

Report of the Annual Meeting

Rapports annuels de la Société historique du Canada

Report of the Annual Meeting

British Military Policy in Canada in the Era of Federation

C. P. Stacey

Volume 13, numéro 1, 1934

URI : <https://id.erudit.org/iderudit/300124ar>

DOI : <https://doi.org/10.7202/300124ar>

[Aller au sommaire du numéro](#)

Éditeur(s)

The Canadian Historical Association/La Société historique du Canada

ISSN

0317-0594 (imprimé)

1712-9095 (numérique)

[Découvrir la revue](#)

Citer cet article

Stacey, C. P. (1934). British Military Policy in Canada in the Era of Federation. *Report of the Annual Meeting / Rapports annuels de la Société historique du Canada*, 13(1), 20–29. <https://doi.org/10.7202/300124ar>

All rights reserved © The Canadian Historical Association/La Société historique du Canada, 1934

Ce document est protégé par la loi sur le droit d'auteur. L'utilisation des services d'Érudit (y compris la reproduction) est assujettie à sa politique d'utilisation que vous pouvez consulter en ligne.

<https://apropos.erudit.org/fr/usagers/politique-dutilisation/>

érudit

Cet article est diffusé et préservé par Érudit.

Érudit est un consortium interuniversitaire sans but lucratif composé de l'Université de Montréal, l'Université Laval et l'Université du Québec à Montréal. Il a pour mission la promotion et la valorisation de la recherche.

<https://www.erudit.org/fr/>

BRITISH MILITARY POLICY IN CANADA IN THE ERA OF FEDERATION

By C. P. STACEY

The drama of Canadian Federation was played to an alarming accompaniment of offstage noises. At the time when the "Great Coalition" was formed in Canada, the Civil War which for more than three years had been in progress in the United States had produced an unpleasantly strained situation along the international boundary. Forces greater than Napoleon's were treading the soil of North America; the people of Canadian border towns might hear on the south wind the rattle of Union drums beating the assembly for a million men in arms; and among the inhabitants of the northern states indignation against what they held to be the hostile attitude of Britain in their hour of crisis was steadily growing. Before the Federation movement had passed its early stages, the danger of war with the United States had become much more imminent; and even after the South had been crushed and the victorious Union had begun to disband its armies, that danger was kept alive by bitter memories and by the hostile enterprises of the Fenian Brotherhood.

The atmosphere of the Federation era was thus a military atmosphere, dominated by apprehensions and defensive preparations. The situation of Canada (to quote a Cabinet minute of 1866) was "one of quasi war, which may at any moment become one of active hostilities".¹ In the relations of mother country and colony, at such a time, military questions were of paramount importance to both parties. Considerable attention has been given, particularly in recent studies, to this aspect of the developments of the period; but it is possible that an examination of the purely military side of British and Canadian policy during these critical years may still serve useful purposes.

I

In order fully to appreciate British military policy in America during the Federation period, it is desirable to take some notice of the occurrences of the previous generation.

Even before the concession of responsible government to the great settlement colonies, voices had been raised in England against the burden which the system of colonial garrisons imposed upon the British taxpayer. The Radical Liberals made a special contribution towards creating a "colonial military question". Joseph Hume, the mouthpiece of Utilitarianism, attacked the cost of the garrisons in Parliament as early as 1819, and continued to do so until his death in 1855. He found allies in the "economists" of the Manchester School. Richard Cobden repeatedly assailed the colonial expenditure, and his friend John Bright echoed his views. To these men "Imperialism"—even in the most respectable sense—was merely a part of the old social and economic order which they were vowed to destroy; and no feature of it was more objectionable than its expense.

The colonial garrisons had other enemies. It is worth observing that on this issue the survivors of the little group of "colonial reformers"

¹April 7, 1866. *Series E*, State Book A.C., p. 351, Public Archives of Canada.

or "Radical Imperialists", to which Durham and Buller had belonged, shared the views of Manchester, though from different motives. Edward Gibbon Wakefield opposed the garrison system, and Sir William Molesworth made the matter one of his primary interests after his return to Parliament in 1845. In addition to being an injustice to the British taxpayer, they maintained, the system was a hindrance to the full development of that self-government which they advocated as the surest means of perpetuating the Imperial tie—a standing threat to autonomy, and an unnatural and evil influence upon colonial politics.

