

Between the Devil and the Deep Blue Sea?
Union Prospects and Deliberative Debate in Nova Scotia's Public Sphere, 1863-1864

by

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Abstract

This thesis explores Nova Scotia's 1863-1864 public union debates and examines the roles of political liberalism and loyalism in the colony's deliberative public sphere. It argues that these debates were thematically broad, deliberative and sophisticated. The costs and benefits of political union were examined and effective argumentation determined the positions of open-minded and receptive individuals. Though shaped largely by the colonial elite, the debates provide a meaningful example of deliberative democracy in action. Multiple schemes were considered as colonials simultaneously deliberated the consequences of a regional Maritime variant, alongside the wider B.N.A. scheme. Contrary to conventional scholarly wisdom, evidence suggests that a spirited and meaningful assessment of union prospects was indeed had by the colony's leading citizens. It further indicates that rather than being brandished as conservative and parochial, these deliberative colonists should be appreciated as executors of reflective agency, arbiters of public opinion and sponsors of the people's sovereignty.

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Chapter One: Introduction

The improvement of understanding is for two ends: first, our own increase of knowledge; secondly, to enable us to deliver that knowledge to others.

–John Locke¹

* * * * *

Imagine if you will that the executive directors of a large company have called a staff meeting. Rather than the usual affair however, this get-together is intended to host a consultative and deliberative debate on potential schemes for corporate merger. A number of unification scenarios exist, and will have to be considered. The company could unite with a handful of regional competitors, or join in a larger conglomerate. It could amalgamate entirely, or maintain any number of independent organs. It is everyone's hope that this symposium will consider the prospects in principle, thoroughly and carefully, for these are significant questions. The assembly's decisions will impact the business in immeasurable ways. All could be affected: salaries, working conditions, its mandate, values, identity and institutions, as well as the businesses' size and scope, and its involvement in the community. The meeting is open to all the company's employees. Anyone, at least in theory, is able and encouraged to participate in the debate. Unfortunately however, there are segments of the workforce that will not be attending. Employees, who, for example, cannot afford to dedicate the time or those who are thought to lack the requisite knowledge or experience to contribute to the dialogue, will likely be absent. A rather large subsection of the workforce falls into this second category and, though not explicitly excluded from the debate, will be discouraged from participating.

¹ This quote is drawn from John Locke, *Some Thoughts Concerning Reading and Study for a Gentleman*, (1689).

In reality, the meeting is likely to comprise the corporation's executive, its middle management and most of its more highly educated employees. Regardless, it should be a considerable enough gathering to stimulate substantive and meaningful debate. In smaller groups, employees have already begun to discuss the questions at hand. Everyone knows that there are competing visions for the company's future. A number of rival interests and the varied topics for consideration should naturally produce a spirited and evocative debate. The company's executives are among those who hope for this sort of well-developed dialogue. They realize that a happy workforce is a productive workforce and that, should the wrong decision be made, it could lead to a great deal of dissatisfaction and division. Inherent in their corporate philosophy is the notion that a business is little more than its employees and therefore, in this way, the employees are collectively sovereign. If the entire workforce left the company, what would it be left with? There are those outside the corporation who doubt its ability to host an open and transparent debate, one of depth and substance. They question whether necessary conditions exist for this sort of deliberative dialogue to naturally manifest. Despite these detractors, the interchange exists as it has been described: open, genuine, deliberative, thematically broad and sophisticated. The fundamental argument of this paper is that the sort of dynamic just described, depicts (in both essence and substance) the political union dialogue hosted within Nova Scotia's newspapers, and throughout the colony's public sphere. In 1863 and 1864, before the specific structures of the Quebec Resolutions were introduced, this was precisely the sort of exchange that occurred.²

² Approximately 2,000 contemporary newspaper articles were examined for this thesis.

The public sphere, to which this thesis will regularly refer, is defined as the intellectual space where private individuals could, in the eighteenth- and nineteenth-centuries, render opinion on matters of collective interest.³ Within this space, the colonial elite were able to discuss topics that they read, saw or otherwise experienced, and which elicited their insight or commentary. Aided by the contemporary growth of the print industry, the public sphere came increasingly to be accessed by way of the printed word.⁴ Though never exclusively contained by well-circulated publications, as conventional meeting places like shops and taverns continued to serve as points of contact, printed contributions were, most certainly by the mid-nineteenth-century, the most popular manner of access.⁵ The reach, breadth, speed of circulation and accessibility of newspapers and magazines contributed to the formation of a wider and more inclusive public sphere. Today, these periodicals allow historians to access the public spheres of years past, and provide insight into the thoughts, attitudes, concerns and debates that occupied the minds of their contributors.

The public sphere was constituted almost entirely by men who belonged to the majority ethnicity and religion of their respective states. Participants also required the maintenance of suitable economic means, to ensure their continued access to newspapers and thus, to information and opinion.⁶ The “bourgeois public sphere,” was first described

³ James Van Horn Melton, *The Rise of the Public in Enlightenment Europe* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2001). For a good introduction to Habermas and the public sphere, see also Craig Calhoun, *Habermas and the Public Sphere* (Cambridge: MIT Press, 1992).

⁴ Ibid, 1.

⁵ Ibid.

⁶ Ibid, 3.

by Jürgen Habermas in his 1962 study, *Structural Transformation of the Public Sphere*.⁷ Unfortunately, delayed translation of the text kept it from any academic discourse not conducted in the German language. It was translated first into French only in 1978 and then into English in 1989.⁸ A philosopher, Habermas sought to determine the conditions under which rational, free and deliberative discussion of public issues first became possible. He appreciated the “bourgeois public sphere” as a communicative space where print culture, sociability and public involvement in political dialogue made discussion and debate more accessible. Though limited still by sex, class and creed, the public sphere, according to Habermas, preserved a relative openness and equality that had rarely existed before its construction. As mass consumerism emerged in the late nineteenth and early twentieth-century, the public sphere faded from existence.⁹

European consumerism made cultural products increasingly accessible to individuals of wealth, regardless of their social rank, and thus contributed to early conceptions of “the public.”¹⁰ The public was contingent on the modern nation-state that consolidated from the late middle ages and on the development of society as a construct distinct from the state. As governments conscripted force and violence as monopolies of state power, society, according to Habermas, emerged to capture the realm of private interest and activity. Over time, these incipient counterweights to state authority grew to

⁷ Jürgen Habermas, *Structural Transformation of the Public Sphere: An Inquiry into a Category of Bourgeois Society* (Cambridge: MIT Press, 1989).

⁸ Van Horn Melton, *The Rise of the Public*, 3-4. For the French translation, see Jürgen Habermas, *L'espace public. Archéologie de la publicité comme dimension constitutive de la société bourgeoise* (Paris: Payot, 1978).

⁹ Van Horn Melton. *The Rise of the Public*, 2-4.

¹⁰ *Ibid*, 5.

become what we would recognize as civil society.¹¹ Habermas also contended that the rise of capitalism was required for the evolution of the bourgeois public sphere, as it further separated society from the state. Society gained autonomy and agency through the expansion of local, national and international markets and through advanced means of transportation. In addition to the greater exchange of goods, these factors widened networks of communication through which increased streams of information could flow.¹² In turn, greater demands for information further strengthened its transnational delivery.¹³

In the eighteenth-century, the popularity of the novel contributed to the commodification of literature, which along with the propagation of luxury resorts, theatres and general entertainment, came to define growing networks of sociability as characteristic of the era's enlightenment. Together, proponents of sociability, who maintained the economic means necessary for requisite activity, came to embody "the public" as an identifiable entity that was sovereign over matters of popular interest.¹⁴ In politics, the public maintained a certain agency that was recognized by virtually all of Europe's political elite.¹⁵ As the market continued to replace the conventional household as the central location of production and exchange, and because administrative duties were likewise being relocated away from the home, bourgeois notions of the private

¹¹ Ibid, 5-6.

¹² Ibid, 5.

¹³ On knowledge, information and transnationalism, see Samuel Moyn and Andrew Sartori, *Global Intellectual History* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2013).

¹⁴ Van Horn Melton, *The Rise of the Public*, 7-8. See also Mona Ozouf, "Public Opinion' at the End of the Old Regime," *Journal of Modern History*, 60 (1988): 9-13.

¹⁵ Even the absolute monarch Louis XVI recognized the strength of the public voice. He once wrote, "I must always consult public opinion, it is never wrong." John Hardman, *French Politics 1774-1789: From the Accession of Louis XVI to the Fall of the Bastille* (London: Longman Press, 1995), 232.

family, as an outlet for personal affection, firmly took root. In order to maintain the protected sphere of the bourgeois family, one required adequate financial means and property. A belief in the necessity of wealth possession for continued access to the private sphere became an increasingly accepted ideal of bourgeois society. These trends, argued Habermas, account for the nineteenth-century contradiction between values of openness, egalitarianism and equality, which were espoused by contemporary liberalism, and the de facto exclusion of individuals thought to lack the economic means, education or status to effectively participate within the public sphere.¹⁶

In order to maintain the open and deliberative character of the public sphere, its moderators were required to embrace three assumptions. Firstly, that reason and not authority or identity determined the value of argumentation and the course of debate. The public sphere offered inclusive membership where one gained admission through education and his ability to engage in effective debate rather than his social status. The second assumption was that no topic was beyond the bounds of critique. Everything remained subject to scrutiny: literature, art, music, politics, religion and even the actions of individual politicians and clergymen.¹⁷ The third and final principle held that secrecy and mystery, as the enemies of openness and publicity, were inconsistent with the health and well-being of the sphere and thus of society.¹⁸ The chief purpose of the public sphere was to host rational and deliberative debate on all matters of the public interest. It was only through collective deliberation that the people's judgement and opinion could be

¹⁶ Van Horn Melton, *The Rise of the Public*, 7-8.

¹⁷ On music and the public sphere, see James H. Johnson, *Listening in Paris A Cultural History* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1996). On art and the public sphere, see Thomas E. Crow, *Painters and Public Life in Eighteenth-Century Paris* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1985).

¹⁸ Van Horn Melton, *The Rise of the Public*, 8.

determined and advocated, in order to advance rational and responsible government. Equally, this uncensored forum where informed individuals could exchange thought and opinion was thought, by the sphere's contributors, to be the best method for securing individual liberty and justice. This precise ideology permitted and indeed encouraged the sophisticated, nuanced and deliberative debate hosted on the questions of political union in Nova Scotia and throughout British North America.

Returning to the business meeting model presented at this chapter's introduction, readers may find that certain distinct parallels lead to the analogy's expediency in conceptualizing the union debates. One may consider the business itself as Nova Scotian society as a whole. The executives are the politicians and newspapermen that organized and often participated in the debates of the public sphere.¹⁹ The meeting equates to the bourgeois public sphere within which relevant deliberative and sophisticated dialogue was exchanged. The attendant employees reflect the sphere's members, while those discouraged from participation including women, racialized minorities and the uneducated and less wealthy white men of Nova Scotian society, are likewise represented by those employees who were either unable to participate or who were discouraged from partaking in the exchanges of the corporate gathering.

In addition to both hosting and moderating the public dialogue, newspapermen of the day were among its greatest contributors. Editors and publishers with varying views and opinions sanctioned the sort of widespread debate that this thesis maintains took place within the colony's public sphere. The type, depth and breadth of the subjects to be considered at the analogous business gathering, mirror the variety of questions and

¹⁹ For a list of newspapers and their editors discussed in this study, see Appendix A.

consequences pondered by Nova Scotia's bourgeois elite. The corporation's philosophy, one that treasures its employees' freedom and diversity of thought, and which encourages open dialogue, may be compared to a broadly-defined Lockean liberalism that was embraced by contemporary Nova Scotia, and for that matter the North American continent as a whole, from the late eighteenth-century onward. By the start of the pre-resolution Confederation debates, in the early to mid-1860s, the liberal philosophy was sufficiently entrenched in Nova Scotia that the colony may be regarded as a young liberal democracy.²⁰

The business's varied prospects for merger well-reflect the union options under consideration within the public sphere. Participants deliberated, as part of a single and over-arching dialogue, both Maritime and wider British North American unions, whether each should be legislative or federative, and whether both models might be concurrently pursued to the colonies' greatest benefit. Finally, the external detractors who doubt this corporation's ability to host an open and truly deliberative public dialogue may be likened to conventional scholarly wisdom that similarly questions whether Maritime colonists really partook in free, purposeful and significant union debates.²¹

This thesis will investigate each of these features of the debate in turn. Its second chapter seeks to establish an operationalized definition of liberalism, one compatible with historical inquiries of a socio-political and intellectual nature. Utilizing Ian McKay's liberal order framework for its foundational definition, the chapter also draws on more

²⁰ See Danny Samson, *The Spirit of Industry and Improvement: Liberal Government and Rural-Industrial Society, Nova Scotia, 1790-1867* (Montreal & Kingston: McGill-Queens University Press, 2008).

²¹ These scholarly assumptions are discussed in chapters four and five of this thesis.

political aspects of the liberal ideology provided by, among others, Jeffrey McNairn, Janet Ajzenstat, Bruce Curtis, and Jerry Bannister.²² Moreover, Chapter Two considers the extent to which liberalism and loyalism impacted both Nova Scotia's mid-nineteenth-century political culture, and the principal social values that unified members of its bourgeois public sphere.

Chapter Three explores the decades leading up to the pre-resolution Confederation debates.²³ It analyses some of the events, people and features that allowed the colony to develop, by the mid-1860s, into a relatively mature deliberative democracy. These, the building blocks of the public sphere and of any liberal democracy include, for example, the colony's earliest intellectual foundations that were implanted by waves of

²² For some of the most significant sources upon which this chapter draws, see Ian McKay, "The Liberal Order Framework: A Prospectus for a Reconnaissance of Canadian History," *Canadian Historical Review*, 81, no. 4 (2000): 616-651; Jeffrey McNairn, "In Hope and Fear: Intellectual History, Liberalism, and the Liberal Order Framework," *Liberalism and Hegemony: Debating the Canadian Liberal Revolution*, ed. Jean-Francois Constant & Michel Ducharme (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2009); Jeffrey L. McNairn, *The Capacity to Judge: Public Opinion and Deliberative Democracy in Upper Canada, 1791-1854* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2000); Janet Ajzenstat, *The Canadian Founding: John Locke and Parliament* (Montreal & Kingston: McGill-Queens University Press, 2007); Janet Ajzenstat, *Once and Future Canadian Democracy: An Essay in Political Thought* (Montreal & Kingston: McGill-Queens University Press, 2003); Janet Ajzenstat, and Peter J. Smith, *Canada's Origins: Liberal, Tory, or Republican?* (Ottawa: Carleton University Press, 1995); Bruce Curtis, "Liberalisms, Social Theory, and Historical Analysis," *Liberalism and Hegemony: Debating the Canadian Liberal Revolution*, ed. Jean-Francois Constant & Michel Ducharme (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2009); Jerry Bannister, "Canada as Counter-Revolution: The Loyalist Order Framework in Canadian History 1750-1840," *Liberalism and Hegemony: Debating the Canadian Liberal Revolution*, ed. Jean-Francois Constant & Michel Ducharme (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2009).

²³ "Pre-resolution" will refer, throughout this thesis, to the approximately three years that immediately preceded the release of the seventy-two resolutions of the Quebec Conference, when public debate was already a prominent subject of colonial public spheres. For the seventy-two resolutions, see Quebec Conference, October, 1864, "The Quebec Resolutions, October, 1864 (The 72 Resolutions)." Library and Archives Canada, 2005-, accessed June 15, 2014, <http://www.collectionscanada.gc.ca/confederation/023001-7104-e.html>.

immigrants who arrived even before the loyalist influx. Additional contributions, beyond those of the pre-loyalist and loyalist elements, were made by Scottish settlers, the clergy, pious missionaries and the colony's first merchants. Chapter Three also examines elements of Nova Scotia's early literature of knowledge, the Mephibosheth Stepsure and John Young letters, libraries, the mechanic's institute and the intellectual offerings of literary and scientific societies. Finally, and most importantly, it concludes with a survey of Nova Scotia's first publications. Early magazines like the *Acadian* and *Halifax Monthly*, and newspapers that later organized, moderated and participated in the Confederation debates, are considered for their respective contributions to the colony's maturing press. A description of the colony's press landscape as it existed in the years leading up to 1863-1864 completes this analysis.

Chapter Four asserts that the large majority of prospective union consequences were in fact debated and that, in the pre-resolution period, newspapers, rather than standing in support or opposition to the union principle, remained receptive to well-reasoned persuasion. It illustrates how, over these two years, conclusions had yet to be drawn and a truly sophisticated deliberative dialogue was had by the press as part of the public sphere. The chapter also explores the efficacy of historians' efforts to divide and catalogue contemporary Maritimers into pro- and anti-union clusters.²⁴ It argues that categorization not only obscures nuance, but denies the roles of historical contingency and individual agency in the ongoing development of personal and editorial opinion. As such, the chapter asserts that in order to historicise the intricacies and sophistication of the pre-resolution debates, scholars should pursue a more qualitative historical

²⁴ See a discussion of relevant historiography beginning on page 77. See the discussion of historians' tendency toward categorization beginning on page 84.

methodology, one better suited to describe the even-handed reflection, deliberation, reserved judgement and receptiveness of the colonial public sphere. Chapters Four and Five each utilize close textual analyses in order to examine the precise subject matter of Nova Scotia's union debates.²⁵

Prior to moving on, it may be wise to emphasize a vitally significant aspect of the dialogue in question. Deliberation over the varied and often nuanced consequences of potential union were not as some may imagine, debated by distinct and opposing factions. Notions of contingency, open-mindedness and the ability of contemporaries to be persuaded by effective argumentation are central to depicting the debates as they were, and do well, in and of themselves, to illustrate the dialogue. It will not be an objective of this thesis to delineate writers or publications into pro- and anti-confederate camps as prior to the release of the Quebec Resolutions, such groups, if they existed at all, were porous, pliable and disorganized. As a meaningful alternative to categorization, this thesis suggests that so long as opinions were ably articulated and deliberatively assessed, their substantive description, regardless of confliction or contradiction, provides a perfectly, rational, complete and expedient assessment of the dialogue in question. Again, this study affirms that labels like pro-union and anti-confederate are in fact unhelpful, and fail to capture the development of opinion, that was so essential to public contemplations of union in 1863 and 1864.

Chapter Five of this thesis begins with an overview of Maritime union, one of the principle paradigms for corporate merger considered by the elite workforce of the public

²⁵ Jeffrey McNairn's 2000 study provided a valuable sample of this methodological approach, McNairn, *The Capacity to Judge*.

sphere. Rather than being an ineffectual and weak option, as much scholarly wisdom purports, the chapter demonstrates how deliberation on this subject was indeed a serious module of the larger union dialogue. Rather than being ignored by Nova Scotia's public sphere, evidence suggests that the scheme was afforded the same thorough, enthusiastic and sophisticated deliberation as was its larger, British North American concomitant.²⁶

Subjects of Maritime union reflected in the press, and which are examined in this chapter include regional sentiments, desires for the restoration of ancient Acadia and prospects for an Atlantic nation, in addition to matters of colonial defence, regional development, economic expedience and governmental efficiency. As they did with the wider debate,

²⁶ Those works that refer to a weak or ineffectual public debate on Maritime union include, among others Peter B. Waite, *The Life and Times of Confederation, 1864-1867* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1962); William M. Whitelaw, *The Maritimes and Canada Before Confederation* (Toronto: Oxford University Press, 1966); Chester Martin, *Foundations of Canadian Nationhood* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1955); John G. Reid, *Six Crucial Decades: Times of Change in the History of the Maritimes* (Halifax: Nimbus Publishing, 1987), 103; E.R. Forbes, and D.A. Muise, *The Atlantic Provinces in Confederation* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1993), 31. A direct example may be found in Phillip Buckner's assertion, "As Chester Martin pointed out, Maritime Union might have become a reality had it been pushed as vigorously as Confederation." Phillip Buckner, "CHR Dialogue: The Maritimes and Confederation: A Reassessment," *Canadian Historical Review*, 71, no. 1 (1990): 42.

While consultation does not necessarily indicate confirmation, it may be valuable to note that Google Scholar lists 32 academic texts that cite Whitelaw's study, including in David Jay Bercuson, *Canada and the Burden of Unity* (Toronto: MacMillan Press, 1977); Cole Harris, and John Warkentin, *Canada Before Confederation; A Study in Historical Geography* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1991); Cole Harris, and Eric Leinberger, *The Reluctant Land: Society, Space, and Environment in Canada Before Confederation* (Vancouver: UBC Press, 2008). Chester Martin's study has, again according to Google Scholar, been cited at least 24 times, including in, Earl H. Fry, *Canadian Government and Politics in Comparative Politics* (Lanham: University of Press of America, 1984).

within which the regional scheme was situated, the bourgeois elite engaged in a thorough exercise of deliberative democracy on Maritime union.²⁷

Chapter Five also questions the accuracy of conventional scholarly wisdom concerning the impetus for Maritime union, and challenges the notion that regional disillusionment with Canada was responsible for the scheme's entertainment by the Lower Provinces.²⁸ Instead, it argues that regional sentiment and effective reasoning can better account for the option's thorough deliberation in the public sphere.²⁹ Conventional claims are asserted in much of the extant historiography. Historian Peter B. Waite is one of the earliest modern scholars to declare the ineffectual nature of the Maritimes' public debates on regional union, a belief that has endured through its adoption and re-assertion in more recent histories. In the 1960s, Waite contended that while certain political leaders may have supported the concept of Maritime union, "popular support was negligible and public enthusiasm non-existent."³⁰ His position was reprised by, among others, John G. Reid in 1987 and in Phillip Buckner's 1990 "reassessment" of the Maritimes and Confederation.³¹ In 1993, historians E.R. Forbes and D.A. Muise again echoed this assessment, by arguing that despite Maritime recognition that union could "ennoble colonial politics by opening the door for new economic initiatives," it continued as an

²⁷ This thesis uses the terms "regional scheme" or "regional union" to refer to the plan for uniting New Brunswick, Prince Edward Island and Nova Scotia in a Maritime union.

