of Parliament, two of which were assigned a wide range of legislative powers, and a Supreme Court with both federal and general appellate jurisdiction. Such a union, he contended, would work wonders for the people of Canada; it would insure a community of feeling as well as interest among the provinces, call forth a higher and more enlightened policy, attract a better class of men into politics, identify the union with the mother land and prevent its attachment to the United States, strengthen the nation in peace and war, diminish the influence of the French, prevent the unfortunate divergence of colonial views at the Imperial Court, increase domestic and external commerce, develop the vast natural resources of the country, and produce a higher moral and religious consciousness among the people. Unless some such measure were adopted, Canada, he concluded, would be lost to Great Britain.

To bring matters to a conclusion, Mr. Vankoughnet revived his resolution, minus, however, the clause in regard to the intervention of the local legislature. The resolution read as follows: "That it be resolved that in accordance with the suggestions contained in the report of the conference on the union already adopted, and inasmuch as time does not admit of this conference in its present session digesting the principles of a constitution for the union, a deputation of gentlemen be selected by the central society who shall be requested to meet in the city of Halifax in Nova Scotia, at some early and convenient date to be fixed by themselves, such gentlemen as may then and there assemble from the other provinces to discuss the terms of the union" and that all papers submitted to the convention be laid before the conference "that they may prepare a report to be submitted to the central society and to this or any future convention of the League as also to the public, containing such information

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A series of resolutions dealing with the political and economic conditions of the colony were presented by Mr. Wilson in a rambling speech, in which he managed to touch upon a whole variety of subjects including the status of the Governor-General, the mode of electing the Legislative Council, and a political union with the United States. The first of the resolutions declared that "it is essential to the welfare of the colony and its future good government that a constitution should be framed in unison with the wishes of the people and suited to the growing importance and intelligence of the country, and that such constitution should embrace a union of the British American colonies on mutually advantageous and fairly arranged terms, with the concession from the Mother Country of enlarged powers of self government." The resolution was adopted without opposition.

The second resolution dealt with the fiscal question: "that under the altered commercial policy of Great Britain by which the differential duties in favor of colonial produce have been largely repealed and the agricultural and commercial interests of British dependencies subjected to the severest competition in her markets with foreign rivals, independent in their legislative action, it is obviously unjust to perpetuate the imperial power to interfere with the proceedings of the colonial government adopted to foster and advance our social and industrial welfare." The spirited tone of the resolution awakened the suspicion of some of the ultra-Tories who saw, or thought they saw, in it a sinister design to lead "the convention step by step a little further than they would any of them like to go, indeed, to absolute independence." The effect of the resolution, according to Mr. O'Brien, "would be to prohibit the interference of the Imperial Government in our legislation." He moved in amendment a declaratory resolution to the effect that Canada would be driven "to seek the welfare of her own people irrespective of British interests or influences" unless Great Britain changed her fiscal policy and opened up for the colonies the markets of foreign countries, especially that of the United States. The amendment was summarily rejected. Mr. Benjamin thereupon moved in amendment that "if the interests of the British people will not admit of protection to colonial products in the markets of Great Britain, then it will become not merely the duty but the inevitable necessity of colonists to create at home or to seek abroad a market or markets for the products of their own industry," and that "in order to enable us to regulate these markets to our own advantage and for our own safety, it is necessary that we should obtain from Great Britain the control of the river and gulf of St. Lawrence and the power of imposing imposts upon British or foreign goods entering our markets." This amendment was likewise defeated after an animated discussion in which the authorities of Downing Street came in for severe criticism from some of the more radical members. The meddlesome interference of the Colonial Office, it was declared, had become intolerable. Nothing would contribute so much to

bring about a spirit of contentment within the province and to forestall the further growth of annexationist sentiment as the grant of complete self government to the colony. The original resolution was adopted without a division.