Beyond the limits of these groups, similar views were widely held on both sides of the House of Commons—more and more widely as the rapid liberalizing of the Imperial system supplied additional arguments for a decentralization of responsibility. The advent of free trade, leaving the colonies absolutely at liberty to buy and sell where they chose, was a most compelling influence; while at the same time the concession of political autonomy enabled the Imperial authorities with perfect propriety to suggest to them that the dignity of their new freedom demanded that they should not remain a heavy burden on the purse of a Mother Country which no longer interfered in their affairs. And the use which the colonies proceeded to make of this freedom disposed English statesmen all the more towards a policy of colonial retrenchment: the Canadian tariff of 1859 made it clear that the English money spent on the maintenance of a garrison in Canada would not suffice in future to purchase even free entry to the colonial market for English goods. We must remember also that throughout this period the disturbed state of Europe constantly served to remind the anxious English nation that only a small proportion of its small army was actually available to defend the British Isles.

In 1861, Parliament's long resentment against the garrison system issued in an investigation by a select committee of the Commons. The evidence, including that of the arch-Little Englander Robert Lowe (who, on this subject at least, agreed with Bright), and of W. E. Gladstone, was strongly hostile to the existing arrangements. The committee reported in this sense, and the House proceeded to resolve without a division "that Colonies exercising the rights of self-government ought to undertake the main responsibility of providing for their own internal order and security, and ought to assist in their own external defence".²

II

Out of deference to such views (if for no other reasons) the Imperial government had long been striving to reduce its garrison in British North America. In 1851, Lord Grey, after much consideration, laid down the principle that in Canada, in time of peace, British troops would garrison only the chief fortified posts, the responsibility for internal security generally devolving upon the local government. During the Crimean War the colony was almost completely stripped of troops, but at its conclusion, when the enlistment controversy was causing friction with the United States, five regiments were hastily sent back. By 1861 the situation had returned to what was considered normal, with a little more than 4,000 effective regulars available in the whole of British North America.

²The committee's report is in *Parliamentary Papers, House of Commons*, 1861, no. 423, vol. XIII. The debate is in *Hansard*, 3rd series, vol. CLXV, March 4, 1862.

This state of things was upset by the outbreak of the American Civil War. Canada was reinforced at once; and very soon the *Trent* affair brought a very considerable expeditionary force hurrying across the Atlantic. By the spring of 1862 the regular forces in the colonies totalled nearly 18,000 men. In consequence, during 1861-2 the Province of Canada alone cost the British taxpayer £738,000, as against only £166,000 the year before;³ and even before the bill came in, the economically-minded in the House of Commons were asking questions. Then came the Canadian political crisis of 1862, when the provincial legislature (owing to a combination of circumstances, not all of which related to military policy) defeated John A. Macdonald's Militia Bill, which had been designed to provide, by ballot, a trained force of 50,000 men. Immediately the British Parliament and press burst into a tirade of indignant abuse against this slothful colony, which, while gladly accepting the protection of Great Britain, refused to do anything towards protecting itself. The episode sadly shook the mutual confidence of Mother Country and colony. Henceforth it was even more difficult than before for the Imperial Cabinet to approach the House of Commons with proposals for expenditure in Canada, and, on the other hand, Canadian apprehensions of the influence of "Little England" opinion in the Mother Country were more lively than ever.

From this time, one element in the situation looms steadily larger until it wholly dominates the attitude of Britain towards Canadian questions. That element is the fear of American attack. A British force of 18,000 men had seemed important in 1861, when people recalled that until that very year the whole United States Army had been only 13,000 strong; but its aspect shrank sadly as the strength of the northern forces grew towards a million men, and northern resentment against Britain grew hardly less rapidly. The anxieties of the Imperial government were given point when in 1862 a commission of military experts declared that the defence of Canada was feasible, but only after the execution of a gargantuan programme of preparations, including permanent fortifications not only at Quebec and Montreal, but also at Prescott, Kingston, Toronto, the Niagara frontier, Guelph, London, Sarnia, and other points.⁴ As neither the new and intransigent government at Quebec nor the angry Parliament at Westminster would have considered such a project for an instant, it remained merely a record of the pessimism with which professional soldiers regarded Canada's chances. And to make matters worse, Gettysburg and Vicksburg, in July of 1863, indicated that the tide of war in the United States was beginning to turn in favour of the North. Before long, Englishmen were talking of the danger of "disgrace" at the hands of the United States which now confronted the British garrison in Canada, and *The Times* was suggesting that nine or ten thousand British troops might actually serve as a bait "to allure the American army across the great Lakes"⁵

Early in 1864, a very able Engineer officer, Lieutenant-Colonel W. F. D. Jervois, presented another report on the defence of Canada.⁶

³*P.P., H. of C.*, 1870, no. 80, vol. XLIX.

