

Dominion Day at Perth, July 1, 1867

A view from the Editor of *The Perth Courier.*

The patriotic enthusiasm with which July 1st is today celebrated was not universally shared by those who, 150 years ago, experienced first-hand the birth of our nation. Like all significant political events, opinion on the merits and likely result of Confederation was deeply divided, and nowhere more so than at Perth.

The *Perth Courier* described Confederation as “*political suicide*”, complaining that the politicians had “*treated the people with contempt*” when parliament approved the plan “*by a coup d’état*”, and that “*the Imperial Act of Union ... was finally and irretrievably passed, and the fate of British North America sealed, even before it has the remotest idea how the thing is to be done*”. The *Courier* further warned that “*the frightfully reckless way in which they handled the destinies of a Nation*” had produced a Constitution “*that in five years will cause it to cry out for annexation to the United States ... England talks of cutting us off, and cut us off she assuredly will*”.

THE PERTH COURIER
Is
Published every Friday Morning
By G. L. WALKER,
AT HIS OFFICE, GORE-ST., PERTH, C.W.
TERMS—\$1.50 Cash down in advance
—\$2.00 if not paid strictly in advance.
These terms will in all cases be rigidly adhered to.
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The author of this cri de coeur, journalist George Lockhart Walker, had purchased the *Perth Courier*¹ in 1863 and was its editor when four of the British North American colonies united to create the Dominion of Canada in 1867. He was a Reform Party supporter, an energetic critic of John A. Macdonald and George Etienne Cartier², and a strong opponent of the Conservative-Reform coalition that had governed Canada from 1864. Walker especially feared that the mooted continuation of that coalition would lead to the emergence of an undemocratic one-party state.

Born in 1838 at New Hartford, Herkimer County, New York, Walker arrived in Canada as a child when his family moved to Napanee, Addington County, Ontario, in 1840. In 1863, the same year

¹ The *Perth Courier* was founded in 1834 by John Cameron (1814-1834) and then, following his sudden death, published by his brother Malcolm Cameron (1808-1876) in 1834-1835. James Thompson (1812-1912) acquired ownership and was *Courier* publisher until 1852 when the paper was sold to Charles Rice (1822-1901) who was owner and editor until Walker purchased the journal in 1863.

² George-Étienne Cartier (1814-1873). Elected as a Liberal-Reformer in 1848 to the United Provinces Legislature, he served as co-Premier with John A. Macdonald in the Parliaments of 1857-1862. As the leading voice of the French-Canadian community, Cartier was the kingpin of the Confederation movement. He was also largely responsible for later bringing Manitoba and British Columbia into the Dominion.

he purchased the *Courier*, he married Hannah Allan³ at Perth. Reflecting upon his career in journalism, Walker's obituary recalled that; "*he constantly adhered to the fortunes of the Reform Party, strenuously exercising his individual influence and that of his journal in support of that party, and in this character, he waged war with the Conservative element here*". The picture, therefore, painted by the *Perth Courier*, of attitudes and activities at Perth in the final run-up to Canadian Confederation, is one highly colored by the politics of its editor; and George L. Walker was assuredly not a fan of the "*Grand Scheme*".

There were, in fact, two other newspapers published at Perth in 1867, both of which supported the Conservative Party and, therefore, the pro-Confederation cause. Unfortunately, no editions of either, for the period in question, have survived⁴. The *Courier* boasted a circulation about equal to the combined distribution of the *British Standard* and *Perth Expositor*, but we are, nonetheless, left with a biased view of how the people of Perth, Lanark County, and beyond may have regarded the advent of their 'New Nationality'. The *Courier* may have been Reform in its politics, but Perth and area was generally Conservative in its leanings. Nevertheless, however singular they may be, the *Courier's* news columns for 1867 demonstrate that not everyone thought the creation of the Dominion of Canada as either wise or inevitable.

To appreciate the significance of Walker's reportage, it is useful to keep in mind that, 150 years ago, Perth was, relatively, a place of much greater consequence than it is today. Before the emergence of broadcast media, and when even daily newspapers were a rarity, the local weekly paper was of considerably greater influence and importance than we may think of it 150 years later. The *Perth Courier* and its local competitors, were received and read, and their columns often re-printed by other journals, far beyond their home turf.

By way of context, we must recall that individual elected Legislative Assemblies were first established in the colonies of Nova Scotia (1758), Prince Edward Island (1773), New Brunswick (1784), Upper Canada (1791), Lower Canada (1791) and Newfoundland (1832). In 1841, the Assemblies of Upper Canada (Ontario) and Lower Canada (Quebec) were merged into a single parliament for the United Province of Canada. In that United Province Assembly, a Conservative-Reform coalition was formed in June 1864 when the Conservative Government of J. Sandfield Macdonald⁵ collapsed. That coalition continued to advance the cause of a long-discussed plan to unite the colonies of British North America into a single country. The Charlottetown Conference of September 1864 set the ball rolling and the Quebec Conference of October 1864 hammered out the framework of a political agreement. Then, in November 1866, 16 delegates from Nova Scotia, New Brunswick and the Canadas, set out for London, England. By Christmas, a preliminary draft of enabling legislation was sent to the Colonial Office. On March 8, 1867, an 'Act to Provide for the Union and Government of British North America'⁶ passed the British House of Commons and was signed into law by Queen Victoria on March 29th.

³ Hannah Allan (1840-1907), born Balderson, Drummond Township, daughter of William Allan (1787-1868) and Eleanor Davis (1803-1890).

⁴ Of the *British Standard*⁴, published from 1852 until about 1870, only an incomplete series from 1852-1863 survive in the Ontario Archives. Of the *Perth Expositor*⁴, published from 1861 through 1936, only a few copies from 1924-1925 are in the collection of Archives Lanark.

⁵ John Sandfield Macdonald (1812-1872), Premier of the United Provinces of Canada 1862-1864 and first Premier of Ontario 1867-1871.

⁶ aka the British North America Act (BNA)

Some local players in these historic events, who's names frequently appear in the 1867 columns of the *Perth Courier*, may require introduction.

William McDougall (1822-1905) was a Reform (Clear-Grit) Party member of the United Province Assembly for the riding of Ontario North, until he lost his seat in July 1863 because he had crossed the floor to join the Conservative-led coalition. On November 4, 1864, he returned to the Assembly, however, when the sitting member for Lanark North, Robert Bell⁷, was prevailed upon to step aside so that McDougall could be re-elected and continue to serve as Provincial Secretary. In 1866 McDougall was a member of the London delegation that secured the Act of Union.

Alexander Morris (1826-1889) was elected in 1861 as a Conservative representing South Lanark. He was a long-time supporter of Confederation which he first imagined in his 1858 book *Nova Britannia*. His father, William Morris (1786-1858), had held essentially the same seat for the Conservatives in the Upper Canada Legislature from 1820 until he was appointed to the Legislative Council in 1836 and then to the Legislative Council of the United Province in 1840, serving until he retired in 1848.

William Pearce Howland (1811-1907) was elected to the United Province Assembly on the Reform ticket in 1857 and, from 1861, served as Finance Minister and Receiver General in the government of J. Sandfield Macdonald. In the Coalition Government of 1864 he was Postmaster General. Although still claiming to be a Reformer, over time Howland drifted into the Conservative orbit of Sir John A. Macdonald, especially so during his participation in the London Conference.

John A. Macdonald (1815-1891) was the Conservative Deputy Premier of the United Province's Coalition Government and an irresistible force behind the drive for Confederation. (The accepted spelling of his surname is 'Macdonald', but in the columns of the *Courier*, and other papers quoted by the *Courier*, his name is spelled in a number of ways. In the excerpts below, the spelling has been left as it appeared in the original.)

The Perth Courier.