²⁸ Those histories which accent the role of Maritime disillusionment with Canada include Waite, *The Life and Times*; Whitelaw, *the Maritimes and Canada*; J. Murray Beck, *The Briton Becomes Canadian: 1848-1873* (Montreal & Kingston: McGill-Queens University Press, 1983); Reid, *Six Crucial Decades*.

²⁹ Effective reasoning concerning a wide range of economic and political issues

³⁰ Waite, *The Life and Times*, 51-52.

³¹ Reid, *Six Crucial Decades*, 103; Buckner, "CHR Dialogue," 21.

unlikely possibility through the summer of 1864.³² By neglecting the extent of the dialogue maintained within Nova Scotia's public sphere, reductionist assessments contribute to the traditional identification of conservative parochialism as a mainstay feature of Maritime politics, culture and public discourse.³³

Similarly problematic are those histories that account for consideration of the Maritime scheme by accentuating, to the exclusion of other factors, the role of Maritime disillusionment over Canada's decision to cancel the Intercolonial Railway.³⁴ Waite maintains, for example, that following Lord Monck's February 20, 1864 dispatch to Charles Hastings Doyle, Governor of Nova Scotia (in which he informs the Governor of Canada's intention to resume the Intercolonial survey at its own expense), even the largely ineffectual talk of Maritime union quickly fell silent. He further asserts that once Maritime resentment over the Intercolonial's cancellation was calmed by the project's resurrection, the "press fell silent and public interest in Maritime union seemed non-existent. In short, by the early summer of 1864, Maritime union was all but forgotten."³⁵ Though dated in terms of historiography, Waite's assertions, and those of even older scholarship, like William Whitelaw's study of 1934 (reprinted multiple times between 1934 and 1990) or Chester Martin's of 1935 (reprinted multiple times between 1955 and

³² Historian Malcolm MacLeod has called the study "the most important book on regional history [in the last] 30 years [...]." Malcolm MacLeod, "Another Look at "The Atlantic Provinces in Confederation," *Acadiensis*, 23, no. 2 (1994): 191-197; Forbes and Muise, *The Atlantic Provinces*, 31.

³³ A fuller examination of relevant historiography begins on page 109.

³⁴ Those histories which accent the role of Maritime disillusionment with Canada include Waite, *The Life and Times*; Whitelaw, *the Maritimes and Canada*; Beck, *The Briton Becomes Canadian*; Reid, *Six Crucial Decades*.

³⁵ Waite, *The Life and Times*, 56-59. Similar sentiments are expressed in Michael Swift, "CHANDLER, EDWARD BARRON," in *Dictionary of Canadian Biography*, vol. 10, University of Toronto/Université Laval, 2003–, accessed June 22, 2014, http://www.biographi.ca/en/bio/chandler_edward_barron_10E.html.

1981), are likely responsible for informing parallel assumptions found in more current assessments.³⁶ Contrary however to these prominent scholarly claims– that a weak, trivial and ineffectual public debate was all that was had over Maritime union – a substantial collection of divergent evidence may be gathered from the historical record. A number of relevant excerpts taken from between the pages of Nova Scotia’s leading publications demonstrate a public dialogue quite characteristic of the thoughtful and sophisticated deliberation exercised on questions of the larger union, but also on similar matters of public interest throughout the colony’s history.³⁷

³⁶ Waite, *The Life and Times*; Whitelaw, *the Maritimes and Canada*; Martin, *Foundations of Canadian Nationhood*. A direct example may be found in Phillip Buckner’s assertion, “As Chester Martin pointed out, Maritime Union might have become a reality had it been pushed as vigorously as Confederation.” Buckner, “CHR Dialogue,” 42. Aside from the more recent studies already cited, Google notes that Whitelaw’s work has been cited at least 32 times, including in Bercuson, *Canada and the Burden*; Harris, and Warkentin, *Canada before Confederation*; Harris, and Leinberger, *The Reluctant Land*. Chester Martin’s study has, according to Google, been cited at least 24 times, including in Fry, *Canadian Government and Politics*.

³⁷ See chapters three and four of this study.

Chapter Two: Liberalism Defined:
A Framework for Exploring the Deliberative Democracy

All mankind [...] being all equal and independent, no one ought to harm another in his
life, health, liberty, or possessions
–John Locke³⁸

* * * * *

Defining A Political and Intellectual Liberalism

In 2000, Professor Ian McKay published an article in the *Canadian Historical Review* that proposed a fundamental shift in the way that historians approach Canada’s development. By adopting what he termed, a “liberal order framework,” scholars can study Canada as a project of political or ideological change.³⁹ Over time, McKay’s theory holds, liberalism, despite regularly being contested and resisted, was implanted and expanded over Canada’s heterogeneous terrain until it attained a hegemonic status. This, McKay’s central argument, will be accepted and pursued within this thesis, as evidence suggests that Nova Scotia did in fact experience a systemic entrenchment of liberal values throughout the late eighteenth and nineteenth-centuries.⁴⁰ This chapter argues that by the 1860s, the liberal ideology was sufficiently engrained in Nova Scotian society that the colony may be considered a liberal democracy, albeit without an inclusive franchise. If you recall our contextual analogy of the corporate staff meeting, this Lockean liberalism translates to the corporate philosophy that allowed for open, topically broad and meaningful debate on the questions of political union.

³⁸ John Locke, *Second Treatise of Government*, (Indianapolis: Hackett Pub. Co., 1980), Chapter Two.

³⁹ McKay, "The Liberal Order Framework," 616-651.

⁴⁰ See Chapter Three of this thesis.

Rather than accept McKay's materialist definition of liberalism as it stands, this thesis creates a broader construct by incorporating more context-specific political elements. By suggesting that material property rights held a supreme primacy in a hierarchy of liberal values, over civic freedom and fundamental equality, McKay limits the extent to which his theory may be effectively applied to studies of a social, political or intellectual nature. Three elements of his theory have together generated a fervent debate within the scholarly community: his restricting the fundamental principles of the liberal order, his hierarchical ranking of those tenets, and the Gramscian qualities that he identifies within the liberal order.⁴¹ The evidence contained in this assessment of Nova Scotia's mid-nineteenth-century deliberative democracy better supports those scholars who caution against these three aspects of McKay's theory. As Jeffrey McNairn maintains, no one disputes that individuality, liberty, equal status and property were central aspects of nineteenth-century thought, but "why only these elements, and why in this particular configuration?"⁴²

While McKay acknowledges that liberalism manifested in any number of historical forms, his framework accentuates only those qualities that he believes were shared among all such incarnations. Glossing over extant diversities, he thus proposes a singular framework that fails to distinguish between disparate groups of the intellectual elite.⁴³ Instead of embracing the multiplicity of ideas through which the liberal philosophy was effectively expressed, McKay's assertion directs focus on a

⁴¹ See, for example, the collection *Liberalism and Hegemony: Debating the Canadian Liberal Revolution*, ed. Jean-Francois Constant and Michel Ducharme. (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2009).

⁴² McNairn, "In Hope and Fear," 70.

⁴³ *Ibid*, 77.

homogeneous liberalism, one that is confined by both his restricted definition and his preferential ordering. His regulated framework ignores the particularity and contingency that intellectual historians suggest existed throughout historical space and time. McKay's definition also fails to acknowledge that even relatively systematic thinkers often adopted a variety of arguments and rhetoric. McNairn contends that these contingencies in fact, "wreak havoc with our desire to order the past into a few neat categories" but that scholarly neglect would most certainly cause us to "miss much of the human agency and political intent of such eclecticism."⁴⁴ Such concerns do not preclude a wider and more inclusive liberal framework from ordering scholarly examinations of varied thoughts and positions, so long as contingency and human agency are taken into account. As McKay's narrow materialist locus moves scholars away from the social, intellectual, political and religious ideas and principles of the liberal philosophy, this study embraces an expanded and more comprehensive approach. A broadened definition of liberalism will be adopted while McKay's fundamental premises concerning the significance of liberalism to the social order and the dominant status a specifically liberal social order had acquired by the middle of the nineteenth-century, will be maintained.

McKay's central constituents of liberalism – individualism, property and equality – will also remain significant components of a wider definition, as will his assertion that central to the liberal philosophy is the belief that individual freedoms should only be limited to obtain the equal freedom of others. Additional features of the definition here utilized and which together permit meaningful examinations of socio-political and intellectual phenomena, are in fact acknowledged by McKay, but nonetheless remain

⁴⁴ Ibid, 78.

unexamined by his study.⁴⁵ These aspects include: equality before the law, freedom of expression, freedom of conscience and freedom of work. While discrimination against certain groups including women and specific ethnic and religious minorities most definitely existed in nineteenth-century practice, some scholars argue that rather than being components of the liberal philosophy, these inequalities were due more to the social discrimination that existed outside the philosophy's framework. As Uday S. Mehta has suggested, liberal thinkers often argued that practical rights to liberty and self-determination were predicated on the capacity of the individual for reason and rational self-government.⁴⁶ Those thought incapable of exercising appropriately cogent judgement, including children, women, the disabled, certain ethnic and religious minorities and the uneducated working classes, were believed to be rightfully excluded from exercising liberal freedoms. As sexist and xenophobic prejudices endured, ancillary of these liberal principles, they were thus able to distort the ideology's uniform application. What is most important here is to recognize that one cannot view as "anti-democratic," any society that lacks the social and material equality common to the modern liberal democracy. Such presentism will certainly lead one to underestimate the significance of early incarnations of equality principles, like those that developed the bourgeois public sphere in contemporary British North America.

⁴⁵ Ibid, 77.

⁴⁶ Referenced in Curtis, *Liberalisms*, 186. See also Uday S. Mehta, "Liberal Strategies of Exclusion," *Tensions of Empire: Colonial Cultures in a Bourgeois World*, ed. Frederick Cooper & Ann Laura Stoler (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1997), 59-86. For an alternative view on women in the public sphere see, among others Cecilia Morgan, *Public Men and Virtuous Women: the Gendered Languages of Religion and Politics in Upper Canada 1791-1850* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1996). On francophone Acadians in Nova Scotia, see J. Alphonse Deveau, and Sally Ross, *The Acadians of Nova Scotia, Past and Present* (Halifax: Nimbus Publishing, 1992); Bona Arsenault, and Pascal Alain, *Histoire des Acadiens* (Saint-Laurent: Fides, 2004).

In order to examine the Confederation debates as manifestations of an increasingly-entrenched Lockean liberalism, which this study maintains dominated Nova Scotia's bourgeois public sphere by the mid nineteenth-century, additional precepts must be adopted. Professor Bruce Curtis's contention, for example, that reason is indeed a fundamental element of liberalism, as it is reason alone that allows individuals to know and understand their rights, necessitates embrace.⁴⁷ Likewise do John Gray's additions of universalism, which affirms the moral unity of the human species, and meliorism, which maintains the corrigibility of all socio-political institutions. These features are central aspects of the liberalism this study finds evidenced in Nova Scotia.⁴⁸ Michael Freedon's notion that liberalism tended to favour empirical freedom both as a condition for, and expression of rationality and justice, will similarly be adopted.⁴⁹ Finally, the central status of British constitutionalism in Canadian expressions of liberalism, a notion maintained by Janet Ajzenstat among others, will also form a central component of this study's definition.⁵⁰

It is important here to pause in order to consider how these additions distinguish the approach of this thesis from that of Ian McKay and other scholars who prefer more materialist interpretations of the liberal philosophy. The liberalism that informed the Confederation debates that this thesis examines relies on the principles of political liberty espoused by John Locke, and which were present in British North America from its very

⁴⁷ Curtis, *Liberalisms*, 191.

⁴⁸ John Gray, *Liberalism: Second Edition* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1995), XII.

⁴⁹ Michael Freedon, *Liberalism Divided: A Study in British Political Thought, 1914-1939* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1986).

⁵⁰ See, among others Ajzenstat, *The Canadian Founding*; Ajzenstat, *Once and Future*; Ajzenstat and Smith, *Canada's Origins*; Janet Ajzenstat, *The Political Thought of Lord Durham* (Montreal & Kingston: McGill-Queens University Press, 1988).

founding.⁵¹ Contrary to materialist interpretations, Janet Ajzenstat reminds us that it is misleading to view liberalism as a philosophy devoted primarily to “who gets what when.”⁵² Likewise, while liberals most often embraced capitalism, they should not be considered as agents of the wealthy classes. Political liberalism allows its citizens to participate in democratic expression, while at the same time, valuing the sanctity of private life.⁵³ It is a philosophy of liberty, which emerged against the backdrop of Europe’s seventeenth-century absolutism. Its tenets, as offered by John Locke, focus on the notion that law makes one free. The liberal values his or her political scepticism and argues that “eternal vigilance is the price of liberty.”⁵⁴

As liberals have on occasion resorted to armed rebellion, their collective trust is placed, not in politicians, but in political institutions.⁵⁵ Among its central tenets are: representative democracy, equality, justice, the separation of church and state, individual and political freedoms, the conservation of dissent and the rights of the minority.⁵⁶ Liberalism asserts that “Peace, Order and Good Government” or, “Life, Liberty and the Pursuit of Happiness,” are what lie at the heart of righteous governance and are what tie any legitimate government to its citizens. The philosophy holds that the best way for government to maintain its purpose is to rely on adversarial politics, where ideologies and leaders can submit themselves to the people’s judgement.⁵⁷ Inherent also in the liberal ideology is a mistrust of absolutism, including democratic absolutism. Fearing tyranny of

⁵¹ Ajzenstat, *Once and Future*, 8.

⁵² *Ibid*, 37.

⁵³ *Ibid*, 8.

⁵⁴ *Ibid*, 16.

⁵⁵ *Ibid*. Liberal revolutions include for example the Glorious Revolution of 1688 or the American Revolution of 1775.

⁵⁶ *Ibid*.

⁵⁷ *Ibid*, 17.

the many, as exhibited historically by Cromwell and Robespierre, and more recently by Papineau and Mackenzie, liberalism advocates the pursuit of negotiated governance that includes a series of checks and balances.⁵⁸ In the nineteenth-century, the term “democracy” referred to mob rule.⁵⁹ Despite their liberalism, the Fathers of Confederation, like members of Nova Scotia’s mid-nineteenth-century public sphere, were thus unlikely to ever refer to themselves as democrats. In this thesis, the terms “democrat” or “democracy” will be utilized with their contemporary definitions in mind. Should it be necessary to refer to the nineteenth-century construct, one can use the alternative phrasing, “unbridled democracy.”

When asserting the role of political liberalism in the nineteenth-century, it is important to differentiate between political and social democracy. A useful separation is offered by Janet Ajzenstat and her application of the liberal epithet discussed thus far, to John Lambton, Earl of Durham. As Ajzenstat suggests, Durham and his colonial contemporaries adopted the liberal perspective toward politics, not society. They did not wish to throw away their titles, disenfranchise the aristocracy, or abandon social ordering, but equally, they did not expect to gain political power by way of their social status. Durham understood the need to influence English voters through effective argument. In political terms, voters were his equals as their political judgements necessitated respect.⁶⁰ To believe that contemporary elites were not adherents to the liberal philosophy is to assert that they: approved of political inequality, rule by hierarchy or oligarchy, and believed in the innate superiority of certain families, classes, races or partisans that were,

⁵⁸ Ibid, 28.

⁵⁹ Ibid, 46.

⁶⁰ Ibid, 51.

by nature, entitled to govern.⁶¹ As mentioned, modern conceptions of liberal democracy must not be applied to studies of its historical manifestations. Inequality, even political inequality, most certainly existed, but achievements like responsible government must still be considered as models of democracy. In British North America, the franchise was broader than it was in England. While voters were required to own property, the colonial distribution of wealth was far more equal than in the metropole, and in truth, the majority of adult males were able to meet minimum property requirements and thus qualify for democratic inclusion.⁶²

Ajzenstat cites John A. Macdonald, like Lord Durham, as another example of a nineteenth-century liberal democrat. She notes that Canada's first prime minister argued for political deliberation, the protection of minority rights and for popular sovereignty (as represented in parliament). He understood the importance of ethnic and linguistic inclusion, and was a master at ensuring balance in parties and cabinets.⁶³ Further, he appreciated the vitality of the constitution, and its role in preserving freedoms of expression and argument. In reality, popular sovereignty could not and would not be effected by each individual providing his or her consent. In nineteenth-century British North America, and indeed in twenty-first century Canada, the people's sovereignty is expressed by way of majority through election or a plurality in the House of Commons.⁶⁴ There is no permanent majority, as majorities form and reform as issues arise and public

⁶¹ Ibid, 54.

⁶² Ibid, 61.

⁶³ Ibid, 77.

⁶⁴ Ibid, 52.

opinion evolves.⁶⁵ While the majority may rule, minority rights and freedoms are protected by law, most significantly, through the constitution.

Returning to the question of McKay's materialist liberalism, it should be noted that a number of scholars manage to assert the primacy of property while still recognizing the significance of political liberty to the liberal philosophy. These historians argue that, in fact, liberties themselves constitute a form of property. J.M. Hexter, for example, has claimed that:

“The spectrum of liberties was as varied as the rights of rule or authority that the lords of the land had. Liberties, that is to say, were treated as if they were property. Since property was one of the things that all who had it most ardently strove to keep, all through the West communities invested sizeable amounts of thought, energy and armed force into seeing to it that all their property, including their property in their liberties was secure.”⁶⁶

A number of thinkers, from David Hume to John Hall, have likewise insisted on the centrality of merchants and commerce to the establishment and maintenance of civil liberties in general.⁶⁷ A less materialist supporter of the primacy of property, E.A. Heaman, is one scholar who recognizes that “the link between liberty and liberalism is more than nominal and does much to account for the political ideology's successes.”⁶⁸ Despite asserting the dominance of property and individualism to the liberal philosophy, Heaman appreciates that liberalism provided “an important means for criticizing the

⁶⁵ Ibid.

⁶⁶ J.H. Hexter, *The Birth of Modern Freedom*, (Times Literary Supplement, 1983). Quoted by John A. Hall, *Powers and Liberties: The Causes and Consequences of the Rise of the West*, (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1985), 159.

⁶⁷ E.A. Heaman, "Rights Talk and the Liberal Order Framework," *Liberalism and Hegemony: Debating the Canadian Liberal Revolution*, ed. Jean-Francois Constant & Michel Ducharme (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2009), 149.

⁶⁸ Ibid, 147.

forms of authority that preceded it: despotic and theocratic authority in particular.”⁶⁹ She likewise locates the conceptual foundations of liberalism in the Habeus Corpus Act of 1679, which prevented officials of the Crown from practising arbitrary imprisonment.⁷⁰ Scholars like Heaman and Hexter are able to appreciate the role of political liberties either because they select to imbed them in their definitions of property, or because they acknowledge that despite the predominance of property in their definitions of liberalism, political liberties endure as essential components of the theory.

With these more nuanced theorists one would be hard-pressed to disagree, as their concepts of liberalism would likely support the examination of social, political or intellectual topics in history. McKay’s Liberal Order Framework however, seems unlikely to condone their sort of broadened definition of property that could include political liberty. By ignoring other components of liberalism, which he recognizes but fails to investigate in his article, McKay suggests that rather than being predominant in the liberal philosophy, property is uniquely supreme, so much so that one may entirely exclude political liberty and democracy from a framework that seeks to study Canada’s liberal origins. It must be stressed that none of these arguments mean to suggest that material property was not a fundamental component of liberalism’s nineteenth-century expression, but simply that political liberties must be similarly afforded a significant role in scholarly assessments of the theory.

As stated above, Canada, from its very founding, was a country informed by the liberal philosophy. Contrary to traditionalist claims in the historiography, which views Toryism as our nation’s foundational ideology, these more recent works assert that even

⁶⁹ Ibid.

⁷⁰ Ibid, 148.

the loyalists were in fact, American liberals, teeming with individualist sentiments.⁷¹ They were not, as conventional scholarly wisdom suggests, “purveyors of benign teachings about deference and collectivism. They didn’t come to British territories hoping to find a society where they could bow the knee and doff the cap.”⁷² As will be discussed further in Chapter Three, these Loyalists, from their very arrival, instigated a campaign for representative legislatures and freer political institutions, items which they saw as being rightfully due any British subject. The Fathers of Confederation too, according to Ajzenstat, cannot be considered ideological Tories in the standard definition.⁷³ Though both large-C and large-L Conservatives and Liberals, these men were not deferential, “collectivist conservatives,” but rather “liberal democrats,” designers of a “free constitution for a free country.”⁷⁴ It is the object of this study to examine these observations, relative to those individuals who comprised Nova Scotia’s bourgeois public

⁷¹ Conventional histories that adopt the ‘laurentian’ paradigm and which assert Canada’s tory origins include, among others Donald Creighton, *the Road to Confederation: The Emergence of Canada, 1863-1867* (Toronto: MacMillan Press, 1964); Gad Horowitz, “Conservatism, Liberalism, and Socialism in Canada: An Interpretation,” *Canadian Journal of Economics and Political Science*, 32, no. 2 (1966): 143-171; William Christian, and Colin Campbell, *Political Parties and Ideologies in Canada, Second Edition* (Toronto: McGraw-Hill Ryerson, 1982). For a critical evaluation of Horowitz’s theoretical contribution, see H.D. Forbes, “Hartz-Horowitz at Twenty: Nationalism, Toryism, and Socialism in Canada and the United States,” *Canadian Journal of Political Science*, 22, no. 2 (1987): 287-315; Andrew Smith, “Toryism, Classical Liberalism, and Capitalism: The Politics of Taxation and the Struggle for Canadian Confederation,” *The Canadian Historical Review*, 89, no. 1 (2008): 1-25. The debate between those who assert Canada’s tory origins and those who, alternatively, identify an increasingly dominant liberalism is ably described in Ajzenstat and Smith, *Canada’s Origins*.

⁷² Ajzenstat, *Once and Future*, 6.

⁷³ *Ibid*, 6-7.

⁷⁴ *Ibid*, 6-7. While some may find it difficult, even unfathomable, to define the Fathers of Confederation as liberal democrats, I use the term in comparison to romanticist civic republicanism. On the dichotomy refer to works by Janet Ajzenstat cited in this thesis. The term is here utilized in order to account for the widespread breadth and depth of deliberative democracy in contemporary British North America.

sphere, as a means of accounting for the sophistication, breadth and deliberative nature of their Confederation dialogue.

