

## Charlottetown Conference: 1864



The colonies of Nova Scotia, Prince Edward Island, and New Brunswick decided to meet in Charlottetown, Prince Edward Island on September 1, 1864 to discuss the idea of a union of the Atlantic colonies. Newfoundland decided not to attend the meeting.

The Province of Canada (Canada East and Canada West) decided to take advantage of this opportunity to convince the Atlantic colonies (Nova Scotia, New Brunswick, and Prince Edward Island) to join with them in a larger union. They were told that they could attend the conference.

John A. Macdonald, George Brown, George-Étienne Cartier, Alexander Galt, and Thomas D'Arcy McGee went in order to state why they thought there should be a British North American union. The Province of Canada promised to build a railway connecting Canada and the Atlantic colonies. George Brown (Canada West) promised "that our farmers and manufacturers and mechanics shall carry their wares into every village of the Maritime Provinces and that they shall with equal freedom bring their fish, and their coal, and their . . . produce to our three millions of inhabitants."

By the end of the Charlottetown Conference the decision had been made to work toward a Confederation of all the British North American colonies. It was decided that a second meeting should be held in a month's time at Quebec.



**Above:** People celebrated at a grand dance held on the final night of the Charlottetown Conference.



*Fathers of Confederation*, by Rex Woods. Delegates met in Charlottetown in 1864 to discuss the formation of a united Canada.

# Quebec Conference: 1864



Delegates from the British North American colonies met again in October, but this time they met in Quebec City.

There were representatives from the Province of Canada, as well as all of the Atlantic colonies, including Newfoundland, which had not attended the Charlottetown Conference. The Quebec Conference lasted for over two weeks.

The result of the Quebec Conference was a list called the **Seventy-Two Resolutions**, which were to form the basis upon which the new nation of Canada would be built. The highlights of the Seventy-Two Resolutions appear to the right.



The Quebec Conference was held in the temporary Parliament Building at Montmorency-Laval in Quebec.

## Seventy-Two Resolutions

At the Quebec Conference, Seventy-Two Resolutions were drawn up. Some of the major ideas follow:

- A strong central government (federal government) would handle common affairs, notably economic development and defence.
- Provinces would have limited powers (thus they would be weaker than the federal government) to handle local affairs, and social and cultural issues.
- A federal Parliament would be composed of a lower house called the House of Commons and an upper house, known as the Senate.
- Members of the House of Commons would be elected according to the notion of representation by population.
- Members of the Senate would be appointed. Canada East, Canada West, and Atlantic Canada would each be considered a region and would be given about the same number of members. Each region had 24 members. This would provide some protection for the small Atlantic colonies, which would each have very few elected members in the House of Commons.
- The federal government was to legislate for “peace, order and good government.”

C-6350, National Archives of Canada, Ottawa



This photograph, taken on October 27, 1864, the last day of the Quebec Conference, shows delegates from the five colonies of British North America: the Province of Canada, New Brunswick, Nova Scotia, Prince Edward Island, and Newfoundland.

**Resolutions** — a list of guidelines or rules that are to be followed as a basis for ruling a group of people



# The Confederation Debates

## In the Province of Canada



The Confederation Debates included intense discussions of serious disagreements.



The job of the delegates who were at the Quebec Conference was to go home and convince the anti-Confederates (those against Confederation or Union) to change their minds. In order for the Seventy-Two Resolutions to be passed, they had to be approved by the colonial assemblies in the Province of Canada.

In the Province of Canada the debate continued for six weeks, but in the end the Great Coalition (*see* page 182) had an overwhelming majority on its side. The vote in the assembly was 91 to 33 in favour of Confederation.

Here is an imaginary conversation that might have taken place among some of the members of the Legislative Assembly after the vote:

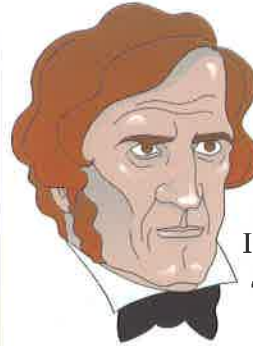


I voted for Confederation because if we are united we will be able to defend ourselves better against the Americans. Britain does not seem very interested in helping us, so we must help ourselves.

That is perfectly true, my friend. However, what is more important, trade will improve within the British North American colonies. We will send our manufactured and our farm goods to the Atlantic colonies and will receive their goods in return.



As a *Canadien* and a representative of my people, I am more interested in protecting the *Canadien* way of life. I think that a separate provincial government for Canada East will do that. I'm in favour of guaranteeing *La Survivance*, not Confederation.



