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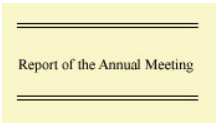
Rapports annuels de la Société historique du Canada



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Volume 27, Number 1, 1948

URI: https://id.erudit.org/iderudit/300293ar
DOI: https://doi.org/10.7202/300293ar

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Publisher(s)

The Canadian Historical Association/La Société historique du Canada

ISSN

0317-0594 (print)
1712-9095 (digital)

Explore this journal

Cite this article

Longley, R. S. (1948). 1848 in Retrospect: Events in Nova Scotia and Canada. *Report of the Annual Meeting / Rapports annuels de la Société historique du Canada*, *27*(1), 55–66. https://doi.org/10.7202/300293ar

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1848 IN RETROSPECT: EVENTS IN NOVA SCOTIA AND CANADA

By R. S. LONGLEY, *Acadia University*

ONE hundred years ago many thrones in continental Europe were being shaken or overthrown by restless and oppressed peoples seeking national self-determination, better economic opportunities, and constitutional government. Revolutions, like epidemics, seek for weak places, and the Europe of 1848 was full of weak places. The British monarchy, on the other hand, not only stood firm, but even increased in strength. That principle, which Queen Victoria once described as "constitutional fiction,"[1] whereby the monarch acts by the advice of responsible ministers, while far from perfect, had given the British people sufficient confidence in their ability to obtain peaceful reforms that appeals to force were considered unnecessary. Chartists and young Irelanders were causing the government some concern, but for the most part Britain's political skies were clear.

In British North America also, the year 1848 was a significant date, for here, where Reformers had long protested against the arbitrary acts of irresponsible officials, the people were granted the benefits of the Queen's "constitutional fiction" as they existed in the Mother Country. Responsible government was assured when Lord John Russell gave the Colonial Seals to the Durhamite Peer, Lord Grey, in June, 1846, but it was not established constitutionally until two years later. Its achievement coincided with the revolutions of Europe, and throughout the colonies it proved a bulwark against the forces of disloyalty and rebellion.

On February 2, 1848, nearly three weeks before the Paris mob set the European continent ablaze, James Boyle Uniacke of Nova Scotia was called to office by the lieutenant-governor, Sir John Harvey, and formed the first Executive Council to be chosen exclusively from the party having a majority in the elected branch of a colonial legislature.[2] Its best-known member, Joseph Howe, expressed deep satisfaction with the change. "You cannot imagine," he wrote to the English Reformer, Charles Buller, "the calmness with which we North Americans survey the political scene shifting in Europe just now."[3] In his enthusiasm, he suggested that responsible government might be used to cure the ills of Ireland. It was his desire to make Nova Scotia a normal school of constitutional procedure so that the sister provinces might observe how representative institutions could promote internal tranquility.[4] These were the words of the man who had opposed Sir Colin Campbell, quarrelled with Lord Falkland, and warned the Russell Government

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[1]A. C. Benson and Viscount Esther, *Letters of Queen Victoria, 1831-67* (3 vols., London, 1908), II, 95, Queen Victoria to Lord John Russell, Aug. 7, 1848.

[2]At the opening of the Assembly in March, a plaque, given by the Canadian Historic Sites and Monuments Board, was unveiled at Province House in Halifax to commemorate the centennial of responsible government in British North America.

[3]"The Howe-Buller Correspondence," ed. Chester Martin (*Canadian Historical Review*, VI, 1925, 329), Howe to Buller, Mar. 14, 1848.

[4]*Ibid.*, 326, Howe to Buller, Feb. 12, 1848.

that if it failed the colonies, the questions at issue would be settled ten years hence by the foes rather than by the friends of Britain. In office, he became a contented and responsible minister.

