
NOT YET PUBLISHED, COMING SOON

PLEDGE
FROM
**ALEXANDER
GALT**



TO THE
**ENGLISH-SPEAKING
MEMBERS OF
LOWER CANADA**

The Vote on Confederation

The Canadian Gleaner

March 17, 1865



*(Scan QR code to view the primary document
from which this material is sourced)*

It may seem strange that after the Prince Edward Island declaring she will have nothing to do with Confederation, New Brunswick returning a majority of members hostile to it, Nova Scotia making it an open question, and Newfoundland postponing its consideration until a new Parliament shall be returned in the course of a twelvemonth, that our Government should push it to a vote. Men of common sense may ask, What is the use of passing a scheme of Confederation when nobody will confederate with us? But they will ask in vain. All that we at present know is, that on Friday night last, 91 members of our Parliament declared themselves in favour of tearing Upper and Lower Canada asunder, of building a railroad that will never pay, and of uniting ourselves with Provinces from which we can expect no benefit. With this vote in their pockets, George Brown and Cartier will go to England, and on the strength of it, will probably induce that Imperial Government to draw up a constitution for us, which will provide for a federal union of the Canadas in the meantime, with liberty to the Lower Provinces to come in when they please. A federal union would be an improvement on Confederation in a pecuniary view, but as it would involve the separation of the Canadas, it would be equally objectionable to the Protestants of our section.

If there was any use in doing so, we might deplore the fatuity of our representatives in voting for Confederation. From a combination of circumstances, which no one could possibly have foreseen a year ago, it has been carried. The Upper Canadian members voted for it because it was the measure of their leader, George Brown, and because they believed it would free them from French domination; the French members voted for it, because it was the scheme of their leader, and because by it they were to have the management of the whole affairs of Lower Canada thrown into their hands. The *Toronto Globe*, in commenting on the vote says:

“To one set of writers [in Lower Canada] it was given to prove that Confederation would

ruin the French Canadians, and oppress in the most tyrannical way all adherents of the Romish Church. To another set it was given to prove that the English speaking and Protestant people of Lower Canada were the parties to be ruined,” and from this contradiction it deduces the conclusion that there could be truth in the allegations of neither party. The fact is that the large number of French members who voted *against* the scheme proves that the fears of the Lower Canada Protestants are well-founded. What made Perrault and his countrymen vote against Confederation? Was it not, because they did not think Confederation gave them enough of power in Lower Canada? All the difference between the French members who voted for Confederation of those who voted against it, is this: those who voted for it thought they got enough, that “their laws, institutions, and religion “were made sufficiently safe; those who voted against it, wanted still more. It was from no enlightened policy the French members (we should except the two Dorions) voted either for or against Confederation; the same narrow minded ideas of self-interest actuated both sides.

As for the English-speaking Lower Canada members who voted with the majority we will say little. They one and all voted against the wishes of the majority of their constituents. We need not say how bitterly we regret seeing Mr. Somerville casting his vote in such company and for such a measure. That he did so conscientiously, and honestly thought he was acting for the good of his constituents, we readily believe, but we are as assuredly convinced that he acted wrong and laboured under a grave error of judgement. That he may soon see his error and retrieve must be the desire of all his well-wishers. It is but fair towards M. Somerville to state that before the vote was taken he extorted from the Ministry a guarantee that many of the rights of the Protestants of Lower Canada (including education) should be respected under Confederation. We long ago expressed our conviction of the utter worthlessness of paper guarantees to people under our circumstances. It will be a

deplorable day for the Protestants of Lower Canada when their rights will depend solely on the forbearance of the French majority and on half a dozen written guarantees.

Le Pays

August 12, 1865



(Scan QR code to view the primary document from which this material is sourced)

--Nous donnons à nos lecteurs l'analyse de la lettre de l'hon. M. Galt, do notre correspondant.

