

Social Studies 10

Unit 2 Readings

Canada from 1815-1840

Pages 1-30

Population Changes: "Late Loyalists" and the Great Migration

The Constitutional Act of 1791 had created the two separate colonies of Upper and Lower Canada. It preserved and protected their two very different cultural traditions in order to ensure their loyalty to Britain. However, in the early nineteenth century, immigration would greatly change the character of both colonies in ways that could not have been foreseen in 1791.

The first phase of such immigration was the arrival from the United States of the "late Loyalists" during the period between 1791 and 1812. Some of these immigrants were true Loyalists who had waited to see if they would receive compensation for their losses during the American Revolution. Others were opportunists, drawn north by the promise of cheap land in good locations. The late Loyalists increased Upper Canada's population from 14 000 in 1791

to 90 000 by 1812. Another 10 000 late Loyalists settled in the Eastern Townships of Lower Canada.

A second wave of immigration, roughly the years 1815-1850, came mostly from the British Isles. Thousands of Irish, Scots and English found themselves displaced by changes resulting from the Industrial Revolution and so set out for the new world. Often called the Great Migration, this great wave of new arrivals to British North America would blur, but not wipe out, the Canadian and Loyalist origins of modern Canada.

THE GREAT MIGRATION

Most immigrants who came to Canada during the Great Migration were very poor but they could get cheap transportation to Canada. Passage to Montreal or Quebec by sailing ship in the 1820s was 7 pounds, about two months wages for a farm laborer, meals included. Children travelled for half fare. These immigrants faced extreme hardships, both on board ship and in the colonies to which they travelled. Sickesses such as cholera were common on board ship: tens of thousands died on their way to North America. The survivors faced great problems as they tried to find work or clear land for pioneer farms.

The following description of the plight of an immigrant family, living in a cave in Upper Canada, was written in 1821:

The mother, who continued to shed tears, told me, that she and her family were Irish immigrants. They had been induced by a series of misfortunes, to set sail for Canada, with the intention of obtaining land, and had, after many difficulties, got thus far in their voyage; but, being now destitute of money, they were unable to procure a lodging, and knew not where to apply for work, assistance, or information. "A husband and these two boys," said the woman, "are all



that now remain to me. My little girl died in the ship and they threw her into the sea. Aye, sure, that was the worst of all," continued she, in an agony of grief. "Poor babe! She had neither prayers nor a wake!"

[Excerpted from John Howison, *Sketches of Upper Canada*, published in 1821.]

The population of British North America doubled between 1815 and 1835. With the rapid growth of population came a period of economic prosperity. Large areas of forest land, traditional hunting grounds for Native peoples, were cleared and pioneer farms established. Growing towns and villages, many of them founded only a few years earlier, became centres of industrial and commercial activity.

The newcomers, whether from the United States or the British Isles, brought with them ways of life different from those of the Canadiens or the original Loyalists. Some brought political ideas that had been influenced by the recent revolutions in the United States and France. Others brought with them the reform-minded ideas of the British Whigs. These political views would soon play a major role in the shaping of colonial government in the Canadas.

Some Scots and Irish settlers brought with them deep feelings of animosity toward the English. They resented the treatment their countrymen had experienced at the hands of English conquerors. In particular, they resented the way in which the British landed gentry had treated peasant farmers, whose lands they had taken over. Religious matters also set these newcomers apart from the early Loyalists. Many of the Irish and Scottish settlers who came to Canada were Roman Catholics. Others were Methodists and Presbyterians, who resented the exclusive privileges extended to the Anglican Church in Upper Canada. Their demands for change would contribute to the new political movements in British North America during the 1820s and 1830s.

1. Explain the terms "late Loyalists" and "Great Migration."
2. Suggest several ways the new waves of immigrants caused problems for the British leaders of the Canadas.

Government and Society in the Canadas

The Structure of Colonial Government

While the Constitutional Act of 1791 had given each of the colonies an elected Legislative Assembly, the real power rested with the governor and his councils. The legislators in the elected Assembly had little control over the actions of the governor who was appointed by the British Government.

An explanation of the organization of parliamentary governments may be useful here. Basically, any parliamentary system of

government has three components: the legislative, the executive and the judiciary. The legislative branch of government approves laws, the executive branch sees that these laws are translated into action, and the judiciary ensures that the laws are enforced.

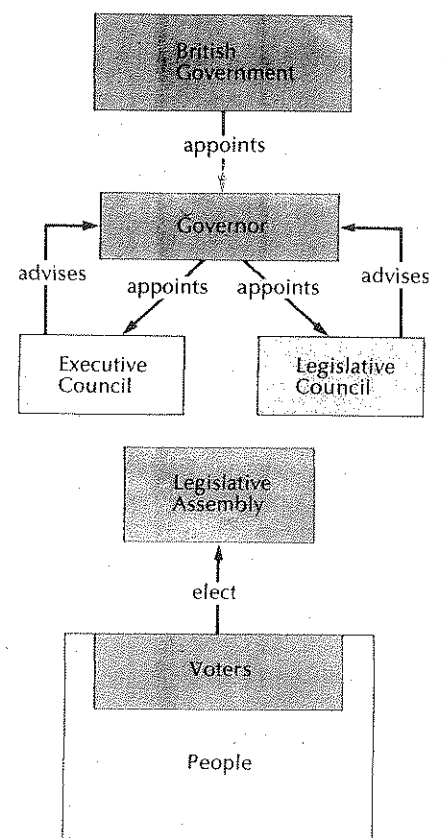
In parliamentary governments, the executive branch drafts most of the laws that come before the legislative branch for approval. The legislators debate these draft laws and then approve them, reject them or pass them in amended form. The executive may also make laws without the approval of the elected legislators if no taxes are involved. Such laws are known as "orders in council."

Under the Constitutional Act of 1791, the executive in Upper and Lower Canada comprised the governor and his Executive Council. There was a governor general responsible for both Upper and Lower Canada, who represented the British Crown. He resided in Quebec City, capital of Lower Canada. A lieutenant-governor, resident in York (Toronto), was appointed to represent the British Crown in Upper Canada. He reported, in theory, to the governor general in Quebec—who was also the lieutenant-governor for Lower Canada. In reality, there were effectively two governors, one for each of the Canadas.

The Constitutional Act called for an Executive Council in each of the Canadas to assist the governor. Members of this council were appointed by the governor for life. They advised and assisted him in the management of public affairs. The Executive Council functioned much like a federal or provincial cabinet does today. Each member headed a government department, directed the activities of that department and hired its employees. The fact that the Executive Council was appointed by the governor, not chosen by the elected members of the Legislative Assembly, meant that there was no responsible government in the Canadas. In other words, the Executive Council was not answerable or "responsible" to the Legislative Assembly. The power of the elected Legislative Assembly was further limited by the Legislative Council. The Legislative Council formed an upper chamber, similar to the British House of Lords, in the colonial government. Any bill passed by the Assembly had to receive the approval of the Legislative Council before becoming law. The members of this council were also appointed by the governor. Most of the Executive Council would be members of this body also. The governor also had to give his approval to any legislation passed in the colony. Even then, the British government could overturn any law within two years of its passage by the colonial legislators.

Within British parliamentary tradition, laws regarding taxation

Structure of Government Established in 1791



Who has power under this system of government established by the Constitutional Act of 1791?

must be approved by the elected legislature. The imposition of taxes on the American colonies by the British Parliament without the approval of the colonial legislatures had been one of the causes of the American Revolution.

The Constitutional Act gave each elected Assembly the power to raise money for local purposes. However, the Constitutional Act also called for one-seventh of all public lands in the Canadas to be set aside to cover the expenses of government. Money from the sale or rent of these Crown Reserves could be used by the governor and his council to pay government expenses, without approval of the Assembly.

LIFE IN UPPER CANADA

A contemporary observer has left the following description of pioneer life in Upper Canada in 1821:

The majority of its inhabitants were indeed very poor when they commenced their labours, and had a variety of discouraging circumstances to contend with... the peculiarities of the climate, the almost inaccessible situation of their farms, the badness of the roads, and the immense woods...

Diminutive log houses, surrounded by a few acres of cleared land, presented themselves... A profusion of decayed and half-burnt timber lay around, and the serpentine roots of trees, blown down by tempests, stretched into the air, in the most fantastic forms. In different places, piles of burning timber sent forth columns of smoke, which enveloped the forests far and wide. Axes rung [sic] in every thicket, and the ear was occasionally startled by the crashing of trees falling to the ground...

Upper Canada, though destitute of those advantages which high agricultural improvement and a dense population never fail to

bestow, is still in many respects, a delightful place of residence... There is a freedom, an independence and a joyousness, connected with the country...

[The country] is delightful to one, who, like me, has [seen] the famishing and healthless poor of a large city; who has visited those alleys where starving human wretchedness takes refuge... Though Upper Canada may be inferior to the old world, in many respects, she still has one superlative advantage over it, which is, a man may travel through her various settlements again and again, and never have his mind agitated, nor his feelings harassed, by the voice of misery, or the murmurs of discontent. Another circumstance tends to make Europeans partial to Canada. They find themselves to be of much more importance there than they would be at home; for the circle of society is so limited, and the number of respectable people in the Province so small...