January 5, 1867

In the 1860s, page-one of the *Perth Courier* was not a 'front page' of headline news as we might expect today. Rather, each week, most of the first page was given over to serialized fiction. 'Hard news' coverage began on page-two. For the first edition of 1867, however, a column and a half of the eight-column layout on page-one was given over to the "*Carrier Boys New Years Address*" dedicated to the "*Friends and Patrons of the Perth Courier*". Their address was in the form of several patriotic, even jingoistic, poems. No authors are named, and it is doubtful any of the verse was composed by a 'carrier boy'. The content of the poems, however, is indicative of the *Courier's* prevailing concerns as Confederation loomed, and tended to set the tone for much of journal's reporting that year.

⁷ Robert Bell (1808-1894), son of Reverend William Bell (1780-1857) of Perth, had been elected as a Reform Party candidate in 1847.

Annexation

He sure must be an errant fool,
Who would exchange Victoria's rule,
For Andrew Jackson's⁸ sway;
Or who a Lion would refuse,
And half-plucked Eagle rather choose,
To keep his foes at bay;
Shall Britons seek for Uncle Sam's
Fain'd wooden nutmegs, basswood hams⁹,
Cute dodges, humbugs, tricks and shams?

In Yankeedom, we must confess,
The folks are good to brag and guess,
And threaten poor John Bull;
There fighting Congressmen abound,
And gambling Senators are found,
With rowdy mobs to pull;
Shalt Canada, the brighted gem,
That decks the British diadem,
Her future weal entrust to them?

Our hearts amid every changing scene,
Beat for our Country and our Queen,
Earth's Greatest, Noblest, Best;
The loyal sons of British sires,
Within our bosoms glow the fires,
That warm each Briton's breast;
Can we our father-land betray,
Or her we honor, love, obey?
With flashing eye, we answer "Nay!"

True to the land whence we have sprung,
By heroes best, by poets sung,
Who hold old England dear;
Her fame, her honour, is our pride,
The spot in which our fathers died,

We cherish and revere;
Can we, prove false to her fair fame,
Or bring disgrace upon her name,
Of those from whom descent we claim?

As round the oak the ivy twines,
Or tendrils of the creeping vines,
Clasp firm the sheltering wall;
So we, 'neath her protecting wing,
To brave old England closely cling,
With her we stand or fall;
Can we this union e'er forego,
Or seek to bring her power low?
With swelling hearts we answer "No!"

We love the British Union Jack,
To it we ne'er shall turn our back,
The flag that proudest waves;
Not like the banners strewn with stars,
The fitting emblems – "Stars and Bars",
Of whips and chains for slaves;
Can we give up for such as these,
The flag that triumphs o'er the seas,
And braves the battle and the breeze?

The greatest deeds of glory done,
The fairest laurels ever won,
Great Britain's annals bear;
The noblest names on History's page,
Of patriot, hero, poet, sage,
Are found recorded there;
Can we forget such high renown,
Or drag to vile dishonour down,
Those whom immortal garlands crown?

⁸ Andrew Jackson (1767-1845), President of U.S. 1829-1837. The reference, however, appears to be an error, the intent being to reference Andrew Johnson (1808-1875), U.S. President 1865-1869, who became President upon the assassination of Abraham Lincoln in 1865.

⁹ During the 18th and 19th centuries, unscrupulous Connecticut/Yankee traders allegedly whittled nutmeg, hams, cigars and pumpkin seeds out of wood. "*Wooden nutmeg*" and "*Basswood Hams*" became terms to mean any type of fraud.

The Fenians

Of all the savage, rabble hordes,
That any land on earth affords,
With which the world is curst;
Of all the wretches vile and base,
That bring dishonour on our race,
The Fenians are the worst;
The meanest piece of flaunting rag,
That e'er disgraced the name of flag,
Is known as the "Sun Burst"¹⁰.

The greatest rascals yet unhung,
That ever used a lying tongue,
Are Roberts¹¹ and his crew;
Yet we can smile to hear their boasts,
Of warlike chiefs, and mighty hosts,
To sweep completely from our coasts,
The flag, Red, White and Blue;
Let them attempt it if they dare,
They'll soon be dangling in the air,
And get their rightful due.

Let them oppose old England's power,
They'll quickly reach their dying hour,
And find a bloody grave;
Their leaders seek to grasp the spoil,
Wrung from the humble hands of toil,
That hew the wood and dig the soil;
But nothing can them save,
Should they presume to touch our land,
Protected by a mighty hand,
And Britain's [unreadable] brave.

Should they our sacred soil invade,
Canadians will not be afraid,
God will defend the right;
Should they provoke without a cause,
What would avail an Eagle's claws,
To snatch then from the Lion's jaws –
A lion strong in might?
For let our enemies beware,
Though long the British Lion spare,
How they his ire excite!

Among other poetry put forward by the 'Carrier Boys' we find sentiments like, "*Though other lands be very fair, None with ours can compare*" and an ode to the Atlantic telegraph cable, laid in July 1866, salutes that engineering wonder as, "*That bond of union, firm and stable, Art's noblest work – the Atlantic Cable*".¹²

Turning to other matters the *Courier* editor cast his eye backward, summarizing major events of the proceeding year,

The most exciting event of the year [1866] has been the filibustering invasion of General O'Neill¹³ and his gallant army of Yankee ragamuffus ... Though our volunteers did not perform the miracles expected of them by foolish people, yet they did well, and will be able to do better next time.

¹⁰ The sunburst flag (Irish: An Gal Gréine) is associated with early Irish nationalism, and more recently, youth wings of Irish republican groups such as Na Fianna Éireann. The flag is first thought to have been used in 1858 by the Irish Republican Brotherhood.

¹¹ William Randall Roberts (1830-1897), president of the American Fenian Society. He participated in the 1866 raid into Canada (Ridgeway). Roberts was later a New York City alderman, U.S. Congressman and American Ambassador to Chile

¹² The cable laid in 1866 was actually the second trans-Atlantic telegraph cable. The first, laid in 1858, had failed after only a few weeks in service.

¹³ John Charles O'Neill (1834-1878), Irish born Union Army officer during the American Civil War, led Fenian raids into Canada in 1866 (Ridgeway) and 1871 (Pembina).

Surmounting all other topics of the year in importance, is the question of Confederation, which still continues to be a "great" one, notwithstanding the apathy with which the public regard it.

The private necessities of a corrupt administration gave birth to Confederation, and foisted it on the country as a panacea for political ills produced in a great measure by themselves. It was carried in parliament by a coup d'état, and is to be carried into effect without giving the people directly concerned an opportunity of pronouncing judgement upon its merits. It is greatly to be deplored for its own sake that the promoters of Confederation saw fit to carry the measure in this way, because if it possessed intrinsic merit in itself, it would ultimately be carried by the people fairly and openly. Such a step might have caused greater delay than has ensued, and perhaps have led to a considerable modification of the Quebec resolutions, but even with such drawbacks to the hasty ambition of amateur statesmen, the countries and people directly concerned might have been greatly benefitted.

Haste never perfects anything, and in so grave a matter as changing the constitution of a country, it amounts to political suicide. This scheme, rushed through with such indecent haste and such open violations of British constitutional usage, will yet cause greater evils to British America than the Federal Constitution of the United States has caused its component members. It is useless any longer to oppose it: the telegraph brings us news of the final settlement of its terms by the Council of Delegates in England, and as it will thus come into operation before long, those who really love their country must endeavour to make the best of it. That it may turn out better than it seems likely to do, is our earnest hope and desire.

The *Courier* did, however, find at least one positive aspect within the legislation to create a Dominion of Canada; but warned that even that was under threat.

The [*location of*] the parliament at Ottawa is a tangible benefit which everyone in this vicinity can immediately realize ... It is greatly to be deplored that some persons are again agitating the question in favor of Quebec or Montreal as the capital of the United Province ... It is not at all improbable that the Lower Province and Lower Canada members of the House combined may make an effort in the Confederate Parliament to have it removed to Quebec ...

The Perth Courier.

