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CANADIAN POLITICAL IDEAS IN THE SIXTIES AND SEVENTIES: EGERTON RYERSON

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By 1860 Ryerson had reached his fifty-seventh year. For more than thirty years he had been a name in Canada. At the age of twenty-three, and at the instance of the little congregation of Methodists in York, of which he was for that year junior preacher, he had challenged John Strachan, and the whole doctrine of privilege in Church and State. This first of a long series of controversies—the last was with Professor Daniel Wilson and Goldwin Smith just fifty years later—at once brought him into friendly relations with the rising reform movement. The chief figures in the movement were Bidwell, Rolph, and Mackenzie. He was already well acquainted with Rolph, whose father had taken up land near the broad loyalist acres of Colonel Joseph Ryerson in Norfolk County, and whose eloquence had deeply impressed his youth. For Bidwell he acquired a profound respect, as a religious man of cultivated mind and liberal views. Their friendship, sealed by Ryerson's protest against Bidwell's proscription in 1838, survived the years, and during the distinguished exile's last visit to Toronto he was Ryerson's guest, sharing his pew in the Metropolitan Church. With the indefatigable and undaunted, but impulsive and incalculable Mackenzie he could have less in common than with either Rolph or Bidwell; but, to judge from the account of Ryerson's New Year's sermon of 1826 appearing in the *Colonial Advocate* of January 12, Mackenzie at first was greatly impressed with the young preacher.¹ He reports that Rolph and Bidwell heard the same sermon.

The next eighteen years of Ryerson's life were occupied with circuit work; with the founding and editing of the *Christian Guardian*, which became the most widely read and, in Sydenham's view at least, "the only decent paper in both Canadas";² with a sojourn of eighteen months in England spent in laying siege to the Colonial Office in the interest of a charter for Upper Canada Academy, later Victoria College, and in deepening through personal contact an acquaintance with English men and movements already formed through wide reading; and lastly in a tenure for three years of the principalship of Victoria College at Cobourg.

It was from this position that he was called by Metcalfe to elaborate a system of public education for his native province. While his entry into the campaign of 1844 was not premeditated,³ but arose out of a request by the Governor for advice on the university question, once involved in the negotiations for the forming of an Executive Council and once embarked on the defence of the Governor, he came nearer than at any time of his life to putting his soul in jeopardy through engaging in party politics. His want of political ambition, ordinarily so-called, however, is exemplified by the fact that when Draper's suggestion that he become joint Provincial Secretary, in charge of Education and with

¹C. B. Sissons, *Egerton Ryerson, His Life and Letters* (Toronto, 1935), I, 18.

²Sydenham to Russell, March 13, 1840.

³C. B. Sissons, "Ryerson and the Elections of 1844" (*Canadian Historical Review*, June, 1942).

a seat in the Executive Council, was not accepted by the Governor, the rejection did not in the least affect his support of the cause. Thirty years later the Rev. John Carroll, author of the great source work on early life in Upper Canada, *Case and his Contemporaries*, wrote an article on Ryerson, at the time of his election as first President of the General Conference of the Methodist Church of Canada. While Carroll did not always see eye to eye with Ryerson in Conference, he makes this profound observation as to his motives: "The Doctor's ambition has not lain in the direction of coveting office, but (and there was no truly great man without ambition) in the direction of influencing public opinion on those questions and measures the carrying of which he deemed to be for the good of the Church and the country; and it was only when an office furthered these objects that he showed any care to obtain it."⁴ But in this bitter contest of 1844 with Robert Baldwin Sullivan, the champion of the Reform Association, the fighting blood running full in his veins carried him further into partisanship than his Christian principles could easily permit, and with the new year we find him lamenting the spiritual barrenness of 1844.