[Excerpted from John Howison, *Sketches of Upper Canada*, published in 1821.]

Land was also set aside for the Anglican Church under the terms of the Constitutional Act. These lands were known as the Clergy Reserves. One-seventh of all public lands were to be set aside for the maintenance of "a Protestant Clergy" in the colonies. Revenue from these lands would be used to pay the costs of churches, schools and other Anglican Church activities in the Canadas. These institutions were intended to play an important part in keeping British traditions alive in Canada.

Upper Canada: The Family Compact, Reformers and Radicals

Social, political and economic power in Upper Canada during the early 1800s lay in the hands of a small group of families which, because of intermarriage among its members, came to be known as the Family Compact. It controlled nearly every aspect of public life in Upper Canada. Members of the Family Compact included wealthy landowners, educators and leaders of the Anglican Church. They were closely linked to the lieutenant-governor for Upper Canada, both socially and politically. Nearly all of the Executive Council for the province was drawn from the Family Compact. The oligarchy used its power on the Executive Council to protect its privileged position and to attack its critics. It could veto bills it did not like and even expel its opponents from the Assembly. The Family Compact argued that it was only natural that they should be the leaders of their community. They saw themselves as the superior members of Upper Canadian society, loyal to the Monarchy, pillars of the church and the only ones educated enough to govern properly.

The attitudes of the Family Compact toward public education and other democratic institutions is nicely summed up in the following statement. It was made by a member of the oligarchy

Our Land: Building the West

during debate over a move to bring public school to Upper Canada: "What do you need such schools for? There will always be enough Englishmen to carry out public business. We can leave the Canadians to clean up the bush." The Family Compact had no need for public schools. Their children attended schools such as York's Upper Canada College, run by the Anglican Church. Critics of the Family Compact called the college a "Prepare-a-Tory" school. The Family Compact had a strong ally in the Anglican Church. One of the leading members of the oligarchy was John Strachan, the first Anglican Bishop of Toronto. He strongly supported the Tory cause, and was an outspoken opponent of any reforms. Strachan resisted any changes such as public schooling that might end the Anglican Church's privileged place in the colony.

Through their power on the Executive Council, the Family Compact controlled the sale of Crown lands, including the assignment of the Crown and Clergy Reserves. They also had control over public works projects such as the building of roads, bridges and canals. Its use of this power led the Family Compact into direct conflict with the pioneer farmers of Upper Canada.

Much of the best farmland in the colony was kept for the Crown and Clergy Reserves or sold to members of the Family Compact. They knew that increasing demand for farmland, created by immigration to Upper Canada, would drive up the price of these lands. Many of these lands lay idle, uncleared bush in the midst of struggling pioneer farms. These farmers wanted to buy some of the unused land to increase their capacity to produce food for the growing population of Upper Canada. They were also concerned about the transportation problem created by the idle lands. The uncleared areas blocked road routes, raising the cost of transporting crops to markets. The impact of the Family Compact's control over land grants and road building is shown in the following statement by Robert Gourlay, a spokesman for the grievances of the pioneer farmers.

These blocks of wild land place the actual settler in an almost hopeless condition; he can hardly expect during his lifetime, to see his neighbourhood contain a population sufficiently dense to support mills, schools, post-offices, places of worship, markets or shops; and, without these, civilization retrogrades.

Roads under these circumstances can neither be opened by the settlers, nor kept in proper repair, even if made by the Government. The inconvenience arising from the want of roads is very

great... I met a settler from the Township of Warwick... returning from the grist mill at Westminster, with flour and bran of thirteen bushels of wheat; he had a yoke of oxen and a horse attached to his waggon, and had been absent nine days, and did not expect to reach home until the following evening... he assured me that he had to unload wholly or in part several times, and after driving his waggon through the swamps, to pick out a road through the woods where the swamps and gulleys were fordable, and to carry his bags on his back and replace them in the waggon [to cover] a distance less than 90 miles [150 kilometres].

[Statement made by Robert Gourlay to Lord Durham following the Rebellion of 1837.]

Gourlay organized meetings of farmers to hear their concerns and to help them present their grievances directly to the British government. In response, the Family Compact used their power on the Executive Council to have Gourlay arrested and expelled from the colony. One of Gourlay's most vehement attackers was Bishop Strachan:

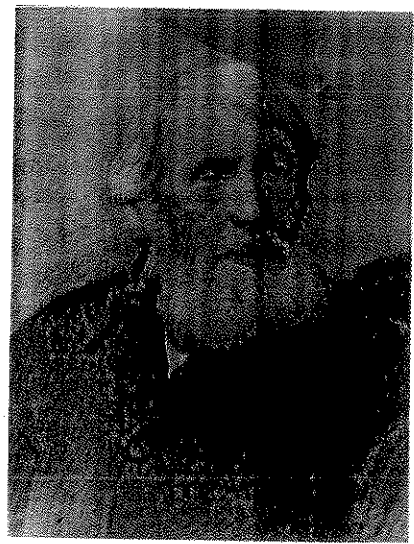
There has been here for a year past a Mr. Gourlay from Fifeshire trying to set us by the ears. He has done a great deal of mischief in the Colony by seditious publications exciting discontent among the people. I saw through him at once and opposed him with my usual vigour upon which the Press groaned with his abuse of me. By this he destroyed much of his influence. A character like Mr. Gourlay in a quiet Colony like this where there is little or no spirit of inquiry and very little knowledge may do much harm... by exciting uneasiness irritation & exciting unreasonable hopes.

[Letter written by John Strachan, December 1, 1818.]

On November 27, 1818, the Family Compact used their control over the Assembly to have passed *An Act to Prevent Certain Meetings in the Province of Upper Canada*. It made the kind of meeting held by Gourlay and the farmers illegal.

Opposition to the Family Compact grew steadily in the 1820s. In the election of 1824, the Tories lost their majority in the Assembly. The victorious Reformers were led by Marshall Bidwell, the son of an American immigrant. They set out to make government and society in Upper Canada more democratic.




One of the Reformers' first acts was to pass a bill allowing Methodist ministers to conduct weddings, a power previously

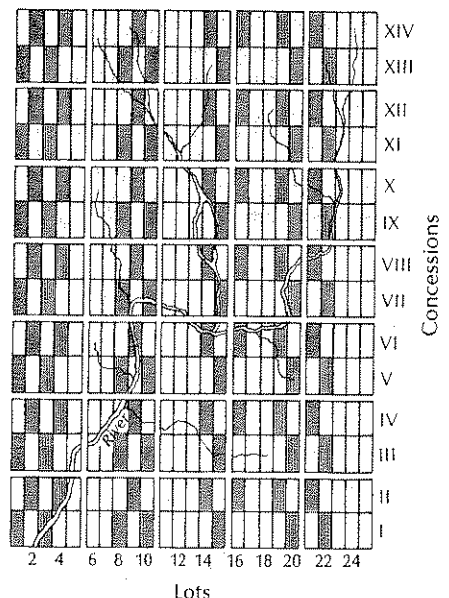


Robert Gourlay arrived in Upper Canada in 1817. He immediately began to gather information on land policy and life in Upper Canada for an immigrant's guide. Gourlay wanted to use the guide to encourage immigrants to settle on his land holdings. The Family Compact opposed Gourlay's activities and cancelled his land grant. Gourlay's criticism of the Family Compact's actions led to two libel trials and, in 1819, his banishment from Upper Canada on charges of sedition.

Layout of a Typical Township in Upper and Lower Canada

Legend

-  Clergy Reserves
-  Crown Reserves
-  Road allowance



One-seventh of the land of each township in Upper Canada was set aside for Clergy Reserves to support a Protestant clergy.

men, bank directors and sto act as a paltry screen for a country about 40 000 pound might benefit they tomaha nuisance.

Indeed, the members of the called a nuisance. They were their power and privilege. In many of them sons of Famil offices of the *Colonial Advoc* This attack only strengthened Accused of libel by the Family from the Assembly four times by the voters of York.

Conflict between the Tories Upper Canada as a result of th governor of Upper Canada, Sir the true leader of the Conserv paign against reform, smear "Yankee-loving traitors." Th election issue loyalty to the C

reserved for the Anglican Church. Strachan accused the Methodists of wanting to create an American-style republic. Through the influence of the Family Compact on the Executive Council, the bill was thrown out. Two years later, the Family Compact again used its power to veto a bill approved by the Legislative Assembly calling for the sale of the Clergy Reserves. The proceeds of the sale would have been used to finance public education in the colony.

Religious freedom and public education were becoming important issues in Upper Canada. By the early 1820s, Methodists and other Protestant sects clearly outnumbered the Anglicans in the colony, especially among the pioneer farming families. By supporting greater religious freedom, the Reformers gained the backing of the Methodists in Upper Canada, particularly their leader Egerton Ryerson.

