

Galt, then member for Sherbrooke in the provincial assembly, advocated, both in and out of Parliament, the confederation of all the British North American provinces, with such effect that the Cartier-Macdonald Government, formed a few months later, in which he was included, despatched a mission to England to sound the Imperial authorities upon the subject. They were informed that only one colony besides Canada had expressed any opinion in regard thereto, and that until the other provinces had made known their sentiments, Her Majesty's Ministers would be acting prematurely in authorizing, without any previous knowledge of their views, a meeting of delegates which might commit them to a preliminary step towards the settlement of a momentous question, to the principle of which the colonies had not signified their assent. On the return of the Canadian delegates, the governments of the Maritime Provinces were put in possession of all the proceedings which had taken place; but a change of ministry in England occurring shortly afterwards, nothing more was heard on the subject for some years.

Goldwin Smith has observed, in one of those epigrammatic sentences with which his writings abound, that the parent of Confederation was deadlock, and it is not to be doubted that to the difficulty of administration, owing in large measure to the sectional antagonism between Upper and Lower Canada, is due the impetus given to the scheme of union on the defeat of the second Taché-Macdonald Ministry in June, 1864. The coalition of 1854 between the followers of Hincks and Baldwin, the Conservative party of Upper Canada, and a large majority of the Lower Canadian members, enabled Macdonald and Cartier to carry on the government for eight years, though with ever-increasing difficulty and diminishing support. In 1862 they fell, and for a brief period John Sandfield Macdonald reigned in their stead. His tenure was still more precarious than that of his predecessors, who two years later returned to office, though not to power, only to suffer defeat within a few weeks of their accession. Thus was the *impasse* reached. Inasmuch as two general elections had taken place within three years, a further appeal to the people offered no prospect of relieving the deadlock which threatened to render all government in Canada impossible. It was at this crisis that George Brown, the leader of the Reform party in Upper Canada, patriotically offered his co-operation towards settling forever the constitutional difficulties between Upper and Lower Canada. He was met by Messrs. Macdonald, Cartier and Galt, and their deliberations resulted in a compact to form a coalition government for the purpose of negotiating a confederation of all the British North American provinces, failing which they undertook to promote the adoption of the federal principle for Canada alone, pending the accomplishment of the larger union. On that understanding Messrs. George Brown, Oliver Mowat, and William McDougall, leading members of the Opposition, entered the Cabinet of which Sir Etienne Taché was the head, and of which John A. Macdonald and George Cartier were leading members.

Meanwhile, a somewhat similar movement was taking form in the Maritime Provinces which, with the exception of Newfoundland,