The crucial question of an elective Legislative Council was again raised by Mr. Wilson on a resolution "That having regard to recent events which have proved that the present mode of constituting a Legislative Council is dangerous to its independence, and in view of the union of the British American provinces, it is the opinion of the convention that this branch of the government should be elected." Although advocating the adoption of a more democratic form of government, Mr. Wilson was careful to emphasize the real conservative character of the proposed constitutional changes. He condemned at the outset the existing ultra democratic form of government, in which the Governor and Legislative Council were practically deprived of any real authority either legislation or administration. An arbitrary unicameral system of government had been set up in Canada in place of the well balanced constitution of England. He strongly favored a permanent Legislative Council, one-eighth of whose members should retire each year. In order to assure its integrity and stability, both the electors of and candidates for the Council should possess a property qualification. In a subsequent statement he endeavored to correct the natural but erroneous impression that he proposed to elect the Council by popular vote. He preferred on the contrary, that it should be elected by the municipalities and corporations of the province. Such a body, he was confident, would prove a much more conservative chamber than a nominated council whose members were dependent upon the ministry of the day. He was prepared to carry the elective principle even further and to apply it to the office of governor. The governor, he proposed, should be chosen by an electoral college made up of the Legislative Councillors and an equal number of members from the Legislative Assembly.

Over this question the progressive and conservative wings of the convention again lined up in hostile array. The leaders of the convention were about equally divided upon the issue. The struggle was waged the more fiercely because the ultra Tories were firmly convinced that a great fundamental principle was at stake and not simply a difference of opinion as to the best mode of selecting an upper chamber. The real question at issue to them was whether the constitution should be republican or monarchical in form. All the arguments of the last convention were again threshed over; on the one hand, the abuse of the royal prerogative, the subserviency of a nominated House and the natural conservatism of an elective chamber; on the other hand, the superiority of English constitutional principles and the danger of American institutions. The leaders of both factions stood forth as the staunch defenders of the British connection against the designs of the annexationists. By the progressive speakers it was urged that the principle of popular election would not impair the loyalty of the people since history had shown that the colonies with the freest constitutions were the last to

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revolt. Moreover, the experience of the early American colonies conclusively proved that the elective system was not incompatible with English principles of government. The principle of popular election had worked well in the district councils and there was every reason to believe that it would prove equally beneficial when applied to the legislature. A republican form of government, Mr. Gamble declared, was inevitable in Canada by reason of its proximity to the United States. The local constitution must be made progressive in order to stop the mouths of demagogues who were continually harping upon the larger measure of liberty enjoyed in the United States as compared with Canada. Unless some such measure were adopted, Canada would inevitably join the United States.

There was, however, a difference of opinion among the supporters of an elective council over the question as to the mode of its election and as to whether it should be a democratic or a conservative body. The more radical members of the convention stood for the principle of direct popular election and a democratic chamber, while the more moderate speakers preferred an indirect system of election as more likely to produce a strong, substantial House, representative of the wealth and social influence of the community.

Some of the delegates sought to tie up the question of a legislative council with the question of an intercolonial union. They desired to incorporate the principle of parliamentary election into the organization of a federal Upper House. Mr. Vankoughnet was strongly opposed to the popular election of legislative councillors. He had in view a chamber similar to the American Senate in the mode of its constitution and the personnel of its membership. An interesting attempt was made by Mr. Dixon to adapt the royal prerogative to a federal Upper Chamber. He moved an amendment to the effect that the legislative council should be chosen by the local legislatures subject to a right of veto on the part of the Crown in case of the selection of an objectionable member. But the amendment found no seconder. The proviso was unacceptable both to the radical members of the convention and to the federationists; it was incompatible alike with the principle of popular election and with the true principles of federalism. But the first section of the amendment, relative to the election of the legislative councillors by the local assemblies, found favor with several of the delegates, and especially those who were most heartily in favor of intercolonial union.