Ryerson wanted important changes made in the way Upper Canada was run, changes that would benefit the farmers, small merchants and workers of the colony. He fought for religious freedom and an end to the privileged place of the Anglican Church in colonial society. Above all, he was a passionate advocate of a free public school system paid for out of government revenues. Like most of the Reformers, Ryerson was loyal to the British Crown and British parliamentary traditions. These men wanted only such rights and freedoms as they felt they were entitled to as British subjects.

Some of the Reformers wanted greater changes than those demanded by men like Bidwell and Ryerson. This group, known as **Radicals**, had been influenced by republican ideas from France and the United States. They wanted to see an end to British rule in Canada. Led by men like William Lyon Mackenzie, these men wanted to destroy the power of the Family Compact. They also wanted to ensure that no oligarchy could ever again be established in Canada. To achieve this end, Mackenzie called for the establishment of a republican form of government, responsible only to the people.

Mackenzie was a newspaperman, a member of the Legislative Assembly and the first mayor of Toronto. He used all of these roles to attack the Family Compact and to argue for a new system of government for Canada. His newspaper, the *Colonial Advocate*, was a major weapon in his attacks on the oligarchy. One editorial described the Family Compact in this way:

[It is] the most extraordinary collection of sturdy beggars, parsons, priests, pensioners, army people, navy people, place-

Lower Canada: The *Château Clique* and The Patriotes

The struggle for reform in Lower Canada, as in Upper Canada, was rooted in conflicts between the elected Legislative Assembly and the powerful oligarchy which controlled the Executive Council. During the early 1830s, the political conflict in Lower Canada was made more complex by the desire of the Canadien majority to protect their culture. The Canadiens felt that their culture was threatened both by the governing oligarchy and by the many English-speaking immigrants who were coming to the colony.

In Lower Canada the conflict was not between Conservatives and Liberals as it was in Britain or Upper Canada. Here, the roots of conflict lay in the history of Quebec and the conquest of that French outpost by the British. As you have learned, both the Quebec Act and the Constitutional Act of 1791 had protected the traditions and culture of French Canada. These traditions found their political expression in the elected Legislative Assembly, which was dominated by the Canadien majority in Lower Canada. The British governor of the colony, however, drew the members of his Executive and Legislative Councils from the British merchant class.

This powerful oligarchy was known as the *Château Clique*. The group took its name from the Château St. Louis, the governor's mansion in Quebec City. Among its members was John Molson, founder of the famous brewing company. The *Château Clique*

avored the building of canals to link the factories of Montreal and Quebec to markets in Upper Canada. As well, they actively fought against traditional land and civil laws in the colony. The *Château Clique* wanted the Canadien population to adopt a British way of life. During the 1830s, the *Château Clique* blocked the efforts of reformers to achieve responsible government in the form of an elected Legislative Council.

The British merchant class was angered by what they saw as the blocks that the Canadien-dominated Assembly placed in the way of freer trade and commerce with Upper Canada. Transportation between the Canadas was difficult in the early 1800s. The growing market in Upper Canada was being served by American suppliers, not the industries of Montreal and Quebec. The Executive Council sought funds to build canals and roads to link the colonies. The taxes to pay for these projects had to be approved by the Assembly.

The British in Lower Canada regarded the Canadiens as ignorant and backward people. They could not understand why the Canadiens kept their old ways of farming, fur trading and doing business. The Canadiens' lack of interest in the new agricultural and industrial methods that had resulted from the Industrial Revolution was incomprehensible to the British merchants.

For their part, the Canadiens regarded the British as arrogant conquerors. They resented the power and privileges enjoyed by the members of the *Château Clique* and other British merchants. They feared that the best lands in the colony would go to English-speaking immigrants. The Canadiens were angered by the low opinion many of the British had of their traditional way of life. Above all, they were concerned that this attitude would lead the British to seek assimilation of the Canadiens into the newcomers' way of life. The French writer de Tocqueville, who visited Lower Canada in 1831, noted that the Canadiens "regard with jealousy the daily arrival of newcomers from Europe. They feel that they will end up being absorbed...the English and French merge so little that the latter keep the name Canadiens, the others continuing to call themselves English."

The gap between the two cultures widened as economic conditions worsened in Lower Canada during the 1830s, especially for the ordinary Canadiens. Many of the industrial jobs in the factories and mills of Quebec and Montreal went to British immigrants. When an economic depression began in 1833, unemployment rose in the cities, affecting Canadiens and immigrants alike. In the countryside, the harvest was poor.



Cornelius Krieghoff sensitively recorded the Canadiens' way of life in his paintings. He lived and travelled in Lower Canada throughout the mid-1800s.

The Canadiens saw the immigrants as an economic as well as a cultural threat. That threat was made more ominous by outbreaks of cholera brought to Quebec by the immigrants. One cholera outbreak in 1832 killed more than 3000 residents of Quebec City. That same year, English soldiers killed three Canadiens during an election rally. All of these problems served to increase anti-British feelings in the colony.

Such feelings were only part of the growing struggle for reform in Lower Canada, however. Improved travel and communications had brought the educated young men of the colony into contact with new political ideas then finding expression in the United States and France. Well-educated, trained as doctors, lawyers or scholars, these

young Canadiens were unable to play a significant role in government because of the power of the English oligarchy. Their frustrations were rooted both in the cultural division between French and English in Lower Canada and in the undemocratic nature of the colonial government.

The reform movement in Lower Canada combined Canadien nationalism with republican ideas of democratic government. These ideas found eloquent expression in a brilliant young lawyer and spellbinding orator, Louis Joseph Papineau. Under his leadership, the Parti Canadien, which held four-fifths of the seats in the Legislative Assembly, often clashed with the governor and his Council. The Assembly steadfastly refused to approve taxes for building canals and roads. Such taxes, they argued, would place heavy burdens on small farmers while helping the wealthy British merchants.

By 1832, the Reformers in Lower Canada had split into two groups, a moderate wing led by John Neilson and a more radical group led by Papineau. The radical wing took the name Patriotes, reflecting the nationalist spirit of their cause. The Patriotes were able to effectively control the Assembly. After the killings during the 1832 election, they passed a motion of censure against the governor. During the same session, the Patriotes approved a bill calling for an elected Legislative Council in the colony. Such a move would have paved the way for responsible government in Lower Canada.

In 1834, the Assembly went even further in its demands for responsible government. The Patriotes approved a list of ninety-two resolutions outlining the Canadien grievances over the way the colony was governed. They again demanded an elected Legislative Council, and sought all of the powers and privileges enjoyed by members of the British Parliament. With the ninety-two resolutions as their platform, the Patriotes won an overwhelming victory in the election of 1834. A resolution calling for responsible government was again approved by the Assembly in 1836.

In 1837, Britain's colonial secretary, Lord Russell, responded to these demands with ten resolutions of his own. While acknowledging the need for increased popular support for the government, Russell firmly rejected any form of responsible government for the colony. His response strengthened the reformers' demands for greater democracy, not only in Lower Canada but in Upper Canada and Nova Scotia as well. It also served to dangerously widen the gap between the British and Canadiens in Lower Canada.



This portrayal of Louis Joseph Papineau was painted by C.W. Jefferys long after the rebellions of 1837. What is Jefferys trying to say about Papineau? What event do you think has just taken place?

THE BRITISH VIEW OF THE CANADIENS

The following description of the Canadiens was written in the early 1800s and shows the attitude held by many British residents of Lower Canada.

The French Canadiens are an inoffensive, quiet people, possessed of little industry and less ambition. . . . The Habitans [sic] content themselves with following the footsteps of their forefathers. They are satisfied with a little, because a little satisfies their wants. They are quiet and obedient subjects, because they feel the value and benefit of the government under which they live. . . . They are religious from education and habit, more than from principle. . . . They live in happy mediocrity, without a wish or endeavour to better their condition. . . .

The Habitans have almost every resource

within their own families. . . they make their own bread, butter and cheese; their soap, candles and sugar. . . . They build their own houses, barns, stables and ovens. Make their own carts, wheels, ploughs, harrows, and canoes. . .

A Canadien will seldom or never purchase that which he can make himself; and I am of the opinion that it is this saving spirit of frugality alone, which has induced them to follow the footsteps of their fathers, and which has prevented them from profiting by the modern improvements. . . and the new implements of agriculture introduced by the English settlers.

[John Lambert, *Travels through Lower Canada, and the United States of America in the years 1806, 1807 and 1808*, London, 1810.]

The reform movement in Lower Canada was much more anti-British in sentiment than its counterpart in Upper Canada. The reformist Canadiens found support from Irish Catholics who had come to Quebec in the Great Migration. Both the Irish and the Canadiens felt oppressed by their Protestant, British rulers. Papineau was joined on Patriote speakers' platforms by men like Edmund O'Callaghan, who wrote in his newspaper, *The Vindicator*, on April 14, 1837: "The British government have decided to make Lower Canada the Ireland of North America. One duty now remains—let them study the history of the American Revolution."

1. What was the name given to the oligarchy in Lower Canada? How did their views of how Lower Canada should be governed differ from those of the Canadiens?
2. What reforms were Papineau and his Patriotes seeking?
3. Why were many Irish immigrants to Lower Canada willing to support the Patriotes?