January 11, 1867

By the following week, Confederation had moved even closer to reality and the *Courier* began its coverage by quoting a *London Daily News* article of December 18, 1866;

It is stated that the Canadian delegates have settled all points at issue with New Brunswick and Nova Scotia, on the one hand, and with the Imperial Government on the other, regarding the Confederation of British North America. A bill on the accepted basis

will be introduced at the opening of the next session to confirm this arrangement. The system of confederation accompanied by an Imperial guarantee of the Intercontinental Railway, having been sanctioned by British Ministers of all parties, no doubt seems to be entertained of the measure being very well received in the House of Commons. It is arranged that this Imperial guarantee, originally fixed at £3,000,000, shall be extended to £4,000,000.

With union of the colonies appearing inevitable, the *Courier* editor focused his frustration, ire and despair on the manner in which it had been brought about, and the men responsible;

This year both the Fates and the Legislature seem determined to cheat the country of its customary pabulum, for the prospect at present is that there will be no Session until after the new order of things is inaugurated and that “great question”, which everyone is sick of hearing about, is definitely settled

It is useless to talk of Constitutional usage to those who disregard everything but their own desires, it would therefore be nonsense for the members of the House of Assembly to expect that Mr. McDonald or his associates will pay any attention to whatever protest they may be disposed to make against his high-handed proceedings in London. The members of the House treated the people with contempt, and they deserve it. He'll come home Sir John A. sometime next summer with a new Constitution for British North America in his pocket, and the House and people may go to Jericho for all he cares ...

Toryism in its palmiest days never enjoyed such a glut of authority. To use a vulgar but expressive phrase, the cry for Reform is “played out”, and unbridled license rules the roost for the time and seems likely to extend its reign to the future.

The Perth Courier.

January 25, 1867

A leading complaint among those who opposed Confederation, ‘True Reformers’ in particular, was that it has been undertaken by a handful of power-brokers without democratic reference to the electorate. By way of buttressing that objection, the *Courier* reprinted a December 20, 1866 Letter to the Editor of the *London* (England) *Examiner*.

I offer no opinion upon the policy of Colonial Confederation, but it is worthy of notice that three only of the five provinces, Canada, Nova Scotia and New Brunswick, have sent delegates to the Conference – that Prince Edward Island and Newfoundland declined – that there are four millions of people in British North America, only 400,000 of whom, one in ten, have had an opportunity to express an opinion at the polls, of a measure changing the relations of the colonies toward the mother country, and that of those 270,000 in one province have elected for, and 130,000 in another against ...

Whatever decisions the delegates may come to, the Imperial Parliament should not be asked to pass any measure which is not sent back to be ratified by the Parliament

and electors of the several provinces ... The Government of the country [*Britain*] should be careful they do not make themselves the scapegoat of these colonial politicians, and at their suggestion, put into an Act of parliament what not one of them dares submit to the consideration of their own legislatures. Signed, Justitia

The *Peith Courier*.

February 8, 1867

The *Courier's* drum-beat of protest over the lack of adequate consultation, by submitting the final agreement to the provincial legislatures, or directly to the electorate, carried on in the form of a reprint from the *Montreal News* (a journal that supported Confederation) pointing out the many differences between the original Quebec Agreement and the one arrived at in London. The *News* article concluded that;

... in some of the Provinces (and unless there is haste in the matter, in our own), this will necessitate a fresh appeal to the constituencies before Confederation is accomplished. We cannot but hope that this will be the case in all the colonies, for anxiously as we desire Confederation, we are still more anxious that it should have a sound foundation. If possible let there be a direct appeal to the electors in every province ... Founded on the direst assent of the people, the Confederacy will be based on a sure foundation, and will be better fitted to stand the rude shocks that all Governments have to bear in these unsettled times.

With the London Conference taking its own direction, the *Courier* turned its attention to the prospects of politics and government subsequent to Confederation. As would become more evident over the following weeks, the defection of Reform politicians to the Conservative party-led coalition government and Confederation drive, were seen as deeply troubling and perhaps even the end of the Reform movement as a political party.



Alexander Morris (1826-1889)

... it may be taken for granted that we shall have an election for both Parliaments – that of the United Provinces [*Federal*] and Upper Canada [*Provincial*] alone – during the next summer. It is therefore desirable that the subject of selecting proper representation should begin to occupy public attention.

For the Parliament of the United Provinces it is to be presumed that Mr. [*Alexander*] Morris will present himself as a candidate in the interest of the Conservative Party, by which means the electors will have the opportunity of pronouncing judgement on Mr. John A. McDonald's manner of governing the country. If a majority of them are satisfied that the tipping premier is the right man in the right place at the head of their country's government, then undoubtedly Mr. Morris will be elected to follow his lead in the larger arena to which Confederation will introduce him; but if they are not satisfied with Mr.

McDonald's administration, it is equally certain that an organized opposition to Mr. Morris' return should be immediately set on foot in this riding.

The personal esteem in which the latter gentleman is held by many on account of his morality and social respectability, has hitherto deterred them from openly condemning his support of a public man who is neither moral nor respectable, but the larger interests now opening to the country under the Union render it imperative that such considerations should not any longer govern their choice of a Representative ... In Parliament Mr. Morris has always been a thorough supporter of Mr. McDonald, not only in policy but in his personality, even to an extent bordering on personal meanness. If that is what the people of the Riding want, we know of no better representative material than their present member. But if it is thought desirable to effect a change in the character of their representative, other material must be sought – and that without delay.

The Perth Courier.

February 15, 1867

With the opening of a new session of the British Parliament, the *Courier* reported the speech from the throne. Proposed legislation covered revisions to the Irish Landlord and Tenants Act and the Navigation Laws, while the anticipated (electoral) Reform Bill for Britain had not been mentioned. “*The rest of the speech*” the *Courier* bitterly noted,

... is taken up with what may be considered matters of routine, such as the union of the British provinces, Fenianism and other things that mean nothing, but which one naturally looks for in such a document.

Other news coming out of the Canadian Delegation in London was less political, but still offered the *Courier* the opportunity for a shot at John A. Macdonald.

Advices from London state that the Hon. John A. McDonald is to be married to Miss Bernard¹⁴ early in March. Miss Bernard is a sister of Lt. Col. [Hewitt] Bernard¹⁵, Chief Clerk in the Attorney General's office at Ottawa, and is described as a handsome and clever woman. Doubtless her influence will be of great benefit to the wayward Premier.

¹⁴ Susan Agnes Bernard (1836-1920), was born near Spanish Town, Jamaica to Thomas James Bernard, of Bellevue, south of Montego Bay, a member of the Privy Council of Jamaica. Married on February 16, 1867, she was the second wife of Sir John A. Macdonald. His first wife was his first cousin, Isabella Clark (1811-1857).

¹⁵ Hewitt Bernard (1825-1893), Lieutenant Colonel of Militia, successful lawyer and co-editor of the *Upper Canada Law Journal*. He became the private secretary to Attorney General John A. Macdonald in 1857 and later chief secretary of the Department. Bernard was the recording secretary at the Charlottetown Conference in 1864.

Much to the consternation of the *Perth Courier*, the Confederation Bill continued to move forward in London with, in the view of the *Courier*, unwise and unseemly haste.

Lord Carnarvon¹⁶ has introduced into the British House of Parliament the Confederation Bill for the union of four North American Provinces, namely, Upper and Lower Canada, New Brunswick and Nova Scotia. The inducements held out to Prince Edward Island and Newfoundland by the Canadian Government were wholly unavailing in moving these provinces to accept a scheme that would, in all probability, have proved utter ruin to them, as it may to those four who have decided on adopting it.

The bill brought forward by the Colonial Secretary has not reached Canada in its entirety, and will not until the arrival of the mail packet at Portland in about a fortnight ... but it will soon be before the people, when, of course, they will be helpless to remedy any objectionable enactments it may contain, as those of our Ministers now in England will undoubtedly rush it through the British parliament with as much speed as possible ...

Since writing the above, the cable has sent the intelligence across the wires that the Confederation Bill has received a second reading in the House of Commons and that it was intended that the third reading was to take place at once. Thus, the Bill will be finally and irretrievably passed and the fate of British North America sealed, even before it has the remotest idea how the thing is to be done.

With the Act of Union having reached Canada, the *Courier* resigned itself to the inevitable, and slightly modified its tone, but gave no ground in its criticism of the “reckless” manner in which the “Great Scheme” had been brought about.