I am also a *Canadien*, but I do not share your feelings about Confederation. I think our way of life will be threatened, because the central government will be too strong and will be run by English-speaking people. We *Canadiens* will have to stand up for ourselves at every turn in the future.



I feel as you do about Confederation, even though I am not a *Canadien*. What good are the Atlantic colonies to the Province of Canada? We don't need to unite with them in order to trade with them.



You nay-sayers are forgetting about the possibility that Confederation will allow us to build a trans-continental railway. Then we will be able to unite with the colonies and territories to the west, and become a nation from sea to sea. Look at all the good farmland we'll be able to take over for the younger generation.



*La Survivance*—cultural survival, especially of the French language and culture, and of the Roman Catholic religion

# In the Atlantic Colonies



There was strong opposition in the Atlantic colonies to the Seventy-Two Resolutions and thus to Confederation. Many people thought that they were doing fine on their own and could see no reason to join Canada and take on its problems. The people of the Atlantic colonies were in the fishing, lumbering, and shipbuilding industries. They felt that they had little in common with the farmers of the Province of Canada.

Briefly, here is what happened before 1867, in the Atlantic colonies:

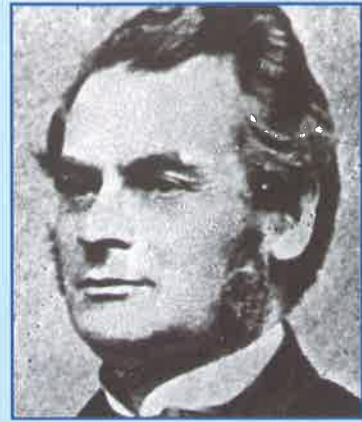
- The people of New Brunswick and Nova Scotia reversed their initial opposition to Confederation and voted for it.
- The people of Prince Edward Island and Newfoundland rejected the idea of Confederation.

The following includes more details about the story of the debates in each of the Atlantic colonies.

## New Brunswick

In 1865 Premier Tilley's pro-Confederation government (those in favour of Confederation or Union) fought an election on the issue of Confederation and lost. His opponents stressed that New Brunswick would lose control over its own affairs in Confederation and the people believed them.

In 1866 the lieutenant-governor, appointed by Great Britain, was instructed to encourage Confederation in the colony. He pressured the anti-Confederation government into resigning and appointed a pro-Confederation government. He then called another election. Tilley was re-elected and the new assembly voted for Confederation. This seems like a surprising turnaround, but circumstances changed between the two elections. First, the fear of an American invasion had been reawakened by Fenian raids across the border. People felt it would be much easier to have a strong army if New Brunswick united with Canada. Second, Great Britain announced that it supported the idea of union. People who were worried about breaking ties with Britain were reassured that some links would remain. Third, people had time to think about the possible economic benefits of union. They became convinced that union would mean an enlarged, protected market for New Brunswick goods. Also, people thought union would mean more money for railway construction, which in turn would mean more jobs for the labour force in the colony. Railways were also needed to open up forested land for settlement. Another reason for the pro-Confederation victory was that Tilley was able to wage a strong campaign with money from sources such as shipping, timber, and railway interests, as well as from the government in the Province of Canada.



### Sir Samuel Leonard Tilley (1818–1896)

Samuel Leonard Tilley was born to Loyalist parents who had come north following the American Revolution. He had a profitable medical supply business before entering politics. Tilley was one of the Fathers of Confederation. He represented New Brunswick at both the Charlottetown and Quebec Conferences. As premier he led the fight to convince the people of New Brunswick to join Confederation. Following Confederation Tilley joined John A. Macdonald's Conservative government first as minister of customs, then as minister of finance. He was lieutenant-governor of New Brunswick from 1873 to 1878. He returned to the Macdonald government as finance minister in 1878. In 1885 he became lieutenant-governor of New Brunswick.



*All in the Family.* This 1865 cartoon from *Le Perroquet* shows Upper and Lower Canada arranging to marry Nova Scotia and New Brunswick. They plan to adopt little Prince Edward Island, but the U.S. is not invited.



## Nova Scotia

People in Nova Scotia had been quite interested in a union of the Maritime colonies. Nova Scotia was largely responsible for the Charlottetown Conference of 1864. There was a strong emotional pull for a maritime union in Nova Scotia. This was because New Brunswick and Prince Edward Island had been part of one colony (Nova Scotia) during the 1700s.