The Rebellions

Within seven months of O'Callaghan's warnings, armed conflict broke out in Lower Canada between Patriotes and British troops. A month after that, open rebellion occurred in Upper Canada. Although these rebellions were quickly put down, uprisings occurred again in 1838. In this section, you will look at the 1837 rebellions in each of the Canadas, as well as those of 1838.

Lower Canada: 1837

In reaction to Lord Russell's rejection of the Patriotes' appeal for responsible government, a public meeting held at St. Charles on the Richelieu in May of 1837 voted to resist British "oppression." Delegates to the meeting adopted resolutions calling for a boycott of British goods and banks. Other resolutions hinted at the possibility of annexation with the United States or the creation of an independent Canadian nation. Papineau was proclaimed the leader of Canadian resistance to the British.

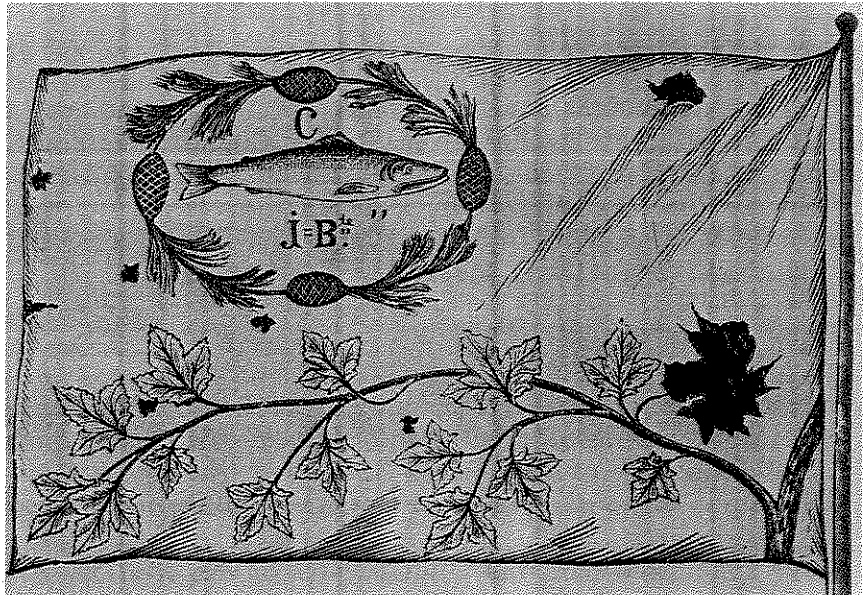
In the Assembly, the Patriote majority continued to refuse to approve taxes needed by the government. The British governor of the colony responded by announcing that he would use money in the colonial treasury without the approval of the elected Assembly. The Patriotes reacted angrily to this violation of the Constitutional Act of 1791.

Papineau's son and other young Patriotes formed a group holding strongly republican views, calling themselves *Fils de la Liberté*. The name means "sons of liberty," after the name of one of the groups that had started the American Revolution. During the summer and fall of 1837, street clashes between the *Fils de la Liberté* and the Tory Doric Club were common.

In October of 1837, the Patriotes held a mass meeting at St. Charles to plan their resistance to British rule. The mood was one of intense Canadian nationalism combined with a passionate salute to the spirit of the American Revolution.

Speaker after speaker in the angry mood of the meeting called for armed rebellion against the British. Only Papineau argued for moderation. He called on his followers to use the existing political system to achieve the changes they demanded. But his was the lone voice of moderation in the meeting hall, lost among the echoing calls for armed revolt. Wolfred Nelson rebuked Papineau, saying

This flag was carried by patriots during the battle of St. Eustache. The muskellunge was a local symbol, but the **J-B** for Jean Baptiste and the branch of a maple tree were symbols of Canadien nationalism. Suggest a reason why these symbols might have been chosen.



"the time has come to melt down our tin plates and spoons to make bullets." Patriote newspapers jubilantly reported the St. Charles meeting, spreading the call for armed rebellion. But the rebels never even had time to properly plan and organize a rebellion, let alone launch it. The Catholic Church publicly denounced the Patriotes and called on the Canadiens to remain loyal to the British Crown.

The Doric Club responded with more violent attacks on the Patriotes. On November 6, 1837, members of the Doric Club attacked the *Fils de la Liberté* as they left one of their meetings. They then ransacked the offices of the Irish pro-Patriote newspaper, the *Vindicator* and wound up the evening by attacking Papineau's home.

The British governor, fearing an armed uprising was about to begin, proclaimed martial law. All political meetings and marches were banned. Ten days after the Doric Club attacks, warrants were issued for the arrest of Papineau and the other Patriote leaders on charges of treason.

British troops were sent to arrest the would-be revolutionaries. The British soldiers were trained professionals, well-armed and well-supplied. The Patriotes, on the other hand, were armed with hunting muskets, pitchforks and scythes. Only one in ten had a gun. Ill-equipped and poorly trained, they were also badly led. The

orators who inspired them to rebellion were lawyers and writers, not soldiers.

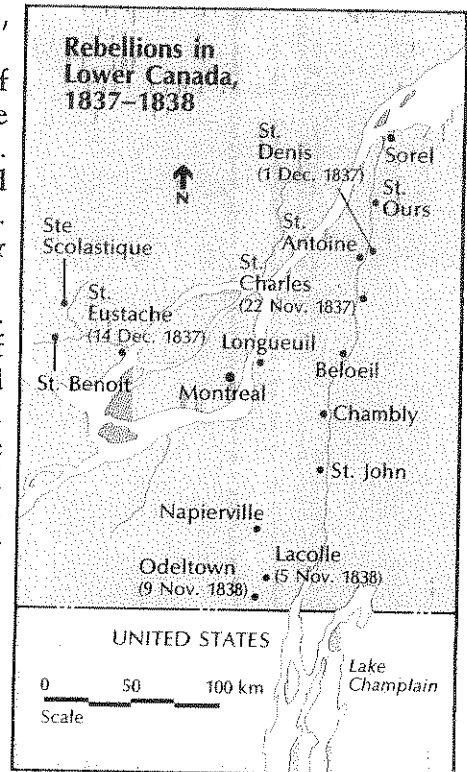
The Patriotes resisted what they viewed as the illegal arrest of their leaders by the British. Pursued by the British troops, the Patriotes had one brief moment of success on November 22, 1837. Barricaded in a stone house in the village of St. Denis, Patriotes led by Wolfred Nelson fought 350 British soldiers to a stand-off. Among the Patriotes at St. Denis was Georges Etienne Cartier, later to be one of the Fathers of Confederation.

The rebels were unable to hold out against the British soldiers. They soon ran short of supplies. They also faced the opposition of the Catholic Church which would not allow them to bury their dead in church cemeteries. The villages of St. Eustache, St. Benoit and St. Charles where rebel leaders and their supporters had sought refuge quickly fell to the British. The Patriotes at St. Denis held out until December 1, 1837, then surrendered to a British force that outnumbered them two to one. Patriote resistance crumbled, and their leaders fled. Many, among them Papineau, escaped to the United States.

Events following the rout of the Patriotes served to widen the gap between the Canadiens and the British in Lower Canada. At St. Eustache, the British found the body of one of their soldiers mutilated by the rebels. In revenge, many homes in the village were sacked and burned by British troops and civilians, members of the Doric Club and Orangemen, who had accompanied them in the pursuit of the Patriotes. Drunken and filled with pride over their easy victories, the Doric Club members and Orangemen drove families out into the snow while the British commanders looked the other way.

Papineau's flight had begun before the first shot was fired. He had never approved of armed rebellion, even when it was forced upon him. Papineau watched from the distance as St. Eustache and St. Denis burned. He lived for many years under a false name in the United States.

1. What events triggered the rebellions of 1837 in Lower Canada?
2. In a short paragraph, explain who was to blame for the violence during the rebellions in Lower Canada.
3. How might Canada's history have been different if the Patriotes had won in 1837?



The rebellion in Lower Canada took place in the last months of 1837. How might the environment have affected the outcome of the rebellion?

Upper Canada: 1837

News of unrest in Lower Canada reached Upper Canada in October of 1837. In that month, troops stationed in Toronto were sent to Lower Canada to deal with the anticipated rebellion there. William Lyon Mackenzie saw the events in Lower Canada during the fall of 1837 as his chance to launch an armed uprising in Upper Canada. As an ardent admirer of the American Revolution and the republic it had created, Mackenzie felt that a similar revolution was needed in Upper Canada. He shared many of the views of the Patriotes in Lower Canada and communicated frequently with their leaders. In the late summer of 1837, he received a message from the Patriotes, asking him for his support should an uprising start in Lower Canada that year.