The full text of the Imperial Act of Union between the British provinces, is at length before the public, and notwithstanding some unjust discrimination against Upper Canadian interests, is as fair to all parties concerned as could reasonably be expected. We have no sympathy with those who childishly throw obstacles in the way of the inevitable ... The measure is now fixed fact, and the duty of patriotism is to make it work as harmoniously as possible.

¹⁶ Henry Howard Molyneux Herbert, 4th Earl of Carnarvon (1831-1890), British Government Secretary of State for the Colonies.

The worst feature of the bill – to our mind – is its incompleteness ... After all the fuss and delay and all the “self sacrifice” and all the “statesmanship” of our public men, we have nothing but new expenses on two poor Provinces as the result of their mighty labors. A union of this character cannot but be regarded as unsatisfactory, it leaves public expectation still unsatisfied, and the great idea of the “New Nationality” as far from realization as ever ...

The arbitrary power exercised by the engineers of the “Great Scheme”, from first to last, and the frightfully reckless way in which they handled the destinies of a Nation, had led us to expect something more unfavourable than they have given us; so it is with a sigh of relief we record our hope that the thing may work more satisfactorily than it seems likely to do, both from its own provisions and the way in which they are regarded by the ex President of the Council.

Elsewhere in the same edition, the *Courier* was more critical of the final agreement, complaining of the anticipated cost, the risk of over-centralization and the danger of annexation.

... Upper Canada will then be where it was before, plus the payment of double its former contributions to the Public Exchequer, and plus again a Constitution that in five years will cause it to cry out for annexation to the United States. Let those who take exception to this statement examine the Act for themselves, and then reflect on the probability of Upper Canadians putting up with the grinding tyranny of injustice from which there is no possible escape.

[*The Act*] would appear to be purposely designed to destroy the local [*provincial*] Parliaments altogether in the course of time and fuse the whole country into one homogenous Legislature based on the model of the British system of King, Lords and Commons ...

The Perth Courier.

March 8, 1867

On March 8th the *Courier* published, in its entirety, the ‘Act To provide For the Union and Government of British North America’. The text occupied all of page-one and about two thirds of page-two, or nearly half the total available space of a four-page paper.

To the exclusion of much other matter we publish in full today the Bill uniting the provinces of Upper and Lower Canada, New Brunswick and Nova Scotia, and earnestly invite the attention of our readers to a consideration of its provisions. These will be found on examination to be as inimical to the interests of this Section as could well be conceived, and we must express our surprise that they were consented to by our special representatives, Messrs. McDougall and Howland.

Not perhaps that surprise should be left on the ground of principle that these gentlemen should assent to the Bill; but for the more ignoble sake of their own interests

and their individual responsibility for the immense issues confided to their care, it is surprising that they could assent to an Act that all Upper Canada must necessarily be dissatisfied with! It flies in the face of the one sole reason why upper Canada acquiesced in the arrangement by which it was brought about, and leaves us instead of the old grievance of one Lower Canada domination, three Lower Canadas to dominate over us with a vigor to which the rule of Cartier was mildness itself.

The Perth Courier.

March 15, 1867

As it had done, and would do for months to come, the *Courier* continued to castigate the 'Fathers of Confederation' for, in its view, gross inequities which had been allowed in the final Union Act. Drawing data from the 1861 census ...

Ontario	1,396,091
Quebec	1,111,566
Nova Scotia	330,857
New Brunswick	<u>252,047</u>
Total	3,090,561

From these figures we learn that but 582,904 people are added to our population by the Union Act, and for the sake of this small number we have to build the Intercontinental Railway and provide the expensive machinery of several new legislatures.

The Senate will consist of seventy-two members. This number is apportioned as follows

Ontario, with a population of	1,396,091	24
Quebec, with a population of	1,111,566	24
Nova Scotia & New Brunswick	582,904	<u>24</u>
Total		72

This is such a peculiar sort of "representation by population" that we would really like to hear Mr. McDougall's explanation of how half a million Bluenoses come to be equal to a million and a-half of Upper Canadians. It will be a literary treat that more than the inhabitants of North Lanark must relish with particular zest.

For the first time the *Courier* waded into the troubled waters of the part religion could play in the new nation's balance of power; again drawing on the 1861 census.

Infidels & persons of no religion	35,540
Roman Catholics	1,372,913
Protestants of all denominations	<u>1,682,108</u>
Total	3,090,561

... sufficient to leave the control of Government in Protestant hands, should occasion unhappily arise for a strife between creed and creed. But we must remember ... that Roman Catholics, from Church unity, and identity of principle, as well as from being a minority of the population, are united in politics as well as religion, whilst the protestants are not, and therefore the balance of power will, to a great extent, remain in the hands of the former. We have seen how well they have exercised this power for their own interests in the settlement of the School question.

On another subject, the newspaper again raised the question of elections for a new parliament and new government for a new country.

Some curiosity exists as to when the elections under the Union Act will take place. The proclamation putting the Act in force will probably be issued in April or early May, and as a session of the United Provinces [*Dominion*] Legislature must take place within six months after the proclamation ... we may expect the elections to take place about the end of June or beginning of July.

The Perth Courier.

March 22, 1867

Even though at a still to be determined date, new elections were looming and the *Courier* once again chided local Reform Party supporters for their lack of preparation.

The inhabitants of the western part of the country appear to be busily at work preparing for the upcoming election. Nothing has yet been done in this part, which is no doubt owing to the general conviction that no suitable material can be got to successfully oppose Mr. Morris in the South Riding and Mr. McDougall in the North. It may therefore be taken for granted that these gentlemen will be returned for the House of Commons.

The Perth Courier.

March 29, 1867

By the end of March any lingering hope at the *Courier*, that Confederation might be abandoned, delayed, or the Union Bill amended, disappeared.

The Canadian Delegates sailed from England for home on the Cunard steamer of the 23rd inst. The Confederation Bill passed its final reading in the House of Commons on the 8th without any debate. Messrs. Howland and McDougall were presented at court before leaving, their absence at the presentation of Messrs. Cartier and McDonald being merely accidental.

The announcement made last week about the Delegates having sailed for Canada, was rather premature, as it now turns out that some of them have again posted off to the Continent. Messrs. Cartier and Langevin¹⁷ are in Rome for the purpose of endeavoring to settle some religious difficulty about the division of the Parish of Montreal, which has been referred to the arbitration of the Pope. We wonder if the people of Canada will have to pay the expenses of this mission to the Holy Father.

Awaiting the Queen's proclamation entering the Union Act into law, the *Courier* turned its attention to a perceived betrayal by Britain of its Canadian colonies.

Ever since the Confederation scheme was mooted, faint hints have come across the Atlantic from England that as soon as appearances would permit, the British Government intended to endeavour to escape the borders which the Canadian garrisons inflicted on it. This feeling is now gaining the proportions of a settled conviction, that as soon as the Dominion of Canada has secured the money guaranteed by the Railway Bill, England will withdraw all her troops from this continent, and allow us to look after ourselves as best we can. This, of course, will be virtual independence.

In proof of this idea, we make the following extract from a recent number of the *London Times* – "Let it be clearly understood that the guarantee of the Canadian railway loan carries with it the responsibility of self-defence to be undertaken by the Confederation, and that it is the intention of the Queen's government to withdraw at no distant time all British troops from the American continent. If that be so, the guarantee may be cheerfully paid if ever it should be called for; and if the two measures of the present session enable us to escape the burdens which the Canadian garrison inflict on the country there will be no reason to regret them, even though they comprise the encouragement of an unremunerative enterprise by means of a principle condemned by sound finance."

The courier also published excerpts from a speech by North Lanark MP William McDougall, to the Highland Society in London.

¹⁷ Hector Langevin (1826-1906). Elected for the Parti bleu to the United Provinces Assembly in 1858, and serving as Solicitor General 1864-1866, he represented the interests of Quebec at the Charlottetown, Quebec and London Conferences.