As responsible government in time became a fact in the Canadas Ryerson's relations as the head of a department came to be less with the Governor and more with his ministers. Their political complexion was to him a matter of no concern; they were judged by the intelligence of their interest in the system he was founding. The municipal authorities and the public in general at all times were taken into confidence, and their interest and support enlisted. A monthly *Journal of Education* was founded for the information of the local school authorities and the profession, and the daily press was employed at need to explain or defend various features of the system that were new or subject to attack. Then every five years Ryerson carried out during the winter an arduous tour of the province. Some forty conventions were held, usually in the county towns, at which trustees and teachers were invited to discuss proposed changes in the school law and express their opinions by vote. Frequently, also, public meetings were held in the evening, presided over by a local judge or a member of Parliament or other prominent citizen, where a lecture on some educational theme was delivered. If the County Council were in session it was visited and invited to discuss policies. These meetings served not only to create and nourish a general interest in education, but also to keep Ryerson so closely in touch with the public mind that his advice to the government in the matter of legislation was likely to be at once practical and popular. Meanwhile his deputy, John George Hodgins, was developing a filing system which makes the archives of the Department of Education a mine of social history, alas unquarried; while at the same time through the Educational Depository good literature was being made available at cost through prizes for use in the schools and through libraries established in every township that was willing to be helped.

While Ryerson was employed in building a system of universal education essential to democracy—and too busy with his task to be concerned with politics, except in so far as they hampered or furthered his work—the sands of an unstable Union were running out. Perhaps his method in snatching what he could for his system as the political

⁴John Carroll, "Egerton Ryerson" (*Canadian Methodist Magazine*, Feb., 1874, 103).

shuttle shot back and forth at Quebec can best be shown by reference in some detail to the events of a single year. The year 1863 may be selected, since that year looked at in retrospect has an aspect of finality in Ryerson's life. It brought to some sort of conclusion two of his main interests—the University and Separate School questions. In the case of the former his hopes and plans were frustrated, at least during his life time; in the latter a settlement was reached which in the main has stood the test of time and which, at all events during his subsequent tenure of office, never seriously disturbed the peace of the province or his own tranquillity.

In another sense the year marked a crisis in his life. During the spring of 1862 he had suffered a serious illness, and before a complete recovery had hurried to Quebec to forestall Richard Scott's effort to gain new privileges for his church in respect of Separate Schools. Now in 1863 after long weeks spent in Quebec, at the command of the Prime Minister, holding the ground he had won in 1862, with the knowledge all the while that the University situation in Toronto was getting out of hand, he suffered a recurrence of his terrible pains in the head and at length realized that no longer could he stand the strain of unremitting application. From 1863 Ryerson is a changed man, willing always—sometimes too willing—to enter the lists in defence of a position which he fancied won, but seldom seeking new conquests. And the renewal of strength necessary for his limited ambition he found in the wild haunts of his native county, where he had fished and hunted as a boy, and in trips in his eighteen-foot skiff, several times alone, between Toronto and his island retreat on Lake Erie.

The University dispute was of long standing. The original land grants, with the increase of settlement, had grown into a splendid endowment. Hoping to avail himself of this endowment for the enjoyment of a privileged communion, Strachan had secured his charter in 1827. But its exclusive character had caused such general opposition that King's College was not opened till 1843. Meanwhile Victoria and Queen's had secured university powers and were offering higher education to all and sundry. They with Regiopolis, a Roman Catholic College at Kingston, secured small annual grants from the government, but desired some scheme of affiliation with a provincial university which would give them a larger and, as they thought, a fairer share of the endowment. However, the voluntarist idea of no state help to the denominations was strong in the province; nor was it entirely confined to the Presbyterians and Baptists. It was sufficiently powerful indeed to prevent any plan of participation or alienation—as you will—till John Langton and Daniel Wilson, ably assisted by the Governor who was a bit of an artist and a President who was complacency personified, managed safely to anchor a large part of the endowment in stone and mortar.⁵ The fine pile which is University College stands as a monument to their finesse and to their faith in the future rather than to their regard for economy or for the requirements of the time. The whole transaction had been laid bare to the public in a parliamentary investigation in 1860. This had led to the appointment of a commission con-