Mackenzie saw his chance to seize control of Upper Canada when the British troops stationed at York were sent to Lower Canada in order to suppress the Patriotes. The rebels had been planning for several months. During the summer of 1837, political meetings

A CALL FOR SUPPORT

Mackenzie published the following handbill on November 27, 1837 in an effort to attract support for an armed uprising in Upper Canada:

BRAVE CANADIANS! God has put into the bold and honest hearts of our brethern in Lower Canada to revolt—not against “lawful” but against “unlawful authority”. The law says we shall not be taxed without our consent by the voices of the men of our choice, but a wicked and tyrannical government has trampled upon that law—robbed the exchequer—divided the plunder—and declared that, regardless of justice they will continue to roll their splendid carriages, and riot in their palaces, at our expense—that we are poor spiritless, ignorant peasants, who were born to toil for our betters. . . .

CANADIANS! Do you love freedom? I know

you do. Do you hate oppression? Who dare deny it? Do you wish. . . . Then buckle on your armour, and put down the villains who oppress and enslave our country. . . . One short hour will deliver our country from the oppressor; and freedom in religion, peace and tranquility, equal laws and an improved country will be the prize. . . .

. . . the prize is a splendid one. A country larger than France or England; natural resources equal to our most boundless wishes—a government of equal laws—religion pure and undefiled—perpetual peace—education to all—millions of acres of lands for revenue—freedom from British tribute—free trade with all the world—but stop—I could never enumerate all the blessings attendant on independence!

Up then, brave Canadians! Get ready your rifles, and make short work of it. . . our enemies in Toronto are in terror and dismay.

were held in many Upper Canadian towns and villages. Rebel militia units were raised. They drilled and held target practice throughout the fall of that year.

Mackenzie came up with a plan of action in November, 1837. His plan for taking over the government of Upper Canada called for a two-pronged attack. One group of rebels would march on Toronto, the other on Hamilton. In Toronto, they would seize 4000 guns from the city hall, arrest Governor Bond Head, and declare their independence from Britain. A convention would then be held to create a republican form of government for Upper Canada.

However, confusion surrounded the start of the ill-fated rebellion. December 7, 1837, had been chosen as the day for the attack to begin. The first rebels arrived at Montgomery's Tavern on Yonge Street, just outside Toronto, on December 4. There, the rebels fought their first skirmish with forces loyal to the government. Colonel Robert Moodie was shot dead as he tried to ride away from Montgomery's Tavern to warn the governor.

When Mackenzie and his rebels began to march down Yonge Street the next day, the element of surprise had been lost. The government had been able to organize a group of armed men led by Colonel Allan Napier McNab to defend the capital of Upper Canada. The British troops were on their way back from Lower Canada. Above all, there was little popular support for the marchers. Fewer than 800 would-be rebels could be assembled for the attack. The march into the city quickly turned into a wild retreat as the rebels were ambushed by Sheriff William Jarvis and a party of fewer than thirty men.

Mackenzie's bold plan ended in humiliating defeat at the Battle of Montgomery's Farm. Colonel McNab and his Loyalist forces chased the rebels across the ploughed fields as they fled. In his flight, Mackenzie dropped a briefcase containing all of his plans for rebellion and the names of those who had taken part in the aborted uprising.

Mackenzie himself escaped, fleeing to the United States. From Rochester, New York, Mackenzie and a party of rebel exiles took over Navy Island in the middle of the Niagara River on December 13, 1837. There, he declared his Provisional Government of Upper Canada. He continued to find little support in either Canada or the United States. A group of Loyalist militia, acting on McNab's orders, burned and sank the *Caroline*, an American vessel being used to supply Mackenzie's rebels on Navy Island. The sinking of the *Caroline* in American waters almost started a war between

LACK OF POPULAR SUPPORT FOR MACKENZIE

Mackenzie had been unable to get widespread support for his rebellion, despite the settlers' many grievances. An Upper Canadian farmer, who had supported Mackenzie's demands for reforms, explained his refusal to join the ill-fated rebellion, saying "I was a Scotch Radical and would have helped Mackenzie all I could—until he drew the sword. That proved to me that he was not constitutional, and I wouldna any such doings."

1. In your own words, explain what the farmer meant by the phrase "he was not constitutional."

Britain and the United States. Some Americans, sympathetic to the rebels, called for an invasion of Canada.

However, the American government did not want a war. In the end, they arrested Mackenzie for breaking American neutrality laws and jailed him for a short time, an experience that dulled his enthusiasm for American institutions.

SUSANNA MOODIE

News of the rebellion spread swiftly, if not accurately, to the pioneer farms of Upper Canada. Susanna Moodie wrote the following description of how she and her family learned of the uprising:

On the 4th of December—that great day of the outbreak... we were met by old Jenny who had a long story to tell us, of which we could make neither head nor tail—how some gentleman had called in our absence, and left a large paper, all about the Queen and the Yankees; that there was war between Canada and the States; that Toronto had been burnt and the governor killed, and I know not what other strange and monstrous statements...

[Reaching our cabin] we found the elucidation of Jenny's marvellous tales: a copy of the Queen's proclamation, calling upon all loyal gentlemen to join in putting down the unnatural rebellion...

[The next day, after her husband had left for Toronto] several poor settlers called at the house... on their way to Peterborough; but they brought with them the most exaggerated accounts. There had been a battle, they said, with the rebels, and the loyalists had been defeated; Toronto was besieged by sixty thousand men, and all the men in the backwoods were ordered to march instantly to the relief of the city...

The honest backwoodsmen, perfectly ignorant of the abuses that had led to the present position of things, regarded the rebels as a set of monsters, for whom no punishment was too severe, and obeyed the call to arms with enthusiasm. The leader of the insurgents must have been astonished at the rapidity with which a large force was collected, as if by magic, to repel his designs.



*Susanna Moodie's book *Roughing It in the Bush* has become an important source of information on life in Upper Canada. What kinds of information do you think historians would find in early settlers' accounts of life in the Canadas? How reliable do you think these accounts would be?*

1. What were Mackenzie's reasons for calling for rebellion in Upper Canada?
2. Give reasons why Mackenzie found little support in Upper Canada for his rebellion.

The Rebellions of 1838

The rebellions of 1837 in both Lower and Upper Canada were quickly suppressed by the British. Both had failed because they had been unable to attract widespread popular support. The rebellions of 1837 showed that the vast majority in both provinces, despite widespread grievances, were content to use peaceful, constitutional means to achieve political ends.

However, events in 1838 showed that these grievances continued. More battles were fought, and more blood shed, after the rebellions of 1837 than during them. Throughout 1838, a secret guerilla army carried out a series of attacks along the boundary between Upper and Lower Canada. This secret group was known as the Patriot Hunters and was based in the United States. Its members struck at prominent Tory targets, burning houses and barns, and sometimes murdering their inhabitants.

The Patriot Hunters had as their symbol an eagle flanked by stars. On their membership card was the image of the eagle, clutching the British lion in its talons. Their aim was to invade and capture Canada in order to liberate it from what they saw as British tyranny. The few forays the group made into Upper Canada were crushed by British troops and the militia. Ineffectual as they were, these raids in 1838 renewed fears of another American invasion of Canada.

In Lower Canada, armed uprisings also broke out in 1838. There, a parallel group known as *les Freres Chasseurs*, had been preparing for armed rebellion since the defeat of the Patriotes in 1837. Led by Robert Nelson, a doctor living in Montreal, *les Freres Chasseurs* were better financed and organized than the Patriotes had been in 1837. Nelson's organization had cells of supporters throughout Lower Canada. They also had a more capable military leadership which recognized the need for the insurgents to be well-armed if the rebellion was to succeed.

Les Freres Chasseurs organized a brief and ineffectual uprising in February of 1838. However, a second campaign was attempted in November. This uprising began with the seizure of the strategic seigneurie of Beauharnois, thirty kilometres from Montreal. But, a

party of Loyalist Caughnawaga natives attacked the rebels and captured them, holding them until British troops arrived.

Meanwhile, Robert Nelson, leader of *les Freres Chasseurs*, was on his way back from the United States with money and arms for the rebels. Loyalist patrols, alerted by the events at Caughnawaga, spotted Nelson and captured the rebel leader. Once again, the rebels, short of arms and ammunition, were doomed to defeat. Again, too, the army and Loyalist volunteers scoured the countryside in search of rebels.

The British revenge on the failed revolutionaries was far more violent than the uprisings themselves. Two of the Upper Canadian rebels, Peter Matthews and Samuel Lount, were hanged in April 1838. Ironically, Lount, who was Mackenzie's lieutenant, had saved the lives of Sheriff William Jarvis' family during the 1837 uprising by keeping his fellow marchers from setting fire to the Jarvis home.