Three days after the peaceful change of government in Nova Scotia, Lord Elgin wrote to the Colonial Office from Montreal to report the probable defeat in the elections then being held, of the weak administration he had inherited from his predecessor, Sir Charles Metcalfe, and of his intention of subjecting the province of Canada to an "interesting crisis" by calling to office members of the opposing party whom Metcalfe and Lord Stanley had described as "impracticable and disloyal."[5] He was not without some misgivings as to its success, but he considered it expedient and necessary. Early in the following month LaFontaine and Baldwin returned to office after four years in opposition, this time at the head of a ministry of their own choosing. A government composed of both English- and French-speaking members, guided by a constitutional governor, and supported by an enthusiastic majority in a newly-elected legislature had sufficient prestige to thwart the schemes of noisy agitators and Irish Repealers. The members accepted Lord Elgin's assertion in the Speech from the Throne that the people enjoyed the blessings of peace through their own patriotism and *their connection with a just and powerful state*, and an opposition amendment by Louis Joseph Papineau found no support.[6] LaFontaine and Baldwin, like Howe of Nova Scotia, were conscious of their new responsibilities, and their newspapers, such as the Toronto *Globe* and the *Revue Canadienne*, poured scorn upon the vitriolic editorials of Papineau's *L'Avenir*.[7] Lord Grey cast many an anxious look at the chaos and confusion across the English Channel, and contrasted the situation there with the order and contentment in British North America. With the traditional Briton's doubt concerning Lower Canadian loyalty, and a superb confidence in the efficacy of British institutions to cure all political ills, he expressed great satisfaction that French Canadians had accepted the responsibilities of office before the news of Louis Phillipe's flight from Paris had reached Montreal.[8] He was far from certain that any but Anglo-Saxons could properly appreciate and administer the British constitution, but his confidence in the governor-general, Lord Elgin, was sufficiently great to convince him that, if the experiment now being tried were to fail, its failure was inevitable.[9] Elgin's success exceeded his fondest hopes. The far-sighted policy of men such as Grey and Elgin, and the loyal support given them by such colonial statesmen as Louis LaFontaine, Robert Baldwin, and Joseph Howe, are worthy of renewed commendation in this centennial year. Of these, none deserves a greater tribute than Henry George, third Earl Grey.

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[5] *Elgin-Grey Papers*, ed. Sir Arthur Doughty (4 vols., Ottawa, 1937), I, 123, Elgin to Grey, Feb. 5, 1848.

[6] *Ibid.*, 134, Elgin to Grey, Mar. 17, 1848.

[7] *L'Avenir* was the newspaper mouthpiece of Papineau. The *Globe* supported Baldwin, and *Revue Canadienne* spoke for LaFontaine.

[8] *Elgin-Grey Papers*, I, 138, Elgin to Grey, Apr. 14, 1848.

[9] *Ibid.*, 125, Elgin to Grey, Mar. 22, 1848.

II

Lord Grey was born in 1802. At the early age of twenty-four he was elected to the House of Commons, and before he was thirty he held a Cabinet portfolio. He was too independent and outspoken ever to be a popular leader or colleague, but he was an able administrator. Sir Henry Taylor, who served under thirteen different secretaries of state, considered Grey the ablest of them all.[10] His appointment to the Colonial Office was timely, and considering the vicissitudes of British political parties, most fortunate.

Grey asked to have Charles Buller as his assistant, but the appointment went to Benjamin Hawes. Buller was made advocate-general, with the understanding that he was to assist in colonial matters.[11] He saw most of Grey's despatches and gave much practical advice. As the friend and associate of Lord Durham, he had the confidence of the colonial Reformers, and was able to act as a liaison officer between them and Downing Street. His correspondence with Joseph Howe enabled him tactfully to inform members of colonial legislatures that they, as well as representatives of the Crown, must learn to act constitutionally. The Howe-Buller letters, while few in number, are as significant in their way for the events of 1848 as are the better known letters of Elgin and Grey.

Since the publication of the Durham *Report*, impatient Reformers such as Molesworth, Buller, Hume, and Roebuck, had often asserted that the policy of the Colonial Office was unprogressive and sometimes reactionary. Molesworth declared that efficient colonial government meant self-government. "Ours is a sad Colonial system," wrote Buller to Howe, "even with all recent concessions. In my eyes the almost sole business of the Colonial Office should be to breed up a supply of good Colonial Governors and then leave them and you to manage your own affairs. Our practice is to neglect the one duty, and meddle in everything else."[12] Hume blandly suggested that more effective reforms could be produced if the Colonial Office were "locked up."[13] Russell's colonial secretary silenced such critics. In the words of the London *Times*, there was a "stir and movement" in the office of Lord Grey, which were indicative of great events.[14]

As a well-known free-trader, Grey recognized that since 1846 the colonies could not be considered of great economic value to the Mother Country, but he would not accept the full implications of the Cobden School, that they were liabilities. He agreed with Arthur Roebuck that colonies enabled Britain to "acquire a power and influence which her own narrow territory might not permit her to attain."[15] As the colonies still needed the guidance and protection of the Mother Country, a working agreement between them was essential; in this agreement the representatives of the Crown must play an important part.[16] It was