⁵The whole story is delightfully displayed in *Early Days in Upper Canada: Letters of John Langton*, edited W. A. Langton, 277-97: "Every stone that goes up in the building, every book that is bought is so much more anchorage and so much less plunder to fight for" (297).

sisting of three representatives from Toronto, Victoria, and Queen's respectively. Their report had been published in January, 1863. It is epitomized in the recommendation that the name of the University be changed from the University of Toronto to the University of Upper Canada.

The findings today seem reasonable enough, and at the time they so appeared to a considerable section of the press and the public. But the two Toronto dailies—the *Globe* and the *Leader*—saw in its main proposals a subtle and a deadly blow aimed at the University. The plan of affiliation and common examinations was to them just a clever device of the outlying colleges to secure control of the Senate and wreck standards of higher education, while the timid suggestion for financial support to the affiliated colleges was an attack on the integrity of the endowment. But the main consideration in determining the issue was not the Toronto press but the fact that John A., who had appointed the commission, was out while John Sandfield was in, and largely by the votes of members obdurately voluntarist. In May after John A. had again secured a majority on a want-of-confidence motion, so delicate was the balance of parties that the situation for the colleges became even less favourable. John Sandfield had found it necessary, in preparation for the general elections in June, to make peace with Brown who, without entering the Cabinet, stood a dominating figure behind the administration. It mattered not that Ryerson when finally released from Quebec was able to show in the Senate that the commissioners in their report had accepted the unanimous view of the twenty-one members of the Senate as expressed in their reply to a questionnaire; and that the Senate in June, 1863, was turning its back on the Senate of February, 1862. The fact that he succeeded in having the *volle face* written into the records of the Senate at that last bitter meeting seemed to convict rather than to convince his opponents, now in a clear majority through new appointments. Nothing could be done, and from that date Ryerson never entered the Senate. Henceforth Victoria and Queen's and Trinity were compelled to go each its own way, financing themselves as best they could. And Toronto also went its way, after 1868 for forty years in exclusive enjoyment of state aid, training some fine scholars in honours and some pass men who were far from scholars; the pride of Toronto is true, but neither deserving nor receiving the general support due a provincial university. Then, after a generation, William Mulock and Nathaniel Burwash revived the ideas of the commissioners, forestalling the opposition of Sir Daniel Wilson, now President and Captain of the old guard, by leaving him out of the negotiations until the principle of federation had already been accepted by the Government. Queen's at the end drew back but Trinity and St. Michael's later entered, adding Anglican and Roman Catholic support, to make the four Arts Colleges of a great University. Financial aid has been extended even to two universities which have not affiliated, Queen's and the University of Western Ontario. But within the provincial University the method of providing for higher education, which recognizes denominational ideals in the federated colleges as they work in friendly rivalry with the state college, at once granting them financial aid through the provision of teaching in the sciences and receiving in return the support of their large endowments for teaching the humane studies and the provision of library, athletic, and social facilities—this arrangement, unique in

university constitutions, is a just and natural outgrowth of the policy which Ryerson favoured in 1863. It embodies the principles which the Senate including Ryerson supported in 1862, and which the Senate with the spirit of the silversmiths of Ephesus renounced in 1863. Strangely enough the man who outwitted his opponents in the University Senate a quarter of a century later—and who as Chancellor at the time of writing still presides over Convocation (incredible though it may seem)—was none other than the young alumnus who moved the final resolution at the public meeting held in Toronto on March 5, 1863, to the effect that a memorial should be prepared for his Excellency and Parliament praying that the report of the commissioners be not acted upon, whereupon the proceedings closed with three cheers for the Queen and three groans for the commissioners.