To the ultra Tories, on the other hand, the principle of popular election was a dangerous American innovation incompatible with the British constitution. The supporters of the elective principle were accused of going too far and too fast in their agitation; they were demanding what Papineau and MacKenzie had been punished for asking. This proposal had been advanced, according to Mr. Murney, "out of deference to the annexationists at the convention." It was in truth an instalment of annexation. If the principle of popular election were once accepted, it would soon be demanded in case of the governor and judges. Great Britain, it was contended, would throw off the colonies

if they adopted such a revolutionary constitution. An amendment by Mr. Murney affirming that it was inexpedient to change the constitution of the colony and disapproving of the annexation was lost by a large majority. A subsequent amendment by Mr. Min, Grand Master of the Orange Order, which aimed to secure the independence of the upper chamber and to prevent the abuse of power by providing that "the number of members should be limited to constantly maintained at half the number of members of the legislative assembly" was carried by a small majority; 34 ayes, 30 noes.

The vote was altogether too close to be decisive. The progressive faction was dissatisfied and on the verge of revolt. For the moment was feared that the labors of the convention might be lost. In order to prevent an open schism, a resolution was presented by Mr. Langton postponing the final determination of the issue "with a view to the selection of branches of the British American League pronouncing their opinion and instructing their delegates upon the question of the concessive elective institutions in Canada as an appanage of the British Crown. The convention had reached an impasse. A reference of the whole question back to the associations seemed the easiest and simplest way out of the difficulty. The resolution offered a fairly satisfactory compromise. It held out to the progressives the hope of ultimate triumph in the legislative associations; it assured to the ultra Tories the maintenance inviolable of the British connection. The progressives, in effect, were permitted to carry on their agitation for elective institutions, but it was determined in advance that the agitation must be strictly loyal and should not be turned to unpatriotic purposes or made to serve the ends of the annexationists. The convention had talked itself out. The members were desirous of returning home as soon as possible. The resolution was adopted unanimously without debate.

The question of annexation was again the most absorbing question before the convention. It came cropping up sometimes fittingly, but usually in the most unexpected and irrelevant manner, throughout the stages of the proceedings. The recent events at Montreal had made the leading issue before the province and the convention could not without escape passing an opinion upon it. Several of the leaders of the convention were convinced that a mistake had been made at Kingston in smothering the question and that it would have been better if the League had then come out with a clear declaration against annexation. The equivocal silence of the first convention was, in the opinion of some of the delegates, the primary reason for the summoning of the second. The immediate object of the convention, according to Mr. Murney, "was to tranquilize the public mind by a declaration against the manifesto. In any case it was expedient to throw the question open to general debate. Now that a majority of the annexationists had withdrawn from the League, there was less reason to fear the result of a frank discussion of the issue. Moreover, it was only fair to permit those who, either openly or secretly, sympathized with the annexation movement to voice their opinions as to the best means of dealing with the ills of the province. It

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could do no harm to allow them to air their grievances since there was no doubt but that the convention was overwhelmingly in favor of the maintenance of the British connection. To attempt to suppress all reference to the question would only outrage their feelings at a time when the exigencies of party politics recommended, in the words of President Moffatt, "the wisdom of cultivating the most cordial relations with the annexationists with a view to joint action against the government at the next election."

The question came up at the very opening of the convention on a resolution of Mr. Gamble relative to the condition of the province. Everywhere, Mr. Gamble declared, the people were talking of separation and annexation, and the government seemed powerless or unwilling to suppress discussion. Although he regretted the appearance of the manifesto, he hoped that the convention would be allowed full liberty to discuss the question. The leaders of the League "regarded it as a dernier ressort and were not going to back the question." Several delegates spoke favorably of the calm and moderate tone of the manifesto and frankly admitted that annexation would come, if not at once, at least in the not distant future. "It was probably the only remedy that the country would finally adopt." For his part, Mr. Hamilton declared, he did not wish to prate of loyalty when the farmers of the province were suffering from the British connection, whereas their American cousins were prospering. Similar sentiments were expressed by Messrs. Gowan, Wilson and Duggan. The question of separation, it was contended, had been reduced by England to a purely commercial basis; and since England had sacrificed the interests of her colonies for selfish reasons, it was not unpatriotic for Canadians, likewise, to consider the question from a business point of view. Personally, Mr. Wilson stated, "his sense of loyalty was second to that of the interests of his family." Unless England reversed her fiscal policy, there was every probability that the Canadian public would demand a union with the United States. The question of annexation also attracted more than ordinary interest, as we have seen, in the debates on a federation of the provinces and on an elective council.