[10]W. P. Morrell, *Colonial Policy in the Age of Russell and Peel* (Oxford, 1930), 203.
[11]*Ibid.*, 302.
[12]"Howe-Buller Correspondence," 316, Howe to Buller, Sept. 10, 1846.
[13]*The Annual Register*, 1848, 16.
[14]*The Times*, Jan. 27, 1847, Morrell, 472.
[15]Klaus K. Knorr, *British Colonial Theories* (Toronto, 1944), 352.
[16]*Elgin-Grey Papers*, 143 and 146, Grey to Elgin, May 4 and 14, 1848. Grey, *Colonial Policy of Lord John Russell's Administration* (2 vols., London, 1853), I, 207 ff.

Grey's desire to give each colony that form of government which best suited its political condition. In British North America, where representative institutions had reached their full development, the governor's task was to guide and advise responsible ministers with a minimum of interference. The earlier Sydenham-Russell theory that full responsible government was incompatible with the proper exercise of the Queen's prerogative must be discarded. Any governor who showed a preference for one political party and doubted or feared its opponents, sowed the seeds of future discord and strife, as sooner or later, under the British system, the opposition party comes to power. It was here that Sir Charles Metcalfe and Lord Falkland failed; they assumed that the Home authorities had more connection with, and more confidence in, one political party than another.[17] In Grey's opinion Metcalfe failed in Canada because he did not understand properly the system that he was seeking to administer.[18] Buller wrote Howe that the colonies were fortunate to have a colonial secretary with such sound views, but he hastened to add that the good results of the new administration could not be expected for some years, as it would take time to find and train governors who would carry out Grey's policy.[19] The delay was not as long as Buller feared; Elgin agreed to Grey's plans before he left England, and the venerable Sir John Harvey proved teachable. With Nova Scotia and Canada giving enthusiastic support to responsible ministries, the system soon spread to the other provinces. Since Harvey and Elgin were the key figures in the Grey policy, a brief comparison of their problems and methods will be of interest.

III

Sir John Harvey came to Nova Scotia at the age of seventy after a long and honourable career as a soldier and colonial governor. Known in his younger days as the "Handsome Colonel Harvey," he was bland, courteous, diplomatic, and given to blarney. As lieutenant-governor of New Brunswick and Newfoundland, he was unusually popular, and left these governments in excellent condition. Lord Sydenham, who visited him at Fredericton in 1840, thought him, except for a tendency to verbosity, "the pearl of civil governors."[20]

Harvey had accepted the appointment to Nova Scotia before Grey became colonial secretary. Buller told Howe that a civilian might have been better, but remembering the experience of Falkland and Metcalfe, he hastened to add, "we could have laid our hands on so many much worse." On the whole, he thought the province fortunate in getting a man who by his past record was unlikely to favour any particular party or individuals.[21] Unfortunately Harvey held the Sydenham theory that political parties were injurious to proper colonial development, and without the guidance of Grey, he might have ended his long and honour-

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[17] *Elgin-Grey Papers*, I, 38, Grey to Elgin, June 2, 1847; I, 138, Grey to Elgin, Apr. 14, 1848.

[18] *Ibid.*, 317, Grey to Elgin, Apr. 5, 1848; I, 56, Grey to Elgin, July 19, 1847.

[19] "Howe-Buller Correspondence," 316, Howe to Buller, Sept. 10, 1846.

[20] Paul Knaplund, *The Letters of Lord Sydenham, Governor-General of Canada, 1839-41 to Lord John Russell* (London, 1941), 84, Sydenham to Russell, July 27, 1840.