Le 2 mars 1865 MM. Pope, Sommerville, Webb, Knight, Wright, Ottawa, Abbott et Rose écrivirent à M. Galt ministre des finances, comme représentant dans le cabinet la population anglaise du Bas-Canada pour lui demander certaines garanties pour cette partie de la population dans le cas où la confédération des provinces aurait lieu.

Ces demandes avaient trait aux limites des comtés et des municipalités, à la loi des écoles, et ils demandaient aussi à ce qu'il fut permis aux municipalités de comtés et de townships, d'acheter à un prix nominal toutes les terres publiques qui se trouveraient dans leurs territoires afin de pouvoir les revendre et les établir.

Le 7 mars 1865, M. Galt au nom du gouvernement accuse réception de cette lettre dans une réponse dont voici la substance.

10. La constitution locale pourvoira à ce qu'il n'y ait aucun changement dans les limites des comtés actuellement représentés par des députés d'origine anglaise (English speaking representatives) sans un vote de ceux dus représentants de ces comtés qui seront présents.

APPENDIX F: GALT'S PLEDGE TO LOWER CANADA

2o. Les limites des municipalités dans ces comtés ne pourront être changées que conformément à la loi générale des municipalités du Bas-Canada.

3o. Il y a aura des dispositions dans les amendements qui seront proposés à la loi des écoles pour assurer aux protestants du Bas-Canada le contrôle sur leur système d'éducation. Le gouvernement n'est pas prêt à dire si ce sera au moyen de changements dans le conseil d'instruction publique, ou autrement, ou tel que suggéré en établissant un département distinct pour un surintendant de l'éducation pour les protestants. Il serait peut être nécessaire de combiner ensemble ces deux moyens. Les dissidents pourraient réunir leurs taxes pour le soutien de leurs écoles, mais il ne serait pas permis à des dissidents isolément de disposer de leurs cotisations pour les écoles en faveur de districts éloignés avec lesquels ils n'auraient aucun rapport. Les cotisations payables par les corporations seraient divisées entre les écoles communes et les écoles dissidentes dans la même proportion que l'octroi législatif.

4o. Le gouvernement ne voit aucune objection à ce que les municipalités de townships et de comtés achètent les terres publiques situées dans leurs limites respectives aux prix qui seront fixés entre elles et le gouvernement ; mais cela ne peut être qu'à la condition que les municipalités devront les vendre à tout acheteur indistinctement.

The Protestant Minority of Lower Canada in a Bad, but not Hopeless Condition

Montreal Witness

August 23, 1865



(Scan QR code to view the primary document from which this material is sourced)

The Legislature has been in session but a few days, and already the position of the Protestant members of Lower Canada who have joined the coalition is no longer the same,—it is very essentially altered; it has become a false one, and untenable for men of

power and principle. When the scheme of Confederation was first proposed to them, they felt, and the Protestant community felt with them, that it would be suicidal for the Lower Canada minority to support a scheme that placed them at the mercy of a Roman Catholic and French majority. Yet the votes of these members were indispensable to carry the scheme, since nearly the half of the French members had refused to join the coalition. In this emergency the support of seven Protestant members from Lower Canada was secured by a secret written pledge, given to them in behalf of the Ministry by Mr. Galt. By a very timely indiscretion, this written pledge has been placed in the hands of Mr. Dorion, and by him publicly exposed.

The secret agreement refers to four guarantees tendered to the Protestant minority of Canada, and which are summed up as follows:—

"1st. No change in the constituencies of English-speaking members unless on a vote of two-thirds of the latter. —

2. The limits of several municipalities within said counties will be changed by executive interference, but only according to law. —

3rd. These municipalities will be permitted to acquire the crown lands within their limits at a nominal price, provided they resell them without distinction to every purchaser. —

4th. The school system of Lower Canada will be remodelled, so as to give Protestants the control of their own schools, and system of education. The government does not pledge themselves, however, to any particular means of reaching this end, which may be by a change in the council for public instruction, by the appointment of a Protestant Superintendent, or otherwise. The dissentients of different municipalities will be allowed to unite their taxes for the support of their schools. Isolated dissentients, however, will not be allowed to send their taxes to support a school far removed from them."