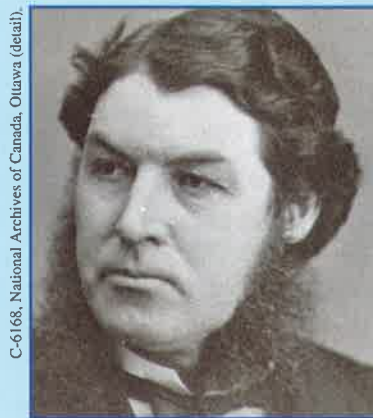
By 1867 Halifax was already an important port and military centre.

Confederation was tied to railway building in the minds of the pro-Confederation people in Nova Scotia. They wanted to see Halifax linked by railway to the Province of Canada (Canada East and Canada West). The access to Canadian markets would greatly help industrial development in Nova Scotia. The reaction of communities in Nova Scotia to the idea of Confederation often depended on their nearness to the proposed railway. If they were not close, then they were not particularly interested.

Many anti-Confederates led by Joseph Howe were concerned about how much influence a small province like Nova Scotia would have in Confederation. They were also worried about higher taxes to support railway development.

Premier Charles Tupper, who was pro-Confederation, watched the 1865 election loss of the pro-Confederation candidates in New Brunswick and decided not to call an election until Joseph Howe lost some of his support. Nova Scotia could not very well join without New Brunswick anyway, since New Brunswick was between Nova Scotia and the Province of Canada. Finally, in 1866 pro-Confederation Premier Tilley of New Brunswick was swept back into office.

A new pro-Confederation lieutenant-governor was appointed in Nova Scotia. Sir Fenwick Williams was well liked because he was a native of the colony and had been a hero in the British navy. With his help, Premier Tupper was able to win the support of the Legislative Assembly for Confederation.



C-6168, National Archives of Canada, Ottawa (detail).

### Charles Tupper (1821–1915)

Tupper was a third-generation Nova Scotian, descended from a family of early North American settlers. He became a doctor and was the first president of the Canadian Medical Association. In 1864 Tupper became the premier of Nova Scotia and attended the Charlottetown and Quebec conferences during that same year. He is one of the Fathers of Confederation and is credited with his province's entry into Confederation. After Confederation, Tupper held many Cabinet posts in the federal government, including that of minister of railways and canals from 1870 to 1884, while the Canadian Pacific Railway was being built. He replaced Sir Mackenzie Bowell as prime minister in May of 1896, but resigned July 8 after he and his Conservatives were defeated by Wilfrid Laurier's Liberals. He led the Opposition for another four years before retiring from politics.

### Joseph Howe

The popular Joseph Howe led the fight against Confederation in Nova Scotia. His 12 “Botheration Letters” were printed in the *Halifax Morning Chronicle* from January to March, 1865. This is an example of what he said:

*Comparing Confederation to a piece of cloth, it is a weak and poorly planned piece of material. Is it a good idea to put new wine [Nova Scotia] in an old bottle [Province of Canada] or to attach new cloth to an old item of clothing? Is union strong when a wise man, doing a steady business, is tricked into joining a gambler? Was Samson stronger when combined with Delilah, who tied him with ropes and cut off his hair?*

## Prince Edward Island

In Prince Edward Island there was widespread opposition to the idea of Confederation. People were concerned that the island's five representatives in the House of Commons would have little power or influence. Also, the Quebec Conference had refused to guarantee a £200 000 loan to buy out the absentee landlords who owned most of the island. Islanders saw no advantage in the proposed customs union, because the island's government operating revenues came almost entirely from duties on trade with other colonies.

## Newfoundland

The people of Newfoundland were really not very interested in Confederation. They felt that they had little in common with the people of the united Province of Canada. When they heard about the anti-Confederation events in the other Atlantic colonies, they lost the little interest they had.

## The London Conference



Sixteen delegates from the Province of Canada, Nova Scotia, and New Brunswick sailed to London in 1866 to present the Seventy-Two Resolutions to British officials. During the meetings in London, the delegates from Nova Scotia and New Brunswick were able to make some changes that were to their benefit. New Brunswick got assurances that the intercolonial railway would be built. Provincial government **subsidies** were increased.

On February 12, 1867, the bill containing the Seventy-Two Resolutions (the British North America Act) was introduced in the British House of Lords. It passed through both houses quickly, and on May 22, 1867, Queen Victoria proclaimed that the Dominion of Canada would become a nation on July 1, 1867. John A. Macdonald was to be the first prime minister.



*London Conference on Confederation*, by J.D. Kelly. The London Conference lasted from December 1866 to February 1867.

**Subsidy**— loan of money that the government contributes or sets aside for a given year's budget. It is usually for a specific project.