The second issue of the year 1863 was marked by the same sharp cleavage of opinion as to the relations of Church and State. The introduction of Separate Schools into the Upper Province was one of the Acts of the first Parliament under Union. Five years later, when Ryerson returned from Europe to take active control of his new office it was as an untidy foundling on his doorstep. So long as Bishop Power lived it caused little trouble, but when his devotion and cholera carried him off, and Bishop Charbonnel, who began and ended his days in France, succeeded him, there was constant difficulty and unpleasantness. In 1862 the government, uncertain of its majority, had permitted the Roman Catholic member for Ottawa, Richard W. Scott, to bring in a Separate School Bill which would have surrendered much that Ryerson had striven through fifteen years to save. Illness had prevented his dealing promptly with the situation at Quebec. Meanwhile he had received several private letters from Macdonald, written with his characteristically personal touch. While discussing the Grammar and Separate School bills he would enquire about the illness of Ryerson's brother William, the orator of Methodism, recently elected for Brant, promising that his secretary would find quarters for him in Quebec; or ask whether Ryerson could do anything *sub rosa* for J. B. Robinson among the Wesleyans; or remark that Dick Scott was a very good fellow, although no Solon. He informs Ryerson that Scott had introduced the present bill without showing it to him, and that his own plan was to send the bill to a special committee where it would be made to suit his views, but he promised to keep back the action of the committee in expectation of Ryerson's speedy arrival. Alarmed at the prospect of what might happen in an uncertain House and with a leader at times so uncertain, Ryerson strove to prepare a brief against Scott's bill, although his doctor cautioned him against any mental exertion. But each attempt to write was followed by a whole day of pain in the head and illness, so he tells Hodgins. Meanwhile the defeat of the government on the Militia Bill gave him some respite. John Sandfield was called upon to form a ministry.

By the end of May Ryerson managed to get to Quebec, enjoying a sleeping car from Montreal to Quebec and "resting wonderfully well." The story of these six days at the capital, among the most important in Ryerson's life, was never untangled by Hodgins. The two letters which tell the story, both in a hand shaky with weakness, are undated; and the fact that Hodgins did not succeed in placing them has sadly confused

his record.⁶ The dates, however, may definitely be set as June 1 and June 3. The former letter describes Scott's visit to Ryerson, who had objected to the form of the bill even as amended and reported by the Committee of the House, and Ryerson's pointing out specific criticisms as well as a general objection to such a bill being introduced by a private member rather than the government itself. Scott had come to see him again in the evening of the same day, agreed to strike out all Ryerson had objected to, and to add the clauses Ryerson had recommended as well as to secure the consent of the government to his going on with the bill. The second letter tells how the following morning Scott, accompanied this time by two representatives who could speak for his church, met Ryerson in the Parliamentary Library. The interview is thus recorded:⁷

Yesterday morning the R.C. Vicar General of Kingston (acting on behalf of the R.C. Bishops of Toronto & Kingston) & the Rev. Mr. Cazeau, Secretary of the Archbishop of Quebec, as representatives of the R.C. Church, accepted the Separate School Bill as proposed to be amended by me & agreed to by Mr. Scott, & afterwards us four waited upon the Premier, & informed him of the result of our consultations, & the desire of the authorities of the R.C. Church that the Government would approve & facilitate Mr. Scott's proceeding with the Bill. . . .

The Atty. Genl. is much pleased & amused that the Separate School question thus falls to his Govt to settle, with so little trouble or action on their part, & that it is left to him to recommend the appointment of the R. C. Bishop of Toronto as member of the Council of Public Instruction. He says he will inquire about [it] of Bernard immediately, & have the appointment made & gazetted. It is by procrastinations & neglect in such matters, that the late administration have lost immensely even among their warmest supporters. I understand that even the opposition sympathise with Mr. Patton & wish he had had the appointment of the County Attorneyship & Clerk of the Peace of the York & Peel.