We take the above statement from the organ of Mr. Dorion, *Le Pays*, because an incorrect version has been published in the English papers, omitting some of the checks with which the guarantees were provided, thus giving too much scope to the latter. For instance, it will be

seen that a Protestant Superintendent of education was not positively promised, but only mentioned as possible, and that the right of the townships to monopolize public lands, for the benefit of a certain class, was not only not granted, but expressly excepted.

It was on the strength of these secret pledges of this written guarantee, under the signature of Mr. Galt, that seven Protestant members from Lower Canada agreed to support the Ministry and their Confederation scheme. By exacting such pledges, these gentlemen fully acknowledged that without them the Confederation scheme was not acceptable to the Protestant minority; that it was not a safe constitution for them to accept; and that their interest and duty would be to oppose it. This is the very ground which the Protestant independent press of Lower Canada has taken from the beginning; and it is very refreshing to find that there were Protestant members from Lower Canada who secretly thought precisely the same, although openly giving their support to the government, and to their pet scheme. But they had guarantees of which their constituents knew nothing, and that made their conscience easy. Their apparently inconsistent excuse was afterwards to be explained at the polls, when they could triumphantly point to the success of their secret negotiations.

But now all this subtle arrangement is destroyed. The secret letter has been made public, and its effect has been a crushing reaction against the rights and the claims of the Protestant minority. The French Canadians of all parties are unanimous in protesting against these guarantees, and pledging themselves not to observe a single one of them. Mr. Cauchon has indignantly committed himself to vote against every one of these concessions. *Le Canadien* looks at them as only a successful trick played on some Protestants members in order to secure their co-operation, and without which, the scheme, not commanding a majority from Lower Canada, would have fallen through. The *Courrier* and other French papers protest more vigorously still. The *Minerve*

alone keeps silent, because that organ of Mr. Cartier regrets to see the trick prematurely exploded, and deems it imprudent to awake the Protestant spirit of Lower Canada by saying that none of the secret guarantees will ever be allowed to pass in the constitution. As to the French opposition press, they are more violent still in denouncing every one of these concessions to Protestants. They do not see in it only a trick of the Ministry, but a treason. They clamor that their nationality and their religion are ruined if any of these pledges are granted, and they agree to vote down every one of them. Even the provision of Mr. Galt that the lands would be sold indiscriminately to all comers fails to satisfy the *Pays*, because if the settlers are a Protestant corporation they can adhere to the letter of the law, but evade the spirit by telling all sorts of lies to turn off Catholic applicants for a lot of land.

The net result of this secret diplomacy becomes very apparent, and it is that the Protestants of Lower Canada are placed now, through the indiscreet action of their ministerial representatives, in a far more precarious position than at any previous time. If the Confederation scheme carry, they will be sacrificed and put in a much tighter place than if no attempt had been made to secure their rights privately and by double dealing. The abortive attempt leaves behind two most unfortunate results; viz., the mistrust of the Catholic majority, which will suspect everything in connection with Lower Canada Protestants, and the determined hostility caused by irritation, which will prevent all generous dealing with the minority, and lead to cutting down their just demands.

But what will the members who have lost their pledges do? Can they possibly be infatuated with the notion that there is still some virtue lingering in the written guarantees of Mr. Galt? The Catholics of Lower Canada are a unit in protesting that they will not allow one of them to pass into the local constitution. The Protestant members find themselves where they were before the pledge was given, or rather still farther off from the security they

deemed indispensable to their constituents. Under these circumstances, only one honorable course is open to them,--either to exact from the coalition a new pledge, not secret, but public, written and well-defined; or else to withdraw altogether from the coalition. The fate of the Confederation scheme rests now entirely with the Protestant members from Lower Canada, for the Catholics of that section are almost equally divided. They command the situation; there is yet time for them to break down the obnoxious scheme, and substitute for it that of Representation by Population, which alone offers to their constituents a sufficient guarantee. Whatever course they adopt, a heavy responsibility rests upon them; may they prove themselves equal to it.