Ajzenstat's emphasis on the centrality of popular sovereignty to the liberal philosophy is also assumed by this thesis. She has argued that principles inherent in the social contract theory, which endured since the seventeenth-century, came to mean that any legitimate settlement of political union rested entirely on popular opinion and thus on acquiring the people's consent.⁷⁵ Citizen sovereignty, which Ajzenstat maintains may be directly drawn from principles espoused in Locke's Second Treatise, rests on the assertion that each individual must participate in the act of political founding and that each and every person had to be consulted.⁷⁶ Though limited by nineteenth-century circumstances, like the exclusion from politics of non-property owners, this thesis argues that these were indeed the principles that most informed the colony's intellectual elite.

An expanded definition of liberalism can reverse the distortion that McKay's restrictive description may impose on numerous historical manifestations of the liberal philosophy. His core principles alone, unfortunately, are able to illuminate few of the seminal debates that shaped the country. As Jeffrey McNairn explains, the use of an expanded definition does not make historians into "cheerleaders for les lumières against *l'infâme*, nor do they deter us from studying how liberals betrayed their principles or how many of their 'reforms' tended to discipline in one sense even as they empowered in another."⁷⁷ Instead, as McNairn asserts on behalf of all intellectual historians, the need for operationalization and case-specific assessments, conform to our "conviction that

⁷⁵ Ajzenstat, *The Canadian Founding*. 12-16.

⁷⁶ Ibid, 16; Locke, *Second Treatise*, Paragraph 94.

⁷⁷ McNairn, "In Hope and Fear," 72.

ideas can only be understood fully and without anachronism if placed within the contexts of particular problems, vocabularies, and circumstances in which they were articulated.”⁷⁸ Evidence supports the notion that a series of fundamental liberal principles underpinned Nova Scotian society by the middle of the nineteenth-century. It was these principles that allowed the Confederation debates, which took place within the colony’s bourgeois public sphere, to be open, inclusive, sophisticated, and indigenous; to truly be an exercise in Nova Scotian deliberative democracy. Essential to this argument is the notion that by the end of the eighteenth-century, British North American Conservatives accepted the political principles that have thus far been defined as fundamentally liberal: respect for civil liberties, equality before the law, individuality, reason, open dialogue, and freedom of thought and expression.⁷⁹

Prior to examining the union debates of Nova Scotia’s press, it is essential to explore those liberal fundamentals that united diverse elements of the colony’s contemporary bourgeois public sphere. In the decade before Confederation, partisan politics in Nova Scotia no longer resembled its greatly polarized ancestral form. Following the colony’s widespread acceptance of responsible government, shortly after its adoption in 1848, common principles increasingly came to unite the poles of the political spectrum. So indiscriminate were political parties that on May 20, 1854, the *Acadian Recorder* declared: “no cogent reason [now exists] for the division of the

⁷⁸ Ibid, 78.

⁷⁹ This is maintained by, among others Michel Ducharme and Jean-Francois Constant in, Jean-Francois Constant, and Michel Ducharme, "Introduction: A Project of Rule Called Canada - The Liberal Order Framework and Historical Practice," *Liberalism and Hegemony: Debating the Canadian Liberal Revolution*, ed. Jean-Francois Constant & Michel Ducharme (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2009). 12; See also Michel Ducharme, ‘Aux fondements de l’État canadien: La liberté au Canada de 1776 à 1841’ (PhD diss., McGill University, 2005), chaps. 2 & 5.

Representatives of Nova Scotia into two parties, regularly organized for the annihilation of each other.”⁸⁰ Reformer and Tory alike maintained the absolute rights of liberty, freedom of thought and of speech, representation in government, equality before the law and so on. These principles which once bitterly divided the colony’s opposing camps now united them. Politicians found themselves bickering for the sake of partisan allegiance rather than any fundamental division of ideology or policy. Conservative premier of Nova Scotia, James William Johnston, acknowledged this state of political affairs, when he announced, in the *British Colonist* of April 6, 1854, that his Conservative party, with its advocacy of an elective legislative council and municipal institutions, had in fact become “the true liberal party.”⁸¹

After the Gourlay Shanty riots of the 1850s, some members of the assembly advocated the dissolution of political parties, which they recognized as being increasingly without substance, in favour of denominational divides that would unite a Protestant faction. William Young, representative of Cumberland County and the colony’s first Speaker of House of Assembly following responsible government, proposed, "that the distinctions between [L]iberals and [C]onservatives should be forgotten, and a new standard erected, beneath whose folds men should unite to restore to this house [...] independence of action."⁸² According to the *Acadian Recorder*, the lack of adversarial

⁸⁰ *Acadian Recorder*, May 20, 1854.

⁸¹ *British Colonist*, April 6, 1854, reproduced in Beck, *The Briton Becomes Canadian*, 94-95.

⁸² Nova Scotia. House of Assembly, *Debates and Proceedings - Nova Scotia House of Assembly*, (Halifax: Nova Scotia. House of Assembly) March 7, 1857; reproduced in Beck, *The Briton Becomes Canadian*, 120; J. Murray Beck, “YOUNG, Sir WILLIAM,” in *Dictionary of Canadian Biography*, vol. 11, University of Toronto/Université Laval, 2003–, accessed June 28, 2014, http://www.biographi.ca/en/bio/young_william_11E.html.

division went so far as to cause ineffectual policy-making in the legislature, and thus administration of the province. On March 7, 1857, its editors wrote, "a gathering of scandal-loving, old women, at a tea-drinking, anywhere in the Province, [...] would [...] blush to know themselves overheard giving utterance to such malicious malignity [...] such silly gossip, and such unmitigated twaddle."⁸³ Nova Scotia's bourgeois public, which continued to delineate its members according to political affiliation, shared much more than many partisan contemporaries were willing to admit.

Newspapermen of the Public Sphere

Like their political counterparts, members of Nova Scotia's bourgeois public sphere were well read, knowledgeable in their own histories, and often trained in legal theory. Most had, at the very least, a passing acquaintance with the political writings of America's founders, and the same plurality wholeheartedly embraced the ideals of liberal

⁸³ *Acadian Recorder*, March 7, 1857. Especially interesting in this particular excerpt is the *Recorder's* decision to invoke the image of, "a gathering of scandal-loving, old women, at a tea-drinking." As has been discussed briefly in this thesis, women were largely excluded from participating in the century's bourgeois public sphere. The concept of separate spheres is central to scholarly assessments of gender relations in the nineteenth-century. Recent scholarship however, has reassessed how, by concentrating on women's absence from the public sphere, historians tend to obscure politics as a venue for gender relations. The sort of gendered language used by the press, especially in commentary on liberty and democracy, had particular implications for women and for gender relations that became critically important as the nineteenth-century unfolded. Used by politicians and members of the press, across the political spectrum, to establish masculine legitimacy in the public sphere, the kind of symbolism and imagery, employed here by the *Acadian Recorder*, permeated British, American and Canadian political cultures. As historian Cecilia Morgan has argued, "[t]he 'public' and the 'private' were not two distinct and separate spheres formed in complete isolation from each other. Each sustained the other, and, [...] the lines between the two were more than a little blurred." On gendered language in British North America see, among others Morgan, *Public Men*.

embodied British constitutionalism.⁸⁴ These men were educated: like the *Acadian Recorders*' Henry Blackadar or the *British Colonists*' contributor, Charles Tupper, at the Horton Academy, like The *Halifax Citizens*' William Garvie at King's College, or at Pictou Academy like Simon H. Holmes of the *Pictou Colonial Standard*.⁸⁵ They were men trained in the legal profession, like Jonathan McCully of the *Morning Chronicle*, Beamish Murdoch, contributor to the *Acadian Recorder*, or John G. Bourinot of the *Halifax Evening Reporter*.⁸⁶ Truly members of the public sphere, these men took part in the development and maintenance of a free and equal civil society. They filled civic positions, like Blackadar, on the Halifax Board of School Commissioners and later, Vice-President of the Nova Scotia Tourist Association, or like Beamish Murdoch who, throughout the 1840s and 1850s, served as clerk of the central board of education, and on

⁸⁴ Ajzenstat, *The Canadian Founding*, 27.

⁸⁵ J. Murray Beck, "BLACKADAR, HENRY DUGWELL," in EN:UNDEF:public_citation_publication, vol. 13, University of Toronto/Université Laval, 2003–, accessed June 11, 2014, http://www.biographi.ca/en/bio/blackadar_henry_dugwell_13E.html; Phillip Buckner, "TUPPER, Sir CHARLES," in EN:UNDEF:public_citation_publication, vol. 14, University of Toronto/Université Laval, 2003–, accessed June 11, 2014, http://www.biographi.ca/en/bio/tupper_charles_14E.html; P. B. Waite, "GARVIE, WILLIAM," in EN:UNDEF:public_citation_publication, vol. 10, University of Toronto/Université Laval, 2003–, accessed June 11, 2014, http://www.biographi.ca/en/bio/garvie_william_10E.html; Allan C. Dunlop, "HOLMES, SIMON HUGH," in EN:UNDEF:public_citation_publication, vol. 14, University of Toronto/Université Laval, 2003–, accessed June 11, 2014, http://www.biographi.ca/en/bio/holmes_simon_hugh_14E.html.

⁸⁶ P. B. Waite, "McCULLY, JONATHAN," in EN:UNDEF:public_citation_publication, vol. 10, University of Toronto/Université Laval, 2003–, accessed June 11, 2014, http://www.biographi.ca/en/bio/mccully_jonathan_10E.html; K. G. Pryke, "MURDOCH, BEAMISH," in *Dictionary of Canadian Biography*, vol. 10, University of Toronto/Université Laval, 2003–, accessed June 11, 2014, http://www.biographi.ca/en/bio/murdoch_beamish_10E.html; Margaret A. Banks, "BOURINOT, Sir JOHN GEORGE," in EN:UNDEF:public_citation_publication, vol. 13, University of Toronto/Université Laval, 2003–, accessed June 11, 2014, http://www.biographi.ca/en/bio/bourinot_john_george_13E.html.

the committee of the Halifax library.⁸⁷ William Garvie similarly functioned as a long-time tutor at Dalhousie College, while Alexander Lawson, of the *Yarmouth Herald*, served as postmaster and manager of the local telegraph office.⁸⁸ Some were politicians and administrators, like members of the Assembly S.H. Holmes and, proprietor of the *Morning Chronicle*, William Annand, or Judge of Probate (1853-1857), John McCully, editor of the same publication.⁸⁹

These colonial liberals, who came to operate a thorough and deliberative public dialogue on questions of union, have often been described as contemplative thinkers and leaders. William Garvie, for example, has been termed an expert in constitutional and legal history.⁹⁰ Historian D.A. Muise pronounced Edmund M. McDonald of both the *Halifax Chronicle* and *New Glasgow Eastern Chronicle*, as having a “facile pen and shrewd political sense.”⁹¹ Similarly, John G. Bourinot came eventually to be known an expert in “parliamentary procedure and constitutional law”, while Angus M. Gidney of the *Bridgetown Free Press*, has been identified as a “teacher, journalist and poet... [with]

⁸⁷Beck, “BLACKADAR, HENRY DUGWELL”; Pryke, “MURDOCH, BEAMISH.”

⁸⁸ Waite, “GARVIE, WILLIAM”; Ian McKay, “LAWSON, ALEXANDER,” in EN:UNDEF:public_citation_publication, vol. 12, University of Toronto/Université Laval, 2003–, accessed June 11, 2014, http://www.biographi.ca/en/bio/lawson_alexander_12E.html.

⁸⁹ Dunlop, “HOLMES, SIMON HUGH”; David A. Sutherland, “ANNAND, WILLIAM,” in EN:UNDEF:public_citation_publication, vol. 11, University of Toronto/Université Laval, 2003–, accessed June 11, 2014, http://www.biographi.ca/en/bio/annand_william_11E.html; Waite, “McCULLY, JONATHAN,”

⁹⁰ Waite, “GARVIE, WILLIAM.”

⁹¹ D. A. Muise, “McDONALD, EDMUND MORTIMER,” in EN:UNDEF:public_citation_publication, vol. 10, University of Toronto/Université Laval, 2003–, accessed June 11, 2014, http://www.biographi.ca/en/bio/mcdonald_edmund_mortimer_10E.html.

powers far above mediocrity.”⁹² As a group, they included both large-C Conservatives and large-L Liberals, but they shared common beliefs in liberty and equality*, in the sovereignty of the people*, and in the power of free and open public dialogue to determine the public will, advocate on its behalf, and thus chart the best possible course for the colony’s future.

A Thoroughly Liberalized Press

The most convincing evidence to support the notion that the members of Nova Scotia’s public sphere embodied the fundamental principles of liberalism can be found in the very articles they wrote, and which assessed the questions of political union. The writers and newspapermen, who structured, mediated and participated within the colony’s public debates on union, each, at varying times, exemplified the essence of the dialogue they shaped. In 1863 and 1864, members of the press and the public sphere understood and exalted the role they shared as principal contributors and moderators of the public union dialogue. The *Acadian Recorder* noted on July 30, 1864 for example that, “the question as to what kind of texture is the constitution we are weaving for the future of these young colonies, is one in presence of which most of our public questions are insignificant indeed. It is a question peculiarly for the press, and a question with which the press must grapple.”⁹³ On October 31, 1863, The *British Colonist* likewise recognized

⁹² Banks, “BOURINOT, Sir JOHN GEORGE”; Shirley B. Elliott, “GIDNEY, ANGUS MORRISON,” in EN:UNDEF:public_citation_publication, vol. 11, University of Toronto/Université Laval, 2003–, accessed June 11, 2014, http://www.biographi.ca/en/bio/gidney_angus_morrison_11E.html.

⁹³ *Acadian Recorder*, July 30, 1864.

the pivotal role played by an intellectual press, when its editors optimistically noted that, “we have no doubt that this discussion [of political union] will evince the patriotism of their [the Maritimes’] public men and the enlarged sentiments of an intelligent press, so essential to the successful development of the project.”⁹⁴ These newspapermen clearly appreciated the significance of their position and the value of the discussion they were orchestrating. The *Colonist’s* optimism – voiced in the early stages of union debate when the principle of political unity, rather than its parameters, were being considered – was seconded on December 7, 1863 by Joseph Howe’s *Novascotian*, when its editors joyfully proclaimed, that “[t]he public press of all the Provinces are engaged discussing the project in a spirit of candor and calmness pleasing to contemplate.”⁹⁵

Exemplifying the virtues enshrined in nineteenth-century Nova Scotia by an increasingly- widespread Lockean liberalism, the newspapers of the colony showcased, at one time or another, virtually every aspect of the philosophy thus far described in this chapter. They exhibited the meliorism John Gray has identified, by noting, as the *Acadian Recorder* did on September 21, 1864, for example, that organic changes of political institutions are often positive and necessary. Phrased as an attack on the French Canadians, for their alleged failure to recognize the value of development, the *Recorder* condemns Lower Canada to “dig the death-pit for the time-honoured principles she would illustrate, and the traditional glories she would inherit.”⁹⁶ A dissimilar incarnation of melioristic liberalism may be found in the September 26, 1864 edition of the *Novascotian*. In this issue the journal’s editors proclaimed their preference for a new

⁹⁴ *British Colonist*, October 31, 1863.

⁹⁵ *Novascotian*, December 7, 1863.

⁹⁶ *Acadian Recorder*, September 21, 1864.

British North American nation to operate under a Governor General rather than a hereditary prince, as “[his or her] tenure of office would enable us periodically to secure, perhaps a desirable successor.”⁹⁷ The corrigible nature of governmental institutions was thus acknowledged by the members of Nova Scotia’s public sphere. In the same September 21, 1864 edition of the *Acadian Recorder*, its editors also exemplify their affinity for political rights and liberties. Again extolled by the *Recorder* when disparaging French Canada, this time for Canadian anxieties over the prospects of political union, the paper suggests that such apprehensions are needless “in a Union where they are protected by law in the enjoyment of each; for greater room would admit of a more indefinite expansion, while free interchange of sentiment and mutual acquaintance would be the grandest of all instruments for the development of those cherished doctrines, which their exclusive policy now hamper and dwarf.”⁹⁸ It is an unquestioned assumption of the *Recorder’s* editors, that any constitution that may be adopted by a unified British North America would include fundamental protections for the “enjoyment of each.” A similar emphasis on liberty is found in the *Pictou Colonial Standard* of September 24, 1864. By referring to the liberties now possessed by Nova Scotians, and which would certainly be maintained under any scheme of union, the *Standard*, a Conservative organ, went so far to suggest that contemporary colonists lived “with a degree of liberty, accompanied by safety of life and property possessed by no other country on which the sun shines.”⁹⁹ It further advised that with the strength that

⁹⁷ *Novascotian*, September 26, 1864.

⁹⁸ *Acadian Recorder*, September 21, 1864.

⁹⁹ *Colonial Standard*, September 24, 1864.

union would bring, British North Americans might, like Britain, “[engage] in the same work of extending civilization and liberty over the world.”¹⁰⁰

Other Lockean principles – like tolerance, open-mindedness and the sovereignty of the people—were equally extolled in Nova Scotia’s leading publications. That the role of the press was to facilitate the people’s rational exercise of their sovereignty seems to be one point of universal consensus. Overt recognition of this sovereignty, on the part of the public sphere, was a mainstay in union-relevant commentary prior to the advent of the Quebec Resolutions. On August 30, 1864, the *Halifax Citizen* for example, asserted that “[t]his is one of those public movements in which public sentiment must precede executive action; and in which success may be imperilled by attempting to carry negotiation beyond the point to which public opinion has yet attained.”¹⁰¹ From their commentaries, in this current round of union-dialogue, the bourgeois elite maintained a widespread recognition of the item’s importance, and an enduring deference toward the sovereignty of public opinion.¹⁰² Perhaps the greatest single recognition of the principles of liberty, public authority, and freedom of thought, expression and dialogue, was published in the *Pictou Colonial Standard* on September 24, 1864:

¹⁰⁰ Ibid.

¹⁰¹ *Halifax Citizen*, August 30, 1864.

¹⁰² On November 2, 1863, the *Novascotian* concluded its remarks by stating, “the foregoing we throw out as general principles, with a view of attracting public attention to this subject and thereby tending to ripen a project for the Union of the Provinces Nearly a year later on September 19, 1864; The editors of the *Morning Chronicle* likewise wrote, “It is a great subject, and we are willing to hear, at all events, what is proposed, and the reasons to be advanced; and we feel very sure that thinking men of all classes will ponder the subject with an anxious desire to mature any measure adapted to perfect these Provinces at a dependency of the Crown, to unite their energies and encourage their means.”

We find ourselves called upon to consider whether we shall be a part of that nation, and if so, what position we shall occupy in it, what we shall gain and what we shall lose by casting in our lot with the colonies around us, what we shall give away and what we shall receive in return. We find ourselves called on to consider what form of government will be best adapted to meet our wants, to preserve and establish the liberty we possess, and advance the prosperity we so much require, to fix the fabric of the system of government we shall adopt on foundations firm and solid, which shall resist the shocks of time and grow stronger with increasing years. We find these and a thousand other considerations present themselves before us in entering on this momentous question, and we are called upon to exercise our maturest judgement, our most profound knowledge and our keenest discrimination, for we feel that we are deciding on our fate and shaping the destiny of generations yet unborn.¹⁰³

The *Halifax Citizen*, as much perhaps as any of its contemporaries, consistently praised the virtues of freedom of thought and expression. On two separate occasions, the *Citizen's* editors published opinions that were entirely inconsistent with their own. After first transcribing an article from the *Toronto Globe*, the paper's editors explained that, "we published the article, not because we endorsed the views it maintains, but because it may be considered as fairly representing the opinions of the advocates of federation; and because the question is now growing to be of so much importance that the public ought to be familiar with the opinions and arguments of leading men on both sides."¹⁰⁴ The *Citizen* later confirmed this sentiment as policy, by publishing an opposition letter to the editor, before commenting, "[w]e give place in our columns to the letters of "Atlas," because we wish to see a full and fair discussion of the Confederation question in all its suspects, and not because we endorse all the views of that writer on the subject."¹⁰⁵ In what better way, one might ask, can any newspaper exemplify the tenets of liberal democracy than to publish contradictory points of view? Not only did the *Citizen* practice

¹⁰³ *Colonial Standard*, September 24, 1864.

¹⁰⁴ *Halifax Citizen*, July 28, 1864.

¹⁰⁵ *Ibid*, September 22, 1864.

these principles, but it called upon the Maritime colonies' political leaders to do the same. Commenting on the prospective Charlottetown Conference on August 30, 1864, the newspaper's editors voiced their sincerest hopes that, "[...] the representatives of the three Provinces will come to the discussion of the subject, with that spirit of enlarged liberality, and of mutual forbearance where there is a possibility of sectional feelings coming in collision [...]." ¹⁰⁶ The *Citizen's* call for governmental transparency was echoed by other publications including the *Novascotian*, when, just two weeks later, it underscored the principle of public sovereignty. "Whether it is proposed to give publicity to the results arrived at, we are not aware, although it would seem very desirable, we should think, that the substance of what shall be agreed upon, if anything, should be furnished to the Press, in order that the public might have time for reflection, and be prepared, through their representatives, to approve or disapprove." ¹⁰⁷

Colonial Loyalism

One final discussion should be had prior to exploring the common subjects of the public sphere's Confederation debates. Loyalism, a major component of British North American value systems, must be acknowledged for its effects on contemporary Nova Scotia were both distinct and unique. A fundamental value, loyalism endured apart from the prevailing liberalism that has thus far been described, but in many ways, its influence on the colony's identity and political culture shaped the liberal philosophy into a uniquely

¹⁰⁶ Ibid, August 30, 1864

¹⁰⁷ *Novascotian*, September 12, 1864.

Canadian phenomenon.¹⁰⁸ In response to Ian McKay's article, Jerry Bannister argues for the existence of what he terms, the "Loyalist Order Framework." Popular loyalism, claims Bannister, is uniquely responsible for Canada's foundation as an experiment in counter-revolution, and was thus largely responsible for the colony's maintaining a political culture separate from that of its dominant American neighbour. It must be stressed, however, that rather than competing with liberalism's ascendancy, loyalism complemented and moulded its practice, adapting its expression to Canada's distinct socio-political landscape. While Professor Bannister examined loyalism's impact, largely as it manifested during Canada's earliest formation, in the eighteenth-century and before, this study necessitates an appreciation of its ongoing effects into the middle of the nineteenth-century.