In Lower Canada, martial law was declared and the elected Assembly suspended following the rebellion in 1837. A new governor general, Lord Durham, was sent to the colony to restore order and to solve "the Canadian problem." Durham feared further armed insurrection if he bowed to local Tory demands for harsh punishments for the rebels. Instead of ordering eight rebel leaders hanged, as the British demanded, he had them exiled to the West Indies. The British government overturned his lenient sentences and Durham angrily resigned his post. He returned to Britain where he wrote a report on the rebellions of 1837 that would become a turning point in Canadian history. You will learn more about Lord Durham's report in the next chapter. The British reacted much more harshly to the rebellion of 1838 in Lower Canada. This time there was no Lord Durham to send the rebel leaders into West Indian exile. Martial law was still in effect from the earlier rebellion: 1200 men were rounded up by the army and jailed as suspected rebels. Of their number, 108 were brought before court martial for trial and all but ten were sentenced to death. Twelve *Freres Chasseurs* were actually hanged before the British realized that executions might lead to another uprising. Fifty-eight of the condemned men were transported to the Australian penal colony and the rest set free. Robert Nelson, the rebel leader, managed to escape to the United States. He abandoned his hope of becoming "president of the new republic" and returned to his medical practice.

In Upper Canada, 885 men were arrested for treason in 1838 and jailed. Of these, twenty were hanged publicly. The Tories hoped the hangings would deter any would-be rebels. Ninety-two were trans-

ported to penal colonies. Other supporters of Mackenzie fled to the United States to avoid similar fates.

1. What evidence in the text shows the Patriot Hunters were influenced by American revolutionary ideas?
2. Suggest reasons why the British government so severely punished the rebels following the 1838 rebellion. What did the government hope to gain?

Summary

The Industrial Revolution in early nineteenth-century Britain created movements of political reform that would have repercussions in the North American colonies. Thousands of immigrants from England, Scotland and Ireland, many of them displaced by the Industrial Revolution, arrived as part of the Great Migration. These immigrants brought with them new social and political ideas that greatly affected life in the Canadas.

Oligarchies held power in each of the British North American colonies. In Upper Canada, the Family Compact used its power in the Executive and Legislative Councils to prevent reforms that would have aided pioneer farmers. The major issues that caused discontent among the farmers were the idle Crown lands and the role of the Anglican Church. With its vast Clergy Reserves, the Anglican Church was able to block religious freedoms and public schooling.

In Lower Canada, the *Château Clique* attempted to use its power in government to build canals linking the colony to markets in Upper Canada. The Canadian reformers, known as Patriotes, used their power in the Assembly to block these efforts. They feared that the British merchant classes wanted to destroy the traditional Canadian way of life.

At first, reformers in both colonies sought changes through the elected assemblies and appeals to the British Parliament. They appealed for responsible government in the colonies, knowing that this would give the elected representatives of the people control over the government. However, the oligarchies, supported by the British, blocked the reformers' efforts.

In frustration, some of the reformers in both colonies turned to armed rebellion. Some of them called for an end to colonies' ties with Britain and the creation of independent republics. Rebellions

occurred in both Canadas in late fall of 1837. The rebellions were poorly organized, badly led and lacked popular support. Both were quickly put down by British troops and civilians loyal to the government. However, unrest and clashes between government troops and rebels continued throughout 1838 as well.

Lord Durham in the Colonies

John "Radical Jack" Lambton, the first Earl of Durham, is known to students of Canadian history as Lord Durham. He was a powerful advocate of political reforms in Britain during the 1830s. For example, he urged that voting should be done by secret ballot and that the vote be given to all male taxpayers.

Led by speakers like Durham, critics of the British government accused it of neglecting its North American colonies. They claimed that this neglect had given rise both to the American Revolution of the 1770s and to the rebellions of 1837-1838 in the Canadas. They

argued that the British government had neither provided good leadership nor allowed enough democracy for the colonies, thus enabling groups like the Family Compact and the Château Clique to become petty tyrants.

Early in 1838, British Prime Minister Melbourne asked Durham to head a commission of inquiry into the rebellions of 1837-1838, and to make recommendations for the future of the Canadas. Durham was also asked to serve as governor general of both Upper and Lower Canada. Durham's acceptance delighted Melbourne and quieted the critics who were using the "Canadian problem" to harass and embarrass the Melbourne government. On both sides of the Atlantic, people who wanted to see political change in the colonies were pleased by Durham's appointment.

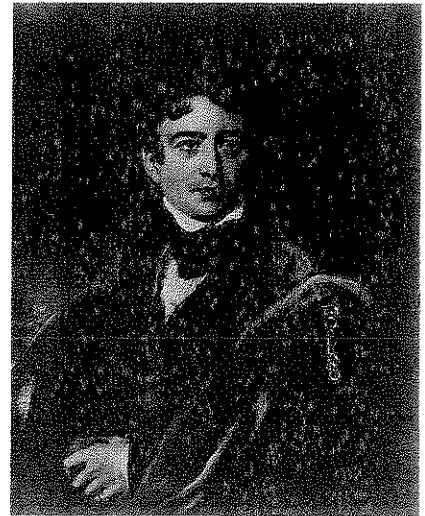
Lord Durham arrived at the port of Quebec City in May 1838 to a warm welcome from the people of Lower Canada. He invited leaders from both Canadas and the Atlantic colonies to meet with him and discuss solutions to the problems of colonial government.

Durham already had in mind one possible solution: the joining of all the colonies into a single legislative union. In other words, Durham wanted to create an elected Assembly which would include representatives from each of the colonies. These legislators would make laws that applied to all of the colonies. Such an assembly would make it impossible for a local oligarchy to control the political life of any individual colony. There would be enough taxpayers in this union to provide the government with the funds needed for such large-scale projects as railway and canal building. Such projects, at this time, were bigger than any individual colony could handle.

Durham discovered, however, that none of the colonies wanted to be part of his proposed legislative union. Each colony feared getting involved with the problems of the others if it had to share a government with them. Durham abandoned the idea of a legislative union of all the colonies. A union of Lower and Upper Canada without the Maritimes, however, would remain part of his proposed solution.

During Durham's visit to Upper Canada, William and Robert Baldwin, leading reformers in the Upper Canada colony, suggested to him the idea of "responsible government" for British North America. This idea was already in practice in Britain itself. Let us take a closer look at what it meant.

In Britain, those people allowed to vote elected the members of the House of Commons. The party getting the largest number of



Lord Durham was an aristocrat, the son-in-law of a former British prime minister. His years in politics had earned him a reputation as a reformer.

members in Parliament would then form a government, headed by the prime minister (usually the leader of the winning party). The prime minister would choose members of his party to be part of his Executive Council, or cabinet. This council gave advice to the monarch and was responsible for the day-to-day running of the country. Each cabinet minister headed a department, staffed by civil servants, who carried out the work of the government.

The Baldwins wanted to see a similar system for the government of the colonies. The colonial governor, appointed by the British government, would still act as the chief representative of authority (or head of state) in the colonies. However, this appointed governor would have to choose his Executive Council from the elected members of the Legislative Assembly of the colony. ("Legislative Assembly" was the name used for the body of representatives elected by colonial voters.)

This Executive Council would then give advice to the colonial governor. The governor would have to accept such advice in all domestic matters, those matters which concerned life in the colony itself. For example, if the Executive Council's members wanted to spend tax money to build roads, and had the support of a majority of members in the Assembly, the colonial governor would have to allow this spending, whether he liked the idea or not. If the Baldwins' proposal was accepted, the real power in the colony would no longer rest with the appointed governor, but with the elected Legislative Assembly, whose members sat in the Executive Council.

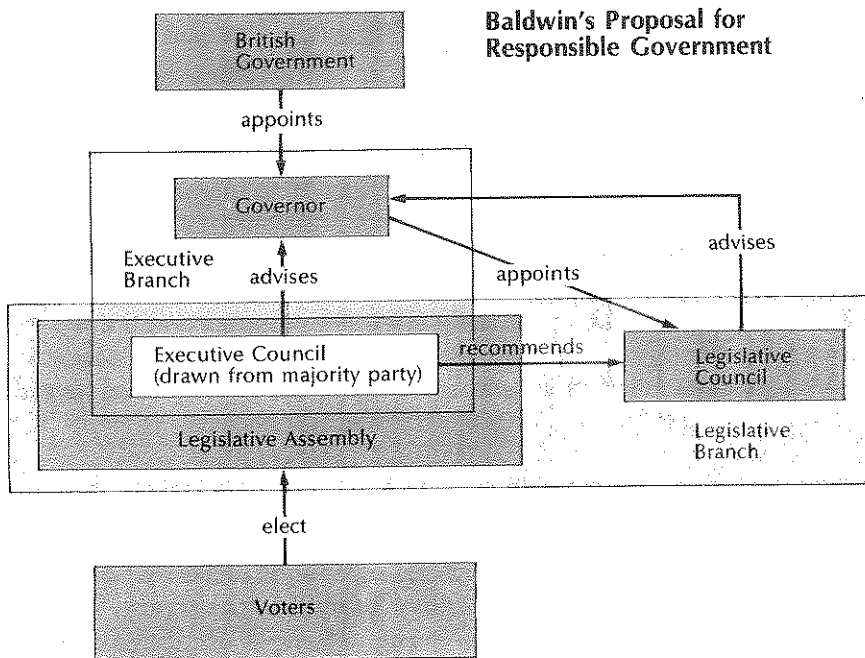
In such a system, the government is said to be "responsible" to the elected Assembly, who in turn represent the people of the colony. The structure of responsible government is shown on page 55.