But the loyalists of the convention were not satisfied with a simple denunciation of annexation in the course of the debate: they insisted upon committing the convention to the maintenance of the British connection. A resolution therefore was introduced by Mr. Miller which read: "that it is a matter of regret to this convention that the subject of a separation of this colony from the motherland and annexation to the United States of America has been openly advocated by a portion of the press and inhabitants of this province; and this convention unhesitatingly records its entire disapprobation of this course and calls upon all well wishers of this country to discountenance it by every means in their power."

The purpose of the resolution, Mr. Miller declared, was to clear the convention of the prevalent suspicion that the League, if not favorable to separation, was at least not opposed to it. This was the more neces-

sary since some of the delegates were desirous of hushing up the discussion with a view to the further dissemination of the erroneous impression as to the neutrality of the convention. Should such an impression be allowed to gain further currency it would seriously militate against the usefulness of the League. Notwithstanding the professed peacefulness of the annexationists, there was not, he maintained, the slightest probability of the peaceful consummation of their policy. "They were solving the bonds of society and revolutionizing the country in the purpose of maintaining the great principles of civil and religious liberty, but for the mere chance of commercial advantage." Anne he contended, would not redound to the great economic advantage of the Canadian public as was so loudly claimed by the annexationists. It would sacrifice the agriculturists of the province to the preponderance of the annexationists of the United States. He and the annexationists of perverting the views of the English government and people in regard to the separation of the colonies. The leading members of the Liberal party in England were not anti-imperialists. They had never disclaimed any intent or desire to hold the colonies in an unwarlike subjection. They were not anxious to get rid of the oversea dominions in proposing to extend to the colonies a larger measure of local autonomy. He did not agree with many of his fellow Conservatives that annexation was a mere matter of time; on the contrary, he was convinced that it would develop a deeper sense of attachment to the Mother Land, such as had appeared during the war of 1812.

Mr. R. Macdonald supported the resolution in a ranting pro-British speech. There was not, he believed, a single member of the convention who was an out and out annexationist although there were several who were suspected of annexation sympathies. He hoped to reclaim many of the annexationists (some of whom had signed the recent manifesto of pique and others with a view to forcing the English government to take notice of the sad condition of the colony) by holding out to them the prospect of the future prosperity of the country. The vaunted prosperity of the United States was fictitious, the result of heavy borrowings of English capital. It would indeed be ungrateful for Canada to secede at the moment when England had granted to them the full right of self government. Annexation would be disastrous to the interests of Canada. They would lose control of the public lands, the customs duties and the postal system of the province. The liberal grants from the imperial treasury would be cut off. Taxation would be increased and they would be burdened with a part of the United States debt. Even though England should consent to a peaceful separation, which was most improbable, the Canadian people, he declared, would never agree to convert the free soil of the province into a slave state. In conclusion he appealed to both political parties "to clear their skirts of the annexationists" and "to unite in pressing upon the British government the necessity of procuring an entrance into the American market for Canadian products.

At this point, Messrs. Gamble and Mack attempted a diversion by

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making an attack upon the policy of the English government in inflicting gross indignities, both of a political and economic character, upon the loyal people of Canada. The chief danger of annexation, the latter declared, arose out of the supercilious attitude of the English government toward the colonies and the fatuous policy of the Manchester School. An amendment was proposed by Mr. Hamilton "that it is wholly inexpedient to discuss the question of annexation at this convention, the loyalty of whose members cannot be questioned and amongst whom as a body there is found no individual to advocate any such obnoxious principle." In his judgment, the convention was fully justified in using the threat of annexation as a means of bringing the English government and people to a proper sense of their responsibility to the colony, a view which was largely shared by Mr. J. Duggan and other delegates.

But the convention was suspicious of the amendment. It refused to be diverted from its purpose by the clever attempt of some of the speakers to arouse the smouldering resentment of the delegates against the English government. The great majority of the members were convinced that the League could not afford to shelve the question of annexation again, but must now frankly declare its decision. The amendment was accordingly defeated by an overwhelming majority, only four or five votes being cast in its favor. The original resolution was thereupon adopted unanimously.