[21] "Howe-Buller Correspondence," 316, Buller to Howe, Sept. 10, 1846.

able career, as his friend, John Kent of Newfoundland feared he would, in intrigues and quarrels.[22]

Harvey faced a difficult situation. Lord Sydenham's visit to Nova Scotia in 1840 to settle what he called "a storm in a puddle" gave to the lieutenant-governor, Lord Falkland, a coalition or no-party Executive Council, of six Conservatives and three Reformers, in which the severe and courtly James W. Johnston and the impulsive, boisterous Joseph Howe were required to work together. The two men differed temperamentally and politically. Johnston supported denominational colleges: Howe advocated a provincial university. Howe demanded equality in appointments and patronage; Falkland dissolved the House on the advice of Johnston alone, and appointed a Conservative to the first executive vacancy. Finally in December, 1843, the three Reformers, Howe, Uniacke, and McNab, left the Council and could not be induced to return; Johnston carried on with a rump executive until his resignation in January, 1848. Falkland's obvious preference for Johnston and the Conservatives, and his somewhat undiplomatic efforts to conciliate the Reformers, aroused Howe's anger; the Falkland-Howe quarrel of 1845-6 was not to the credit of either participant.[23]

In conformity with his political beliefs and past experiences, Harvey at once began negotiations to restore the coalition. Since he was convinced that the differences were personal rather than political, he desired to act as mediator and moderator between the two groups. He would not, he told the Reform leaders, identify himself with any *one* party, but would have his government rest upon the support of *all*.[24] Two days later he wrote Grey of his plans. Responsible or party government in Nova Scotia, if not inconsistent with its proper relation to the parent state, tended to array one class of Her Majesty's subjects against the other and to create elements of strife which need not and do not exist, thus perpetuating agitation and making repose impossible.[25]

Harvey might dislike party differences, but he could neither eliminate nor ignore them. The Reformers had consolidated their strength and called themselves the Great Liberals. They believed public opinion was with them, and that a coalition would defeat their aims. In addition, Howe and Uniacke shared a common ambition to triumph over those "who planned and endeavoured to work out the dirty intrigue of 1843."[26] Howe knew of Harvey's appeal to Grey, and wrote Buller to give his Lordship good advice. The problem could be solved by dissolving the Nova Scotia Assembly. If this were done, there would be no further trouble from Nova Scotia for four years.[27] Uniacke, who was in London, lent his personal influence to this end, although he was by no means sure that the province was ready for the party government which might result.[28]

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[22]Chester Martin, *Empire and Commonwealth* (Oxford, 1929), 228.

[23]Sir Joseph Chisholm, *Speeches and Public Letters of Joseph Howe* (2 vols., Halifax, 1909), I; Martin, *Empire and Commonwealth*; Ross Livingstone, *Responsible Government in Nova Scotia* (Iowa City, 1930).

[24]*Novascotian*, Feb. 8, 1847, Harvey to Howe, L. O. Doyle, and George Young, Sept. 14, 1846.

[25]Morrell, *Colonial Policy*, 461, Harvey to Grey, Sept. 16, 1846.

[26]P. A. C., Howe Papers, I, 171, Uniacke to Howe, Oct. 19, 1846.

[27]"Howe-Buller Correspondence," 318, Howe to Buller, Sept. 16, 1846.

[28]Howe Papers, Uniacke to Howe, Oct. 19, 1846.

Grey and Buller considered Howe's suggestion, but found it neither constitutional nor expedient. A few weeks before, Lord John Russell had approached the Crown with a similar proposal. In reply, the Queen pointed out that the power of dissolution is a most valuable and powerful instrument in the hands of the monarch, and ought to be used only in extreme cases.[29] Sir Robert Peel had expressed similar views, and had declined to advise the use of dissolution to gain a party advantage. Howe not only wanted a dissolution for the benefit of his party, but would have it against the advice of the existing executive. Buller was delegated to inform Howe of his weak position. If Johnston's Council met defeat in the Assembly, or gave the lieutenant-governor advice he could not accept, they would be expected to resign. If a new ministry advised dissolution, it could be granted. Otherwise the Reformers should wait until the general election, which must come in 1847. By following this procedure, they would pay real, and not lip service to the principle they were seeking to establish. Buller concluded with a personal word of encouragement. Lord Grey was determined to act constitutionally. The Reformers would therefore do well to avoid the entanglements of a composite ministry, since "Coalitions always damage all engaged to them and fail all who lean on them."[30]

Grey's famous letter of November 6, 1846, followed the same constitutional arguments. Sir John should carry on with his existing Council as long as it commanded the support of the Assembly. Should this Council be defeated or resign, and a new Council be formed, there could be "no impropriety in dissolving the Assembly on their advice." But whatever the procedure, he must make it clear that any transfer of political power from one party to another was the result, not of the governor's action, but of the wishes of the people themselves.[31]

Perhaps Harvey failed to grasp what Grey wished, or as is more likely, he was still determined to have his coalition. But renewed negotiations with the two groups produced nothing but fresh recriminations and accusations.[32] An appeal to Grey brought the curt reminder that Harvey was not instructed to use his *own judgment*, but only to use his discretion as to how and when the principles enunciated by Grey were to be applied to the political situation in Nova Scotia.[33] The colonial secretary agreed with Buller that coalitions rarely succeed, and he therefore instructed Harvey to retain his existing Council until the issues between the parties could be settled at the hustings.[34] His chief concern was not that the political complexion of the government might change, but for the probable dismissals and political patronage which would result.[35] Harvey took his advice and awaited the elections.