In a letter of August 1838 to Lord Durham, Robert Baldwin summed up his case for responsible government:



Robert Baldwin

I would ask Your Lordship, would the people of England endure any system of Executive Government over which they had less influence than that which at present exists [in the Canadas]? Your Lordship knows they would not. Can you then expect the people of these colonies with their English feelings and English sympathies to be satisfied with less. . . They can see a reason why their relations with foreign countries should be placed in other hands: but none why their domestic concerns should not be managed upon similar principles to those applied in the administration of the Imperial Government. . . .



The Baldwins' proposal appealed to Durham for a number of reasons. First, it called for a form of government similar to Britain's, with which he was of course already familiar. Second, the proposal would provide responsible government for local issues. This provision would silence complaints that these issues were under the control of a government outside the colony. But it would still allow the British government to retain power in all other matters such as foreign trade and defence. Finally, the proposal was acceptable to important political leaders in all six of the colonies. For these reasons, Durham was prepared to recommend to the British Parliament that responsible government be extended to all of the British North American colonies except one: Lower Canada. Here, Durham faced a major problem. He feared that, under responsible government, the French-speaking majority of Lower Canada would use its power to block the wishes of the British minority. As you will shortly see, Durham had a very unfavorable opinion of the Canadiens and their way of life. Despite these views he treated the Patriote rebels leniently following their convictions (see Chapter 2, page 48). His leniency towards the rebels aroused great anger both in the British Colonial Office and among the English-speaking population of Lower Canada. As a result of this criticism of his

actions, five months after his arrival in the colonies, Durham resigned from the position of governor general and returned to Britain. There, he wrote the report that would shape future British policies regarding its North American colonies. You will now get a closer look at that report.

Lord Durham's Report

The following are excerpts from the report prepared by Lord Durham and his staff for the British government. In the report, he deals with four main topics. They are: the causes of conflict in Lower Canada; the causes of conflict in Upper Canada; the proposal for responsible government; and the proposal to unite the two Canadas into a single colony. Here is what Durham had to say about each of these topics:

On the Causes of Conflict in Lower Canada:

Durham felt strongly that the conflict in Lower Canada was a result of the differences of outlook between the Canadien majority and the British minority. He believed that the British commercial and industrial economy, as represented by this minority, was superior to the older agricultural economy of the Canadiens. He felt that the British way of life had to take control in Lower Canada if economic progress was to be achieved there.

I expected to find a contest between a government and a people: I found two nations warring in the bosom of a single state: I found a struggle, not of principles, but of races [ethnic groups];...[a] deadly animosity...now separates the inhabitants of Lower Canada into the hostile divisions of French and English.

[The English in Lower Canada] complain loudly and bitterly of the whole course pursued by the Imperial government, with respect to the quarrel of the two races...they feel that being a minority, any return to the due course of constitutional govern-

ment would again subject them to a French majority; and to this I am persuaded they would never peaceably submit...

It will be acknowledged by everyone who has observed the progress of Anglo-Saxon [British] colonization in America, that sooner or later the English race was sure to predominate even numerically in Lower Canada...

I entertain no doubts as to the national character which must be given to Lower Canada; it must be that of the British Empire;...it must henceforth be the first and steady purpose of the British government to establish an English population, with English laws and language, in this province and to trust to none but a decidedly English legislature....

On Union of the Canadas:

Durham believed that union of the two Canadas would help to solve the political, economic and cultural problems of both colonies. In particular, he saw union as the only way to assimilate the Canadiens into a dominant British culture:

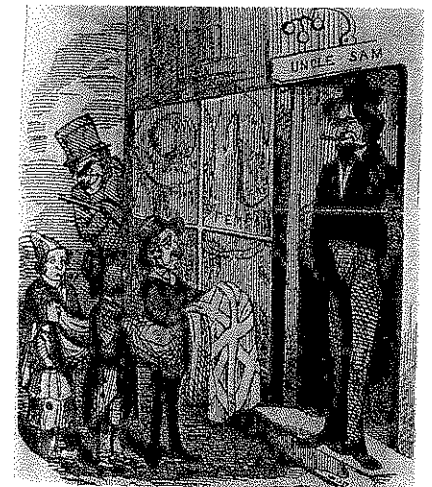
... I believe that tranquility can only be restored by subjecting the province [Lower Canada] to the vigorous rule of an English majority; and that the only [effective] government would be that formed by a legislative union.

If the population of Upper Canada is rightly estimated at 400 000, the English inhabitants of Lower Canada at 150 000 and the French at 450 000, the union of the two provinces would not only give a clear English majority, but one that would be increased every year by the influence of English emigration; and I have little doubt that the French, when once placed by the legitimate course of events and the working of natural causes, in a minority, would abandon their vain hopes of nationality. . . .

On Responsible Government:

Durham observed that many colonists envied the economic prosperity and democratic system of government enjoyed in the United States. He noted that some colonial leaders even wanted the colonies to become part of the United States. If the British government failed to grant responsible government to the colonies, Durham argued, their annexation by the United States would be a strong possibility.

The irritation caused by the late insurrection . . . induced a large portion of the population to look with envy at the material prosperity of their neighbours in the United States, under a perfectly free and eminently responsible government; and, in despair of obtaining such benefits under their present institutions, to desire the adoption of a republican constitution, or even an incorporation with the American Union. . . . The different parties believe that when the case is once fairly put before the mother country, the desired changes in the policy of their government will be readily granted: they are now tranquil, and I believe loyal; determined to abide the decision of the Home Government, and to defend their property and their country against rebellion and invasion. But I cannot but express my belief that this is the last effort of their almost exhausted patience. . . . and . . . that the government of the colony should henceforth be carried on in conformity with the views of the majority in the Assembly.



Some people in the Canadas saw annexation with the United States as a solution to economic problems. In 1849, 325 Montreal citizens published the Annexation Manifesto calling for immediate union with the United States. Do you think the cartoonist supported this view?

Reactions to Lord Durham's Report

The immediate reaction to Lord Durham's report was mixed. Tories in Britain and their counterparts in the colonies saw the report as an attack on their privileges and power. Most Canadian leaders were furious over Durham's views of their culture and over his desire to submerge them in a union with Upper Canada.

In general, reform-minded people on both sides of the Atlantic applauded Durham's recommendations. Reformers in all the colonies favorably received his idea for responsible government. The headline of *The Hamilton Journal* of August 2, 1839, read: "Death to the Family Compact and up with the Durham Constitution!" "No document has ever been promulgated in British North America that has given such general satisfaction as this report," wrote Francis Hincks in his newspaper, the *Toronto Examiner*, on June 24, 1839. Hincks then set about organizing hundreds of "Durham meetings" and "Durham Constitutional Clubs" throughout Upper

Canada. At these meetings, flags were waved and songs sung in support of the reformers' cause.

Durham's report was just as enthusiastically received in the Atlantic colonies. On April 11, 1839, Joseph Howe, a vocal reformer, wrote the following editorial in his newspaper, the *Nova Scotian*:

HOW THE CANADIENS SAW THEMSELVES: THE CASE OF ETIENNE PARENT

During the 1830s, many educated young Canadiens had come to believe that the people of Quebec had been better off before the British came. They believed the people of New France had greater control over their religion, language and culture, all of which were now threatened by the British. Many of the Lower Canadian rebels of 1837-1838 had held these beliefs. When Durham's report appeared, these Canadiens became even more resentful of the British.

Other Canadiens felt differently. In his Quebec City newspaper *Le Canadien*, Etienne Parent had not only translated and published Durham's report, but had written a carefully argued analysis of it. He urged that Canadiens focus on the recommendation for responsible government, rather than on Durham's anti-French sentiments. Parent believed that reformers in the two Canadas could use responsible government both to protect the rights of French Canadians and bring about educational, religious and agricultural changes to Lower Canada. He believed that the Canadiens had to take advantage of industrialization and commerce in order to strengthen their culture. His arguments were opposed by the Catholic Church and the traditionalists, but



Etienne Parent

they would influence reformers like Louis-Hippolyte LaFontaine [see page 63] and play a major role in the achievement of responsible government in Canada.

The remedy for the local executives [Executive Councils] . . . in all the Colonies, has two prime recommendations, being perfectly *simple* and eminently *British*. It is to let the *majority* and not the *minority* govern, and compel every Governor to select his advisors from those who *enjoy the confidence of the people*, and can *command a majority in the popular* [elected legislative] *branch*.

The Family Compact in Upper Canada reacted negatively to Durham's report. They feared the results if both union of the Canadas and responsible government were adopted. R.B. Sullivan, a member of the Family Compact, summed up this negative reaction in 1839:

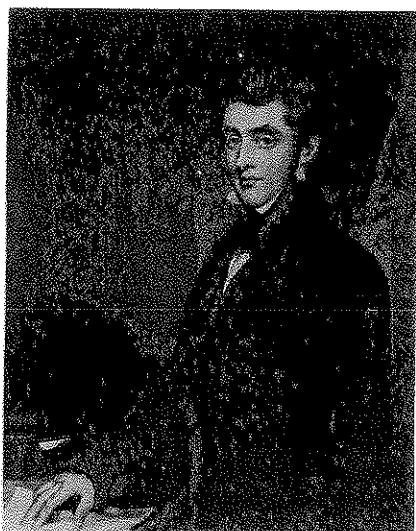
It is said . . . the Union . . . would give a decided [advantage] to the British party in the Legislature.