The vote of the convention accurately reflected the loyal spirit of the League. There were a few extremists in that body: on the one hand, a small coterie of secret annexationists who would have liked to incite their fellow members to open hostility to the English government; on the other, a group of ultra loyalists, like Colonel Playfair, who would have gladly suppressed any reference whatever to the question of annexation as involving a reflection upon the loyalty of the Canadian people. But the great body of delegates were willing to admit that the subject was worthy of serious consideration as a possible solution of the ills of the country. Yet they were altogether too patriotic to think of adopting such a policy so long as there was any reasonable possibility of saving the country in any other way. The decisive vote of the convention settled the question for the League. Henceforth the annexationists desisted from any active efforts to influence its policy.

The last day of the convention was given up mainly to routine business. A resolution, however, was unanimously adopted to the effect that the retention of Lord Elgin as Governor General was injurious to the interests of the province and calculated to undermine the loyalty of the Canadian people. A resolution was also agreed to in favor of increasing the membership of the Executive Council of the League to twenty members. Mr. Moffatt was strongly urged to reconsider his resignation of the Presidency. The election of officers resulted in several changes, the chief of which was the substitution of Messrs. Gamble and Benjamin for the Hon. W. Allan and the Hon. W. Morris in the list of vice-presidents.

A review of the work of the convention reveals the fact that but

little was accomplished. The former political platform was a condemnation of annexation was the chief contribution of the convention. No substantial progress was made with the question of union. The delegates had nothing definite before them; they even attempt to formulate a plan of union or to prepare instructions for their representatives to the Halifax conference. They left the subject in the same nebulous state in which they found it. The debates and discussions covered much the same ground as at the convention. The debates bear witness to the fact that there was no growth of democratic sentiment among the members, but otherwise a consensus of opinion was practically unchanged. The convention of mediocre, censorious men. A signal lack of leadership and statesmanship was displayed throughout the proceedings. The convention was engaged in fighting out its own internal differences rather than in finding a remedy for the evils of the country. The delegates must have returned home with a sense of keen disappointment. They had not succeeded in settling their domestic troubles and had even failed to formulate a constructive policy for the rehabilitation of the party and the salvation of the country.

Immediately after the close of the convention, Mr. T. Wilson of Quebec, addressed an open letter to John Redpath, President of the Montreal Annexation Association, in which he appealed to that gentleman to drop the agitation for annexation until the policy of the League had had a fair trial. "All are agreed that we cannot remain as we are and many that annexation may be necessary, but only as a last resort. But the appeal only called forth a sarcastic reply as "to the futility of the various nostrums" which were occupying the attention of the League. At a subsequent meeting of the Montreal association, the question of the relation of the League to the annexationists was brought up by President Moffatt. "He deemed the expression of an opinion on annexation movement premature at present but thought that the annexationists might have continued to act with them." He hoped that the League was far distant when the colonists would seriously think of annexation but if the unfavorable policy of England should force them to do so, they would consider the question entirely as a Canadian issue. But before reaching any final decision, they ought first to ascertain what Great Britain could and would do for the colonies.

The ensuing discussion showed that there was some difference of opinion among the members as to the proper attitude of the League toward the annexationists, but almost all the speakers expressed themselves as strongly opposed to annexation. The election of officers resulted in the selection of a pronounced pro-British executive, the former annexation officers being quietly dropped. By this decisive action the Montreal Association finally freed itself from the suspicion of annexation proclivities. Several of the local branches of the League in Upper Canada likewise took occasion to express "their most decided disapproval of all attempts being made to sever these British American provinces

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inces from the mother country with a view to joining the Republic of the United States of America."

The question of an elective legislative council was duly referred to the several branches of the League with the result that a majority of the local associations declared in favor of the elective principle. The rising tide of democracy had undermined the old Tory party. But the victory of the democratic section of the party failed to bring peace. Although defeated, the Family Compact did not give up the fight, but determined to prevent, if possible, the calling of another convention to ratify the decision of the branch associations. The struggle for political mastery still went on within the party. Every day it became more difficult for the hostile factions to co-operate. Torn by internal dissensions and weakened by the withdrawal of several of its most influential officers, the League could no longer command the confidence of its members.