The old colonial system, the rule of Downing Street, the notion that a gentleman sitting on his stool in the renowned quarter of foggy London could see more clearly, and direct operations of government 4,000 or 10,000 miles across the sea, more effectually than the chosen representatives of the people on the spot, has been exploded. But it does not follow that the attachment of the people of our self-governing colonies to British institutions, that their devotion to the British Crown, that their ability and determination to defend the British flag, would be in the smallest degree diminished by the change ...

Perhaps for sake of balance, or to mitigate the very fears the *Courier* had been advancing, that Britain's predicted abandonment of her 'self-governing colonies' would lead to American annexation, the paper also published an excerpt from a *New York Times* article.

There is no special jealousy of the projected Confederation on our northern border. So far as it may strengthen the power of the British provinces, for purposes of aggression, it becomes a proper subject for the watchful consideration of our Government ...

There is no doubt that this new Confederation will become independent of Great Britain whenever it chooses to do so – and so long as we continue to bear the burden of our national debt, we cannot foresee the time when annexation to the United States will be more desirable for the new power thus created, than independence.

The Perth Courier.

April 26, 1867

That the British Government had so willingly agreed to Confederation, because it was a first step in disentangling itself from the cost of defending its Canadian colonies, and mitigating the risk of being dragged into an expensive war with the United States (that it might be unable to win), was not purely a figment of the imagination of the *Courier* and other Reform newspapers. The Canadian delegates to the London Conference were well aware that many British MPs and much of the British public, saw the new arrangement in North America in just those terms

Those who have held that the scheme of Confederation was ultimately destined to sever the connection between Great Britain and her North American colonies, cannot fail to have their views strongly confirmed by the recent language of the *London Times*. Speaking of the cession [*sale*] of Russian America [*Alaska*] to the United States, the great organ of British public opinion says,

“We retain our hold on Canada more to please the Canadians than ourselves; and though we certainly shall not imitate the example Russia by selling it to the Americans, we shall be happy to make it independent as soon as it pleases, and leave it to choose its future destiny for itself”.

This is the only sensible [*interpretation*] of the consequences of Confederation that can be entertained, for the idea of creating a Kingdom, self-governing and practically

independent, and holding it subject to a Power three thousand miles away across the seas, is an absurdity that none but a few people in Canada believe in ...

Beyond the prestige of holding such possession, Great Britain derives very little benefit from the ownership of Canada, whilst the connexion is a constant danger to her honor and a perpetual menace to her greatness ... We are all sensible of the dangers of our situation, but few have the hardihood to suggest that the remedy so boldly announced [by the Times] ... It is no wonder that England talks of cutting us off, and cut us off she assuredly will as soon as the "New Nationality" gets fairly standing on its feet ...

In common with the most respected portion of the press of Canada, we have held that Confederation meant separation from Britain; others held that it did not: the public can now judge which took the more correct view of the consequences.

Another reprint in the April 26th edition, from the Kingston News, reported that,

It is expected that the Hon. John A. MacDonalld will return to Canada and be at his government post in Ottawa by the middle of April. Mr. Macdonald had not at the latest dates (by mail) received a baronetcy. His friends here would not be surprised, from his previous well-known expression of his views with regard to such distinctions, to learn that he had declined such an honour.

The Perth Courier.

May 3, 1867

The British Parliament had passed the Union Act on March 9th but, a full two months later, there was still no sign of the Canadian Delegation returning home.

Notwithstanding the fact that our Delegates got through with all business that called them to England about two months ago, yet they do not seem to have any notion of coming home yet. We give the following statement of their movements, which we clip from the Paris correspondence of the *Toronto Leader* –

"Mr. McDougall, Mr. Howland, with their ladies, have been in town (Paris) for the past week: they intend remaining a few days longer. Mr. Macdonald is still in London, and still hopes to leave for home on the 13th, though his colleagues name a week later. Mr. Cartier is in Italy and will soon go back. Mr. McGee intends leaving for Canada about the first of May. We shall not attempt to estimate the cost to the Province of these extended tours to Paris, Rome, and other parts of the Continent. The electors to whom Ministers must apply for re-election should make a few inquiries in regard to this matter".

Returning to the theme of Britain exploiting Canadian Confederation to escape the expense and political risk of providing for their defense, and, therefore, the associated danger of annexation to the United States, the *Courier* published excerpts from a speech by Conservative politician

Alexander Galt¹⁸ to the annual St. Georges dinner in Montreal. In his remarks, Galt alluded to opinion in Britain that held just such a disentanglement should be the logical next step, and that annexation was a possible outcome.

“Let us suppose that the hold of England over these possessions should be relaxed, and that the colonies still continued disunited, what future could have been reserved for them but annexation to the United States? But united, it is at all events possible for them to choose their destiny. With 4,000,000 people, in a few months to be 8,000,000¹⁹, we shall certainly have some choice and some opportunity to say whether it will be for our advantage or disadvantage to join the neighboring States. If ever that alternative is presented, I believe that our better institutions will induce us to adhere to our present condition. Nor do I fail to hope that wiser counsels will prevail with those who, in England, think the colonies a burden on them, and who would welcome their separation”.

The Perth Courier.

May 7, 1867

In January the *Courier* had opined that, despite other failings in the Union Act, the naming of Ottawa as the new Dominion capital was “*a tangible benefit*” and “*deplored that some persons are again agitating the question in favor of Quebec or Montreal*”. Those comments should not, apparently, have been taken to suggest that, beyond its useful proximity to Perth, the city had much to recommend it; especially when it turned out to fawn over John A. Macdonald.

Of all the cities on the continent, Ottawa has ever shown itself to be the most despicable and poorest in spirit. At any time within the past three or four years, when it was announced that the most scrubby politician in the provinces was about to visit the city, no matter on what pretence, forthwith a “grand demonstration” was set on foot – all the one-horse orators, broken-down politicians, and office-seekers were immediately on the qui vive, and waxing themselves into large proportions in anticipation of the importance of the position they were to occupy at the proposed demonstration.

This kind of thing has been carried to such lengths of late in the ambitions little city, that its people have made themselves the laughing stock of the whole province, and richly earned for themselves the contempt of all independent minds throughout the Dominion. An occasion arose on Saturday last, when an opportunity for a renewal of this grovelling spirit could be put in practice, and to resist seemed impossible. On that day, John A. McDonald and wife, and William McDougall and daughter, arrived in Ottawa, and the following is an account of what took place on the occasion. –

¹⁸ Alexander Tilloch Galt (1817-1893). Early in his political career Galt supported demands by Montreal merchants calling for annexation to the United States. In 1858 he introduced the original resolution to the Parliament of the United Province of Canada calling for confederation of the British North American colonies and later that year led the first delegation to London to begin negotiations. He later served as the first Minister of Finance for the Dominion of Canada and was Canada's first High Commissioner to London.

¹⁹ Why Galt said the population of Canada would “in a few months be 8,000,000” is a mystery. The population of Canada would not reach 8,000,000 until 1914.

Mr. and Mrs. John A. Macdonald and Mr. and Miss McDougall arrived here this afternoon. The Civil Service Regiment under command of Lieut. Col. [Thomas] Wiley, and accompanied by the band of the 10th Regiment, was at the Railway Depot to receive them. The mayor²⁰ and several members of the City Council were also present, as well as a concourse of people from the town. The mayor presented an address to Mr. MacDonalld welcoming him back; congratulating him on his improved health²¹, and the success which attended the Confederation scheme; and wishing him and Mrs. MacDonalld a long and happy life.



Sir John A. Macdonald (1815-1891)

Mr. MacDonalld replied, returning thanks for the reception given himself and colleague. He said he was sorry more of his colleagues were not present – but one important member of the delegation (Mr. McDougall) was there – important not only on account of his ability and his position, but also because he was a representative of the Ottawa country. He and Mr. McDougall could take credit for having worked for Ottawa, which, during our day and generation, would be the residence of the leading politicians of the country. At one time, they had some misgivings as to whether Ottawa would remain the capital of the Confederation; but when they saw the declaration in the Imperial Act, the matter was placed beyond doubt (cheers)

...