⁴*Report of the Commissioners Appointed to Consider the Defences of Canada.* W.O. 33, vol. XI, pp. 1901-72; photostat copy in Public Archives of Canada.

⁵June 29, 1864.

⁶*Report on the Defence of Canada and of the British Naval Stations in the North Atlantic . . . Part I*, Feb., 1864; photostat copy in Public Archives of Canada.

The most alarming feature of this document was that it made no suggestions whatever for defensive measures west of Montreal—the reason given being that it appeared unlikely that steps would be taken to provide a naval force on the lakes, and that without this the defence of Upper Canada was merely impossible.⁷ The effects of this report were soon felt in the colony. The Imperial government proceeded to announce the impending withdrawal of the two battalions of Guards which had been stationed there since the *Trent* crisis, an ostensible motive for this decision being the desirability of making possible the formation of a Brigade of Guards for service elsewhere in case of need—a covert reference to the Danish War then in progress on the Continent. This was bad enough, but far more alarming to Canadians was the fact that in redistributing the remaining troops the Lieutenant-General commanding was ordered to evacuate the whole of Upper Canada and concentrate his force “in two principal masses at Quebec and Montreal”. The decision was fully advertised in the course of a debate in the House of Commons.⁸

It must be observed that the march of events had already awakened unpleasant apprehensions in Canada also—even in the minds of the Sandfield Macdonald government, representing the party which from the beginning had strongly resisted any extension of Canada's military responsibilities. In 1863 this Cabinet had enacted a considerably improved code of militia legislation⁹ and made substantial increases in the defence appropriations; and the Taché-Macdonald Conservative administration, which succeeded it the next spring, carried this process further. To an already anxious public, the proposal for the evacuation of Upper Canada came as a severe shock. Lord Monck, in the midst of assisting in the construction of the Great Coalition, lodged a strong protest against it;¹⁰ but the most striking plea arrived a few weeks later, in the shape of a remarkable memorial from Upper Canada. It bore only some seventy signatures, but the list included the name of practically every man of any public prominence in the Toronto district, without distinction of party.¹¹ Attacking the concentration scheme, this document pointed out that the situation of the troops in Canada had been misrepresented and exaggerated in England, and that the tone of the late parliamentary debates seemed more likely to encourage American attack than to serve any useful end. Furthermore, it did not scruple to suggest that the new policy would inevitably be construed as evidence of a pusillanimous spirit:

When the reasons . . . suggested as justifying the change are examined by those who know the actual facts here, men will begin to ask whether other unexpressed reasons have not in reality prevailed; and to fear that if in a time of present peace prudential considerations are deemed sufficient to induce the withdrawal of the troops, they would look in vain for their presence in Upper Canada in the time of actual war. . . .

If the apprehension of present danger be with some Statesmen a sufficient reason for leaving the most populous, the most fertile, and the most extensively cultivated

⁷The measure recommended was the enlargement of the Ottawa and Rideau Canals to permit the passage of ironclads from the sea.

⁸Lugard to Williams, May 25, 1864. Copy in *Correspondence of the Governor-General's Secretary*, no. 11,316, Public Archives of Canada; *Hansard*, vol. CLXXVI, June 27, 1864.

⁹Comprised in 27 Vict., c. 2 and c. 3.

¹⁰Monck to Cardwell (confidential), June 16, 1864. *Corr. Gov.-Gen'l's Sec'y*, no. 11,316.