The elections were held on August 5, 1847, the first such contest in

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[29]Benson and Esher, *Letters to Queen Victoria*, II, 95, Queen Victoria to Lord John Russell, July 16, 1846.

[30]"Howe-Buller Correspondence," 322, Buller to Howe, Nov. 16, 1846.

[31]W. P. M. Kennedy, *Documents of the Canadian Constitution* (Oxford, 1930), 495, Grey to Harvey, Nov. 3, 1846.

[32]*Novascotian*, Feb. 8, 1947.

[33]P. A. N. S., Letter Books, Falkland and Harvey, Grey to Harvey, Dec. 22 and 23, 1846.

[34]*Novascotian*, Jan. 31, 1848, Grey to Harvey, Mar. 2, 1847.

[35]*Ibid.* Also, Kennedy, *Documents*, 496-500, Grey to Harvey, Mar. 31, 1847.

British North America to be decided in a single day. The Reformers won twenty-nine seats in a House of fifty-one and not unnaturally expected to be summoned to office. But Johnston showed no intention of resigning without a vote of want of confidence, and he refused to advise a special session of the Assembly. Thus it was not until January, 1848, that the vote of want of confidence could be passed. Meanwhile, Howe and his colleagues declared that any action taken by the defeated ministry could have no validity, and that needed legislation was being delayed. Harvey, however, had learned his lesson, and refused to interfere. He expected, he told Grey, shortly to form "a strong and efficient government."[36] A few weeks later he rejoiced that Grey's policy had effectively removed from the colony a source of contention which had perplexed its councils and embarrassed its public men for fifteen years.[37] Howe realized that Nova Scotia was making history, and that the success or failure of Grey's policy was in his hands. He assured Buller that he and his colleagues would "keep within the ropes," and the pledge was kept.[38]

The Uniacke-Howe ministry consisted of nine members, six of whom held seats in the Assembly and three in the Legislative Council. At first only three had particular portfolios, but the number was soon increased. The ministers had ample powers and proceeded to use them. During the first session eight important bills were passed. The civil list was revised, the casual and territorial revenues were taken over, the customs administration was consolidated, the financial and provincial secretaries were made responsible ministers, plans were made to take over the control of the provincial post office, and efforts were made to improve the means of communication. "Measures so varied and important emanating from the Government have never before in Nova Scotia been carried out in a single session," Harvey informed Grey with considerable pride.[39] The *Novascotian*, which spoke for the Reformers, commended the lieutenant-governor. King Louis Philippe made no concessions, it declared, and became an exile. Sir John Harvey learned to make concessions; he imitates as well as represents his sovereign.[40]

IV

As has been suggested, Lord Elgin became an advocate of Grey's policy before he left England; hence events in the Canadas proceeded more smoothly and with greater rapidity than in Nova Scotia.

Elgin was a product of Eton and Oxford. He was a man of keen intellect, diplomatic skill, flashing wit, and incisive speech. By birth and early education he was a Conservative, and as a member of the Commons in 1841 he had taken an active part in the overthrow of the Melbourne Ministry. His first diplomatic post, governor of Jamaica, was a gift of a Conservative Government, and it was the Conservative Stanley who suggested that he become governor-general of British

[36]Letter Books, Harvey to Grey, Jan. 27, 1848.
[37]*Ibid.*, Harvey to Grey, Apr. 15, 1848.
[38]"Howe-Buller Correspondence," 326, Howe to Buller, Feb. 12, 1848.
[39]Letter Books, Harvey to Grey, Apr. 6, 1848.
[40]*Novascotian*, June 12, 1848.