Early in May the central committee of the League issued a manifesto in which they called upon the members "to urge our Legislature by petition to pass an address to our Governor-General and both Houses of Parliament praying them to authorize by an imperial act the people, to whom they profess to have already granted self government, to hold a general convention of delegates for the purpose of considering and proposing a constitution for the government of this province and with power to act in concert with delegates from such of the other British provinces in North America as may be desirous of forming a federal union with Canada, such constitution to be afterward submitted to the people for ratification." In addition, they again strongly advocated the advantages of a policy of protection for Canadian industries and the necessity for retrenchment in public expenditures, if the province was to recover its lost prosperity.

This manifesto marks the end of the activity of the League. Its propaganda had already ceased. The provincial executive was composed of conflicting elements. It had no outstanding leaders and no effective policy to present. It had nothing to show for all its efforts. The Reform government, as was to be expected, paid no attention to its recommendations. The executive committee, in fact, was powerless to take any further steps to carry out the program of the League, and allowed matters to drift helplessly along. The League had lost prestige; its proceedings were no longer a subject of public interest and discussion. Even the Reform press ceased to poke fun at "the Children of the Sun." It was useless to ridicule or abuse a dying organization. The local associations were left to their own devices and soon fell into a state of apathy and decay. It is impossible to trace out the records of the disappearance of the League. The process of demise was unnoteworthy. The League was never formally disbanded. The membership simply fell off quietly but rapidly so that by the end of the year the League had died of inanition. When the general election came on in 1850 the members of the League were found once again lined up with their comrades in the Conservative party. The League as a separate organization played no part whatever in that campaign. Even its political program was almost en-

tirely neglected. It had been but an ephemeral body and its history was soon forgotten.

The causes of the failure of the League are not difficult to find. In its very origin it was an artificial organization and it never had the character of a non-partisan body, in reality it was an attempt to reconstruct the Tory party on a more popular basis. The attempt rent the League in twain. The conservative and democratic wings of the organization would not willingly coalesce. They stood on different principles and maintained different ideals. The Tory wing of the party always looked upon its opponents with a certain amount of scorn and suspicion as inferior in social and political standing and tainted with republicanism and other revolutionary designs. Few leaders of the Tory party identified themselves with the League, they dropped out of any active participation in its affairs. The democratic section of the League, on the other hand, had no sympathy with the leaders or policy of the Family Compact. They desired the overthrow of the old regime and to create a new political party in accordance with the democratic spirit of the time. The two wings of the League were too evenly balanced in numbers and influence for the party to dominate the other. The struggle between them was indecisive and could not go on indefinitely without soon destroying the League.

Unfortunately for the League it failed to develop able leaders to deal with the complicated situation. The President and the other executive officers were men of honorable character and influence in the province but they were neither astute politicians nor statesmen; they were experienced men of mediocre talent who had played but a minor part in the political life of the province. They could not make a commanding appeal to the general public or call forth the devoted services which were gladly rendered to a great party leader. The Hon. John A. Macdonald was the only outstanding member of the League and he failed to take a prominent part in its affairs which his preeminent ability and political astuteness would have warranted.

The policy of the League likewise failed to arouse popular enthusiasm or public interest. Although attractive in appearance, the scheme of a federal union, upon which the reputation of the League chiefly depended, fell signally flat on the electorate. The general public were not prepared to accept offhand such a far reaching constitutional proposition. They were almost entirely in the dark as to the national significance and importance of the proposed federation since no preliminary efforts had been made to educate them as to the advantages of an intercolonial union. Even the League, as we have seen, brought forward the scheme without any adequate consideration of the feasibility and character of the suggested federation. The scheme was presented and adopted as a political makeshift rather than as a careful piece of constructive statesmanship.