McDougall, at the call of the crowd, stepped on the platform and thanked the assembly for the very cordial welcome extended to them, and congratulation his honorable colleague on the fine display, especially of the Civil Service Volunteers, who had turned out to welcome him as Minister of Militia. Mr. McDougall expressed the satisfaction of himself and co-delegates at the complete success which had attended their mission to England.

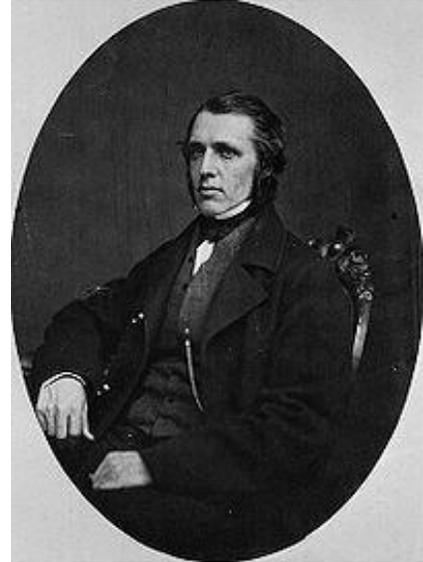
²⁰ Robert Lyon (1829-1888).

²¹ While staying at the Westminster Palace Hotel, London, Macdonald awoke one night to find that he and his bed were on fire. His hair and hands were singed and his shoulder was burned badly enough to require medical attention. A prodigious drinker, he had passed out while reading a newspaper and the candle tipped over, setting the room ablaze. The curtains, the sheets and blankets, even the pillow beneath his head and the nightshirt he was wearing were all in flames. George-Étienne Cartier, staying in a nearby room, came to his rescue. Suffering from his injuries and a subsequent infection, Sir John A. would spend eight straight days in bed.

Mr. & Mrs. McDonald were heartily cheered as they alighted from the car and took seats in Buckley's²² carriage and four. Mr. and Miss McDougall immediately followed in Mr. McDougall's own carriage and a pair of greys. The cortege was loudly cheered on leaving the depot ground.

In other news for the week the *Courier* reported that the clock continued to run down toward the reality of Confederation and elections for a new parliament; lamenting the division and betrayal besetting the Reform Party.

It is stated in authorized terms that the Queen's proclamation concerning Confederation, will be issued at the beginning of next week. The elections will, in all likelihood, take place about the beginning of June.



William McDougall (1822-1905)

As the time draws near when the Queen's proclamation constituting the new Dominion may be expected to appear, considerable speculation is indulged in as to who shall put the new machinery in motion. The old Conservative party with the narrow instincts of their class, are greedily hoping to continue the Coalition in office until they have secured to themselves the host of new offices and appointments to be made under Confederation.

Some of the Reformers, on the other hand, support the continuance of the present Administration on the same ground, with the hope of securing to themselves a few of the good things which may be expected to be plentifully flying about ... These people are governed solely by personal selfishness, and have no care for the public whatever so long as their individual ends may be served by their means ...

The Perth Courier.

May 17, 1867

The ongoing failure of the Reform Party in the ridings of North and South Lanark South, to organize and select a candidate to challenge William Morris in the upcoming election was taken up in a Letter to the Editor.

²² Patrick Buckley, carriage driver and stable hand employed by John A. Macdonald. When D'Arcy McGee was assassinated on April 7, 1868 police rounded up more than 40 men, mostly Irish immigrants suspected of Fenian allegiance, including Buckley, and it was Buckley who gave them name of Patrick J. Whelan who was convicted and executed for the murder of McGee.

Unless from parties belonging to the old Conservative School there is scarcely a whisper passing round concerning who is to be our Representative in the future parliament of the Kingdom of Canada, during the next decade. Has the good old cause of Constitutional Reform been forgotten – abandoned to the wind and weather, to be tossed to and fro by every wave of Conservative intrigue, malversation, and duplicity? - Signed 'Lanark'.

The Perth Courier.

May 24, 1867

The Ministerial organs announce that a list of the proposed senators for Ontario has been sent to England for ratification by the Queen. Somebody telegraphs from Perth to the [*Toronto*] *Globe*, stating that the Hon. R. Matheson²³ is included in the list of fortunate. The same journal also states that the names of such gentlemen as the Hon. Messrs. Moore and [*Alexander*] Vidal²⁴ have been left off. If this is the case, dissatisfaction will be almost universal throughout the Province. A few days we presume, will settle the matter.

The Perth Courier.

May 31, 1867

As John A. Macdonald's Conservative-led coalition campaigned for continuation of what they called a "No Party" government for the first parliament of the new Dominion, independent Reformers, and the press that supported them, were portrayed by coalition supporters as unpatriotic or even treasonous. For the *Courier*, another coalition government amounted to the continuance of Conservative-led one party rule.

As stated in a Bulletin from the *Courier* office on Friday last, 24th inst., the Queen's proclamation, relative to Confederation, has been issued. The Union Act takes effect on the 1st July next, on which day the separate Provincial Governments will cease to exist. The full text of the proclamation has not reached this side of the Atlantic, but is expected to arrive next week, when it will no doubt appear in the leading newspapers.

The cry of treason has always been a favourite theme with the Tory party, but just now it would seem that they are well nigh frantic over the matter. The cry is being sounded from every corner of the provinces where the Tory print can find sufficient subsistence wherewith to eke out an existence ... With these gentlemen, every Reformer who has

²³ Roderick Matheson (1793-1873), War of 1812 veteran who settled at Perth in 1815 and established a harness and saddle shop that grew into a general merchandise business and survives today as Shaw's of Perth. He was appointed in 1847 as a life member of the Legislative Council of Upper Canada where he served until his appointment to the Dominion Senate in 1867.

²⁴ Alexander Vidal (1819-1906). Vidal missed an appointment in 1867 but was awarded a Senate seat for Sarnia Division in 1873.

heretofore opposed the scheme of Confederation is denounced as a traitor, a rebel, &c. Thus, in a recent issue of the *Montreal Gazette*, the following paragraph occurs –

“The path of retreat is not yet cut off, and we earnestly advise those who are allowing passion and selfishness to carry them into a course of – there is no other word for it – treason, to pause, to reflect, to adopt wiser and more patriotic counsels, before it be too late”.

We may explain that the parties referred to in the above paragraph are the Reformers who are opposing the eminently Tory dodge of “no party”, and who will oppose any further fusion or coalition of parties ...

Of the county papers, which have adopted the disloyal cry, none writes more furiously than the little *British Standard*, published at Perth. In a recent issue the conductor of that journal characterized the editor of the *Courier* as being an “anti-British scribe”, “disloyal to the Crown”, together with other choice sentences of similar character. In reply to all this we would just say to the person who writes this kind of nonsense, that we will have to live long and badly before such crimes against our sovereign as he has committed, can be laid at our door

The Perth Courier.

June 7, 1867

We believe we are correct in stating that the Writs for the election of members for the new houses of Parliament will be issued on or about the 10th of July and will be returnable in six weeks from time of issue.

The Perth Courier.

June 14, 1867

As we have always contended, the administration of the Government under Confederation will very soon totally swamp the Provinces, and make a load of debt for them under which they must soon sink. The financial state of Canada is such at the present time that we could scarcely borrow a dollar outside of the Province. The only institution in the world that will give us a cent is the Bank of Montreal, and in security our Government was compelled to give it the entire control of our finances. The *New York Sun* makes the following remarks on the salaries some of our officials are to receive –

“The salary of Lord Monck²⁵ has hitherto been about the same as that of the president of the United States, but under the new arrangement it is to be raised to the very

²⁵ Charles Stanley Monck, 4th Viscount Monck (1819 –1894) – Governor General of British North American and the Province of Canada 1861-1867 and first Governor General of the Dominion of Canada 1867-1869.

respectable sum of \$60,000 in gold per annum, which will be equivalent to over \$80,000 of our currency. This compensation he is to receive for presiding over a nation of only 3,000,561, while the Governor of the State of New York, having a population of nearly a million larger under his control, receives only \$4,000 per annum for his services. Besides the Viceroy, or Chief Governor, there are to be four Lieutenant Governors, and a host of minor officers, to complete the machinery of the ambitious little nation on our north”.