North America. In Jamaica, where he had almost unlimited authority, he managed affairs so well that Queen Victoria thought he would make an admirable successor to Sir Charles Metcalfe whose "judicious system" she desired to have continued.[41] When Sir Robert Peel resigned in 1846, the Prince Consort wrote Lord Grey of Her Majesty's approval of Metcalfe's "prudent, consistent, and impartial administration," and that Lord Elgin was well fitted to secure "an interrupted development of Lord Metcalfe's views."[42] Grey must have been amused at the Queen's estimate of Metcalfe, but on the following day he invited Elgin to go to Canada.[43] At the time he was not acquainted with his appointee, but knew of his ability, and he wished "to entrust the management of the largest and most important of the British colonies in a season of great difficulty" to the ablest hands he could find.[44] Elgin married Lord Durham's daughter, and became an enthusiastic Durhamite. As such he came to the Canadas. He resolved to keep himself free from party conflicts and to lift Canadian politics "from the mud."

Elgin believed that responsible government should have been a part of the union of 1841, and marvelled at "what study of human nature or of history led Lord Sydenham to the conclusion that it would be possible to concede to a pushing and enterprising people, unencumbered by an aristocracy and dwelling in the immediate vicinity of the United States, such constitutional privileges as were conferred on Canada and yet restrict in practice their power of self-government as he proposed."[45] He saw no reason why Durham's division of powers between imperial and local authorities could not be followed, and if excessive patronage were feared when the Reformers took office, it ought to be remembered that Draper and his Tory colleagues used patronage with "as little scruple as their predecessors."[46]

In conformity with his own views and those of Lord Grey, Elgin did not seek to change the composition of his executive without their consent, but suggested that they meet Parliament with progressive legislation and the prestige of a new governor, or seek to strengthen their support in the Assembly by inviting French Canadians to enter the Council. They chose the second alternative, but LaFontaine would not unite with the Tories, and kept his supporters in line. Elgin remained aloof from the negotiations, but made it clear to the French that he was willing to have them in office.[47] The *Globe* declared that at last the province had been given a constitutional governor. Finally, acting on the advice of the executive, the governor dissolved the Assembly in December, 1847. The ministers hoped to gain from the elections, but the times were against them; the spirit of reform was in the air, and the economic depression since 1846 made the Government unpopular. At first the governor could see little evidence of a change, but by the close of the first week of January, he was convinced he would have new advisers.[48]

[41]Benson and Esher, *Letters of Queen Victoria*, II, 46-7, Queen Victoria to Lord Stanley, Nov. 2, 1845.
[42]*Ibid.*, 94, Prince Albert to Grey, Aug. 3, 1846.
[43]*Elgin-Grey Papers*, I, 3, Grey to Elgin, Aug. 4, 1846.
[44]Grey, *Colonial Policy of Lord John Russell's Administration*, I, 208.
[45]*Elgin-Grey Papers*, I, 29, Elgin to Grey, Apr. 26, 1847.
[46]*Ibid.*, 136, Elgin to Grey, Mar. 17, 1848.
[47]*Ibid.*, 28, Elgin to Grey, Apr. 26, 1847.
[48]*Elgin-Grey Papers*, I, 117, Elgin to Grey, Jan. 7, 1848.

The final returns gave the opposition fifty-nine of the eighty-four seats. Elgin offered his ministers the choice of immediate resignation, or of meeting Parliament without unnecessary delay.[49] They chose the second alternative, but the Assembly was not summoned for several weeks. While the wait was not as long as in Nova Scotia, the governor faced the same problem which had disturbed Harvey's peace of mind for five months, the desire of the defeated party to make midnight appointments.[50] Grey's despatches to Harvey on this important question had been published in Nova Scotia and reached Montreal. Elgin believed they did good. He agreed with Grey that only the political offices should be changed, but he feared that his new ministers would deal, as he put it, "Yankee fashion" with their opponents. It was certain to be difficult for LaFontaine and Baldwin to satisfy the scores of office seekers. In Nova Scotia, Uniacke and Howe faced a similar problem, but considering the provocations and opportunities, patronage under responsible government did not get seriously out of hand.

