

Report of the Annual Meeting of the Canadian Historical Association Rapport de l'assemblée annuelle de la Société historique du Canada

Report of the Annual Meeting

Report of the Secretary-Treasurer

C. N. Cochrane

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REPORT OF THE SECRETARY-TREASURER

By C. N. COCHRANE

The annual meeting of the Canadian Historical Association was held in Toronto on Friday and Saturday, May 27 and 28. Through the courtesy of the authorities of the University of Toronto, the sessions were held in Baldwin House, and visiting members enjoyed the hospitality of Hart House and other facilities of the university. On the evening of Friday, May 27, a dinner was held in the Great Hall of Hart House, in honour of visiting members of the association.

The general sessions began on Friday afternoon. After the usual business, Professor G. M. Wrong delivered the presidential address, and concluded with a review of significant publications on Canadian affairs during the past year. In his address, Mr. Wrong illustrated the difficulties which beset historical composition under modern conditions, and described the relations of history with allied subjects such as anthropology, economics, and philosophy.

The program of papers was arranged to be appropriate to the celebration of the Diamond Jubilee of Confederation. Five papers dealt with the Confederation movement in the various provinces: The Maritimes, by D. C. Harvey, University of Manitoba; Quebec, The Abbé G. Robitaille, Joliette College, P.Q.; Ontario, F. H. Underhill, University of Saskatchewan; British Columbia, His Honour Judge Howay, New Westminster, B.C.; The Prairie Provinces, Chester Martin, University of Manitoba. The relation of British finance to the Confederation movement was described by R. G. Trotter, Queen's University. There followed on these, four papers on various problems of Canadian national life: *The Growth of Canadian National Feeling*, by W. S. Wallace, University of Toronto; *The French Canadians under Confederation*, by Senator N. A. Belcourt; *The Development of Imperial Relations*, by W. T. Waugh, McGill University; *Canadian Cultural Development*, by Dr. J. C. Webster, Shediac, N.B. These papers will be printed *in extenso* in the forthcoming annual report, which it is hoped will this year be ready for distribution in September. In the present article, not more than a brief summary of the addresses can be attempted.

THE CANADIAN HISTORICAL REVIEW

Beginning the series of historical papers, Mr. Harvey outlined the part which early efforts for union among the Maritime provinces played in helping to bring about Confederation: "The maritimes, honest dupes of their own enthusiasm as much as misled by promises from Canadian statesmen, and disappointed with the realities of Confederation, put their faith in England as sure to enforce 'fair play', but like other minorities before them, they found that Imperial governments, like God, are on the side of the big battalions." He concluded with a plea that the promises of the time should be, in part at least, redeemed, as a means of correcting the depression now prevalent in the maritime provinces. Mr. Harvey's paper provoked a lively discussion.

In the absence of the Abbé Robitaille, Mr. Lanctot summarized the paper on Quebec, and this was followed by Mr. Underhill's paper on Ontario. Under the title *Some Aspects of Upper Canadian Radical Opinion in the Decade before Confederation* there was given an analysis of George Brown's *Globe*. The thesis was that the present "Progressive" movement on the prairies represents an unconscious revival of the ideas of two generations ago, when Upper Canada was still the "frontier", and the "intelligent yeomanry" of what is now Ontario fought the battle of the "plain people" against Big Business and especially against the railway octopus of Montreal. With the industrialization of Ontario since Confederation, the ideas of Brown have withered at the roots. "No good Torontonians of the present generation," the speaker said, "could possibly read the *Globe* of the '50's and '60's without a shudder.

Judge Howay's paper described at length the financial situation in British Columbia which led to the federation of that province with the nascent Dominion, and illustrated the petty and sordid motives which dominated at least some of the advocates of union.

In his paper on the Prairie Provinces, Mr. Martin showed that the original position of the Northwest Territories under the government at Ottawa was one of subjection to an unsympathetic imperial power. Without condoning the insurrections by Riel, he affirmed that no one except Riel combined popular support on the prairies with the opportunity of protest, and he described Riel as the predestined victim of a great idea, viz. the extension of free local government to the vast expanses of the west.

An interesting sidelight on Confederation was given by Mr. Trotter in a review of the Baring and Mills correspondence of the 1860's, which showed that a powerful group of financiers in London, interested in the Grand Trunk Railway and other investments in Canada, lent strong support to the movement for union.

In the series of general papers, Mr. Stewart Wallace traced the growth of national feeling from the foundation of the "Canada First" movement to the organization of a Canadian Ministry at Washington. The Hon. N. A. Belcourt first described the position of the French in the period following the Conquest as that of "hewers of wood and drawers of water" for the Anglo-Saxon magnates who with the backing of government appropriated the land and resources of the province, and then proceeded to demonstrate the magnificent growth of Quebec as a member of Confederation, showing by a wealth of statistics how the French Canadians had once more come into possession of their own domain. In his paper on Imperial Relations, Mr. Waugh examined the attitude of the mother country toward the colonies during the past sixty years. First, until 1886, there was much indifference owing to the prevalence of the ideas of the Manchester school. Then, for seventy years, until the defeat of Chamberlain's trade policy, there was a strong imperialism. Since 1906, and due largely to the events of the Great War, the bonds of empire have become looser and weaker, with great extensions to the autonomy of the self-governing colonies. This tendency culminated in the declarations of the last Imperial Conference. "There is no doubt," the speaker concluded, "that if legislation and procedure give effect to the findings of the report, the present constitution of the Empire will be destroyed, and if nothing is done, and the report is treated as mere verbiage, the result will be still more sensational."

In his analysis of Canadian cultural development, Dr. Webster expressed the keenest disappointment at the relative insignificance of Canadian productivity in literature, art, music, and architecture. While admitting that a thin and feeble current had been maintained, he charged Canadians as a whole with neglect of the things of the spirit, ascribing their backwardness to absorption in the problems of material welfare and to stagnation, "especially in the more remote parts" of older Canada. His paper provoked the keenest discussion, during which it appeared that rays of light were to be detected here and there, relieving the general blackness of the picture.

The following officers were elected to serve for the ensuing year,—

President, A. G. Doughty, Ottawa.

Vice-president, Chester Martin, Winnipeg.

Chairman of Management Committee, L. J. Burpee, Ottawa.

English Secretary and Treasurer, Norman Fee, Ottawa.

Editor and French Secretary, Gustave Lanctot, Ottawa.

Council (in addition to the above-named officers): George Wilson, Halifax, N.S.; Leo Harvey, Fredericton, N.B.; Dr. J. C. Webster, Shediac, N.B.; Victor Morin, Montreal, P.Q.; W. T. Waugh, Montreal, P.Q.; D. A. McArthur, Kingston, Ont.; D. C. Harvey, Winnipeg, Man.; A. S. Morton, Saskatoon, Sask.; A. L. Burt, Edmonton, Alta.; W. N. Sage, Point Grey, B.C.