Even if Lord Monck was in fact to be paid as much as \$60,000 in gold annually for his services as Governor General, the town fathers of Perth brought more thrift to plans for celebrations marking the birth of Canada.

The Town Council has appropriated \$150 towards celebrating “Dominion Day”, First of July, in a manner worthy of the new era in the history of the British provinces, which will then be inaugurated. Games of various descriptions, boat races, fireworks, &c., are to form part of the programme and a day of rare amusement may be confidently expected. This action of the Council is highly commendable; and though never in favour of Confederation, we trust the new regime may result as gloriously as it promoters have all along predicted, and that under the unsullied flag of Old England the “New Dominion” may continually advance in everything that tends to make a nation truly great and prosperous. We are much pleased that Perth is not to be behind its compeers in observing the day with due honor; and no doubt, the inhabitants of the surrounding townships will muster in full force to aid in doing honor to the occasion.

The Perth Courier.

June 21, 1867

A meeting of the Committee of Council was held on Saturday evening, at which it was decided to invite the Almonte, Carleton Place and Smiths Fall Volunteer Companies to visit Perth on the First July, Dominion Day, and also to expend \$75 on fireworks. Other arrangements are not complete, nor have we learned whether the Volunteers have signified their acceptance of the invitation.

The \$75 allocated for fireworks was apparently in addition to the \$150 budgeted by Town Council the week before.

Under the largest headline the *Courier* had published all year, GREAT REFORM CONVENTION! SPLENDID SUCCESS! 400 Delegates Present! COALITION DOOMED!, a special report sent by wire from Toronto heralded a revival in Reform Party fortunes and hope for an end to the Coalition Government.

The Perth Courier.
PERTH, FRIDAY, JUNE 28, 1867.
GREAT REFORM CONVENTION!
SPLENDID SUCCESS!
400 Delegates Present!
Requisition to Hon. George Brown!
COALITION DOOMED!
Hon George Brown to visit North Lanark.
SPECIAL TO THE COURIER.

Toronto – The Great Reform Convention met in this city today, and is a splendid success. About four hundred delegates have already arrived, and many more are coming ... McDougall, Howland and Blair, held a caucus of Members of Parliament yesterday, at which only 13 persons were present, of whom not half favoured the continuance of the Coalition. The meeting was a failure, in fact a complete breakdown. The Reformers were never in better spirit than at present and feel quite sanguine as to the result. The election news through the entire country is of the most cheering character, and promises a clean sweep of the Corruptionists.

Reformers regret that there are not more delegates from North Lanark to witness the determined attitude exhibited against the fusion of parties. It is also regretted that Mr. McDougall has apparently gone over to John A., Cartier and Galt, merely for the sake of a few of a few months in office.

The *Carleton Place Herald* announces that the elections “will come off in September”, but it is quite possible that they will take place in August. It is a very old trick of the Tories to endeavour to throw dust in the eyes of opponents ... it can only be said, by way of warning to those who truly participate in the ideas of the Reform party, (alas! Is it to be so no longer?), and who desire to assert their power and rightful suffrage in the great Government change, that there should be little heed given to these paid organs. Let Reformers be ready! Be Ready!

In other news, the *Courier* reported the arrival in Canada of Governor General designate Charles Stanley Monck.

His excellency the Governor General, accompanied by Lady Monck and daughters, arrived at Quebec on Tuesday, by the S.S. *Nestorian*, and was most enthusiastically received by the assembled crowds ... it is understood that he will shortly leave for Ottawa, there to participate in the important arrangements connected with the organization of the “Dominion”.

Locally, with less than a week remaining before the Dominion of Canada would become a reality, planning continued for celebrations to mark the occasion.

At a meeting of the Council Committee on Monday evening, immediately after the close of the regular session, it was decided to have a Fireman's procession, a Volunteer Muster, a Regatta, and a variety of other exercises and amusements, on the First of July, "Dominion Day". It is to be hoped that the affair will be better managed than was the celebration of the Queen's Birthday.

The Perth Courier.

July 5, 1867

The following appears in the daily papers – At eleven o'clock, His Excellency [Lord Monck] drove to the Government Buildings; a royal salute was fired. He was sworn in as Governor-General of Canada before Chief Justice [William Buell] Richards, Drapper and Justices [John Hawkins] Hagarty, Modelet and [Adam] Wilson. After taking the oath of office, His Excellency, in the name of the Queen, conferred the title of Knight Commander of the Bath on Hon. John A. McDonald, and that of Companion of the Bath on Hon. Messrs. Howland, McDougall, Cartier, Galt, Tilley²⁶ and Tupper²⁷. The Governor has issued a proclamation, continuing in office the several public servants till further arrangements are completed.



William Pearce Howland (1811-1907)

The following, it is confidently stated, will form the new Coalition Cabinet – President of the Council, Hon. Mr. [Adam] Blair²⁸; Hon. Mr. [Alexander] Galt, Minister of Finance; Hon. Mr. [William] Howland, Inland Revenue; Hon. Mr. [Samuel] Tilley, Customs; Hon. Mr. [Alexander] Campbell²⁹, Post Master General; Hon. Mr. [William] McDougall, Public Works; Hon. Mr. [George-Étienne] Cartier, Minister of War; Sir John A. McDonald, Minister of Justice; Hon. Mr. [Hector-Louis] Langevin, Home Secretary; Hon. Mr. [Adams] Archibald³⁰, Foreign Secretary; Hon. Mr. [Peter] Mitchell³¹, Minister of Marine and Fisheries; Hon. Mr. [Charles] Cinpais³², Minister of Agriculture; and Hon. Mr. [William]

²⁶ Samuel Leonard Tilley (1818-1896), New Brunswick delegate to the London Confederation Conferences.

²⁷ Charles Tupper (1821-1915), Premier of Nova Scotia and delegate to the London Confederation Conferences.

²⁸ Adam Johnson Fergusson Blair (1815-1867).

²⁹ Alexander Campbell (1822-1892).

³⁰ Adams George Archibald (1814-1892).

³¹ Peter Mitchell (1824-1899).

³² Charles John Chapais (1811-1885).

Kenny³³, Receiver General. The Lieutenant Governors are – Gen. [William] Silstead³⁴, Ontario; Sir N. F. Belleau³⁵, Quebec; Gen. [William] Williams³⁶, Nova Scotia; Gen. [Charles] Doyle³⁷, New Brunswick.

On July 5th the *Courier* dedicated just under a full page (8 ½ columns) to a detailed report on the debates and resolutions of the ‘Great Reform Conference’ held at Toronto on Thursday and Friday of the previous week, describing it as,

... decidedly the most successful affair of the kind ever held in Canada. Our special telegrams from Toronto last week, put down the number of those attending as about 400, but when the afternoon trains and boats arrived this number swelled to nearly 700. Among this number, were all the leading Reformers in Ontario, many of whom made stirring speeches. The utmost unanimity prevailed throughout on all questions dealt with, but more especially was the unanimity displayed in the question of Coalition or no Coalition – only three hands being held up against the resolution affirming that Coalitions were demoralizing &c.

Buried near the center of page-three, beside advertisements for mortgage sales, fresh seed, dry goods, groceries and liquors, the *Courier* found room for a single column mention of celebrations at Perth marking Canada’s first Dominion Day.

Dominion Day - At the early hour of five o’clock on Monday morning, the successive discharges of two cannon captured from the Americans during the 1812-15 war³⁸, proclaimed to the suddenly aroused denizens of our good old town that the Natal Day of the “New Nationality” had arrived, and was to be celebrated in a manner worthy of the union of four such important Provinces as the two Canadas, New Brunswick and Nova Scotia. The morning was clear and calm, with not a cloud to darken the horizon; and if being favoured with sunshiny weather for inauguration may be taken as a favorable omen of its future prosperity, then the Dominion of Canada will be signally blessed in the career so auspiciously begun on the memorable First of July 1867.