As Bannister notes, Nova Scotia was, by the time of the Confederation debates, a model of constitutional reform.¹⁰⁹ It never experienced the sort of upheaval that gripped Upper and Lower Canada in the 1830s, yet managed to campaign effectively for responsible government, achieving its implementation in 1848, before any other British colony. As will be detailed in Chapter Three of this thesis, Nova Scotia experienced a series of political shifts as it developed into a liberal democracy. An ideal case study for the examination of Nova Scotian loyalist sentiment is found in the prose of Joseph Howe, one of the colony's leading statesmen and among its foremost campaigners for liberal reform. Howe spent much of his career struggling against the imperially-preserved oligarchy that ruled the colony. He campaigned for, in addition to responsible government, reforms to the judiciary, among the magistrates, within the colonial

¹⁰⁸ Bannister, "Canada as Counter-Revolution," 99.

¹⁰⁹ Ibid, 106.

government, and even for a colonial voice in imperial affairs. How, one might wonder, can an individual who consistently resisted the status quo of the British establishment simultaneously maintain a wholehearted loyalty to both the metropole and the Empire?

A somewhat counterintuitive yet entirely accurate attitude of British North American loyalists must be considered. As Brian Smith and Janet Ajzenstat contend, at no point in British North American history did loyalism necessitate reflex-like deference to British policy or the whims of her attending officials. In fact, it may be argued that true loyalism, at times, demanded the confrontation of British officials whose views or policies contradicted time-honoured principles of British constitutionalism.¹¹⁰ The notion that colonials might rightfully challenge the home-country's oligarchs, officials, and aristocrats, at times even its socio-political structures, while maintaining sincere and heartfelt loyalty, is central to understanding the *mêlées* for liberty so common in the nineteenth-century. The majority of British North American 'reformers' earned that designation as a direct result of their convictions concerning the equal treatment of colonial subjects who were not afforded the full rights and privileges of their countrymen living in Britain.¹¹¹ When reformers like Joseph Howe campaigned for the liberal principles espoused by the British constitution, they were acting as loyal subjects of the British crown, perhaps even more so than the colonial officials they attacked.

At the very least, one must acknowledge that in the minds of many reformers, there existed no inconsistency between their campaigns for liberty and their assertions of loyalty. In his 1985 biography of Joseph Howe, political scientist J. Murray Beck claimed that, "like his father before him Howe wanted, above all else, to preserve the British

¹¹⁰ Ajzenstat and Smith, *Canada's Origins*, 213.

¹¹¹ Bannister, "Canada as Counter-Revolution," 125.

connection and hence his share of the British heritage.”¹¹² Consider Howe’s reflection on his personal connection to Britain:

I walk into Westminster Abbey and the Howe banner hangs as high as any other in Henry the 7th’s Chapel. I walk into Greenwich Hospital and there stands Black Dick, in white marble, but with the broad chest and ample forehead which the Howes ‘of this ilk’ have never wanted. Now I feel that I have a property in these two noble piles which our common ancestors built and bequeathed, quite equal to that of any gentleman in London.¹¹³

Joseph Howe’s personal loyalism was also fundamental to determining both his and his party’s attitudes and policies. When responding to Conservative Premier James Johnston’s call for an elected Legislative Council for example, Howe, who sincerely felt that the proposal risked effective responsible government, invoked what he saw as Britain’s innate liberal constitutionalism. “While ‘continental thrones [were being] shattered, [and] systems of government... scattered to the four winds of heaven,’ had not Britain ‘gone steadily onward in the development of its constitution,’ preserving the lives, property, and freedom of its people in the process.”¹¹⁴ Professor Bannister rightly points out that the political battles of mid-nineteenth-century British North America drew on a public culture that spanned the contested ideas of both liberalism and loyalism.¹¹⁵

When the Confederation debates ensued, both prior to and following the advent of the Quebec Resolutions, supporters and opponents alike invoked, as a central purpose of their positions, Nova Scotia’s continued relationship to the British Empire. Loyalism, like liberalism, played a significant role in the debates of the public sphere. On April 10,

¹¹² Beck, *The Briton Becomes Canadian*, 75-76.

¹¹³ *Ibid.*

¹¹⁴ Nova Scotia. House of Assembly, *Debates and Proceedings*, March 1, 1858; Beck, *The Briton Becomes Canadian*, 124.

¹¹⁵ Bannister, “Canada as Counter-Revolution,” 125.

1865, Charles Tupper, a once and future Conservative, leader of the pro-Confederation party in Nova Scotia, and future Prime Minister of Canada, sought to strengthen his argument in favour of union by invoking colonials' pervasive hopes for an unrelenting association with empire. "[...] If these comparatively small countries are to have any future whatever in connection with the crown of England, it must be found in a consolidation of all British North America."¹¹⁶ The same loyalist sentiments may be found equally as often, in the arguments of the anti-Confederation camp that formed in the assembly shortly after the Quebec Conference of October 1864. On April 5, 1866, William Annand, once-liberal, then leader of the anti-union-opposition, questioned what, in the Quebec scheme, prevented the separation of Britain from her North American colonies.

I may be mistaken, but I thought I could see in England, during my recent visit there, a desire to get rid of these colonies, and an impression that, by Confederation, England would be relieved of a portion of the expense which we cause at present... I apprehend seriously that Confederation, pure and simple, is another name for independence. I wish to guard against that, my desire is that British America should remain British America.¹¹⁷

In Nova Scotia's press, during the pre-resolution period, there existed a special primacy for considerations of colonial loyalism. At this point in the colony's public dialogue, virtually all the publications of the bourgeois public sphere maintained a relatively open-minded and flexible approach to questions of political union. Concerns for the conservation of links to empire were thus utilized not as direct arguments to support or oppose the union ideal, but as fuel to provoke public deliberation and debate.

¹¹⁶ Janet Ajzenstat, et. al., *Canada's Founding Debates* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2003), 208.

¹¹⁷ *Ibid*, 209.

The bourgeois elite collectively determined that appraisals of the consequences that union might bring to Britain, loyalty and empire should be a pivotal component of the colony's public union dialogue.

On September 26, 1864, editors of Howe's Liberal *Novascotian* proclaimed that their very calculations of union's consequences to Empire relations inspired their receptiveness of the union ideal:

[I]f we supposed it [the scheme of Confederation] would have a tendency in the remotest degree to weaken the ties that bind us to the Mother Country- if we were not of opinion that it is adapted to strengthen this cord, and more closely identify us with all that is English and British, as an integral portion of the Provincial Press we should never cease to denounce the project as suicidal to our best interests, and worthy of all condemnation. But it is because we are of the opinion that exactly the reverse of this will be the result [...]. [that we are prepared to entertain the project, and give it our best advocacy.¹¹⁸

Just two days prior, Simon H. Holmes's Conservative-leaning *Pictou Colonial Standard*, a newspaper that Holmes described as "a dedicated advocate of the principles of true Conservatism," also considered how the colony's relationship with the Empire would change should political union be pursued. "It is true," the article stated, "that a Union of these Provinces does not necessarily imply a separation from Britain. These colonies may unite, and still maintain a connection with the mother country, equally close with that which now exists." It continued, by arguing however, that in reality, "a Union such as is contemplated now, means the formation of a nation, and this must eventually lead to changes in the relations which have heretofore existed between these colonies and Great Britain. [...]" The *Colonist* then pronounced what many loyal Nova Scotians similarly maintained, "[h]ow close this tie will be, will depend on the form of Government we may

¹¹⁸ *Novascotian*, September 26, 1864.

adopt. But, whatever it may be we may rest assured that it will be not only our duty, but our interest, to retain our allegiance to Britain, and to make the same bonds which shall be employed in consummating our own Union here, bind us closer and more firmly than ever to the mother country.”¹¹⁹ As P.B. Waite has declared, for many Nova Scotians, the Empire was tangible.¹²⁰ From a maritime colony like theirs, Nova Scotians found traversing the eastern waters that separated the New World from England to be simpler and more advantageous than crossing the westward expanse of forests and hills to reach the rest of British North America.

The main purpose of this chapter has been to assert the dominance of the liberal philosophy, as has been defined, in Nova Scotia’s bourgeois public sphere. By drawing on McKay’s liberal order framework and the elements of Lockean liberalism that he identified (individualism, property and equality), a fundamental theoretical framework was proposed. In order to render it meaningful when applied to any examination of the social, political and intellectual histories of the colony, this chapter has argued for an expanded definition. This widened abstraction includes: equality before the law, freedom of expression, freedom of conscience, reason, universalism, meliorism, British constitutionalism and perhaps most significantly, the people’s sovereignty. Contemporary liberalism, along with the loyalist sentiments that penetrated Nova Scotia’s de-polarized political spectrum and that thrived in the public sphere, offers a theoretical framework through which the colony’s union debates may be effectively examined.

¹¹⁹ *Colonial Standard*, September 24, 1864.

¹²⁰ Peter B. Waite, "Halifax Newspapers and the Federal Principle, 1864-1865," Chap. 31 in *Canadian History before Confederation: Essays and Interpretations*, ed. J.M. Bumsted (Georgetown: Irwin Dorsey, 1979), 497-498.

Chapter Three: Large Streams from Little Fountains Flow...:
Entrenching Liberal Values and the Development of Nova Scotia's Bourgeois Public Sphere

What revolution in Government and politics it [the newspaper] has witnessed, what reputation it has helped to build up and what to pull down, what provincial crisis it has sided in tiding over, [...]. If it has wrought a salutary change in the settlements of the People, and as a consequence in their social and public habits it will lay a greater claim to public favour, than though it had been the organ of great parties or had woven the purple robe of office for a few [...]. The public voice no more makes the newspaper than does the newspaper make the public voice. The editor must think for the public, but he is not to do the public's thinking.

—*Acadian Recorder*¹²¹

* * * * *

This chapter explores the growth of Nova Scotia's bourgeois public sphere and discusses key developments that furthered the entrenchment of liberal values in colonial society. By the 1860s, these processes together enabled the colony to engage in a broad, open-minded and deliberative public dialogue on the questions surrounding British North American union. Beginning with an examination of the colony's earliest intellectual foundations, set by its founders including Anglo-American immigrants, the clergy, missionaries and merchants, Chapter Three then examines the birth and evolution of Nova Scotia's first publications. Early Nova Scotians exhibited a range of diverse thought and public deliberation long before the union debates. A colony engaged with the problems of empire and the pursuit of liberty, Nova Scotia was aware of its seniority among its sister colonies and exercised its duty as a centre of loyalist sentiment, by advocating for colonial interests in imperial policy. The foundations of Nova Scotia's liberal democracy arrived in the colony with some of its earliest European settlers. These migrants brought not only practical skill and knowledge from their homelands, but the philosophical fundamentals upon which the colony was able to build. From its very inception as

¹²¹ This excerpt comes from the *Acadian Recorder's* comments on its own history, published on the eve of its rebranding in 1864. *Acadian Recorder*, July 2, 1864.

a British domain, Nova Scotia's social and political culture was inescapably bound to be shaped by a permutation of the loyalism and liberalism of both American and British experiences.

Planters, Pre-Loyalist Settlers and Loyalist Migrants

In the mid eighteenth-century, some eight thousand pre-loyalist New Englanders, Planters termed "Americanized Britons," arrived in the colony and laid the economic foundations for fishing, farming, shipbuilding and trading, which together evolved to constitute the hallmarks of Nova Scotia's economy.¹²² With the inauguration of Halifax as the colony's capital in 1749, British administrators attempted to increase the town's population by subsidizing immigration of, first American and British, then German, French and Swiss Protestants.¹²³ From the settlement of the very first New Englanders in Nova Scotia, came structured lobbies, organized under the colonial Board of Trade. Their central purpose was to campaign for the establishment of a local legislative assembly, which after two years of agitation, they would achieve in 1759.

Despite British efforts to suppress the sort of Yankee political behaviour that was unwanted in the new colony, New Englanders arrived in Nova Scotia expecting to maintain the same rights and privileges they had in New England, and managed to successfully operate a significant degree of local autonomy, albeit without legal sanction.¹²⁴ Historian Elizabeth Mancke has gone so far as to declare that in some ways, localism in Nova Scotia was "more

¹²² See Elizabeth Mancke, "Idiosyncratic Localism, Provincial Moderation, and Imperial Loyalty: Planter Studies and the History of 18th-Century Nova Scotia," *Acadiensis*, 42, no. 1 (2013): 169-181.

¹²³ Elizabeth Mancke, *The Fault Lines of Empire: Political Differentiation in Massachusetts and Nova Scotia, ca. 1760-1830* (New York: Routledge, 2005), 10.

¹²⁴ *Ibid*, 27.

intense and idiosyncratic” than it was in contemporary New England.¹²⁵ As neither state law nor colony wide practice was able to define the extent of local authority, transplanted culture and local circumstances were solely responsible for determining its limits. These settlers were among the first to confront colonial practices and often found themselves in struggles between local needs, the colonial government and the imperial metropole. Already by the mid-1760s, Nova Scotia’s Yankee settlers had come to expect little success by way of their protests to Halifax. Even if the Assembly and Council acceded to their demands, such measures were certain to provoke the Crown’s rejection.¹²⁶ Instead, as settlers began to appreciate that regional quiet meant little attention from colonial administrators, and that local authority, so long as it did not interfere with governmental prerogatives, would be tolerated by Halifax, community institutions began to take hold. Professor Mancke has concluded that, “the governor and council seemed to have just enough rebuke to keep the settlers on their guard, but not enough to stop their local adaptations.”¹²⁷ In this way, early Nova Scotians managed local affairs based on their customs and particular requirements.

In 1783, 40,000 American loyalist settlers entered the Maritime region, 20,000 of whom settled in peninsular Nova Scotia. This influx led to the creation of both an independent New Brunswick and Cape Breton in 1784 and by the end of the American Revolution, the population of the colony had doubled. These American loyalists had higher than average levels of education, reputations for holding positions of authority, and a passionate loyalty to the Crown. In addition, and despite claims of their Tory Conservatism found in older historiography, more current research suggests that, like most Revolutionary era Americans, they were in fact typical

¹²⁵ Ibid.

¹²⁶ Ibid, 72.

¹²⁷ Ibid.

bourgeois liberals.¹²⁸ Of all that they brought to the young colony, the group's greatest contribution emerged from their heartfelt sympathies for individualism and self-government.¹²⁹ Despite difficult conditions, the beginnings of Nova Scotia's liberal democracy, its public press, and its bourgeois public sphere, may be traced to their early efforts.

The Scots Arrive

New waves of British migrants soon followed the loyalist influx. Between 1801 and 1805, and then, after the conclusion of the Napoleonic wars in 1815, a great migration of mainly Scottish settlers, doubled Nova Scotia's population. Brought by the severe economic depression that followed the Napoleonic Wars, greater access to transatlantic transport, the burgeoning colonial timber trade and positive reports they received from the colony, early nineteenth-century Scottish migrants had an especially notable impact on the intellectual and political cultures of the still-young colony.¹³⁰ Despite the Scots general poverty and widespread illiteracy, a number of greatly influential leaders emerged from between their ranks.¹³¹ Merchants, ministers and missionaries wielded great skill in galvanizing their newly-settled Scottish kinsmen toward greater levels of philosophical and political consciousness. Noteworthy efforts by organizations

¹²⁸ Scholars who support this assessment include among others David Bell, Lorne Tepperman, Janet Ajzenstat and Peter J. Smith. David Bell, and Lorne Tepperman, *The Roots of Disunity: a Look at Canadian Political Culture* (Toronto: McClelland and Stewart, 1979), 30; Ajzenstat and Smith, *Canada's Origins*, 4.

¹²⁹ Ajzenstat and Smith, *Canada's Origins*, 4.

¹³⁰ Lucille H. Campey, *After the Hector: the Scottish Pioneers of Nova Scotia and Cape Breton, 1773-1852* (Toronto: Natural Heritage Books, 2007), 81.

¹³¹ The plight of Scottish settlers was described by Reverends John McClellan and Donald Fraser, who had been sent by the Scotch Presbytery of Halifax to tour Cape Breton in 1827. A.F. Binnington, *The Glasgow Colonial Society and its Work in the Development of the Presbyterian Church in British North America, 1825-1840* (PhD diss., Emmanuel College, 1960), 112; Campey, *After the Hector*, 17 & 149.

like the Highland Society of Nova Scotia led to the inception of public education and soon created a pool of scholars that earned the community its reputation for intellectual prowess.¹³² One such Scottish settler was Reverend Thomas McCulloch, who, in addition to founding Pictou College in 1816, published a series of oft humorous Mephibosheth Stepsure letters in the *Acadian Recorder*. Filled with satirical literary musings, McCulloch hoped to educate Pictou's settlers on the principles of perseverance and thrift.¹³³ Though based, according to McCulloch, on true experiences, his letters, reminiscent more of moral-totting fables than instructive manuals, delivered their messages by way of common anecdote. An excerpt from the Reverend's second letter provides an example of the sort of conclusions he intended his readers to draw.

I have generally seen, that misfortune[,] which requires a stout heart and strong exertions to overcome it, produces contrary effects. As Jack's prospects of comfort diminished, he became less inclined to labour for comfort; and was no longer that active, hard working fellow, that he had formerly been. In the mean time [sic], from the failure of trade and other circumstances, the price of timber fell so much, that Jack declared it better to go idle than to work for such wages. Go idle he did but when he was enjoying himself Mr. Ledger sued out the mortgage, and then capiassed [sic] him for the balance of his account; and he is now living with the sheriff, till trade revive, and labour return to its old price. Before I left home, his little boys were at my house, asking a few potatoes to keep them from starving; and when I arrived at Mr. Holdfast's, I found Jack's thoughts and enjoyments, limited to a game at cards and a class of grog.¹³⁴

McCulloch's work for moral and educational reform has been described as having "the most profound intellectual influence on the province's nascent liberalism."¹³⁵ John Young, another Scottish intellectual to take to the pen and exercise influence through the public sphere, hoped to correct the faulty practices of local farmers. He sought to focus the attention of his local

¹³² Pictou, the hub of Scottish migrants in the nineteenth-century, for example, had sixty schools by 1826. Campey, *After the Hector*, 17 & 188.

¹³³ Thomas McCulloch, and Gwendolyn Davies, *The Mephibosheth Stepsure Letters* (Ottawa: Carleton University Press, 1990).

¹³⁴ McCulloch's second letter was published in the *Acadian Recorder* on January 5, 1822. The letters also appear in McCulloch, and Davies, *The Mephibosheth Stepsure Letters* 27.

¹³⁵ Stanley MacMullin, "In Search of the Liberal Mind: Thomas McCulloch and the Impulse to Action," *Journal of Canadian Studies*, 23, no. 1 & 2 (1988): 85.

community on the principal importance of rural affairs and to instruct, to the greatest effect possible, in the scientific principles that guided what most considered to be the ‘art’ of agriculture.¹³⁶ Young clearly understood the fundamental role of a well-managed farming culture in determining the colony’s fortunes, and dedicated a great deal of effort toward deliberating on the current state and future prospects of the industry. In his premiere piece, he sought to describe and justify his efforts to come:

I have long repined in secret at the lamentable state of our Agriculture, and held with no small indignation the constant and unceasing drain on our specie, for the purchase of American product. I have revolved this subject in my mind, with more than ordinary attention; I have conversed with all classes of people, with a view to gather information; I have even traversed the Province in different directions, keeping my eye fixed on its present state, its capability of improvement, the obstacles which oppose its progress, the incitements within our reach, by which to quicken and animate its industry; and I now intend, through the medium of the Recorder to lay before the public, in a series of letters, the result of all my thoughts and observations.¹³⁷

Through his letters, Young meant to better Nova Scotia’s rural communities, and bore no air of self-importance or over-confidence. He clearly presented his methodologies, presumably in order to substantiate his claims and further educate his readers, and intended to encourage dialogue that might increase the efficacy of agricultural practices in Nova Scotia. Though perhaps not unique in terms of subject or approach, Young’s letters are especially noteworthy, as they have been deemed directly responsible for the colony’s first sustained attempt at agricultural societies.¹³⁸ These assemblies were, according to historian Danny Samson, the result of a movement that made improvement “a central underpinning of ideas and practices within both the countryside and government circles in Halifax.” Through local agricultural societies and a

¹³⁶ John Young, *The Letters of Agricola on the Principles of Vegetation and Tillage: Written for Nova Scotia, and Published First in the Acadian Recorder*, (Halifax: Holland & Co., 1822).

¹³⁷ First letter of Agricola pushed in the *Acadian Recorder* on July 15, 1818, appears in Young, *The Letters of Agricola*.

¹³⁸ Samson, *The Spirit of Industry and Improvement*, 54.

central board, Young's call to action institutionalized certain "liberal ideas and practices in the countryside and in the state."¹³⁹

Thomas McCulloch and John Young both spoke of liberal ideals. While Young supported Adam Smith's positions on political economy, and argued within the confines of a narrow economic liberalism, he spoke little of its more political principles. McCulloch, on the other hand was more concerned with principles of individualism and self-improvement, most notably in terms of material life.¹⁴⁰ Each operated from within Nova Scotia's public sphere, and each contributed toward the implantation of liberal principles.

The Pious and Devout

Though of various ethnic and denominational backgrounds, a vital segment of Nova Scotia's early nineteenth-century immigrants were the religiously devout. Like newspapers, formal education was a luxury that few early communities could afford. Political representation too was absent from many rural settlements, as legislators often chose to reside in Halifax, rather than remain in the communities they represented. Despite these realities, religious instruction often ensured that early settlements could never be deemed intellectually stagnant. Churches stood not only as houses of worship, but also as centres of intellectual development, where deliberation and debate were cultivated over issues of baptism, the sacraments, pre-destination and free-will. Standards of conduct and conscience were scoured for between the pages of the bible and frequently, healthy controversy would ensue over disparate interpretations.¹⁴¹

¹³⁹ Ibid.

¹⁴⁰ Ibid, 55.

¹⁴¹ Daniel Cobb Harvey, "The Intellectual Awakening of Nova Scotia," *Dalhousie Review*, 13 (1933): 6.