During the week for some reason Scott thought it best to withdraw his bill, thus postponing the decision for another session and year. Nevertheless the *Globe* took occasion to renew its assaults upon Ryerson on the ground of surrender to Roman Catholic influence. Ryerson replied in the *Leader* of July 12—to better the day with the deed—with his usual clarity and rather more than his usual asperity.

Some two or three years since, I was informed that a gentleman asked one of the prominent editors of the *Globe* why they continued their ceaseless attacks upon Dr. Ryerson, and made statements which they must know were unfounded. The reply was in effect: "When we commence with a man we never let him go until we finish him." When I heard this, I resolved to expose at least once a year the false and malicious attacks of the *Globe*; but as, at the expiration of the first year after forming this purpose, the Editor-

⁶J. G. Hodgins, *Legislation and History of Separate Schools in Upper Canada, 1841-1876*, 161 ff.

⁷Victoria University Library, Ryerson Correspondence, Ryerson to Hodgins, June 3, 1862.

in-Chief of the *Globe* was rejected from Parliament by the free and independent electors of the electoral division in which I reside, I thought it would be ungracious to chastise him any further for his iniquities against me.

However, the systematic crusade of the *Globe* since June has compelled him to revise his decision. He reviews his past attitude on the Separate School question. The present negotiations and the changes effected by his intervention, he sets forth in some detail. The substance of the letter just read is repeated, and it is noted that two copies of the agreement were prepared after the conference, one for himself and one for Scott. Thus the whole affair was made a matter of public record, according to Ryerson's custom. The document was signed and sealed, and witnessed, so to speak, by the public through the columns of the *Leader*. The delivery was to come the following March.

The Separate School Act was being hammered out at Quebec during the very weeks of 1863 in which university reform was being shattered at Toronto.⁸ It stands as one of the greatest triumphs of Ryerson's constructive statesmanship, his ability to find the middle and practical course. The Act is short, running to twenty-eight clauses, and simple and clear in its phrasing. Here was no hunting ground for lawyers, no arena for the litigious, as has been the case with certain later educational enactments in the province, Regulations 12 and 17, for instance, as to the place of the French language in the schools. It was provided under the Act that appeals from the decision of the Chief Superintendent should be made not to the Courts, but to the Governor-General-in-Council; and Scott was able to say thirty years later that he was not aware of an appeal ever having been made.

Its purpose was stated in the preamble as twofold: to restore to Roman Catholics in Upper Canada certain rights which they had formerly enjoyed, and to bring the provisions of the law as to Separate Schools more in harmony with the provisions of the law as to Common Schools. But as the terms of the Act are studied, the restoration of rights appear less conspicuous than the practical provisions making for a general system for Roman Catholics and Protestants alike. The *Globe*, with its satellites, at the time was pleased to make much of the concessions to the Church of Rome, but failed to recognize the large concessions on the part of the Roman Catholics to the broad claims of a common system.

To understand Ryerson's attitude certain facts must be remembered. After nearly twenty years of development of the school system, there was still no law compelling parents to use the schools, and indeed no law compelling municipalities to avail themselves of the system; and one municipality at least (that of Richmond) was still outside, managing its own schools without government regulation or support. Further the Separate Schools of the Upper Province and the Dissident Schools of the Lower Province were of the very fabric of Union; and whatever flaws that fabric was showing with time it was the frame within which those entrusted with the task of dispelling ignorance had to work. It is significant that in 1867 when the more solid structure of Confederation

⁸The progress of events (with interesting sidelights) may be followed in the twenty-two letters from Ryerson to Hodgins between February and May, and the eight from Patton to Ryerson (Ryerson Correspondence).

replaced Union the changes of 1863 were considered sound enough to be written into the constitution, as a solemn compact binding the two central provinces. And Brown, who had charged in 1863 that Ryerson had entered into a deep plot, not only with the Roman Catholic Bishop of Toronto but with the High Church Anglicans, to break up the Common School System altogether and divide the school fund among the sects, and who had employed his powerful pen to arouse Protestant resentment during the election campaign of May and June of that year, by 1866 as a Father of Confederation was compelled to admit—without apology to Ryerson, however—that the settlement was necessary and not unreasonable.