¹¹*Ibid.*, no. 11,392. Among the signatories were the Anglican and Roman Catholic Bishops, the Chief Justice and Chancellor of Upper Canada, the Mayor of Toronto, local members of the two Houses of the provincial Parliament, leading university dignitaries and professional men, and the chief militia officers.

portion of Canada without a British Soldier, what policy have we to anticipate when all the Country west of Montreal, perhaps even of Quebec, is virtually in the hands of the enemy . . .? With such a possible future before them would not the Canadians be justified in concluding that they would soon hear from these same Statesmen, the language which an eminent Historian tells us the Romans used when they withdrew from Britain. They "informed the Britons they must no longer look to them for succour, exhorted them to arm in their own defence, and urged that as they were now their own Masters it became them to protect by their own valour that independence which their ancient lords had conferred upon them". . . .

. . . Your Memorialists . . . must declare that their alarm at this partial withdrawal of Her Majesty's Forces is the more lively because they fear it will be regarded as the first step to an end to which no consideration can reconcile them, and which, if it happen, they must view as an unmitigated calamity. They may be told coldly if not insultingly that "Canada can no longer rebel for this simple reason that she has nothing to rebel for"; their loyalty may be again, as it was said to have been years ago, an embarrassment in dealing with this Province; or it may be a matter of contemptuous surprize to some whose only idol is a cold blooded utilitarianism. It nevertheless continues to exist in undiminished force,—and it will not be the least painful part of what the People of Canada may be called upon to undergo that they should be treated as Outcasts from the Country which they have ever called their "Home".

This singularly authoritative declaration throws most interesting light upon the thoughts that were influencing the leaders of Canadian opinion at the time that the Coalition was formed. It indicates that the apprehension of American attack was by this time decidedly current in Canada; and further, that another apprehension, even more serious, was beginning to appear: that of desertion by Great Britain.

III

The protests ultimately had their due effect, in that the evacuation of Upper Canada was countermanded; but succeeding events did not strengthen the confidence of the Canadian government. The advent of a strong and energetic ministry in the province encouraged Cardwell, the Colonial Secretary, to suggest that Mother Country and colony might now consider joint defensive measures in earnest. After consultation with the Canadian Cabinet (the Quebec Conference was actually in session at the time) Colonel Jervis submitted a new scheme for the defence (this time) of the whole province, founded upon fortifications at Quebec, Montreal, and Kingston, and a naval establishment on Lake Ontario.¹² The local government then replied to Cardwell.¹³ Declaring that the defence of Canada was "essentially an imperial question", they expressed alarm at hearing of utterances in England suggesting that it was there considered almost exclusively a Canadian responsibility; and they proceeded to demand, in so many words, an assurance as to how many regular troops would be maintained in the province while the danger continued; how many "might be depended upon" in the event of war; and "the means by which the expenses of war should be defrayed". They feared that Federation's chances in other provinces might be injured by mortgaging Canada's future too heavily for defensive works; but they concluded with the solid offer that, provided the Imperial government would guarantee a loan designed to meet the cost, they would commence forthwith the fortifications at Montreal, which were considered all-important.

¹²*Report on the Defence of Canada*, Nov. 10, 1864. Copies in *Macdonald Papers*, "Militia and Defence", vol. II, Public Archives of Canada.

¹³Council minute, Nov. 16, 1864. *E*, State Book A.A., p. 427.

The reply¹⁴ was discouraging. Not only did the Imperial government decline (wisely, perhaps) to commit themselves on the future strength of the garrison, but they refused the guarantee for the Montreal loan. "Considering the great importance of that place to the defence of the whole Province", wrote Cardwell, "and the very moderate sum which the proposed works are estimated to require,—they think a very bad effect would be produced by making that proposal." The fact was that, though the war scare had driven Canada's five-per-cent. bonds down to 85 on the London market, and she would have had difficulty in floating a loan unsupported, ministers lacked the courage to face the House of Commons with the scheme. The whole exchange is a sad commentary on the state of the Imperial relationship.

The American situation, moreover, had taken a turn for the worse. A determined campaign of clandestine enterprises against the Union, carried on by Confederate agents from Canada, aroused in the North a bitter animosity which reached its height in December, 1864. The provincial government's actions now showed how perilous it considered this state of things. Among other drastic measures to suppress the Confederate attempts, it took the wholly unprecedented step of calling out 2,000 men of the volunteer force, and stationing them on the border (at a cost to Canada of \$80,000 per month)¹⁵ to enforce neutrality. There was now no doubt that the Canadian ministry was thoroughly frightened.