Occasionally, these debates were deemed so consequential that publications were issued to document their content. Such texts would later be appreciated as some of the earliest examples of Nova Scotia's indigenous "literature of knowledge."¹⁴²

Pious immigrants of the early nineteenth-century influenced colonial society in a number of ways. Religious institutions served the colony's cultural and intellectual development by founding colleges and publications; many of which, however unintentional, ultimately came to serve as forces for liberal progressivism. With increased Scottish immigration, the Church of England soon represented an ever-dwindling sector of the population. As demographics shifted, the Church's de facto official status, and the privileges that came along with it, caused greater discontent in the fragile colony.¹⁴³ Diverse denominations of Christian settlers were soon advocating the discontinuation of state sponsorship for their Anglican brethren, in hopes of securing equal rights of property, education, marriage laws and state sponsorship.¹⁴⁴

Nova Scotia Magazine and Comprehensive Review of Literature, Politics and News, edited by the Reverend William Cochran and published first in 1789, was the colony's premiere magazine.¹⁴⁵ In print for just three years, its content of mainly British and foreign poetics, listings of books and minimal commentary on local affairs, sought, above all else to encourage the creation of a public sphere, where speculation and debate might take place.¹⁴⁶ Printed by well-known publisher John Howe, the magazine endures as an early example of the colony's emergent press. Its subscribers, at one time or another, included nearly all of Nova Scotia's

¹⁴² Ibid.

¹⁴³ Ibid, 7-8.

¹⁴⁴ Ibid.

¹⁴⁵ C. P. Wright, "COCHRAN, WILLIAM," in *Dictionary of Canadian Biography*, vol. 6, University of Toronto/Université Laval, 2003–, accessed June 12, 2014, http://www.biographi.ca/en/bio/cochran_william_6E.html.

¹⁴⁶ Marie Tremaine, *A Bibliography of Canadian Imprints, 1751-1800* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1999), 654-656.

leading officials: the Lieutenant-Governor, his councillors, military officers, clergy, members of the assembly and bar, justices of the peace and a fair number of colonial merchants, and, though limited to the elite classes, it achieved relatively wide distribution, reaching some 267 subscribers throughout Halifax, peninsular Nova Scotia, and even into New Brunswick and Prince Edward Island.¹⁴⁷ Its success likely helped to consolidate Nova Scotia's budding bourgeois public sphere.

Colonial education was also fathered by the colony's pious elite. From 1787, when King's College was established by the same Anglican leaders who first organized the colony into ecclesiastical provinces, its purpose was to prevent the draining of intellectual capital to American seminaries while at the same time, ensuring the continued loyalty of the educated classes.¹⁴⁸ From its founding until its forced adoption of Anglican exclusivity, the College produced a generation of religious and civic leaders. In 1832, with the founding of the Presbyterian Pictou Academy, and the popular push for the consolidation of Dalhousie College, King's College again opened its doors to permit widespread access to education.¹⁴⁹ According to historians Charles H.H. Scobie and George A. Rawlyk, the College's library, faculty and students, contributed a great deal to the intellectual and social character of the province.¹⁵⁰

¹⁴⁷ Harvey, "The Intellectual Awakening," 10.

¹⁴⁸ Lois Kernaghan and Cheryl Bell, ed. "University of King's College." in *The Canadian Encyclopedia*. Historica Canada, 2012-, accessed June 12, 2014, <http://www.thecanadianencyclopedia.ca/en/article/university-of-kings-college/>

¹⁴⁹ Charles H.H. Scobie, and George A. Rawlyk, *The Contribution of Presbyterianism to the Maritime Provinces of Canada* (Montreal & Kingston: McGill-Queen's University Press, 1997), 35-37.

¹⁵⁰ See Chapter 4 "Schooling/Credentials for Professional Advancement: A Case Study of Pictou Presbyterians" in Charles H.H. Scobie, and Rawlyk, *The Contribution of Presbyterianism*.

The Merchants Settle

Religious cohorts were by no means alone in contributing to the colony's socio-political and intellectual progress. The merchant classes, more than any other, managed to successfully bridge the cultural gap that separated the governing from the governed in early Nova Scotia. In doing so, these entrepreneurs served to disseminate information, broaden the knowledge base of the general citizenry, and widen the capacity for Nova Scotians to participate in informed legislative and political debates.¹⁵¹ Though originally transient, by the end of the eighteenth-century, a formidable collection of merchants emerged in Halifax.¹⁵² Businessmen, intimately connected with policy-making, especially that which affected their economic fortunes, were among the first to examine colonial conditions, engage in deliberative discussion of policy and conclude intelligent economic and political positions, with which they could affect meaningful change through exertion of pressures on local decision makers. Bolstered by the prospective gains of privateering in the Napoleonic wars, Halifax merchants formed their first Committee of Trade in 1804 with hopes of both guarding their economic interests and reaching the ear of the imperial government.¹⁵³ By advocating for shifts in commercial policy that might undermine the monopoly of American traders over West Indian markets, Haligonian merchants drew imperial attention toward the role that Nova Scotia could play in the affairs of empire. The more optimistic of Haligonian entrepreneurs expected that, with appropriate conditions imposed by the

¹⁵¹ Harvey, "The Intellectual Awakening."

¹⁵² See Julian Gwyn, *Excessive Expectations: Maritime Commerce and the Economic Development of Nova Scotia, 1740-1870* (Montreal & Kingston: McGill-Queens University Press, 1998), Chap. 2.

¹⁵³ For Nova Scotian privateering see Dan Conlin, *A Private War in the Caribbean: Nova Scotia Privateering 1793-1805*. (Master's Thesis, St. Mary's University, 1996). On the founding of the Committee of Trade see D. A. Sutherland, "SABATIER, WILLIAM," in *Dictionary of Canadian Biography*, vol. 6, University of Toronto/Université Laval, 2003–, accessed June 13, 2014, http://www.biographi.ca/en/bio/sabatier_william_6E.html.

Imperial government, wartime profits might be sustained in peacetime. In order to acquire the legislation needed to protect colonial welfare and hamper foreign competition, the Halifax Committee of Trade submitted petition after petition to authorities in both Halifax and London.¹⁵⁴ Demanding the exclusion of foreign fishing and trading vessels from British waters in North America and the West Indies, Nova Scotia's merchants emphasized their need for the maintenance of tariff preferences, and advocated for the establishment of Halifax as a 'free port' that could officially receive goods from New England, along with capital and migrants coming from Britain.¹⁵⁵ Despite the Committee's efforts, many merchants remained doubtful of their peacetime prospects. When Britain agreed to restore French fishing rights off the coasts of Newfoundland in 1814, and signed the Anglo-American commercial convention four years later, fear and outrage gripped the Halifax waterfront.¹⁵⁶

In 1822, a series of economic crises, which saw Britain essentially abandon eighteenth-century mercantilism, sank the Committee of Trade which was quickly replaced with the Chamber of Commerce.¹⁵⁷ Immediately, this new merchant institution began vigorous campaigns to elicit the economic stimulation necessary to effect a recovery.¹⁵⁸ Still committed to the confrontation of American commercial interests, the Chamber of Commerce adopted a programme designed to enhance its competitiveness by pressing the colony to adopt a qualified liberalisation of mercantilist policy. Central to the Chamber's efforts was its push for competitive parity with American rivals which its members maintained could only be achieved through direct

¹⁵⁴ David Sutherland, "Halifax Merchants and the Pursuit of Development, 1783-1850," *Canadian Historical Review*, LIX, no. 1 (1978): 4.

¹⁵⁵ *Ibid*, 5.

¹⁵⁶ *Ibid*, 6. The Anglo-American commercial convention made it difficult to prosecute American vessels for fishing and smuggling along the coasts of British North America.

¹⁵⁷ *Ibid*.

¹⁵⁸ *Ibid*, 7.

trade with foreign Europe. Merchant members also pushed for the erection of imperial warehouses in Halifax that could store, duty free, foreign goods awaiting export.¹⁵⁹ Fervent lobbying of the authorities in London called for these and similar measures, and led to the continued de-regulation of the colonial economy. Merchants also sought a corporate charter that would establish a limited-liability bank in Halifax and that could provide necessary commercial credit in order to cultivate the capital investment required for economic recovery.¹⁶⁰ Imperial authorization for direct European trade and the establishment of duty-free warehouses, once achieved in 1825, were received by colonial merchants as indicative of a fresh British commitment to the pursuit of liberal free trade,¹⁶¹

Nova Scotia's Public Press

As Nova Scotia's economy continued to expand, so too did the public demands for information and continuing education. Such needs were often satiated with the appearance of a new, native publication; which were essential to the growth and maintenance of the colony's bourgeois public sphere. The *Acadian Magazine or Literary Mirror* for example, published from 1826, sought to advance the colony's literary standing by opposing ignorance and parochialism in Nova Scotia.¹⁶² Though printed for only two years, the *Acadian's* editors hoped that along with the emergence of schools and libraries, the magazine could act as an outlet for the ambitions of the colony's educated youth. While still dependent for much of its content on foreign

¹⁵⁹ Ibid, 7-8.

¹⁶⁰ Ibid, 8.

¹⁶¹ Ibid.

¹⁶² Patricia Fleming, and Yvan Lamonde, *History of the Book in Canada: Beginnings to 1840*, (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2004), 243-244. For more on the *Acadian*, see Thomas Brewer Vincent, and Ann LaBrash, *The Acadian Magazine, 1826-1828. Contents Report and Index* (Kingston: Royal Military College of Canada, 1982).

publications, the *Acadian* was more of a local publication than was its earliest antecedent, the *Nova Scotia Magazine*.¹⁶³ In 1830, soon after the *Acadian's* disbandment, a new magazine, the *Halifax Monthly*, took its place. Like its predecessor, the *Monthly's* main concern was to assist in the development of local knowledge, dialogue and literary engagement. Many of its articles drew from lectures delivered at the Halifax Mechanics' Institute, which, from its inception in 1831 hosted public dialogue on a wide array of subjects in history, literature and science. Its editors also paid particularly close attention to the affairs of the colonial legislature.¹⁶⁴ For its tendency to include the contrasting viewpoints of poets, journalists, historians, artisans and politicians, the *Halifax Monthly* should be appreciated as a well-developed forum of the public sphere. The contributions made by these publications to Nova Scotian society and its evolving bourgeois public sphere, were undoubtedly significant, and warrant the attention of any history which seeks to explore the colony's intellectual development.

Long imbedded in European and American societies, the newspaper emerged rather late in British North America. Once born in 1752, however, the public press took hold and promptly expanded.¹⁶⁵ Prior to the Treaty of Utrecht, and subsequent arrival of experienced American printers, only one printing press had ever been utilized in the British North American regions of New France.¹⁶⁶ The first newspaper to be published in British-controlled Nova Scotia, from 1752, was the *Halifax Gazette*. From its inception until 1812, at least twenty autonomous

¹⁶³ For 32 issues of the *Halifax Monthly* see J.S. Cunnabell, Early Canadiana Online, "*The Halifax Monthly* magazine." Last modified 2014. Accessed June 13, 2014. http://eco.canadiana.ca/view/oocihm.8_04924.

¹⁶⁴ On the Halifax Mechanics' Institute see M. Brook Taylor, *Promoters, Patriots, and Partisans: Historiography in Nineteenth-Century English Canada* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1989), 183.

¹⁶⁵ George Fetherling, *The Rise of the Canadian Newspaper* (Toronto: Oxford University Press, 1990), 1.

¹⁶⁶ I refer here to the portion of New France contained by modern Canadian borders. Fetherling, *The Rise of the Canadian Newspaper*, 3.

newspapers were launched, and endured for various durations in the Maritime colonies of Nova Scotia, New Brunswick and Prince Edward Island. Generally short-lived, and often with minute circulations, just three of these newspapers managed to continue well into the nineteenth-century.¹⁶⁷ The total number of Maritime newspaper subscribers in 1800 has been estimated at no more than two thousand.¹⁶⁸ According to historian J.J. Stewart, extant publications included: The *Halifax Gazette/Royal Gazette* and *Nova Scotia Chronicle and Weekly Advertiser* (1769-1837) which merged in 1770, the *Halifax Journal* (1781-1870), *Weekly Chronicle/Acadian* (1786-1837), *Nova Scotia Gazette and Weekly Advertiser* (1801-1806), *Halifax Telegram* (1807-?), *Novator* (1809-1810?), a German-language journal (1787-1788), and three publications that ceased before the turn of the nineteenth-century including the *Royal American Gazette*, *Port Roseway Gazette* and *Shelbourne Advertiser* (1784), and the *Nova Scotia Packet and General Advertiser* (1785).¹⁶⁹

When the *Acadian Recorder* entered the field in 1813, it did so at a time when three newspapers constituted the whole of Nova Scotia's public press. The *Gazette*, *Journal*, and *Weekly Chronicle*, operated in almost singular harmony both with one another, and with the colonial administration.¹⁷⁰ Founded by Anthony Holland, and maintained in Halifax until 1930, the *Recorder* remained a weekly journal until September 1864, when it experimented with tri-

¹⁶⁷ James Stuart Martell, "The Press of the Maritime Provinces in the 1830s," *Papers of the Bibliographical Society of Canada*, 28 (1987): 111.

¹⁶⁸ J.J. Stuart, "Early Journalism in Nova Scotia," *Collections of the Nova Scotia Historical Society*, 6 (1888): 91-122.

¹⁶⁹ For a complete listing of newspapers from 1752-1988, see Brenda Hicks, Lynn Murphy, and Anjali Vohra, *Nova Scotia Newspapers: a Directory and Union List, 1752-1988* (Halifax: Dalhousie University, 1990). For a listing of newspapers used in this thesis, see Appendix A.

¹⁷⁰ Fetherling, *The Rise of the Canadian Newspaper*, 18.

weekly publication before shifting to a daily format in December 1868.¹⁷¹ First an advocate of only moderate reform, once under the stewardship of John English and Hugh Blackadar from 1837 onward, it spearheaded, along with the *Novascotian*, the reformist charge for responsible government. Even after it diverted from popular reformist interests in the 1850s, the newspaper continued to be respected as a thoroughly deliberative, outspoken and ably directed publication.¹⁷² With the *Recorder's* inception, and that of the *Free Press* soon after in 1816, controversy, deliberation and public discussion and disagreement came to characterize the once docile and even servile Nova Scotian press. In the ensuing decades, new and independent publications continued to enter the fray bringing the total number of Nova Scotian newspapers to nine by 1833.¹⁷³ Six of these nine newspapers were based in Halifax, while two were located in Pictou, and one in Yarmouth. Yarmouth had experimented with the newspaper prior to the successful and long-enduring establishment of the *Yarmouth Herald*. First in 1827, then in 1831 with the *Yarmouth Telegraph and Shelburne Advertiser*, these local publications each enjoyed only a brief existence. Characteristic of its population, the *Telegraph* earned a reputation for accurately representing the oft-shifting public opinions of its readership. Alternatively, the long-published *Herald*, founded in 1833 by Alexander Lawson, and which remains in Yarmouth still today, was the intrepid voice of the colony's south-west, and fought fervently for self-government and similar socio-political reforms.¹⁷⁴

¹⁷¹ "Tri-weekly publication" refers to those journals that publish three times per week. See "Acadian Recorder" in Hicks, Murphy, and Vohra, *Nova Scotia Newspapers*.

¹⁷² See Beck, "BLACKADAR, HENRY DUGWELL"; Martell, "The Press of the Maritime Provinces, 120.

¹⁷³ Fetherling, *The Rise of the Canadian Newspaper*, 18.

¹⁷⁴ See "Yarmouth Herald" and "Yarmouth Tribune" in Hicks, Murphy, and Vohra, *Nova Scotia Newspapers*; Murray J. Lawson, *Yarmouth, Past and Present: a Book of Reminiscences*, (Yarmouth: J.M. Lawson, 1902), 18-20 & 27-29.

In the largely Scottish community of Pictou, the successful founding of the *Colonial Patriot* in 1827 provided a vehicle for the expression of reformist Scottish radicalism both within and far-beyond the locality. More Conservative members of the community launched the competing Pictou *Observer* soon afterward in 1831.¹⁷⁵ In Halifax, the growing press was led, in many ways, by Joseph Howe's *Novascotian*. Though renamed multiple times – first the *Colonial Herald*, then the *Novascotian and Weekly Chronicle*, before being again-renamed as the *Nova Scotian*, and ultimately the *Nova Scotia's Farm and Home Journal* – the publication continued until 1925. Just three years after its founding by G.R. Young in 1824, it was acquired by Joseph Howe who, – contrary to some contemporary reformers, like for example William Lyon Mackenzie – adopted a fiercely loyalist and noticeably less radical reformist style.¹⁷⁶ Joseph Howe was long aware of the role that a stable and enduring newspaper played in the political affairs of the colony. As the son of noted publisher John Howe, founder and operator of the *Halifax Journal*, postmaster general and King's printer, the younger Howe grew up surrounded by the art and science of nineteenth-century newspaper making.¹⁷⁷ Under Joseph Howe's stewardship, the *Novascotian* challenged the status quo, fighting for among other causes, the right of the colony's press to publish the activities and debates of the colonial assembly. His ardent belief in the role of the press as a central disseminator of knowledge guided the journal's

¹⁷⁵ For the *Colonial Patriot* see J. Murray Beck, "BLANCHARD, JOTHAM," in *Dictionary of Canadian Biography*, vol. 7, University of Toronto/Université Laval, 2003–, accessed June 13, 2014, http://www.biographi.ca/en/bio/blanchard_jotham_7E.html; See "Pictou Observer" in Hicks, Murphy, and Vohra, *Nova Scotia Newspapers*.

¹⁷⁶ See J. Murray Beck, "HOWE, JOSEPH," in *Dictionary of Canadian Biography*, vol. 10, University of Toronto/Université Laval, 2003–, accessed June 13, 2014, http://www.biographi.ca/en/bio/howe_joseph_10E.html;

¹⁷⁷ J. Murray Beck, *Conservative Reformer, 1804-1848* (Montreal & Kingston: McGill-Queens University Press, 1982), Chap. 1.

editorial policy and public positions.¹⁷⁸ When the *Novascotian* began publishing legislative matters on July 9, 1829, Joseph Howe and his contemporaries quickly realized the power of their newfound ability to substantiate, with evidence, their own political grievances. Howe began, almost immediately, to lament the high salaries of the judiciary, and call into question the constitutionality of the legislative council.¹⁷⁹

Following the War of 1812, second and third generation Maritimers increasingly realized the influence that newspapers could wield as mediums for expression and as vehicles for the exchange of knowledge. By 1828, local education, patriotism and socio-political divisions contrived to create a widespread public demand for more and better newspapers.¹⁸⁰ By the late 1820s, the expanded use of stage coaches and the advent of steamships facilitated both the speedier gathering of news and subsequently, the distribution-rates of newspapers.¹⁸¹ From the late 1810s through to the end of the 1830s, approximately forty different journals were launched, each contributing to Nova Scotia's grand collection of news articles and editorials focussed on colonial, American, British and European affairs.¹⁸² During the tumultuous 1830s, for example, the loyalist press throughout British North America, but most especially in Nova Scotia, Britain's most senior American colony, closely scrutinized affairs in the unruly Canadas. These examinations later served to inform Maritime assessments of union, a subject that will be explored further in chapters four and five. Additional shifts in the practices of the public press, such as its consistent publication of Maritime correspondence and literary contributions, caused an upsurge in its engagement with regional affairs. In turn, local attention strengthened the reach

¹⁷⁸ See Beck, "HOWE, JOSEPH."

¹⁷⁹ Martell, "The Press of the Maritime Provinces," 120.

¹⁸⁰ *Ibid.*, 110.

¹⁸¹ *Ibid.*

¹⁸² *Ibid.*, 111.

and influence of the colony's bourgeois public sphere.¹⁸³ When public affairs waned, most commonly in the winter and spring months, the colony's press relied on the science, literature and classics articles of larger American and European publications to supply its content. Dependence on foreign publications continued until 1828, when Joseph Howe won editors the right to report on the affairs of local government. From that point onward, accounts and debates of the colony's legislature provided a new and enduring source of press fodder.¹⁸⁴

Along with growth in their numbers, authority, breadth and influence, the 1820s and 1830s saw newspaper publishers increase their attempts to solicit ever-more discerning subscribers. The reach of these journals far exceeded the extent of their subscription lists, as, in addition to frequently changing hands, new issues had a tendency, especially during times of crisis, to encourage local gatherings for public readings. Great insight into this growing phenomenon was provided in a letter published by the *Colonial Patriot* on March 28, 1828:

Generally on the evening after the paper comes to hand, a few of the neighbours assemble in my house, and, after our homely and heartfelt compliments are exchanged, a reader is appointed, who after drawing his chair up to the head of the table, trimming the candle, coughing, and clearing his throat, unceremoniously bawls out 'Silence' – and immediately all are attention. After the reading is over, then came the remarks... Here was an adult education a century ago, when newspapers came like manna from heaven to a people hungry for cultural and social enlightenment, economic information, and political intelligence, and what was more, ready and willing to respond to the pleas and suggestions of their favourite editors.¹⁸⁵

¹⁸³ Ibid.

¹⁸⁴ See, among others John Ralston Saul, *Joseph Howe & the Battle for Freedom of Speech*, (Kentville: Gaspereau Press, 2006); Barry Cahill, "Howe (1835), Dixon (1920) and McLachlan (1923): Comparative Perspectives on the Legal History of Sedition," *University of New Brunswick Law Journal*, 45 (1996): 281-310; Beck, *Conservative Reformer*, Chap. 9:: The King v. Joseph Howe; Beck, "A Fool for a Client," 27-44; B. Cahill, "Sedition in Nova Scotia: R. v. Howe and the "Contested Legality" of Seditious Libel," *University of New Brunswick Law Journal*, 51 (2002): 91-142.

¹⁸⁵ *Colonial Patriot*, March 28, 1828.