The most important effect of the Act was to notify Upper Canadians that Separate Schools were a permanent feature of their life. This fact Ryerson himself had been compelled reluctantly to recognize. Now the Orange Societies and other opponents of co-operation between Church and State were forced to accept what to them was a bitter truth. Admitting the right to Separate Schools, the Act proceeded to facilitate their establishment under fair terms. But there was no surrender of what Ryerson regarded as fundamental, the right of the individual citizen to decide for himself whether he would support Common or Separate Schools. In the draft first submitted it was proposed to define all Roman Catholics as *ipso facto* supporters of Separate Schools; against this Ryerson was adamant. The Act relieved the Separate School supporter, however, of the trouble of giving annual notice of his support; notice once given stood from year to year, unless he chose to notify the Clerk of the Municipality that he wished to withdraw. A second privilege was granted in the case of Roman Catholic families living in a school section adjacent to a Separate School section. A Union section might be formed, as was permitted with Common Schools, in adjacent municipalities, whereas under the Taché bill of 1855 a Separate School section was made conterminous with the Common School section. The practical restriction was made, however, that the home of the new supporter must be within three miles of the school-house. If he lived beyond this limit, he might send his children to the Separate School, and thus increase its attendance and the government grant based on attendance, but his property tax went to the Common School section in which he resided.

But over against these new privileges stood several important provisions all tending to bring Separate Schools definitely within the general provisions for Common School education. Their teachers now became subject to the same examinations and method of certification as Common School teachers. Previously only priests were named as visitors of Separate Schools; now all judges, members of the legislature, wardens of counties, reeves of municipalities, the Chief Superintendent and local superintendents were by law free to enter any Separate School. Further, Separate Schools were made subject to such inspection as might be directed from time to time by the Chief Superintendent of Education, and to such regulation as to curriculum and text-books as might be imposed by the Council of Public Instruction.

As to Government grants, Separate Schools were now placed on the same footing as Common Schools, with one exception. Individual Common School Boards were required to raise by assessment a sum at least equal to the legislative grant; Separate School Boards were not

so required either by the Taché or the Scott bills. Ryerson's explanation is that Separate School trustees complained of the requirement as a grievance; he might have added that among the poor Irish and French settlers the size of the family raised would be frequently quite out of proportion to the value of the property held, yet the state could ill afford to have the education of their children suffer on that account. Municipal grants to schools at the time were not a regular thing, but certain municipalities were distributing for Common School education the funds accruing under the Clergy Reserve settlement. The law now required all municipalities to divide any grant equally according to attendance between Common and Separate Schools. But in the matter of levying and collecting the Separate School taxes, Ryerson was obdurate. The municipalities could and did collect the Common School levies, once they were fixed by the school trustees; Separate School rates they were not permitted to collect. This distinction he regarded as imperative by reason of the separation of Church and State in Upper Canada, and the fact that after 1857 in Lower Canada the municipalities were forbidden to collect taxes for Dissident Schools. The distinction between what was fitting for the municipalities and what was fitting for the government had since been abandoned; and the emphasis Ryerson laid on it at the time is probably to be accounted for by the deep impression remaining in his mind from the struggle against church establishment in the province, and by the strength of voluntarist sentiment generally.

The spirit in which the Act was framed is perhaps best illustrated by one little change. Formerly Separate School trustees were required to make their returns for attendance on which the provincial grant was based under oath; for Common School trustees a declaration only was required. This discrimination was now abandoned. For the future, confidence in good faith was to be the basis on which all alike—individuals, municipalities, and government—were to engage in the important business of training an intelligent citizenship.