V

Such Reformers as Cobden and Molesworth had long complained that the inhabitants of the colonies were economically better off than the masses of England who were taxed for their defence.[51] Molesworth had a simple solution to the problem; self-government should be accompanied by self-help.[52] Grey agreed with this policy. "Self-government," he declared, "ought to carry with it corresponding responsibilities, and the time has now come when the people of Canada must be called upon to take upon themselves a larger share than they have hitherto done of expenses incurred on their account."[53] He believed, however, that such an important step should be approached with caution, and that it must be preceded by some form of inter-provincial organization, possibly a federal union. If the provinces were united, they could formulate a British American Zollverein, provide for their own defence, agree upon a progressive policy of railway construction, promote immigration, and control the postal services. Elgin came to Canada pledged to promote a federal union, but a study of the local conditions convinced him that Durham was correct in thinking that an intercolonial railway was a necessary preliminary.[54] Both Elgin and Grey saw the importance of a railway for opening new lands, and providing adequate transportation, especially for defence, and Grey made a number of proposals to combine the construction of an intercolonial railroad with a planned system of colonization. But the "Little Englanders" refused to support such a plan, and it was finally dropped. The Robinson Report of 1848 aroused the ambitions of the provinces, and they pledged their support to the railway. In the end, however, nothing was done and Grey's later letters became little more than an "awkward excuse for doing nothing."[55]

[49] *Ibid.*, 127, Algin to Grey, Mar. 2, 1848.
[50] *Ibid.*
[51] Knorr, *British Colonial Theories*, 352.
[52] Morrell, *Colonial Policy*, 474, from a speech by Molesworth in the House of Commons.
[53] Grey, *Colonial Policy of Lord Russell's Administration*, I, 260.
[54] *Durham Report* (Methuen ed.), 235.
[55] *Elgin-Grey Papers*, I, 316, Grey to Elgin, Apr. 5, 1849.

As a major step toward his desired goal of interprovincial co-operation, Grey instructed Elgin to call an interprovincial conference for October, 1847. Howe informed Buller that the delegates would discuss a Zollverein, a North American post office, railroads, and colonization.[56] He was greatly annoyed because Johnston, who had recently met defeat at the polls, insisted upon representing Nova Scotia. "Nova Scotia can take no effective part in these important questions," he wrote, "till we have a Government."[57] Harvey told Elgin that constitutionally he could not do otherwise than appoint Johnston, but he feared that any policy the latter might advocate would be rejected at the next session of the Assembly.[58] New Brunswick was represented by R. L. Hazen who was not in close touch with his province, and Canada by the rather colourless inspector-general, William Cayley. Consequently, this first conference was noted more for its pioneering efforts than for its accomplishments. Its most important work was in making provision for a local administration of the colonial post office.

Up to 1846 the postal services in British North America were administered from London through a deputy residing in the colonies. The system did not prove entirely satisfactory, and with the growth of colonial self-government, the postmaster general, Lord Clanricarde, proposed to hand over the administration of the post office to the provinces. Grey favoured the plan, and instructed that it be discussed at the interprovincial conference. It was finally decided that a central administration was at present impracticable, and that each province should control the postal services within its own borders. A uniform letter rate of 3*d.* was agreed upon.[59] The agreement was ratified by the new Uniacke-Howe Government at the session of 1848. In June, Uniacke visited Montreal where a satisfactory arrangement was made with the Canadian Ministry. The post office came under provincial control in 1851.

With the establishment of full responsible government, the provincial administrations continued to negotiate with each other on problems of common interest. In 1848 two of the Nova Scotia ministers, Michael Tobin and George R. Young, came to Montreal to discuss matters of trade and transportation. The two executives were mutually pleased with each other and transacted considerable business.[60] Grey was delighted and looked forward to a speedy abolition of all interprovincial trade barriers.

The repeal of the British Corn Laws lost to the provinces their most valued market. In return they were given the power to amend their own tariffs. In 1847 the Canadian Government established a uniform tariff of 7½ per cent. The LaFontaine-Baldwin Ministry sought to obtain reciprocity with the United States and the repeal of the Navigation

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[56]"Howe-Buller Correspondence," 323, Howe to Buller, Sept. 2, 1847.

[57]*Ibid.*

[58]*Elgin-Grey Papers*, I, 74, Elgin to Grey, Oct. 13, 1847.

[59]*Journals of the Nova Scotia Assembly*, 1847; *Journals of the Nova Scotia Assembly*, 1848, Appendix 56; William Smith, *History of the Post Office in British North America* (Cambridge, 1920), 267-9; *Novascotian*, June 19, 1848; *Journals of the Nova Scotia Assembly*, Appendix 56; *Journals of the Assembly of Canada*, 1849, BBB.

[60]*Elgin-Grey Papers*, I, 181-3, Elgin to Grey, June 15, 1848. *Novascotian*, June 19, 1848.