The extent of these newspapers' penetration, and thus the reach of the colony's bourgeois public sphere, is also evidenced in a piece of correspondence received by Joseph Howe during the brandy duty disputes that gripped Nova Scotia in the spring of 1830. Published in the *Novascotian* on May 6, 1830, the author asserts, "Your papers are sought after and read with an avidity which I have never seen equalled in this quarter, even in times of greater excitement. I conversed with a gentleman from the lower extremity of the country yesterday, who tells me a similar interest is manifested in all the other Townships."¹⁸⁶ By the 1830s, utilitarian "news and reading rooms" had also become quite common. For the same price as a single sustained journal subscription, colonials could congregate and examine a series of specialized or distant publications. In addition to facilitating social connections by way of local conversation, this practice exposed members of the bourgeois public sphere to a wider range of journalistic views and opinions than they might have otherwise experienced.¹⁸⁷

Joseph Howe and Seditious Libel

Despite great strides in the size, influence and liberty of the press, occasional quarrels between the popular assumption of liberal values and the colony's conservative authorities, most certainly did occur. In 1835, Joseph Howe became engaged in what is still considered the greatest battle for freedom of the press ever to take place in Nova Scotia, perhaps in all of British North America. While legend mistakenly claims that Howe's successful defense against charges of seditious libel secured freedom of the press, his legal victory did instill greater accountability in the colony's government and furthered the degree to which the average Nova Scotian attended

¹⁸⁶ *Novascotian*, May 6, 1830.

¹⁸⁷ McNairn, *The Capacity to Judge*, 144.

to colonial politics.¹⁸⁸ Sparked by the economic stagnation of the early 1830s, and further motivated by its deepening in 1834, the Nova Scotian press became more willing than ever to publically air its political grievances, and hold accountable those administrators thought responsible. The *Acadian Recorder* summarized local protests on June 14, 1834 when its editors wrote, “[t]raders and Dealers failing in groupes [sic], workmen idle, persons born or long resident in the country emigrating, Jails full, and a melancholy foreboding stamp [sic] on every second countenance...”¹⁸⁹ Aside from publishers’ concerns over the state of public affairs, they also suffered more personal anxieties over their ability to collect subscriptions. Joseph Howe’s own financial security was threatened by the public downturn, which he and others increasingly came to attribute to the reckless policies of the colony’s public officials. In an act of civil disobedience, Howe refused to pay his 1834 taxes, until forced into remittance by threat of a court summons.¹⁹⁰

In the summer of 1834, an outbreak of cholera swept the colony and caused public grievances to deepen even further. Howe, at the helm of the *Novascotian*, along with Phillip Holland, editor of the *Acadian Recorder*, publically rebuked the colonial magistrates who, in their opinions, failed to take adequate precautionary steps to prevent the pandemic, or at least minimize its impact. The editors’ position is summarized in an article published in the *Novascotian* on August 28, 1834, “[n]early three weeks of very precious time have been wasted while the lay Members of the Board [of health] have been accusing the Doctors of a desire to create jobs and pocket the public money; and the Doctors have retorted [with] charges of

¹⁸⁸ J.M. Beck, “A Fool for a Client”: The Trial of Joseph Howe,” *Acadiensis*, 3, no. 2 (1974): 30.

¹⁸⁹ *Acadian Recorder*, June 14, 1834.

¹⁹⁰ Beck, *Conservative Reformer*, 132. On concurrent events happening elsewhere in British North America, see the compilation, *Canada and the British Empire*. Edited by Phillip A. Buckner. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2008.

inhumanity and a disregard of the sufferings of the poor.”¹⁹¹ Despite his admitted distaste for “the constant canvassings, the petty intrigues, and dirty little factions [that municipal corporations] engender,” Howe made sure to assist the grand jury of 1834 in its efforts to publically censure any colonial official thought worthy of criticism.¹⁹² Its final indictment, which Howe printed in the *Novascotian* at the jury members’ request, was so incendiary and so extensive that it caused the Lieutenant-Governor to appoint a special committee of the Council to investigate accounts of the colony’s public finances.¹⁹³ On November 6, 1834, Howe launched a public campaign that called for an end to the abuses of the colony’s politicians. Two weeks later, he printed the first of what would be two powerful letters of civic reprimand, signed by “The People.”¹⁹⁴

Written by one George Thompson, the second of these two pieces of correspondence, published in the *Novascotian* in January of 1835, ultimately caused criminal charges to be brought against the paper’s editor, Joseph Howe. At the letter’s outset, Thompson referred to what he believed was a tendency among Nova Scotians to remain indifferent toward public affairs. It was Thompson’s belief, however, that change could be effected, if only Nova Scotians became engaged in vigilant and deliberative reflection:

Repeated attempts have from time to time been made, by independent minded persons among us, to excite amongst their countrymen some spirit of resistance or opposition to those unwarrantable and unequal exactions, which have been drained from the pockets of the public. But it seems to me that the torpid indifference to public matters which has hitherto been the general characteristic of the people, has at length become quickened and aroused by a calm and deliberate reflection on what must be their future condition if they any longer neglect to look after the servants of the State.¹⁹⁵

¹⁹¹ *Novascotian*, August 28, 1834.

¹⁹² Beck, *Conservative Reformer*, 133. *Novascotian*, October 9, 1834

¹⁹³ Beck, “A Fool for a Client,” 3.

¹⁹⁴ *Novascotian*, November 20, 1834; Beck, *Conservative Reformer*, 133-134.

¹⁹⁵ The second of Thompson’s letters signed, “The People,” *Novascotian*, January 1, 1835.

In a daring plea, Thompson appealed to bourgeois liberals by laying a long history of negligence, misappropriation and even embezzlement at the feet of colonial officials. With confidence, he presented his accusations:

I will venture to affirm, without the possibility of being contradicted by proof, that during the lapse of the last 30 years, the Magistracy and Police have, by one stratagem or other, taken from the pockets of the people, in over exactions, fines, &c.&c. a sum that would exceed in the gross amount of £30,000; and I am prepared to prove my assertions whenever they are manly enough to come forward and justify their conduct to the people. – Can it not be proved, and is it not notorious, that one of the present active Magistrates has contrived for years, to filch from one establishment, and that dedicated to the comfort of the poor and destitute, at least £300 per annum? [...]. Is it not known to every reflecting and observant man, whose business or curiosity has led him to take a view of the municipal bustle of our Court of Sessions, that from the pockets of the poor and distressed at least £1000 is drawn annually, and pocketed by men whose services the Country might well spare.¹⁹⁶

Within a week of publication, the colony's magistrates were demanding prosecution, and by February 4, 1835, Howe was informed by Attorney-General S.G.W. Archibald, that charges of criminal libel would be brought forthwith. Evidence of the reach and influence of the colony's bourgeois public sphere may be found in the reaction that followed Howe's indictment.¹⁹⁷

Letters were written to the press, by both friend and foe, each expressing its writers' support for the embattled Howe; many pledged any effort necessary to assist in his overcoming the hostility of corrupt statesmen.¹⁹⁸ The overwhelming response took even Howe by surprise. In his later address to the jury he stated, "I could not get into my office; it was crammed and the

¹⁹⁶ Ibid. For more on Howe's effective public speaking, see Joseph Howe, Joseph Andrew Chisholm and William Annand, *The Speeches and Public Letters of Joseph Howe. (Based upon Mr. Annand's edition of 1858)*, (Halifax: Chronicle Pub. Co., 1909).

¹⁹⁷ Beck, *Conservative Reformer*, 31-32. See the indictment, James F. Gray, "The Indictment for Libel and Howe's Defense," The Nova Scotia Legislature, 2014, accessed June 14, 2014, <http://nslegislature.ca/index.php/about/joe-howe/indictment>.

¹⁹⁸ One letter of support from a 'foe' was written and published after Howe's acquittal by his "old enemy," Edward Ward of the Temperance Recorder, on March 8, 1835, see Beck, *Conservative Reformer*, 135.

passage leading to it, with people, one of whom had suffered some exaction, had some complaint to expose, or had had justice denied or delayed.”¹⁹⁹ In what may have been an exhibition of their own liberal ideals, even magistrates stood before the presiding Chief Justice to request that Howe be afforded every opportunity to substantiate his allegations.²⁰⁰ Though unable to find a lawyer who had any faith in his ability to overcome the charges, Howe remained confident both in his own capabilities and in the justness of his position:

I went to two or three lawyers in succession, showed them the Attorney-General’s notice of trial and asked them if the case could be successfully defended. The answer was, No: there was no doubt that the letter was a libel; that I must make my peace, or submit to fine and imprisonment. I asked them to lend me their books, gathered an armful, threw myself on a sofa, and read libel law for a week. By that time I had convinced myself that they were wrong, and that there was a good defence, if the case were properly presented to the court and jury.²⁰¹

According to the statutes which governed Howe’s case, the publication of “any matter calculated to degrade the persons at whom it was aimed or disturb the public peace,” was considered libellous, regardless of the truthfulness of the accusation.²⁰² Despite the law’s clarity, Howe, for more than six hours, eloquently stated his case to the jury. Given the great and enduring public interest in the case, and Howe’s status as his own legal representative, certain allowances were made to facilitate his unconventional procedure.²⁰³ Pleading to the hearts and minds of his jurymen, Howe exuded liberal idealism and loyalism by extolling the virtues of British constitutionalism.

Will you, my countrymen, the descendants of these men; warmed by their blood; inheriting their language; and having the principles for which they struggled confided to

¹⁹⁹ See Howe’s speech to the jury in Howe, Chisholm and Annand, *The Speeches*.

²⁰⁰ Beck, *Conservative Reformer*, 135.

²⁰¹ Howe, Chisholm and Annand, *The Speeches*.

²⁰² Cahill, “Sedition in Nova Scotia,” 104. For more on Howe’s case, see Saul, *Joseph Howe*.

²⁰³ Beck, “A Fool for a Client,” 37.

your care, allow them to be violated in your hands? Will you permit the sacred fire of liberty, brought by your fathers from the venerable temples of Britain, to be quenched and trodden out on the simple altars they have raised? Your verdict will be the most important in its consequences, ever delivered before this tribunal; and I conjure you to judge me by the principles of English law, and to leave an unshackled press as a legacy to your children.²⁰⁴

It took the jury just ten minutes to pronounce Howe innocent of the charges: a verdict lauded by virtually every newspaper in the colony.²⁰⁵ A full accounting of the trial was published in the *Novascotian* on March 12, 1835, and was quickly duplicated by a number of colonial journals. Soon after the trial, a pamphlet, which contained excerpts of the trial record, transcribed verbatim, was being sold at newspaper offices across the colony.²⁰⁶ Despite his victory, endorsements of the contemporary press, and persistent popular folklore, Joseph Howe cannot be credited with giving freedom to the colonial press. In most common law justice systems, nineteenth-century Nova Scotia included, jury verdicts cannot alter legislation. Rather than challenge the law's validity, the jury found simply that the facts of the case failed to establish Howe's violation. Only in 1843, when the British parliament enacted a bill permitting the defence of truth, for cases that were deemed to be in the public interest, would the press in Nova Scotia and throughout the British Empire, gain an appreciable measure of liberty.²⁰⁷ Despite the popular hyperbole, Howe's case furthered the entrenchment of liberal values in other ways. Immediate changes in local governance were affected by both the accusations he published and

²⁰⁴ See Howe's speech to the jury in Howe, Chisholm and Annand, *The Speeches*.

²⁰⁵ Beck, "A Fool for a Client," 38.

²⁰⁶ Beck, *Conservative Reformer*, 135.

²⁰⁷ Barry Cahill, "R. v. Howe (1835) for Seditious Libel: A Tale of Twelve Magistrates," *Canadian State Trials, Volume I: Law, Politics and Security Measures, 1608-1837*, ed. Frank Murray Greenwood and Barry Wright (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1996), 547-575; Beck, "A Fool for a Client," 34. For an intriguing analysis of the trial, see Cahill, "Sedition in Nova Scotia," 91-142.

his legal victory. Within days of his acquittal, multiple public officials resigned their posts.²⁰⁸ The words of one such magistrate, Joseph Starr, supports the notion that widespread political engagement had indeed taken hold, “the very name of Magistrate [had become] a byword & reproach in the place, and they are treated with insult by all classes from the highest to the lowest.”²⁰⁹ Words like these must be appreciated as affording great consequence to Howe’s efforts, and those of his fellow newspapermen, to encourage the “calm and deliberate reflection,” that Thompson maintained would lift Nova Scotians from their “torpid indifference to public matters.”²¹⁰ Further evidence for the entrenchment of liberal values may be garnered from ensuing events. When, on March 11, 1835, the colony’s governor named thirteen new magistrates to fill the void left by earlier resignations, an unprecedented nine of his nominees refused to accept the appointment.²¹¹ While most claimed that personal affairs prevented their accommodating the governor’s gracious offer, others, like Haligonian merchant Lawrence Hartsborne, were more forthcoming. Hartsborne admitted that the effects of Howe’s indictment were indeed responsible for his refusal:

The results of the late trial by which it appears that the Editor of a licentious News Paper may, with impurity, first libel the whole Bench of Magistrates, and then in the face of a Court attempt to brand with impunity one of that body [Tremain] who has been on the Commission of the Peace upwards of thirty years, and in my humble opinion conducted himself honorably and zealously.²¹²

In all, Howe’s trial should be appreciated as a pivotal event in the entrenchment of liberal values in Nova Scotia.

²⁰⁸ Beck, *Conservative Reformer*, 142.

²⁰⁹ Beck, “A Fool for a Client,” 39; Starr to George, 4 March 1835, RG 1, vol 252, doc 7.

²¹⁰ The second of Thompson’s letters signed, “The People,” *Novascotian*, January 1, 1835.

²¹¹ Beck, “A Fool for a Client,” 39.

²¹² Beck, *Conservative Reformer*, 142.

The Colonial Press to the 1860s

When assessing the development of the colony's bourgeois public sphere, technological advancements in printing, most notably in the 1840s, must be considered as contributing to the spread and penetration of the public press. Mechanical innovations in newspaper production resounded toward the middle of the nineteenth-century. The steam-driven printing press, first introduced at the *Times of London* in 1814, was brought to British North America by William Cunnabell of Halifax in 1840; thus making possible the rapid production of newspapers and in turn, the transition of British North American printing from craft to industry.²¹³ A newer printing press, the steam cylinder, also saw its British North American debut in the Maritimes, when Fredericton's *Loyalist* purchased the region's first machine. By 1852, Charlottetown became the second British North American town to adopt the innovation.²¹⁴

The greatest single technological advancement for news and the press at large in the Victorian era, however, was certainly the telegraph. For the first time, news from across an island, or across an ocean, was accessible to even smaller publications. The single-wire version, a re-invented variety of the European invention, was introduced by American Samuel F.B. Morse, and was first inaugurated in British North America in December 1846, with a line joining Toronto and Hamilton. Toronto and Montreal were linked shortly after, in August of 1847, and points connecting the Maritimes and Canada were installed by 1850. Halifax and Saint John were coupled with Boston via telegraph a year earlier, in 1849.²¹⁵ Even before the telegraph, when it came to the collection of foreign news and information, Halifax stood in unique stead. Ships from Halifax harbour were routinely dispatched to meet American and British steamers

²¹³ Fetherling, *The Rise of the Canadian Newspaper*, 28.

²¹⁴ *Ibid*, 29.

²¹⁵ *Ibid*, 37.

some fifty miles offshore. After collecting news updates, carrier pigeons would ferry information to the peninsula, thus making Nova Scotians among the first British North Americans to receive foreign news.²¹⁶ This practice, though still employed elsewhere, was discontinued in Halifax with the introduction of telegraphy. These and similar technological advancements combined with social and political factors to make the 1840s a watershed period for the expansion of Nova Scotia's bourgeois public sphere.

Ethno-religious, linguistic, geographic, political, literary, agricultural, denominational and even familial divisions were, in this period, reflected in the colony's public press.²¹⁷ Exchanges between these publications were a critically important part of their continued generation, and editors frequently copied from one another, often at the behest of original authors, to ensure the widest possible distribution of news, thought, and opinion.²¹⁸ The political leanings of the colony's extant newspapers were detailed, though with rather conspicuous partisan overtones, by the *Novascotian* on September 16, 1844:

Of the fourteen newspapers published in Nova Scotia, only three sustain this Government. Two of these, the Royal Gazette and Post are conducted by a venal hireling of the men and views which these journals support. The other is the Christian Messenger, a violent political partizan [sic] paper, circulated under the cloke [sic] of religion, and controlled by the Attorney General... What a picture is thus exhibited of the lean support which his Lordships "leader" and his colleagues derive from the people! The spirit of the Times and the Pictou Chronicle in the East, and the Yarmouth Herald in the West, to say nothing of the journals in the Capital, are in vigorous hostility to the Administration. No wonder then that the Attorney General cherishes a spirit of malice, hatred and revenge towards the liberal press – and particularly, as he must know that its opinions and those of three fourths of the people are identical.²¹⁹

²¹⁶ Ibid.

²¹⁷ Hicks, Murphy and Vohra, *Nova Scotia Newspapers*.

²¹⁸ McNairn, *The Capacity to Judge*, 125-126.

²¹⁹ *Novascotian*, September 16, 1844.

A host of religious and political factions were only too willing to participate in the often bitter exchanges that were common to any free press. It was not unusual for such organizations to seek in newspapers, a vehicle by which their own views and positions might be forwarded in the public mind.²²⁰ Still, the controversy of the late 1830s, and early 1840s, may best be understood as resulting from those issues which separated the colony's numerous and often passionate liberals from the oligarchic Falkland admonition in Halifax.²²¹ With responsible government in 1848, and the further entrenchment of political liberalism, there emerged a new partisan reality that required parties to resituate themselves, in order to determine new political divides. Two Tory publications, the *Times* and the *Post*, ended with the old regime, while a third, the *Gazette*, was acquired and controlled by the majority Liberal party.²²² The colony's politicians did not long labour under the uncertainty of a non-partisan political system, and quickly found a series of issues upon which their platforms might be constructed. Free trade versus protectionism, private versus public operation of colonial railways, relations with the United States and the union of British North America, are just a few of many such examples.

Liberty of the press was a value held dear by virtually all newspapermen of the mid-nineteenth-century. It was often extolled as the 'palladium' of British liberties. The press was an instrument for the diffusion of knowledge; enlightening its readers, protecting liberty and standing as a beacon through which the dark misdeeds of public men could be illuminated. The presence of a strong, diverse and free press was an indicator of civilization.²²³ As Jeffrey McNairn has documented, colonial editors saw increased circulation, or the launching of a new

²²⁰ On voluntary associations see McNairn, *The Capacity to Judge*, Chap. 2.

²²¹ See Phillip A. Buckner, *The Transition to Responsible Government: British Policy in British North America, 1815-1850* (Westport: Greenwood Press, 1985).

²²² Daniel Cobb Harvey, "Newspapers of Nova Scotia, 1840-1867." *Papers of the Bibliographical Society of Canada*. (1987): 139.

²²³ McNairn, *The Capacity to Judge*, 141.

paper, as evidence of their community's membership in a free and progressive world.²²⁴ The degree, to which liberal values were entrenched in Nova Scotia, and throughout British North America, helps explain the formation of countless journals which had few local subscribers on which to rely for their sustenance. By the 1830s, newspaper readers wielded significant control over the extent, direction and range of their public press. Given the precarious financial statuses of most of these publications, publisher's depended on the subscription – and indeed payment – of their subscribers.²²⁵ Prior to the ascension of advertisers as the main source of newspaper revenue, public opinion controlled the press as its essential outlet. The tendency for public regulation of its own channels of exchange indicates a growing belief among the bourgeois elite in the autonomy and ultimate authority of the public sphere.²²⁶ Popular sentiments on the value of the press were captured by Alexander Lawson, editor and proprietor of the *Yarmouth Herald*, on August 9, 1833:

Newspapers have now become an appendage of civilization and abound in every enlightened country. They always increase the intelligence of the people, and whenever they have been once fully established they are never abandoned. It would be difficult to enumerate the many advantages they confer on society: they scatter irresistibly the seeds of knowledge and freedom and multiply the subjects of social conversation, so that they become a necessary element of social life.²²⁷

Newspapers were partisan but engaged in open debate with their opponents and exposed their readers to the public affairs of the colony. As discussed in Chapter Two, and will be

²²⁴ Ibid, 141-142.

²²⁵ Collecting subscription fees was a great difficulty for contemporary publishers. Reminders, encouragement, threats and legal action were often required for collection. Occasionally, editors even published their demands for the benefit of subscribers. The *Novascotian* for example, printed such a reminder on September 14, 1842, "Not very Likely:- That our subscribers will remit us the amount of their subscription due, b the next mail. More than Likely – That many of them will not pay us for years – and others never." *Novascotian*, September 14, 1842.

²²⁶ McNairn, *The Capacity to Judge*, 143.

²²⁷ *Yarmouth Herald* August 9, 1833.

demonstrated in chapters four and five, deliberation, fairness and well-reasoned attention, were hallmarks of the public sphere's debates on union. Between 1840 and 1867, the landscape of the press in Nova Scotia remained quite fluid. At least eighty independent publications existed at one time or another, while only six managed to endure throughout the entirety of the period. Approximately fifteen newspapers remained in print, on average, at any given time, and no more than thirty were ever being published simultaneously. The vast majority of these newspapers were native to Halifax, though Pictou and Yarmouth managed to maintain two opposing journals throughout the majority of the decades in question. Other centres managed, on occasion, to host successful publications, including for example the *Antigonish Casket* that, launched by John Boyd in 1852, continues into the present day.²²⁸ In 1839, Nova Scotia hosted thirteen newspapers; by 1848, this number grew to eighteen and in 1864, twenty-four publications comprised its entire press landscape. As evidence of the field's fluidity, one might consider that in the intervening years, at least fifty-eight journals were both invested and discontinued. By the 1850s, news also began to be appreciated as perishable. More daily-issued newspapers appeared, many distinguishing themselves from their weekly, bi-weekly, and tri-weekly competitors by including the term 'daily' in their titles. Most were morning papers, despite the fact that telegraphy favoured delayed publication, until the *Saint John Globe* sought to distinguish itself with evening delivery. Many continued to carry the 'daily', 'morning', and 'evening' distinctions right up until the eve of the Second World War.²²⁹

That liberalism became increasingly entrenched in Nova Scotia throughout the first half of the nineteenth-century is without doubt; that the bourgeois public sphere developed into a

²²⁸ See K. G. Pryke, "BOYD, JOHN (1823-80)," in *Dictionary of Canadian Biography*, vol. 10, University of Toronto/Université Laval, 2003–, accessed June 15, 2014, http://www.biographi.ca/en/bio/boyd_john_1823_80_10E.html.