The proposition for a union of the provinces is . . . founded on a fallacy—a supposed [agreement] of purpose among the whole British population. But the fact is otherwise. The population of Upper Canada is divided into political parties. . . . American political agitation has infected many of them with republicanism, and with notions of politics inconsistent with colonial dependence. . . . If then this democratic party were to have even partial success in the Upper Canada elections there would be two contending parties amongst the British representation in the United Legislature.

The French Canadians have shown that they are united as a party . . . they will unquestionably unite themselves with the one of the British parties which will undertake the most for them. The democratic party being the weakest in the British representation will unquestionably undertake anything for the sake of gaining French support. . . .

A Solution Tried

From Lord Durham's Report to the Act of Union



Lord Sydenham was considered one of the ablest administrators sent from Britain to North America. He was experienced both as a politician and as a businessperson. He arrived in Lower Canada in October 1839 and died in September 1841 as a result of a fall from a horse.

The British government of 1839 was not yet ready to grant responsible government to its North American colonies. The colonial secretary, Lord Russell, believed strongly in the principle that a colony was different from a nation. Responsible government was unacceptable to him. With responsible government, the British-appointed governor of a colony would have to follow the advice of an Assembly elected by the colonists. This advice might differ from the advice the British government wished the governor to follow. Russell felt that, in all colonial matters, the wishes of the British government were more important than the desires of the colonists.

As a result of Russell's strong views, the British government rejected Durham's recommendation calling for responsible government. But, it did accept the recommendation calling for union of the two Canadas. A single colony, or province, would be created from Upper and Lower Canada. Upper Canada would be known as Canada West and Lower Canada as Canada East. The new province would assume the debts of each colony as a single debt. There would be one elected Legislative Assembly in which each of the Canadas would have equal representation. This measure was adopted because representation by population would have created a Canadian majority in the Assembly.

Charles Poulett Thompson, soon to be known as Baron Sydenham, arrived in the Canadas as their new governor general. He was charged with the responsibility of gaining approval for the proposed union from both Upper and Lower Canada.

When Sydenham travelled to Lower Canada, the proposed Act of Union was enthusiastically received there by the British minority. For them, the union would serve to put the rebellious Canadiens in their place. It would also encourage English commerce and industry at the expense of the traditional Canadian way of life based on

farming and the fur trade. The *Gazette*, a Montreal English newspaper, editorialized that literacy in English, not property, should be the requirement of anyone seeking the right to vote in the united colony.

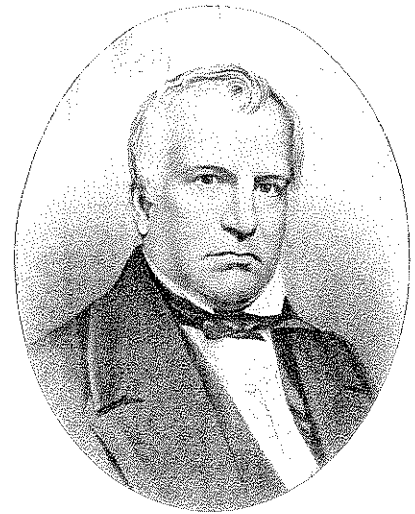
Faced with such anti-French bigotry, Canadien moderates who had supported Lord Durham's recommendations for responsible government actively opposed the Act of Union. The Catholic Church joined in this opposition.

These concerns were ignored by Sydenham, who then travelled to Toronto to seek the endorsement of the Upper Canadians for the proposed union. Despite the strong objections of the Family Compact, the Tory-dominated Assembly gave the idea overwhelming approval. It had been persuaded to do so by Sydenham's promise of a British loan that would cover the combined debts of the two colonies. Reformers in the Upper Canadian Assembly also supported the proposal. As Sullivan had anticipated, they foresaw the possibility of an alliance with reform-minded Canadien legislators to bring about responsible government. The legislators of Upper Canada did insist on two changes to the proposed Act. First, the capital of the United Province was to be located at Kingston, halfway between Montreal and Toronto. Second, English was to be the only official language of the colony.

The Act of Union was approved by the British Parliament in July 1840. Royal proclamation of the Act followed in February 1841. Apart from creating a single colony, the Act of Union brought little change to the government of the Canadas. The structure of government established under the Constitutional Act of 1791 was maintained. There was still a governor appointed by the British government, his Executive Council and an elected Assembly. Now, however, there would be only one such government for both the Canadas.

No rebellion greeted passage of the Act of Union, despite French-Canadian opposition to it. Rioting broke out in the Canadas during the election of 1841, but as mob violence was a common feature of voting during this period, the riots created few concerns. Instead, reformers in both Canada West and Canada East set out to find ways of working together toward the achievement of responsible government.

1. How did the Act of Union change, and not change, the government of the Canadas?
2. Why did some Canadien leaders oppose the Act of Union?



Louis-Hippolyte LaFontaine strongly opposed the combining of the debts of Upper and Lower Canada into a single debt. Lower Canada owed almost nothing while Upper Canada owed about £1 000 000, or over £2 for every man, woman and child (approximately one week's wages for an average laborer in 1840).

Lord Elgin and the Rebellion Losses Bill

As these changes were taking place, Metcalfe retired as governor because of ill health. The Liberal government in Britain named Lord Elgin as his successor in January 1847. Elgin was Durham's son-in-law. Like Durham, Lord Elgin was strongly committed to a more democratic system of government for the colonies. So, too, was the new colonial secretary, Lord Grey, Durham's brother-in-law. Grey instructed Elgin to introduce responsible government as soon as possible.

In the 1848 election in the Canadas, the Reformers won a large majority in the Assembly. Elgin immediately called upon Baldwin and LaFontaine to form a government and to name the members of the Executive Council. Like the prime minister in Britain, they selected these members from their own party in the Assembly. The Executive Council, with the approval of the Assembly, would shape government policy. Responsible government appeared to have been achieved in the Canadas.

The real test of responsible government would come when the colonial government took an action of which the governor disapproved. If the governor overruled the measure, there was no real responsible government. If he granted the act Royal Assent despite his objections, responsible government had been truly achieved.

The first such test came in 1849, with the passage of the Rebellion Losses Bill by the Assembly. This bill provided compensation for persons who had suffered property damage during the rebellion of 1837-1838. Most of the people were Canadiens who had not taken part in the rebellions. However, some of the persons to be compensated were rebels whose property had been destroyed by the British. For this reason, the Tory opposition in the Assembly bitterly opposed the bill. Elgin himself was known not to favor it. Like the Tories, he did not think it right that people who had rebelled against the colonial government a dozen years earlier should now be compensated by the government. The question was whether Elgin would sign the bill into law. Despite threats against his life, he did sign it, on the grounds that responsible government required him to follow the advice of his Executive Council. Responsible government had passed its first test.

THE MONTREAL RIOTS, 1849

Elgin's signing of the Rebellion Losses Bill led to a violent protest and riots by Tories in Montreal. The capital of the Canadas had been moved to Montreal from Kingston in 1844. It was there that Elgin resided and there that he signed the controversial bill. Reverend William Rufus Seaver, a shopkeeper and Congregational minister, was an eyewitness to the riots. He wrote the following account of them in his diary:

Business is terrible *dull* and nothing is now talked about but a *republican government*. Today the Govn [Governor] came to town on horseback... went home about 3 o'clock... and came again to town attended by his officers and a Guard more than usually numerous. What is this all about? was at once the inquiry... It was rumoured that the Bill indemnifying the Rebellion losses was now to be sanctioned... on the report spreading through town (which it did like wildfire) an immense mob assembled and surrounded [sic] the Parliament house to see what his Excellency [Elgin] intended to

do—when it was finally announced that he had really given the Royal Sanction to the Bill, then there was *trouble*—as his Excellency left the House for his carriage at the door he was assailed with stones, clubs, & rotten & good eggs by thousands, and he was struck in the face with an egg, his carriage windows broken etc. but by the speed of his horses he was enabled to escape with no injury except to his carriage and his equipage—I stop here for the cry is raised that the *Parliament House* is on fire—fire—fire is the cry—and from my shop door I see the red flames light up the Heavens—I go—more after I see what the row is—

...about 8 o'clock [in the evening] while Parliament was still sitting a mob (it can be called nothing else tho' composed of some of our most worthy citizens) assembled around the House, and commenced the destruction of the building, by breaking windows etc. Soon the doors were broken open and a stout fellow sprang into the speakers chair with the exclamation, "*I dissolve Parliament.*" This was the Signal—and immediately in the face of the members, and an immense

multitude of spectators the Gas Pipes were fired in a dozen places, and the building wrapped in flames. ... All was lost, nothing saved, and the structure now is but a heap of smoking ruins.