Fortunately, they did not know that in England the Queen was discussing with members of the Cabinet "the impossibility of our being able to hold Canada, but we must struggle for it; and far the best would be to let it go as an independent kingdom, under an English Prince . . ."¹⁶ They did know, however, that though the British government had proposed an appropriation for strengthening the fortifications of Quebec, its object was merely to provide a refuge for the whole British force in Canada in the event of war; and they knew also that the debates on the subject in Parliament were a mixture of panic and despondency. To make matters worse, news came that the electors of New Brunswick had rejected Federation. With war apparently imminent; with Britain frightened of her responsibilities in Canada; and with the Maritimes turning against the policy of union, the situation now demanded strong measures. The Canadian government took them. As a gesture, they passed through Parliament an appropriation of \$1,000,000 for fortifications; and the leaders of the ministry then sailed for England, hoping to reach by conference such an arrangement with the Mother Country as would further the cause of Federation and lay the horrible phantom that was haunting men's minds—"the dread of forcible annexation, and abandonment by Great Britain". The words are John A. Macdonald's.¹⁷ Before all the members of the delegation were on the ocean, news arrived of the collapse of the Southern Confederacy.

IV

Full of the conviction that there was great danger from the United States, and that if war came it would be within two years, the Canadians

¹⁴Cardwell to Monck (confidential), Jan 21, 1865. *Series G*, vol. 173, p. 77.

¹⁵Council minute, Dec. 28, 1864. State Book A.A., p. 568.

¹⁶G. E. Buckle (ed.), *Letters of Queen Victoria* (2nd series, London and New York, 1927), vol. I, p. 250; Feb. 12, 1865.

¹⁷Macdonald to Colonel Gray of New Brunswick, March 27, 1865 (Sir J. Pope, *Memoirs of Sir J. A. Macdonald*, Ottawa, 1895, vol. I, pp. 280-1).

unfolded in England an immense programme of defensive preparations to be undertaken jointly by Mother Country and colony.¹⁸ Though they counted upon Britain bearing an enormous (even an unfair) share of the general burden, the scheme actually envisaged the possibility of Canada spending £9,000,000 (to be obtained from loans supported by the Imperial guarantee) for defence and allied objects. The Imperial Cabinet, however, preferred to stick to the more modest Jervois scheme. Moreover, it refused to grant any guarantee in advance of Canadian legislation; and as this necessitated a year's delay, it was decided to postpone the whole programme until after Federation, for fear of jeopardizing that great project. Thus the Canadians returned home without making any practical arrangement for an improved defensive system; but the official report of the conferences¹⁹ stated that the colonials "had expressed unreservedly the desire of Canada to devote her whole resources, both in men and money, for the maintenance of her connection with the Mother Country" and that the Imperial government had declared in return that it "fully acknowledged the reciprocal obligation of defending every portion of the Empire with all the resources at its command". This was a solid gain, in the circumstances of the day. And south of the border the Union Army was rapidly being disbanded.

Before 1865 was out, however, precautions had to be taken against the Fenians; and the next year saw an attempt at genuine invasion. In the face of this actual emergency, Canada took more energetic defensive measures than ever before, and her militia appropriations were the most generous on record. These things were noted in England; and when a panic in Upper Canada caused the Governor-General suddenly to cable for reinforcements, they were promptly sent. Again the annual cost of Canada to the British taxpayer soared upward; and this situation was not agreeable even to the ministers who had sent the troops. Disraeli (now at the Exchequer) wrote to the Prime Minister:²⁰

... We must seriously consider our Canadian position, which is most illegitimate. An army maintained in a country which does not permit us even to govern it! What an anomaly!

It can never be our pretence, or our policy, to defend the Canadian frontier against the U.S. If the colonists can't, as a general rule, defend themselves against the Fenians, they can do nothing. They ought to be, and must be, strong enough for that. Power and influence we should exercise in Asia; consequently in Eastern Europe, consequently also in Western Europe; but what is the use of these colonial deadweights *which we do not govern?*

After some preliminary skirmishing, in 1868 the garrison of Canada was considerably diminished, in the face of a strong Canadian protest; and

¹⁸See the manuscript memoranda of their first interviews with Cardwell in *Macdonald Papers*, "Visits to England", vol. I, pp. 86ff.