²²⁹ Hicks, Murphy and Vohra, *Nova Scotia Newspapers*.

formidable and even decisive player in colonial society is equally certain. By exploring their projects of growth in Nova Scotia, assisted by the colony's immigrants, religious settlers, merchants, loyalists and most notably, newspapermen, this chapter has sought to illustrate that by the 1860s, the colony had attained the necessary capacity and experience to engage in an wide-ranging, deliberative and sophisticated public debate on questions of political union. The remainder of this study is dedicated to exploring this public union dialogue, and will engage in a systematic examination of some of its varied themes, subjects and details.

Chapter Four: Second Thoughts are Ever Wiser:
The Union Dialogue of Nova Scotia's Public Sphere: an Exercise in Deliberative Democracy

Education begins the gentleman, but reading, good company and reflection must finish him.
—John Locke ²³⁰

* * * * *

Examinations of Confederation are likely the most prolific of all histories of Canada. Virtually every Canadian history textbook contains a chapter that details the plans, conferences and structures of the federation brought to fruition in 1867. Less abundant are historical examinations of the Confederation debates had, not by the political elite who ultimately crafted the scheme, but by the colonial public that, with equal attention, examined and debated prospective union. Still fewer are histories that examine the debates on union in principle, rather than those which considered the specific framework offered by the Quebec Resolutions. In 1863 and 1864, before the negotiation of explicit plans for the pursuit of federation, Nova Scotia's bourgeois public sphere considered union in principle. This chapter argues that a multitude of union consequences were debated, and newspapers, rather than standing in support or opposition, remained entirely receptive to persuasive argumentation. Over these two years, conclusions had yet to be drawn and a truly broad and deliberative dialogue was had by press within the public sphere.

The second central objective of this chapter concerns a long-practised tendency for historians to divide contemporary Maritimers into pro- and anti-union clusters. It asserts that when considering the union dialogue of Nova Scotia's public press, prior to the production of the Quebec Resolutions, qualitative description of debate participants' even-handed reflection,

²³⁰ The quote is drawn from John Locke, *Some Thoughts Concerning Education* (Edinburgh: J. Brown, 1752).

deliberation, reserved judgement and receptiveness to effective arguments, provides the best possible historical insight. Not only do efforts toward categorization obscure nuance, they deny the roles of historical contingency and individual agency in the ongoing development of personal and editorial opinion. This chapter reconsiders historians' continued usage of compartmentalization to illustrate popular opinion in the period under examination. It considers the extent and subject matter of union debates in Nova Scotia, by probing relevant editorials of the colonial public press. Additionally, the chapter utilizes extensive direct quotations drawn from contemporary newspapers and emphasizes close textual analyses. As the members of the public press were well aware of the significance of their debates and of the value of sincere reflection, their words alone can best illustrate their exercise of deliberative democracy.

Nova Scotia and Union Historiography

Recent Confederation historiography dedicates surprisingly little attention to the union dialogue of the public sphere. Professor Peter Russell's *Constitutional Odyssey: Can Canadians Become a Sovereign People?*, for example, examines Confederation conferences in detail, but refers to the newspaper debates only in passing. Russell notes that, "[w]hile the politicians were debating and drafting behind the closed doors of the cabinet room, the numerous and lively newspapers of the day carried on a spirited constitutional debate." Despite the acknowledgment, he selects not to examine that dialogue and instead directs his readers to Peter B. Waite's 1962 review of newspaper coverage.²³¹ Likewise, Frederick Vaughan's *The Canadian Federalist Experiment: From Defiant Monarchy to Reluctant Republic*, proceeds directly from an

²³¹ Peter Russell, *Constitutional Odyssey: Can Canadians Become a Sovereign People?* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1993), 20-21. Russell refers his readers to Waite, *The Life and Times*.

assessment of “The Enlightenment and the Foundations of Modern Government in England and America,” to a discussion of delegates and conferences. While Vaughan spends considerable time detailing the debates of the political elite, he too selects not to explore the simultaneous dialogue of the public sphere.²³² Also in 2003, Janet Ajzenstat et. al. published a wonderful contribution to the historiography of Canada’s Confederation debates. Despite the volume’s great value, its authors similarly elected to explore only those debates conducted by the political elite, and do not approach those organized by the colonial public. The book’s introduction states, “all parties and political persuasions are represented: conservatives and liberals, confederates and anti-confederates. [...]. Our aim is to present the Fathers of Canadian Confederation, their supporters, and their opponents not merely as thinkers about their country but as thinkers about politics – men consciously acting within the tradition of political thought. [...].” Ajzenstat continues by noting that,

“The immediate question before the legislators in these years is whether and on what terms to join union. [...] these concerns lead rapidly to deliberations on a deeper character. What is the best form of government? Are parliamentary institutions the only choice? What is the purpose of government? Liberty? Prosperity? Democracy? Is parliamentary government democratic? What gives a constitution legitimacy in the eyes of the people? What makes a nation great? Much of the fascination of the debates for readers today lies in what the speakers say on these perennial topics.”²³³

This outline is no more apt to describe the debates of the political elite than those of the bourgeois public sphere, and as such, applies just as well to this study as it does to Ajzenstat's own. Another, more recent, of Ajzenstat’s contributions, *The Canadian Founding: John Locke*

²³² Frederick Vaughan, *The Canadian Federalist Experiment: From Defiant Monarchy to Reluctant Republic* (Montreal & Kingston: McGill-Queens University Press, 2003).

²³³ Ajzenstat, et. al., *Canada's Founding Debates*, 1-2.

and Parliament, likewise examines liberal values and the union dialogue of parliament, but fails to accommodate the wider public debates.²³⁴

Samuel V. LaSelva's 1996 examination of the politicians' debates and conferences was brought to a close when LaSelva states, "At the Quebec Conference of 1864 and after, Canadians engaged in a full and famous debate. That debate contains a plurality of constitutional visions, in which ideas about imperial government were opposed to beliefs about popular sovereignty, and the war of races and nationalities was opposed to ethnic harmony and to the Canadian political nationality."²³⁵ Unfortunately, the commonly employed and subtly restrictive premise of his statement, denies the existence of pre-conference considerations of union in principle, by ignoring the wider, popular, diverse and deliberative debates of the public press that occurred in 1863 and 1864. A common scholarly assumption, that, "[Canadian Confederation] was not a popular movement, but [was] the work of a few master-builders," is challenged by examinations of the thorough and effective union dialogue orchestrated by the colonial public.²³⁶

Certain older scholarship has examined the Confederation debates of the Maritimes, and some has even considered those which occurred within the public sphere. Chester Martin's 1955 study, for example, concentrated on Maritime opposition to the Quebec scheme, and fairly concluded that the phenomenon was too general to be the result of personality or parochialism.²³⁷ He does, however, like most examinations of Maritime reflection on union, revert to innate conservatism as a means of explaining the trend. Another older piece of scholarship, Donald Creighton's 1964 examination of Confederation, employed a teleological framework that serves

²³⁴ Ajzenstat, *The Canadian Founding*, 27.

²³⁵ Samuel V. LaSelva, *The Moral Foundations of Canadian Federalism: Paradoxes, Achievements, and Tragedies of Nationhood* (Montreal & Kingston: McGill-Queens University Press, 1996), 48.

²³⁶ *Ibid.*

²³⁷ Martin, *Foundations of Canadian Nationhood*.

as a prime example of the consensus approach most common in the 1960s.²³⁸ His analysis often leads to the dismissal of popular notions of Maritime opposition, and rather than challenge the accuracy of conventional wisdom, he tends instead to obscure Maritime sentiments as parochial, and the result of a “national lethargy.”²³⁹ In 1971, D.A. Muise published a study that, for the first time, explored the motivations behind Maritime sentiments.²⁴⁰ He argued that pro-Confederation attitudes in the Maritimes did indeed play a more significant role than conventional scholarship had indicated. Muise explored pro- and anti-Confederation sensibilities within an economic framework, which he claimed, accounts for differing views. Younger and more progressive members of the colony, who were prepared to transition to a commercial economy, were, according to Muise, more receptive of the union principle, while older colonists, committed to the traditions of wood, wind and sail, were far more likely to stand in opposition.²⁴¹ While the study does well to account for diverse Maritime sentiments, it fails to afford contingency a role in determining opinion, and as such, removes a certain degree of agency from the people of the Maritimes. Muise is also forced, by the nature of his study, to divide colonists into two opposing camps. While certainly a popular approach of extant scholarship, the application of strict groupings based on region, age, and economic station, inherently suggests that colonists with open minds were unable to determine their own positions according to persuasive argument. Finally, the study seems unable to differentiate between opinion on union in principle, and sentiments pertaining to the Quebec scheme, and as such, fails to examine the colonial debates on their own terms and as they actually occurred.

²³⁸ Creighton, *The Road to Confederation*.

²³⁹ *Ibid*, 10.

²⁴⁰ D.A. Muise, *Elections and Constituencies: Federal Politics in Nova Scotia, 1867-1878*. (PhD diss., University of Western Ontario, 1971).

²⁴¹ D.A. Muise, *Elections and Constituencies*.

At least two dated studies directly examine the union debates that took place within the public spheres of the Maritime colonies. John Heisler's 1950 article, "The Halifax Press and British North American Union, 1856-1864," rightfully argued against the then-popular notion that Maritime opposition was sufficiently universal as to entirely obscure local support.²⁴² Several features of Heisler's article necessitate a reassessment of his subject, however. Historical scholarship of the past six decades, when taken together, affords an entirely new framework through which the question may be examined. Scholarly appreciation of the entrenchment of liberalism, and recent advancements in historicizing the bourgeois public sphere, combine to effect a meaningful shift in how analysts might approach the public union debates. Secondly, Heisler's study examines Halifax newspapers in isolation, and does not incorporate those editorial opinions emanating from beyond municipal boundaries. Though most certainly still useful, his conclusions are unable to influence wider colonial or even regional studies. By limiting his assessment to Halifax proper, the remainder of mainly rural peninsular Nova Scotia remains unconsidered, despite the fact that the colony's public sphere most certainly accommodated editorial opinion from beyond the polity's center. In this way, Heisler's assessment considers only a fraction of the public debate, and leads potentially to his mistaking a partial dialogue as representative of colonial sentiment on the whole. Finally, and most significantly, Heisler's examination, like most conventional historiography, remains committed to delegating newspapers into pro and anti-union parties. This trend, more than any other, is responsible for the extant scholarship's failure to afford appropriate agency to citizens of the Maritimes, by either ignoring, or denying their open-mindedness, considered approach, and general receptiveness; items so essentially characteristic of debates in the public sphere.

²⁴² John Heisler, "The Halifax Press and British North America Union, 1856-1864," *Dalhousie Review*, 30 (1950).

In 1962, Peter B. Waite produced what some still consider as the authoritative assessment of the union debates in the Maritimes.²⁴³ Again influenced by the decade's 'consensus approach', Waite's examination minimized opposition to union, in order to accentuate the national accomplishment that was Confederation. Though not, like Chester Martin, teleological in approach, Waite asserts that Confederation was an inevitable result of persistent external pressures exerted on British North America. He also acknowledged the existence of pro-confederate sentiments in the Maritimes, and believed that such support could be traced to regional aspirations for a greater nation.²⁴⁴ Waite's conclusion, that Nova Scotia was "dragooned" into union, however, obscures the nature of the union debates, again denying agency while ignoring contingency. Like most other scholars, Waite also attempts to organize pro- and anti-union categories.

In 1990, Phillip Buckner published an article in the *Canadian Historical Review* that called for a reassessment of Confederation in the Maritimes.²⁴⁵ Buckner concludes that far too much historiography views the Maritimes as a collection of parochial and conservative communities, content with the status quo and "trapped in intellectual lethargy."²⁴⁶ His assertion, that Maritimers were acutely aware of the external events that made union desirable is confirmed by the evidence in this thesis. Likewise is his conclusion that no external pressures could have compelled the Maritime colonies into accepting union if ultimately, they remained convinced

²⁴³ Waite, *The Life and Times*. I define Waite's text as authoritative after considering the extent of modern scholarly citations. Google notes 76 such citations, though more most certainly exist. See references in among many others Russell, *Constitutional Odyssey*; Phillip A. Buckner, *the Atlantic Region to Confederation: A History* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1994); Thomas O. Hueglin and Alan Fenna, *Comparative Federalism: A Systematic Inquiry* (Toronto: Broadview Press, 2006); Jennifer Smith, *Federalism* (Vancouver: UBC Press, 2004).

²⁴⁴ Waite, *The Life and Times*, 89.

²⁴⁵ Buckner, "CHR Dialogue."

²⁴⁶ *Ibid*, 2.

that the scheme was not in their own best interest. Buckner appeals for a new scholarly assessment, one that diverts from conventional assumptions, and will examine the Maritimes as they were. As well-considered as his article most certainly is, he too seems unable to separate public considerations of the union principle, from those of particular schemes, namely the Quebec Resolutions. Before scholars can answer Buckner's call for the reassessment of Maritime debates over the Quebec Resolutions, they must first seek to understand fundamental reactions to the concept of union. It is only by separating these two stages of the public debate that motivations for support or opposition may be discovered. This framework is also uniquely positioned to encourage scholarly reflection on how meaningful arguments influenced the formation of opinion, and thus position, on questions of union. In this way, shifts in opinion that may have occurred after the Quebec scheme's release can be fairly attributed to genuine opposition to its terms, rather than to union in principle, or other contemporary developments. The ensuing analysis seeks to realize the first stage of this investigative chronology by examining the union debates of the public sphere as they existed, prior to the Quebec Resolutions. Though neglected by much of the extant scholarship, in the twenty-some months preceding the Charlottetown Conference, there was indeed a thorough, thematically broad and deliberative public dialogue that considered union in principle as no specific schemes had yet been proposed. This study examines 1863 and 1864 as a distinct period, inaugurated by the cessation of initial pan-British North American cooperation on the Intercolonial railway, and terminated by the commencement of the Quebec Conference.

Phillip Buckner has noted that while it may indeed seem satisfying to match ethno-religious categories with dichotomous sets of interests, in doing so, scholars have often obscured

the diversity which existed on both sides of the union question.²⁴⁷ Rather than attempt to construct pro- and anti-union groupings, this chapter maintains that when considering the union dialogue of Nova Scotia's public press, prior to the Quebec scheme, fluidity of thought, even-handed reflection, deliberation, reserved judgement and receptiveness to effective argumentation, together provide the best historical insight. Cautious deliberation, exercised as it was on a nearly global basis, should cause historians to reconsider their use of pro- and anti-confederate labels, most certainly when describing the period in question. By relying too heavily on analyses which seek to find ideological and fundamentalist assertions of principle, the nuance with which editorial judgement was most often pronounced, can quite easily become lost. Evidence indeed suggests that the colonial polity was much more open-minded and deliberative than conventional scholarly wisdom has thus far suggested.

Preparation for Union, Proposed Methodologies and Scholarly Longings for Classification

The first aspect of union dialogue this chapter will consider concerns not the principle of union, which most contemporary editors claimed to support, but Nova Scotia's readiness for it. On several occasions throughout 1863 and 1864, the *Acadian Recorder* noted a common lack of preparedness for union across all the colonies of British North America.²⁴⁸ On November 7, 1863 it argued:

The two Canadas had no union a short time ago. Union it was declared was the medicine which would give perfect health to Canada. She got union and Canada was never so sick as at the present time. Let us be prepared for union before we seek it, or we may get such union as will not be well for us. Many a disconsolate youth has believed that

²⁴⁷ Buckner, "CHR Dialogue," 13.

²⁴⁸ Included among others, are articles published on November 2, 1863, November 7, 1863, April 2, 1864 and August 20, 1864.

hymenial union was about the thing of all others that would suit him best; but alas for spooney!²⁴⁹

The *Recorder's* belief that "Canada was never so sick as at the present time" was generally accepted by many Nova Scotians assessing union prospects. Maritimers had long watched political events unfold in the united Canadas, and their own conceptions of federalism were greatly influenced by what they perceived to be Canadian failures. Two opposing alliances in the Canadian assembly ensured that, along with the virtual double-majority required to pass bills, legislative accomplishment was increasingly unattainable. The moderate liberal alliance between John A. Macdonald's Conservatives and George-Étienne Cartier's Bleus was effectively balanced by the more radical reformist bloc of George Brown's Reformers and Antoine Dorion's anticlerical Rouges. From the founding of the united Province of Canada, the polity's *raison d'être*, according both to the British and a large proportion of Anglophone Canadians, was to affect the assimilation and eventual absorption of the francophone element.²⁵⁰ In spite of the numerical majority of French Canadians, their population of 650,000 and Anglophone Upper Canada's 450,000 inhabitants were each afforded equal representation in the joint assembly. Canadians quickly realized however, that colonial harmony and ethnic annihilation were irreconcilable goals, and a certain degree of governmental duality had to be permitted. As such, accommodation included the retention of French civil law in Canada East, the appointment of separate superintendents of education, and the ongoing expectation that twin Anglophone and Francophone Prime Ministers, would co-govern the "unified" state.²⁵¹ Cooperation, negotiation and compromise were quickly accepted as necessary for effective governance.²⁵² Despite certain

²⁴⁹ *Acadian Recorder*, November 7, 1863.

²⁵⁰ Russell, *Constitutional Odyssey*, 17-19.

²⁵¹ *Ibid.*

²⁵² *Ibid.*

successes, by the early 1860s, Canadian politics had degenerated into deadlock. Earlier political crises had also moved Canadian politics toward stalemate in 1851, 1854, 1857 and 1858, as they did in 1863 and 1864.²⁵³ For those Maritimers who considered Canadian political impasses, federalism and the potential for unity with French Canada provoked considerable anxiety.²⁵⁴

Returning to the *Acadian Recorder*'s November 7th article, one should consider a number of essential questions posed by the journal. "Are we at all ready for union?" "Are there any signs of political union among these British Colonies?" "Is not each Colony too busily occupied?" "Are not the intellects of our statesmen too much pressed down by the grave cares of petty party bickerings?"²⁵⁵ Despite their seeming apprehension, these questions must not be viewed as the simple rhetoric of a publication that seeks to either dissuade its readership from supporting union, or detract from particular arguments. Rather, the journal's caution may be better appreciated as a means to effect sober reconsideration both among the colony's population and its leading statesmen. By the end of 1863, it was widely apparent that attempts to create greater economic integration and cooperation between the colonies of British North America, without the pursuit of similar political changes, had failed.²⁵⁶ Less evident was that failure to achieve inter-colonial integration would ultimately kindle interest in, and indeed the pursuit of, political union. The *Acadian Recorder* continued its November 7th article by noting features of governance that continued to separate, rather than amalgamate Britain's North American colonies.

²⁵³ John L. Finlay and D.N. Sprague, *The Structure of Canadian history, Sixth Edition* (Scarborough: Prentice Hall Allyn and Bacon Canada, 2000), 184.

²⁵⁴ *Ibid*, 182-183.

²⁵⁵ *Ibid*.

²⁵⁶ R.C. Nelson, et. al., "Canadian Confederation as a Case Study in Community Formation," *The Causes of Canadian Confederation*, ed. Ged Martin (Fredericton: Acadiensis Press, 1990), 50-85; Ged Martin, *Britain and the Origins of Canadian Confederation, 1837-67* (Vancouver: UBC Press, 1995), 11.

The Colonies can hardly be said to exist under the same forms of government. Our Legislative Councils - our House of Lords differ in the most essential particular. As yet the people of this Colony and New Brunswick tacitly declare themselves in favour of the British principle: in Canada and Prince Edward Island the people have chosen the Republican principle. Unite the Colonies without assimilating these elements of the constitution and how soon would you hear a wail for divorce. There is the Elective franchise. Will the empty cry of Union satisfy communities without the preliminary education which assimilates their ideas on such an important question as this? No, not a union of the most bald commercial nature.²⁵⁷

Regardless of perceived contradictions, these are the words of a publication which wholeheartedly espoused the probable benefits of union. "We only hope the future history of the scheme may prove how groundless are any complaints of ours. We accord every honor due to the men who are moving in this matter, and we bid them God speed in restoring the ancient Acadia to the map of North America."²⁵⁸ The *Acadian Recorder* again expressed its hope for the success of the union project when it stated, "we are ready to believe that the way may be prepared by delegations, and by an interchange of hospitalities, and we hope the time is not far off when we shall have a legislative union which will bind the far West with the shores of the Atlantic as firmly as the British Islands are now bound together."²⁵⁹ Intriguingly, the newspaper's support for union was not, at this point, limited to any one potential scheme, as it voiced equal favor for the regional variant of Maritime union:

We cannot fancy what objection- what reasonable objection there is to a union [of the Maritime Provinces]. The time may not be opportune, there may be much to do by way of preparation which has been neglected; but we have no patience to argue with the man who objects to a resort for the populations of New Brunswick, Nova Scotia and Prince

²⁵⁷ *Acadian Recorder*, November 7, 1863.

²⁵⁸ *Ibid*, April 2, 1864. In this case, the contrasting excerpts clearly refer to Maritime union. However, similar contradictions appear across the spectrum of union dialogue and as such, no differentiation need be made.

²⁵⁹ *Ibid*, April 20, 1864.

Edward Island, to one Governor, one Executive, one Parliament, one Capital, a common Judiciary, a common Tariff, and a common patriotism.²⁶⁰

The *Recorder's* dual conviction is undeniable as it repeatedly expressed its sincerest hopes for a wider union that would bind the entirety of British North America in statehood:

With the same resources, the same climate, the same aims, and interests, and aspirations, we colonists have been struggling along with as little harmony as if we had been antipodes to each other. We have been obstructing each other's paths cutting each other's throats, while we ought to have been shoulder to shoulder. Split up and divided by feuds and centuries of war, and historical hatred for an undiscoverable period of the past, the world is still looking every year for certain signs of a union of the 40 million dwellers on the Italian peninsula, under a government and system such as makes England happy and prosperous. The 3(3) [sic] little republics of North America with separate Governors, Legislators and Judiciaries are not a cheerful picture of the blessings of little states. It is now no longer a matter of fancy with us. Safety calls aloud for our union, preparatory to a union of British America.²⁶¹

A close reading of these excerpts reveals several threads of argumentation that, together, convinced the *Recorder's* editors, and those of other publications, that the colonies were not yet ready for union.²⁶² Their first quarrel emerges from the notion that the colonial leaders of all provinces concerned, had failed to devote adequate attention to meaningful preparation. The article argues, for example, that a lack of political will has allowed internal affairs to, “[keep] us too busy,” and that as such, “petty party bickerings,” continue to monopolize political attention. Secondly, the editorial asserts that the political differences now separating the colonies must be diminished, if not eliminated, before the provinces may be ready for union. While they share similar resources, climates, aims and interests, they remain separated, argues the *Recorder*, by their continued maintenance of disparate forms of government, constitutions, and election

²⁶⁰ Ibid, April 2, 1864.