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ship. In truth, it must be confessed that the plan of a federal union was probably due as much to the desire to forestall the anticipated action of the provincial government along similar lines, as to a conviction on the part of the convention as to its merits as a truly national policy. The convention was under the immediate necessity of formulating an alternative policy to the popular demand for reciprocity or annexation.

There was at the time a rumor to the effect that the British government was about to propose a plan of union. Earl Grey, Secretary of State for the colonies, was a well known federationist. The previous year he had brought forth the suggestion of a general assembly for the Australian colonies and it was generally believed in official circles that he favored some similar arrangement for the North American provinces. The action of the provincial government in sending two of the ministers to the Maritime provinces to negotiate a reciprocal trade agreement seemed to confirm the belief that a federal union was on the tapis. Several of the papers of the Maritime provinces lent credence to the report that the question of federation had been officially discussed by the representatives of the several governments, though with what result was not yet known to the public. These rumors were not without influence upon the members of the convention in predisposing them to accept the policy of federation. They hoped to dish their political opponents by a previous declaration in favor of a federal union. But the shrewd plans of the League miscarried owing to the apathy of the Canadian public and the suspicion of the people of the Maritime provinces who would have nothing to do with the project. The proposal to hold an inter-colonial conference was treated with indifference in every quarter and in a few months time the whole scheme of federation was practically forgotten, though Messrs. Perry and Sherwood attempted to revive it somewhat later.

The policy of colonial protection did not prove as attractive as had been anticipated. In some of the larger commercial centres it was received with considerable favor but in the rural districts it was generally regarded with suspicion. The farmers of the province were much more interested in the efforts of the government to secure an immediate market for their products in the United States than in the promise held out by the League of the future development of a home market by means of a protective policy. Moreover, the recent adoption by Great Britain of the principle of free trade had shaken the confidence of many of the colonists in the efficiency of a policy of protection.

The remainder of the platform of the League contained nothing new or distinctive in character. Some of the more important proposals were stolen from their political opponents. The questions of retrenchment and elective institutions were the peculiar tenets of the Clear Grit party and for some time past had occupied a prominent place in its campaign against the extravagance and conservatism of the Government. Notwithstanding its liberal tendencies, the League could scarcely pose as a democratic organization; at least it could not hope to compete with the radical Reformers in an appeal for democratic measures.

The chief political interest of the time centered in the struggle between the Baldwin Reformers and the Clear Grit party. Many of the latter had gotten entirely out of hand and were no longer subject to party discipline. They freely assailed the policy of the Ministry and demanded an immediate settlement of the vexed question of clerical salaries on pain of the overthrow of the Government. In vain Mr. Essexwin pleaded for moderate counsels. The Clear Grits would be satisfied with nothing less than the overthrow of the whole regime of ecclesiastical privilege. Every day it became more apparent that the Reform party was on the point of disintegration. The demoralization among the Reformers lent fresh hope and courage to the Tories. The latter were gradually recovering from their defeat and humiliation. The leadership of the party again saw the prospect of a restoration to office through the assistance of the conservative wing of the Reformers. Throughout the province the work of reorganization went steadily on; the rank and file of the party were again drummed into line; new recruits were rapidly gained among the disgruntled Reformers; the officials and members of the League rallied once more to the old party standard. The League ceased to exist as an independent body; it was insensibly absorbed into the revived Tory party.

Although the League had but an ephemeral existence its influence on the course of Canadian history was by no means inconsequential. To it may be credited three distinct contributions to the political life of the country: first, the democratization of the Tory party; second, the proposal of a federal union of the British American provinces; third, the advocacy of an independent fiscal policy based on the principle of colonial protection. Undoubtedly it exercised a considerable influence in other directions, notably in resisting the growth of annexation sentiments. But these three factors are, it is believed, the outstanding features of its short-lived career.