The Firemen – The Fountain and Union Fire Companies turned out soon after 9 o’clock, and, headed by St. Patrick’s Brass Band, proceeded to test the Engines, the former at the tank on Wilson Street, the latter at Mair’s Corner.

The Procession – A reasonable time having elapsed after the above occurrence, a procession consisting of the Band, the Volunteers, The Firemen, the Corporation³⁹, the

³³ Edward Kenny (1800-1891).

³⁴ William Henry Stisted (1817-1875).

³⁵ Narcisse Fortunat Belleau (1808-1894).

³⁶ William Fenwick Williams (1800-1883).

³⁷ Charles Hastings Doyle (1804-1883).

³⁸ Still on display in front of the Lanark County Court House at Perth.

³⁹ Town Council - Mayor Richard Shaw (1822-1872), Reeve John Doran (1826-1899), Deputy Reeve Robert Douglas, Councillors William O’Brien, Charles H. Gamsby, R. Elliot, Charles Meighen (1823-1917), Henry Dowsley Shaw (1833-1917), Edward G. Malloch (1839-1922), David Holliday (1818-1900), T. Jamieson, Duncan A. Kippen (1831-1926).

resident Senator⁴⁰ and the Parliamentary Representative⁴¹, the Judge⁴², the sheriff⁴³, the professional Gentlemen, the Grammar School Teachers, together with a large number of the most prominent citizens, and various leading farmers from the surrounding townships, formed at the Market Square and marched along Gore, Foster and Drummond Streets to the field immediately opposite Judge Malloch's residence⁴⁴. This procession was one of the most imposing features of the day.

The Proclamation – No sooner had the procession become properly disposed on the field, than the Mayor mounted the nostrum, which in this instance chanced to be a cannon, and with a voice of awful majesty, announced the order of the proceedings. His worship then read the Queen's proclamation, which impressive ceremony having been duly concluded, loud cheers were given for "Our Gracious Sovereign" and "The New Dominion" and Alex Morris, Esq., MPP for South Lanark, ascended the eminence just vacated by the mayor, and proceeded to deliver an address.

Royal Salute – The more intellectual part of the proceedings over, the Volunteers and Cannoniers fired a Royal Salute. Some evolutions were likewise performed by the Volunteers, whose manly bearing and soldierly appearance elicited numerous plaudits from the spectators.

The Regatta – Returning from the scene of so many attractions, the crowd patiently awaited the Regatta. For some time a disappointment appeared inevitable, owing to the multitude of logs in the river; however this difficulty was at length overcome, and the sport commenced in good and earnest. Several boats competed for prizes; and though not at all up to general anticipation, the Regatta passed off pretty fairly. A couple of laughable mishaps in the shape of "duckings" caused no little merriment at the expense of the aquatic disciples of Neptune. One individual fell from the bridge plump into the stream, whence he dexterously contrived to emerge in an exceedingly wet state, and minus his watch and some other paraphernalia. A boat containing two young men was capsized and its occupants ignominiously "spilled" into the meandering Tay, greatly to the delight of sundry juveniles, as well as "children of larger growth".

Foot Race – In the afternoon, Mr. John Lee⁴⁵, the Perth champion, and a miner from Burgess, who has lately arrived from England, and is said to be a regular professional, ran a Foot Race on Herriott Street. This race attracted great attention, and was watched with eager interest. Upon Lee being declared the winner, the applause for a few moments knew no bounds; his friends thronging to grasp him by the hand and congratulate him on his victory.

⁴⁰ Roderick Matheson (1797-1873) would suffer a stroke six months later and never actually take his seat in the Senate.

⁴¹ Alexander Morris (1826-1889).

⁴² John Glass Malloch (1806-1873).

⁴³ James V. Thompson (1812-1912), one time owner of the *Perth Courier* and Sheriff of Lanark & Renfrew Counties 1866-1903.

⁴⁴ Now the original block of the Perth's Great War Memorial Hospital.

⁴⁵ Possibly John Lee b.1843, Perth, s/o Irish born Richard b.1818 and Mary b.1825 Lee. Perhaps the same John Lee who was turnkey at the Perth Jail.

A New But Good Idea – Not the least attractive feature of the day was the original idea of Messrs. McCarthy and Moffat, in dressing up their locomotive – the “Tay” – in a very fancy and tasty design. On the front there were placed two large evergreen trees, interlaced with silk ribbons, in red, white and blue; six flags of various designs were also displayed on different parts of the engine, together with other suitable paraphernalia. Altogether the staunch engine, “The Tay”, did her part well in the celebration of the day and great praise is due to Messrs. McCarthy and Moffat for the trouble and expense to which they went in their successful endeavors to assist the festivities of the occasion.

Fireworks – An excellent assortment had been procured from Boston, and soon after 9 o’clock the discharge of a rocket ushered in the pyrotechnic display. Showers of rockets, stars, &c., with now and again a revolving wheel by way of variety, followed each other in rapid succession, and presented a gleaming spectacle attractive to the beholders. A large number of boats, illuminated with Chinese Lanterns, and bearing tasteful transparencies, as the Beaver and Maple Leaf, the prince of Wales motto “Canada Floreat” &c., glided smoothly over the glassy surface of the sparkling waters, and the strains of the Brass Band, wafted by the evening breeze, completed a panoramic scene on which the eye loved to linger. The display continued until 11:30 o’clock, and well pleased with everything in general, and themselves in particular, the assembled hundreds dispersed, having, as in duty bound, first listened to the inspiring anthem so dear to every true Canadian, “GOD SAVE THE QUEEN”.

Conclusion – We may state in conclusion, that to Messrs. [Duncan] Kippen, [John] Doran and [Edward] Malloch, are due the credit for getting the fine display of fireworks exhibited – the like of which we venture to say, was not excelled in Canada, for variety, beauty of design and general splendor.

Epilogue

The first Federal elections for the new Dominion of Canada were finally held between August 7th and September 20th, 1867. Much to the chagrin of the *Perth Courier*, John A. Macdonald led his Conservative party to victory, winning a clear majority with 100 seats in a 130 member House of Commons, including the majority of seats in both Ontario and Quebec. The Reformers, renamed the Liberal Party, formed the official opposition with 62 seats. The balance of 18 seats went to the Anti-Confederation Party led by Joseph Howe of Nova Scotia (who wanted to withdraw his province from the new union).

As the *Perth Courier*’s editor feared, the Reformers of Lanark South failed to field a candidate and Conservative Alexander Morris was re-elected by acclamation. He would go on to be appointed Minister of Inland Revenue in 1869, serving until he was named Chief Justice of Manitoba in 1872 and then Lieutenant Governor of Manitoba and the Northwest Territories later the same year. Stepping down in 1876 he returned to politics and was elected as MPP for Toronto East in 1878 and held that seat until retiring in 1886.

In Lanark North the Reform/Liberals also failed to field a candidate and William McDougal won by acclamation. He was Sir John A. Macdonald’s Minister of Public Works until September 1869 and held the seat for Lanark North in 1867-1872 and 1878-1882. McDougall also served as

Lieutenant Governor of Rupert's Land and the Northwest Territories in 1869-1870. In 1875 he was elected to the Ontario Legislative Assembly, sitting until 1878.

William Pearce Howland was also re-elected and continued to serve as Minister of Inland Revenue until July 1868. From 1868 through 1873 he was the Lieutenant Governor of Ontario.

As George L. Walker reported and commented on the events of Confederation year, he was 29 years of age. Just seven years after recording the historic events of 1867, he died at the age of only 35 years; the victim of 'dynamic' or 'malignant' fever. In addition to his widow he left six children under the age of 10 years. George Walker's brothers, James M. Walker and William T. Walker, took over publication of the *Courier* after his death and in 1901 sold it to nephew Walter W. Walker. In 1934 the *Courier* was incorporated as the Perth Courier Publishing Company with directors Walter W. Walker, Weston W. Walker and Thomas Vincent Lally. The *Courier* remained in the hands of Walker family descendants until 2006.

- **Ron W. Shaw (2017)**