¹⁹Cardwell to Monck, June 17, 1865, *G*, vol. 174, p. 54. Published in *P.P.*, *H. of C.*, 1865, cd. 3535, vol. XXXVII, and in *Papers relating to the Conferences* . . . presented to the Canadian Parliament. Lack of space prevents reference to the important place of these conferences in the history of the Federation movement; but it will be recalled that thereafter the Imperial government redoubled its efforts to influence the Maritimes in favour of the project, and that to justify this action Cardwell used the argument that the Mother Country's military responsibilities in America gave her the right "to urge with earnestness and just authority" measures which would improve the military position of the colonies. The encouragement of Federation certainly constitutes a definite element in British military policy in America at this period.

²⁰Disraeli to Derby, Sept. 30, 1866 (W. F. Monypenny and G. E. Buckle, *Life of Benjamin Disraeli*, London, 1910-20, vol. IV, pp. 476-7).

one of the last acts of the defeated Conservative government was to order a still greater reduction.²¹

The incoming Gladstone ministry soon took even more drastic measures. Cardwell, now at the War Office, thought it essential to his scheme of army reform that the proportion of time spent by the British soldier on foreign stations should be reduced. Only colonial withdrawals, moreover, could redeem Gladstone's characteristic election pledge—army reform combined with a reduction in expenditure. With regard to Canada, there were, perhaps, special motives. England's fear of the United States gobbling up the garrison there had not disappeared; on the contrary, it still flourished. The unsettled *Alabama* issue was a constant anxiety. On the occasion of the failure of the attempt at settlement made in 1869, the Foreign Secretary wrote to the Queen:²² "It is the unfriendly state of our relations with America that to a great extent paralyses our action in Europe. There is not the slightest doubt that if we were engaged in a Continental quarrel we should immediately find ourselves at war with the United States." Here, it may be, we have a glimpse of the secret of the timidity of British policy throughout this period. The continental situation was threatening and uncertain, and it is little wonder that the prospect of the tiny British Army attempting to fight a war on two fronts—one on either side of the Atlantic!—daunted the Imperial authorities. The danger from the United States did not lead the ministry to make Canada an exception to their general policy of colonial retrenchment: much the contrary. Having already announced a large reduction of the regular force there, early in 1870 they staggered the Dominion government by declaring their intent of withdrawing every British soldier, except the garrison of Halifax, by the next year.²³

Here it is convenient to recall that one of the motives of British statesmen in supporting Canadian Federation had certainly been the hope of transferring to the new political unit some of the Mother Country's unpleasant responsibilities in America. As *The Times* bluntly put it:²⁴ "We look to Confederation as the means of relieving this country from much expense and much embarrassment. . . . We appreciate the goodwill of the Canadians and their desire to maintain their relations with the British Crown. But a people of four millions ought to be able to keep their own defences." Gladstone himself had expressed a similar idea.²⁵ In the past, he said, British Americans had "to some extent separated the burdens of freedom from the spirit of freedom"; and now, "We have to bring about a different state of things. The best way to do it is to raise their political position to the very highest point . . . in order that with that elevated position their sense of responsibility may likewise grow." These hopes had so far been disappointed. Just as fiercely as the old Province of Canada, the new Dominion had resisted every Imperial move towards a decentralization of military responsibility.

The primary reason for this obstructiveness seems clear. In the

²¹Buckingham to officer administering government of Canada, Dec. 8, 1868. *G*, vol. 561.

²²Clarendon to the Queen, May 1, 1869 (*Letters of Queen Victoria*, 2nd series, vol. I, pp. 594-5).

²³Granville to Young, Feb. 12, 1870. Published in *Canada Sessional Papers*, 1871, no. 46, p. 8.

²⁴March 1, 1867.

²⁵Speech on Canada Railway Loan Bill, March 28, 1867. *Hansard*, vol. CLXXXVI, pp. 749-57.

eyes of Canadian statesmen, the value of a British garrison consisted less in the actual military advantage of its presence than in the fact that it was a symbol of Imperial solidarity calculated to impress the United States; whereas, they feared, a withdrawal of troops would be construed as signifying a willingness to let the Dominion go by the board. This appeared very clearly at the time of the negotiations over the participation of Imperial troops in the Red River Expedition, and in Canada's vain effort to persuade Whitehall to allow a detachment to remain in Manitoba on garrison duty.²⁶ Inevitably, therefore, the Canadian government fought very hard against the Cardwell scheme—particularly after a new Fenian raid in May, 1870, had focussed public attention on the issue; but it fought in vain.²⁷ The Imperial forces evacuated Quebec in November, 1871.