Of these three contributions the most important, in its immediate results at least, was the rejuvenation of the Tory party. The new spirit of democracy had swept away the dogmas of political and ecclesiastical privilege upon which the Family Compact had been based. The party had been discredited but not extinguished by its defeat and subsequent humiliation. Although of Tory origin, the League developed democratic sentiments and liberal principles. The question of an elective legislative council was only one phase of the great struggle between democracy and privilege. The League, in reality, completed the disorganization of the old Tory party. It stifled the spirit of arrant Toryism; it threw out of the colonial traditions of the past, it introduced a more progressive element into the leadership of the party; it advocated a more liberal and enlightened policy in accordance with the spirit of the age; it broke the dependence of the party on the policy and support of the Colonial Office and it made possible the reorganization of the old Tory party upon a more popular national basis. In short, it created a national Conservative party, differing little in purpose and policy from the more moderate wing of the reformers. From the day of that reorganization it became

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almost inevitable that many of the moderate Reformers would pass over into the ranks of the Conservative party. The genius of Sir John Macdonald made the process of transition an easy one. Out of that coalition arose the Liberal-Conservative party of today.

The project of an intercolonial union did not owe its origin to the League, but to the League belongs the credit of first attempting to popularize the policy and make it a distinct political issue. The effort signally failed for reasons we have already discussed but nevertheless the attempt was not altogether fruitless. The scheme was undoubtedly premature for the people of Canada and the Maritime provinces were strangers to one another. Neither social nor economic relations were sufficiently intimate to have developed a community of feeling and interest. Both Canada and the provinces by the sea had much closer relations with Great Britain and the United States than with each other. The imperial connection was the all sufficing band of union at the time. A national consciousness had not yet arisen. But thanks to the propaganda of the League, the Canadian public were familiarized with the idea of a federal union and were made conversant with some of its chief advantages. The seed, which was sown on unfavorable soil, subsequently sprang up and bore abundant fruit in the confederation of Canada under the British North America Act of 1867.

Under the old Mercantile System of England, the colonies, as we have seen, had been treated as economic appanages of the mother country. But upon the adoption of free trade in Great Britain the colonies were granted fiscal freedom and entrusted with the right of framing their own tariffs. The Reform party in Canada was naturally favorable to the economic principles of its Liberal friends in England, while the Tories, on the other hand, naturally clung to the policy of preferential trade. At the outset, some of the Boards of Trade of the chief commercial cities joined with the Tory party in demanding the restoration of the former colonial system, but the clamor was in vain. The leaders of the League were keen enough to see the folly of further appeals to the British government; the latter was fully committed to the principle of fiscal freedom and would not revise its policy. The colonies were to be no longer treated as favored children of the mother land; they were to be left to work out their fiscal and political salvation by their own unaided efforts. The upon string regime was over; the colonies were cut loose for all time.

Widely divergent were the policies now proposed to meet the emergency. The Reform Ministry pinned its faith to reciprocity, and opened up negotiations with the government at Washington, as also with the Maritime provinces, for the free exchange of a limited list of natural products. A section of the commercial community started an active campaign in favor of annexation. The ultra Tories denounced the policy of the English government in threatening and oftentimes seditious language, and demanded the restoration of the old colonial system.

The League rejected the continental and imperialistic policies alike.

It came out in favor of a national policy of protection to be based and exclusively on the needs of the province itself. This declaration of fiscal independence was undoubtedly due in part to a spirit of hostility toward the English government and to a feeling of pique at the action of Congress in rejecting the proposals for reciprocity. But it was mainly due to a desire to build up a strong self contained nation, economically independent of the United States and Great Britain and free from the meddlesome interference of the Colonial Office and the Imperial Parliament. With the collapse of the annexation movement, the abolitionist press of Montreal and the majority of the wealthy and influential members of that party joined forces with the Conservative party in demanding an increase in the tariff. For a time the growth of protectionist sentiment was retarded, especially in the rural districts, by the marvellous expansion of trade which took place under the Elgin Reciprocity Treaty of 1854. But the desire for protection continued to grow in the chief industrial centers of the country and with the abrogation of the Reciprocity Treaty in 1866 the question of protection was forced to the front by the Conservative party and became the dominant political issue of the day. The national policy of Sir John A. Macdonald was a legitimate product of the economic principles of the League.

We may then conclude in the language of Sir John A. Macdonald that the principles which were laid down by the British American League in 1850 are the lines around which the Liberal-Conservative party has moved ever since.



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