It has seemed best in endeavouring to deal with Ryerson's political ideas to permit them to emerge in his attitude on particular questions rather than to attempt to arrive at some general formula. However in 1867 he himself undertook to set forth certain of his views in a pamphlet.⁹ It was prompted by the Reform Convention in Toronto at the end of June when the three Reformers from the Upper Province who had accepted portfolios in the Coalition government were read out of the party, though William McDougall with folded arms stoutly faced his former associates. One of the speakers at this assembly who was greatly acclaimed was Mr. John Macdonald, later Senator, and at this time a leading layman of the Methodist Church and a member of Parliament for Toronto. He had declared his belief that the only way to keep men true was to draw strict party lines and that coalitions were demoralizing. Here, then, was a theory that was striking root deep in Canadian soil, setting brother against brother, dividing communities and communions. At different times in earlier years, to the offence of this side or that, Ryerson had striven to check the excesses of party. As Superintendent of Education he had seen it to be a clog in the machinery of school and municipal government. He must now come to the support of non-partisan principle which after years of party turmoil

⁹Egerton Ryerson, *The New Canadian Dominion: Dangers and Duties of the People in Relation to Their Government*, 32.

had achieved Federation and which the two Macdonalds as first ministers at Ottawa and Toronto were seeking, or at least claiming, to perpetuate.

Ryerson hastens to assure his readers that he has no objection to political associations if they are based on some principle such as the establishing of free trade, or the abolition of slavery, or the securing of responsible government. Such associations often perform a useful work, after which they cease to exist. What he objects to is the system which seeks to usurp the ordinary functions of government in general affairs, to appoint partisans to office, and to organize and maintain the whole machinery of government as an engine to party. It is this evil which deadens religious feeling, undermines public morality, and creates the maxim that all is fair in politics, especially when it is aggravated by a violent and unscrupulous press which merely discusses men and fails to deal with public questions with intelligence and largeness of heart. Thus the public services are deprived of the abilities of the better type of citizens. "Free and independent men in the Legislature, as in the country, are the best counterpoise to faction and the main-spring of a nation's progress and greatness."¹⁰

How far the pamphlet affected the imminent election for both Parliament and legislature it is impossible to estimate. The *Globe* sought to make light of it editorially, and heaped ridicule on Satan reproving sin. But when Brown offered himself in South Ontario as an out-and-out party candidate, he was defeated—and never again stood for election. Of the Reform coalitionists McDougall received an acclamation while Howland was returned by a large majority.¹¹ In Ontario the coalition secured a safe majority, and under a Roman Catholic Premier, while in the Dominion the verdict was sweeping. But if Ryerson imagined that partisan politics had been scotched in Ontario, or that his own path for the next few years would be strewn with roses, he was vastly mistaken. He had still to reckon with the vaulting ambition of Edward Blake and with the industry and shrewdness of Oliver Mowat, whose careful attention to detail enabled him to construct a party organization that nothing could shake for thirty years.

It was 1876 before Ryerson finally handed over his work to a responsible minister of the Crown. He was convinced that the change was best. In 1862 he had contended that Scott's bill should be sponsored by the government; now he had come to realize, and from painful experience, that administration as well as legislation must be more directly under government control. But he was content. After more than fifty years of public life—he uses the term even of his saddle-bag days—he could claim to have accomplished something. He had played a part, as great as that of any Canadian, in striking off the fetters of privilege that were cramping the province of his birth. Then he had led its people into a larger view of their duty in respect of education. True it was socialism, continental rather than English, and as such resisted both by selfish conservatives and doctrinaire liberals. But, in his creed, it was necessary and good. Gradually as he was able to secure public support, and pegging down each advance by careful legislation, he improved his system till its excellence was recognized and acclaimed even beyond Canada. But as liberty and law ever walk hand in hand, so he saw his later work as the complement of his earlier.

¹⁰*Ibid.*, 25.

¹¹The third coalition minister—the Hon. A. J. Fergusson Blair—had accepted a seat in the Senate.