V

Throughout the British colonies, the new military policy aroused deep resentment. Yet it may be suggested that, despite the friction of the moment, it was in the long run a great boon to the cause of Imperial unity. To put the matter in a nutshell, the abolition of the expensive garrison system terminated the one genuine grievance of the British taxpayer against the colonial Empire; and the anti-Imperial party was deprived of the argument which it had been plying with great effect for more than thirty years. In 1872, *The Times*, commenting upon the reduced colonial expenditure, remarked: "Contrasting this with the frightful sums previously lavished, we may congratulate the country on being in the fair way of removing the chief, if not the only, difficulty which besets the maintenance of a Colonial Empire."²⁸

One English politician, indeed, seems to have been very swift to grasp the possible implications of the new situation. The matchless opportunist who led the Conservative party—he of the "colonial dead-weights" of 1866—suddenly appears in his Crystal Palace speech of 1872 as a convinced Imperialist, reproaching the Liberals with parsimonious anti-colonial acts—acts which he is careful not to specify too exactly.²⁹ What had changed Disraeli's views? Are we to believe that he had been down the road to Damascus? It seems more likely that he had merely realized that Cardwell's military policy—the policy towards which his own government had been strongly tending at the time of its fall—had made Imperialism a safe policy for English statesmen: safe, because it had ceased to be directly associated with a constant drain upon the taxpayer's pockets. And since a happy fate had decreed that the Liberals should be the ones to take the inevitable step of evacuation, Disraeli was in the singularly fortunate position of being able to profit by their achievement on the one hand, while on the other he reproached them (by implication) for bringing it about.

The result justified his judgment. Cardwell's work was never undone; and from this time forward Imperialism became a more and more acceptable policy in the eyes of the British public, until to the men of the

²⁶See, e.g., Macdonald to Rose, Feb. 5, 1870, *Macdonald Papers*, Private Letter Book, vol. XIII, p. 1022; and Kimberley to Young (confidential), Aug. 30, 1870, G, vol. 569A, p. 106.

²⁷See the correspondence in *Canada Sessional Papers*, 1871, no. 46.

²⁸Oct. 25, 1872.

²⁹T. E. Kebbel, *Selected Speeches of . . . the Earl of Beaconsfield* (London, 1882), vol. II, pp. 523-35: June 24, 1872.

nineties views that had been expressed every day in the House of Commons of the sixties would have seemed almost treasonable. It would be a trifle dangerous to credit Gladstone's first ministry with the far-sighted intention of producing this ultimate result, and equally dangerous to claim that it was brought about by the abolition of the garrisons alone; but it does seem fair to suggest that the military evacuation of the self-governing colonies made a very tangible contribution towards the production of a new and freer Imperial association.

[NOTE.—The Imperial government's fortification projects in America throw interesting light on its apprehensions during the latter part of the Civil War. Although (thanks to the disgust produced in England by the defeat of the Militia Bill of 1862, and also perhaps to doubts which were entertained concerning the defensibility of the inland province) nothing was done in Canada until 1865, the previous year's estimates appropriated £15,000 for improvements in the Maritimes, against a total estimate of £100,000, of which £25,000 had already been voted (*P.P., H. of C.*, 1864, no. 50, vol. XXXV). After Jervois reported on the Maritime situation (*Report on the Defence of the British Naval Stations in the North Atlantic together with Observations on the Defence of New Brunswick, &c.*, January, 1865) the estimate for the Maritimes was increased to £190,000 (chiefly for Halifax) and a scheme to cost £260,000 (later increased to £375,000) was undertaken at Bermuda. Jervois conceived of British strategy in a possible Anglo-American conflict as consisting of defensive action, based on a system of permanent fortifications, on the Canadian border, combined with offensive enterprises directed against the American seaboard from the fortified bases at Halifax and Bermuda. This plan was evidently agreeable to his superiors in England.]