Acts. In Nova Scotia the Uniacke-Howe Government was anxious to promote interprovincial trade. The Assembly of 1847 made the first move by passing an act to permit the free entry into Nova Scotia of all goods, except spirituous liquors, from any province offering similar concessions.[61] The Uniacke-Howe Ministry not only repeated the offer, but urged its adoption by Canada and New Brunswick. Both provinces responded, and in a short time interprovincial free trade became a reality.[62] The *Novascotian* rejoiced at the accomplishment, and looked forward hopefully to a new era. Grey too expressed satisfaction. He did not live to see the federal union and the railroad he so much desired, but something had been accomplished, and in his dreams he may have caught a glimpse of the Canada of 1948.

DISCUSSION

Mr. Underhill pointed out that 1948 was the centenary of that year of revolutions, 1848. He did not propose to criticize the heroes of 1848—for men like Howe, Baldwin, and LaFontaine may be regarded as the heroes of 1848 in this country—but at the same time he felt it only fair to say something on behalf of Papineau and Mackenzie. Too often these men are regarded simply as obstinate fools who refused to see the light of "responsible government." Papineau and Mackenzie had, however, striven for democracy in a sense that Baldwin and LaFontaine never understood. Responsible government was a victory for the gentleman, not for the backwoods farmer. The Grit movement and other radical movements owed their origin to the fact that the form of government established in 1848 had not wholly met the particular needs of the time. Accordingly, when commemorating the memory of the heroes of 1848 we should not ignore the memory of the radicals who preceded them.

Mr. Rothney expressed pleasure that the programme committee should have seen fit to devote a session of the annual meeting to the hundredth anniversary of 1848. Elsewhere in Canada this centenary had passed practically unnoticed; no reference to 1848 had been made in the parliament of Canada. Indeed the only evidence of interest in the events of 1848 which had come to his attention was a small floral tribute on the monument of Baldwin and LaFontaine from the school children of Montreal. He went on to say that LaFontaine deserves to be regarded as our first Canadian premier; and yet there is no satisfactory biography of him. Would it be too much too hope that Father Jensen's paper might lead to such a biography? He agreed with Professor Underhill that Papineau had a deeper sense of democracy than LaFontaine. The struggle of 1848 had been one between liberals and conservatives, yet LaFontaine, despite his contribution to responsible government, was essentially conservative in outlook. Indeed, his successor, Morin, had led the French Canadians into alliance with that arch-Tory, MacNab. Referring to Quebec politics at the present time he expressed concern that M. Duplessis should be judged, as Papineau had

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[61]Harold Innis and Arthur Lower, *Select Documents in Canadian Economic History* (Toronto, 1933), 366.

[62]*Novascotian*, May 15, 1848. New Brunswick ratified the proposal on May 6.

been so often judged, by what his opponents say about him. Nationalism in Quebec—and this he considered to be as true of the present as of the past—was fundamentally democratic in its conception.

Mr. Sissons commented upon the part played by Hincks in the political education of LaFontaine. Hincks was a man with a greater realistic approach to politics than either Baldwin or LaFontaine. More than any other man he knew what Canada needed at that time. Mr. Sissons said that to some responsible government amounted to little more than the transfer of patronage from one party to another with little evidence to show that the Reformers were wiser in their use of it than their predecessors had been. But responsible government, to him, involved something more than this; it involved the transfer of power from a narrow oligarchy to a party with a wider basis among the population. In this transfer Hincks would seem to deserve a larger place than is usually accorded him.

Mr. Masters said that, although he had found the papers on 1848 interesting, he was inclined to feel rather tired of the subject of responsible government. Grade school and university had placed great emphasis upon responsible government in all courses in Canadian history; but it was a conception which was hard for the younger mind to understand and, in his opinion, this overdose of responsible government was one reason for the prevailing view among undergraduates that Canadian history is dull stuff. He is prepared to admit that responsible government was one of the great contributions to the political and constitutional development of Canada; nevertheless history, like women's hats, has its fads and fashions. Responsible government was at one time the fashionable subject of study in this country; but the present generation lacks the same interest in and zest for it displayed by the older generation of students and historians in Canada.

Mr. Underhill concluded the discussion by commenting upon the lack of controversy among Canadians over the events of 1848. In this respect Canada provides a great contrast to the countries of Europe.