Those Guarantees

The Canadian Gleaner

August 25, 1865



(Scan QR code to view the primary document from which this material is sourced)

On Wednesday week, for the second time this session, the letter of guarantees which Mr. Somerville and other English-speaking L.C. members procured from the Ministry, came up in discussion. What was said during the two debate docs not tend to increase our estimation of the value of those guarantees. The way Mr. Galt and his colleagues tried to conceal all the circumstances connected with the document, does not speak much for their sincerity. If Cartier & Co. honestly intended to carry out the pledges of their letter, they would not try to keep it out of sight

on the plea that it is "confidential." But they did not give the letter with the intention of fulfilling its conditions. They have no intention of doing justice to the Protestants of Lower Canada. The object they wanted to attain by giving the letter was to get the votes of the members for the Eastern Townships and to make the Protestants of Lower Canada believe their rights were to be respected under Confederation. They have gained their point so far as the votes are concerned, but there are very few people indeed in the Townships who are willing to accept a "confidential" letter as sufficient guarantee for their rights.

The guarantees in the letter are not very ample nor very explicit, yet such as they are they have aroused the hostility of the French. The guarantees are as follows:--

"1st. No change in the constituencies of English-speaking members unless on a vote of two-thirds of the latter. —

2nd. The limits of the several municipalities within said counties will be changed by executive interference, but only according to law. —

3rd. These municipalities will be permitted to acquire the crown lands within their limits at a nominal price, provided they re-sell them without distinction to every purchaser. —

4th. The school system of Lower Canada will be remodelled, so as to give Protestants the control of their own schools, and system of education."

Nobody would thank Cartier and his friends if they really intended to give those guarantees, for they could not have offered less. Still, unsatisfactory as they are to us, the whole French press protests against granting them. The *Montreal Witness* says:--

"The French Canadians of all parties are unanimous in protesting against these guarantees, and pledging themselves not to observe a single one of them. Mr. Cauchon has indignantly committed himself to vote against every one of these concessions. *Le Canadien* looks at them as only a successful trick played on some Protestants members in order to secure their co-operation, and without which, the scheme, not commanding a majority from Lower Canada, would have fallen through. The *Courrier* and other French papers protest more vigorously still. The *Minerve* alone keeps silent, because that organ of Mr. Cartier regrets to

see the trick prematurely exploded, and deems it imprudent to awake the Protestant spirit of Lower Canada by saying that none of the secret guarantees will ever be allowed to pass in the constitution. As to the French opposition press, they are more violent still in denouncing every one of these concessions to Protestants. They do not see in it only a trick of the Ministry, but a treason. They clamor that their nationality and their religion are ruined if any of these pledges are granted, and they agree to vote down every one of them. Even the provision of Mr. Galt that the lands would be sold indiscriminately to all comers fails to satisfy the *Pays*, because if the settlers are a Protestant corporation they can adhere to the letter of the law, but evade the spirit by telling all sorts of lies to turn off Catholic applicants for a lot of land."

Such is the reception of these paltry concessions by the French; they will take everything but give nothing. The old intolerant spirit, which before the Conquest would not allow a native to become a Protestant, is still active. Can the English-speaking people of Lower Canada entrust themselves to a Government of such men? Men who will not now give even the guarantees defined in this "confidential" letter. From the moment the Upper Canada members withdraw from the House, will our desires be listened to or our wants consulted? Let our present Constitution be done away with, and let that of the Confederation scheme take its place, and the Protestants of Lower Canada need no longer say that they live under a representative government. We will be placed exactly in the same position that the Protestants of Ireland were under James the Second. The only measure that will do justice to us and the French alike, is a thorough union with Upper Canada on the basis of Representation by Population. No guarantees whatever can compare with the presence of Upper Canada members in the House and no Union with New Brunswick and Nova Scotia can ever be of as much advantage to the whole of Lower Canada as a through Union with the Western Province.