²⁶¹ Ibid.

²⁶² Similar sentiments were expressed consistently by the *Acadian Recorder*, but also, among others, by the *British Colonist* on January 21, 1863; the *Halifax Citizen* on July 28, 1864, September 4, 1864 and September 8, 1864; and by the *Yarmouth Tribune* on December 3, 1863.

franchises. Finally, the *Recorder* notes, without analysis, that not only do these colonies stand apart, but they continue to actively impede one another, presumably by way of economic competition; that rather than “standing shoulder to shoulder,” they obstruct “each other’s paths” and “[cut] each other’s throats.” On September 4, 1864, the *Halifax Citizen* likewise asserts that, “[a] great deal has to be done, a great many difficulties removed out of the way, before we can have a united British America.”²⁶³ Similar sentiments are also presented in the *Yarmouth Tribune*, on December 16, 1863, when its editors suggest, “[...] other difficulties await removal; pending which a Union of all the Provinces is manifestly impossible. Moreover, more intimate relationships of a commercial nature would seem to be necessary preliminaries; and these are not likely to be brought about until the question of Intercolonial communication shall have emerged from the clouds that beset it now.”²⁶⁴ The *Tribune*’s editors thus add to the press’ collective list of required preparations, the advancement of “intercolonial communication,” by which the *Tribune* most assuredly refers to the Intercolonial Railway.

In 1861, a singular diplomatic incident convinced imperial authorities and British North American colonists alike, of their need for greater defensive infrastructure. The American Civil War, which had recently begun, led to the Northern Union army’s violation of Great Britain’s access to “freedom of the sea.”²⁶⁵ The *Trent*, a steamship carrying representatives of the Confederacy was on its way to Great Britain in order to negotiate the potential for British aid to Southern interests. Union forces, which received word of the *Trent*’s intentions, intercepted the ship in hopes of preventing any alliance between the Confederacy and Great Britain. In preventing a British-bound ship from reaching its destination, and arresting the Confederate

²⁶³ *Halifax Citizen*, September 4, 1864.

²⁶⁴ *Yarmouth Tribune*, December 16, 1863.

²⁶⁵ Finlay and Sprague, *The Structure of Canadian History*, 193-194.

ambassadors at gunpoint in international waters, the Yankee North infuriated imperial officials.²⁶⁶ While calmer heads prevailed, a number of British administrators were clamouring for war. All could agree however, that strengthening British North American defenses was, in the face of an ongoing American Civil War, a wise recourse, and fourteen thousand British troops were sent to reinforce the American colonies. Unfortunately, they arrived too late in 1861 to successfully navigate their ships through frozen North American waters, in order to reach the easternmost terminus of the Grand Trunk Railway. Instead, they were forced to disembark at Saint John and proceed on land, and often through heavy snow, eleven-hundred kilometres westward.²⁶⁷ This incident would instigate talk of an Intercolonial Railroad, and while initial prospects for colonial cooperation seemed promising, Canada, much to the chagrin of the imperial and Maritime governments, would soon withdraw from the project.²⁶⁸

Despite their concerns over timing and readiness, can the *Recorder*, *Citizen* and *Tribune*, which published the above excerpts, be fairly considered to favour union? If so, is it Maritime Union or some wide scheme which their editors, at this point, would truly prefer? Also, if union did appeal to the publishers of these journals, what might be made of their harsh warnings against its pursuit? These questions have been approached by a number of previous histories, including some of those discussed in this chapter's introduction, and while they are certainly fair to pose, one must, prior to seeking their solution, consider the value of their prospective answers. Rather than attempting to reconcile the seemingly contradictory assessments put forth by the *Acadian Recorder* and a number of its contemporaries, might their simple illustration provide more useful insight?

²⁶⁶ Ibid.

²⁶⁷ Ibid.

²⁶⁸ Ibid.

Those who seek to reconcile the conflicting opinions of any single member of Nova Scotia's bourgeois public sphere must inherently presume two distinct hypotheses. Firstly, that individual editors and publishers of the public press presented inconsistent and sometimes conflicting thoughts and opinions on political union; and secondly, that accepting and describing the existence of such contradiction, cannot alone provide sufficient historical insight into the public dialogue as it existed. The first of these two premises is undeniable, as a certain degree of contradiction is evident, even in the few excerpts already presented. The second however, which presumes that reflective confliction cannot account for a perfectly balanced, complete and expedient point of view, necessitates re-examination. A pertinent observation is offered by Jeffery McNairn, who has identified a tendency among newspapers to shift, manipulate and merge their views, in order to fashion as complete an assessment as possible. McNairn notes that scholars have often failed to appreciate the significance of this flexibility, by assuming that "words meant to function strategically in specific contexts can be swept into a few tidy compartments."²⁶⁹ By classifying newspapers, at this early stage of the dialogue, as either pro- or anti-union, historians have sometimes allowed for open-ended argument and reserved judgement to go by unacknowledged. Such conclusions tend to stifle rather than illuminate debates of the public sphere and obscure the deliberative nature of participant reflection. If we revert back to our business meeting metaphor, this need for labelling may be equated to one's pre-determining each employee's attitudes toward merger, before they have had the chance to thoroughly consider its consequences and arrive freely at their own conclusions.

On July 28, 1864, the *Halifax Citizen* again presented its concerns over timing and preparation. Its editorial noted:

²⁶⁹ McNairn, *The Capacity to Judge*, 13.

The News thinks that eventually there will be a union of all the Provinces: and that if it can be affected now on terms alike advantageous to the Lower Provinces and to Canada, it might as well go into operation at once. This is quite time: but the "if" is a rather important one, and is likely to bar the immediate consummation of the scheme. A union "alike advantageous to all the Provinces" is scarcely possible under present circumstances; and Canada must find a solution of her local troubles, some means of reducing her tariff without increasing her debt, and of placing herself financially on a footing of equality with the Lower Provinces, before it would be prudent for the latter to take any decided approach to a union with Canada, on such a basis as is now contemplated between the maritime Provinces.²⁷⁰

In the article from which the above excerpt is drawn, the *Citizen* voiced neither support for nor antagonism toward the concept of union, but rather pronounced doubt over the value of preparatory steps thus far taken by Canada. By engaging in a discussion of the union prospect, William Garvie and his editors were, to a certain extent, declaring themselves open to union in theory. By noting relevant deficiencies that are capable of being overcome the publication opens the way for how, in its editors' opinion, union may one day manifest. This commentary is best characterized as, of yet, neither pro- nor anti-union, but rather as being open to consideration and amenable to persuasion. The *Citizen* confirmed this assessment on September 4, 1864:

Every person here who thinks about it at all, hopes and believes that a Union will be effected sooner or later, and may believe that it must be, if these Colonies are to be preserved from absorption into the neighbouring republic; but no person believes that an immediate Union is desirable or even possible. A great deal has to be done, a great many difficulties removed out of the way, before we can have a united British America.²⁷¹

Though some may be tempted to pronounce the paper as pro-union, based simply on the optimistic preamble of this excerpt, hesitation is warranted. With reflection, one need first consider whether if, in actual fact, it is even possible for the *Citizen* to truly favour a project that has yet to be fully conceptualized. By asserting that all due consideration of the scheme must

²⁷⁰ *Halifax Citizen*, July 28, 1864. Recall that the "local troubles" to which the *Citizen* refers, likely denotes the political dead-lock that had gripped the united Province of Canada by 1863, as it had numerous years prior.

²⁷¹ *Ibid*, September 4, 1864.

produce a favourable impression, is the newspaper really moving beyond the open-minded receptiveness required by liberal concepts of free and fair debate, and closer to a pro-union position? Though William Garvie and his writers do indeed prescribe remedies to the current state of affairs, which they have determined, at present, to preclude union, these same men can hardly know, should such steps be feasible, whether they alone would be sufficient to enlist their support. Prior to the advent and release of the Quebec scheme, conceptions of union remained theoretical.

While a number of newspapers presented frameworks, that would, in the opinion of their proponents, have been better options than certain others, few newspapermen would, or perhaps even could (as they simply could not yet know), determine any design that would enlist their unequivocal support. All that was had at this point was an open and honest dialogue on the apparent advantages and disadvantages of potential scenarios and particular parameters. In the same September 4, 1864 issue of the *Halifax Citizen*, Garvie and his writers conceptualized a scheme from which Nova Scotians may prefer to withdraw.

On another point, also, the people of the maritime Provinces are united in opinion;- they believe that a confederation is not suited to the requirements of the country or the political sentiments of the people and that the splitting up of Canada in several Provinces, on the Federal plan, will be fatal to the national hopes of British Americans. But there is no great prospect of the Brown-Cartier proposal of Canadian federation being accomplished. Judging from the tone of the Canadian press of all shades of politics, no body there places much faith in the scheme, or in the sincerity of the men proposing it.²⁷²

As may be fairly expected, much of the public dialogue of the bourgeois public sphere concerns proposals of methods for union. These deliberations were not intended to delineate their participants into pro- and anti-union groups, nor could they have done so. Public considerations of methodology were often organized according to an 'if-then' paradigm that was intended to

²⁷² Ibid, September 4, 1864. Note again the emphasis with which the *Citizen* rejects federalism.

broaden the scope of dialogue, rather than demand precise constraints. The *British Colonist*, on September 20, 1864 provides an example.

It is considered, we believe, on all sides, that the area of B.N. America is too extended for a Legislative Union' and the recent difficulties in the adjoining Republic have not been encouraging in regard to Federation. It would not however be necessary to imitate that model too closely in forming a Confederation, and we understand it is not proposed to do so. By making the Federal Legislature very large, the advantages of a Legislative Union would be to a large extent obtained while the preservation of a local Government in each of the Provinces would secure due attention to all strictly local objects. Instead of the local Parliaments possessing all the powers not specially delegated by the Constitution to the General Legislature, the General Government would probably possess all the powers of a general character which had not been confided specially to the local Governments, except such as are inconsistent with Colonial Institutions. In this way, the position of the General Government would be rendered important without sacrificing the close and careful consideration of public affairs which is so essential to the progress and advancement of every country.²⁷³

On September 22, 1864, the *Halifax Citizen* likewise suggested:

We hold with the hon. Mr. McDonald [sic], that "the union of all these Provinces will be for the advantage and benefit of all;" and the more the subject is investigated, either in its political or commercial aspects, the more will the truth of this proposition be manifest. But a union, to be thus beneficial, must be a union in reality- a perfect incorporation of all the sections of British America into a single whole; and not a partnership of separate States, each independent of the other, and carrying the elements of its own dissolution within the very terms of the compact.²⁷⁴

External Factors

Consider the subject matter approached by these considerations of methodology. On September 4, 1864 the *Citizen* mentioned the potential for, "absorption into the neighbouring republic."²⁷⁵ On September 22, it noted that British North America would not benefit from, "[a] partnership of separate States, each independent of the other, and carrying the elements of its

²⁷³ *British Colonist*, September 20, 1864.

²⁷⁴ *Halifax Citizen*, September 22, 1864.

²⁷⁵ *Ibid*, September 4, 1864.

own dissolution within the very terms of the compact.²⁷⁶ The *British Colonist* of September 20th likewise referred to, “the recent difficulties in the adjoining Republic,” and how they, “have not been encouraging in regard to Federation,”²⁷⁷ while the *Acadian Recorder* of April 2, 1864 proclaimed that, “safety calls aloud for our union, preparatory to a union of British America.”²⁷⁸ Evidenced in all the preceding excerpts is the clear and definite influence of an external phenomenon, the Civil War in the United States. Inherent in these editors’ unwillingness to entertain the federal principle, in addition to the Canadian example, is their widespread, consequential, and alarmed awareness of what seemed to be the ensuing dissolution of the American federation.²⁷⁹

The *Trent Affair* was not unique in bringing the American Civil War to the shores of Britain’s Maritime colonies. It was after all the bloodiest conflict in America's history, where fighting, disease and famine led to the deaths of more than 600,000.²⁸⁰ It was a total war where civilian property and collective infrastructure was not immune to attack and exploitation.²⁸¹ In British North America, the war’s shockwaves reverberated through the newspapers, telegraph reports and personal correspondence that crossed the border.²⁸² The *Trent Affair* caused the first realizations among Maritimers, in perhaps fifty years, that war with the United States was indeed a possibility. The *Chesapeake* incident again brought home the fact that the war might spread

²⁷⁶ Ibid, September 22, 1864.

²⁷⁷ Ibid, September 20, 1863

²⁷⁸ Ibid, April 2, 1864.

²⁷⁹ On the impact of the U.S. Civil War in the Maritimes, see, among others Greg Marquis, *In Armageddon’s Shadow: The Civil War and Canada’s Maritime Provinces* (Halifax: Saint Mary’s University, 1998); Timothy R. Burge, ““Bluenose Effrontery”: Dr. William Johnston Almon and the City of Halifax During the United States’ Civil War.” (unpublished Master’s Thesis, Dalhousie University, 2013).

²⁸⁰ Marquis, *In Armageddon’s Shadow*, XIV.

²⁸¹ Ibid.

²⁸² Ibid, XV.

across the border. By commandeering the Union steamer *Chesapeake* and navigating her up the Bay of Fundy, the actions of a handful of British subjects caused serious discontent among politicians and journalists in the Northern states. Another incident saw an American gunboat commander violate the neutrality of Nova Scotia at Sambro, again causing widespread frustration and calls for retaliation among British subjects in both London and North America. Nova Scotia's tendency to shelter and even refuel Confederate ships, only contributed to prospects of Anglo-American war in the early 1860s.²⁸³ Each of these incidents hammered home the potential for war, the need to consolidate British North American defences, and, what contemporaries perceived to be the inherent weakness of any federal framework. Each of these sentiments would have a marked impact on how the Maritime colonies reacted to the prospects of political union.

Aside from contemporary awareness of the U.S. Civil War, the excerpts presented above also reveal that some publications felt the dissolution of Canada's federation was inadvisable, and that the Brown-Cartier proposal remained unlikely to elicit much support. Given the predominance of these opinions, and an acknowledgement that British North America remained, geographically, far too large to pursue an effective legislative union, the *British Colonist* advocated a middle way. In the estimation of its editors, a "very large" federal legislature could achieve the advantages of legislative union while ensuring that regional attention could still be paid to persistent local concerns. As residual power would remain with the federal parliament, local administrators could deal with uniquely local issues, while the national government would remain dominant. In addition to serving as an example of the press's deliberations on particular paths to union, these excerpts reveal certain awareness, on the part of the bourgeois public

²⁸³ Ibid, XVII-XX.

sphere, that colonial, regional and international pressures had to be considered. Newspapers were prepared to advocate a union that could secure the province's strength and vitality. But without a precise scheme upon which a yea or nay could be affected, the principle of union could not itself demarcate the majority of Nova Scotians into groups of supporters or detractors. The *Novascotian* again spoke for many of its contemporaries when on September 26, 1864 it asserted:

What we are prepared to advocate, however, is not union at any cost or on any terms—nothing of the kind. We want union, but such union as will secure for our Province and our people all that is valuable that we at present enjoy, and much more that, without it, we can scarcely hope to secure. That is the union we are prepared to advocate, and just as fast as the scheme under consideration is developed, and its details made public, we shall sustain or condemn them, and endeavour to influence public opinion accordingly.²⁸⁴

Public deliberations of union contained in Nova Scotia's leading publications can best be characterized as expressions of a commonly held appreciation for the value of thoughtfulness itself: that union – which in principle could be neither supported nor objected to by most reflective members of the bourgeois public sphere – deserved thoughtful and extensive consideration. On August 20, 1864 the *Acadian Recorder* pronounced:

We say then it is high time that the minds of thoughtful and honest statesmen were turned to a solution of the problem before us—time that our politicians and our newspaper editors exchanged views on the subject, and we are glad that the subject is receiving the important attention it is. But we say still what we have all along said. There may be such a thing as too great haste.²⁸⁵

Months earlier, on October 31, 1863, the *British Colonist* published a similar call to intellectual arms:

²⁸⁴ *Novascotian*, September 26, 1864.

²⁸⁵ *Acadian Recorder*, August 20, 1864.

"From the spirit which has from time to time been exhibited on this question in the adjoining Provinces, we have no doubt that its discussion will evince the patriotism of their public men and the enlarged sentiments of an intelligent press, so essential to the successful development of the project."²⁸⁶

These publishers, editors and writers clearly understood the importance of the questions before them. On September 24, 1864, the Pictou *Colonial Standard* noted:

The question of a Union of the British North American Provinces is one of so much importance that it should be dealt with in a spirit of more than ordinary earnestness. We find ourselves called upon to consider whether we shall be a part of that nation, and if so, what position we shall occupy in it, what we shall gain and what we shall lose by casting in our lot with the colonies around us, what we shall give away and what we shall receive in return. We find ourselves called on to consider what form of government will be best adapted to meet our wants, to preserve and establish the liberty we possess, and advance the prosperity we so much require, to fix the fabric of the system of government we shall adopt on foundations firm and solid, which shall resist the shocks of time and grow stronger with increasing years. We find these and a thousand other considerations present themselves before us in entering on this momentous question, and we are called upon to exercise our maturest judgement, our most profound knowledge and our keenest discrimination, for we feel that we are deciding on our fate and shaping the destiny of generations yet unborn.²⁸⁷

In addition to recognizing the significance of proposals for political union, note the extent to which the *Colonial Standard* invokes the liberal ideal of popular sovereignty. It repeatedly refers to a non-descript "we." "We find ourselves called upon," "what position we shall occupy," "what we shall gain and what we shall lose." It likewise refers to, "our wants," "the prosperity we so much require," "the system of government we shall adopt." The collective to which the *Standard* repeatedly refers includes both the press of the bourgeois public sphere and Nova Scotians* as an autonomous entity. The liberal philosophy radiates from the excerpt as sovereignty is placed firmly in the hands of the people*, and, as their vehicles for expression, the public press. It falls not to the colony's politicians to consider, discuss debate and ultimately

²⁸⁶ *British Colonist*, Oct 31, 1863.

²⁸⁷ *Colonial Standard*, September 24, 1864.

accept or reject prospective terms of union, but instead to the people* and their collective outlets. The *Standard's* article endures as a powerful illustration of the liberal principles embraced by the contemporary press, and of its profound belief in the authority of public opinion.

Two contemporary Haligonians were among those who recognized that the subject of union was being duly considered, as it had been in times past, by virtually every thinking person in the country. Governor General Sir Edmund Head and Haligonian lawyer P.S. Hamilton confirmed the subject as one uniquely able to occupy the colony's attention.²⁸⁸ By the 1860s, British North Americans were indeed well acquainted with the principles and concepts of union. While parameters for unification shifted with time and personality – some sought union for Upper and Lower Canada, and others anticipated a greater pan-Empire arrangement, where British North Americans would sit in Westminster and instruct in the Empire's foreign policy – the principles of union were as old as the British Empire in North America. Robert Thompson, member of New Brunswick's legislature, voiced his preference for the latter option in the House of Assembly on June 1, 1865. "I believe, instead of this union [of British North America], we should try to get a union with Britain, by getting a few members in the British parliament for every colony that is of British descent."²⁸⁹ Similar positions were advocated by, among others, legislators George Coles of Prince Edward Island and Christopher Dunkin of Canada.²⁹⁰

In addition to appreciating the significance of their dialogue, the period's newspapermen, as previously mentioned, understood the influence of certain external forces, and managed to successfully take these items into account. More consequential even than the American Civil

²⁸⁸ D.G.G. Kerr, *Sir Edmund Head: A Scholarly Governor* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1954), 164; P.S. Hamilton, "Union of the Colonies of British North America, Being Three Papers Upon This Subject," *Observations Upon a Union of the Colonies, 1854-1855*, Vol. 1, (Montreal: John Lowell, 1864), 3.

²⁸⁹ Ajzenstat, et. al., *Canada's Founding Debates*, 202.

²⁹⁰ Ibid.

War were popular conceptions of how union might influence the colony's relationship with Britain and the Empire. Regardless of both contemporary calculations and the claims of certain older scholarship, evidence suggests that Britain had little intention of abandoning, most especially Nova Scotia, its greatest American maritime colony.²⁹¹ While most of British North America may indeed have been viewed as a liability by British administrators, Nova Scotia, the summer station of Britain's North American squadron, was, perhaps as much as any other colony, recognized as an "indispensable base of British military and naval power," and was seen by the British as a vital strategic asset.²⁹² Further, Nova Scotia played a major role in the sea-bound communications maintained between Great Britain and the United States, as westward shipping, bound for major American settlements, regularly made call in Halifax.²⁹³ British administrators had in mind a role for Nova Scotia that few other colonial possessions could fulfill. Historian Ged Martin has indicated that, "by portraying the British as the trump card against Maritime reluctance, historians have [...] distorted the record of the mid-1860s."²⁹⁴ His claim must not be interpreted as a denial of the role that British interests and pressures played in Nova Scotia's deliberations of potential union, but instead, should lead analysts to question the extent to which such pressures forced colonials toward fixed or otherwise inevitable conclusions.

²⁹¹ Martin, *Britain and the Origins*, 6. An example of the older scholarly trend which inflated the role played by British pressures at the expense of Maritime agency may be found in, K.G. Pryke, "The Making of a Province: Nova Scotia and Confederation," *Historical Papers / Communications historiques*, 3, no. 1 (1968): 35-48.

²⁹² W.L. Morton, *The Critical Years; the Union of British North America, 1857-1873* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1964), 44.

²⁹³ Waite, *The Life and Times*, 194.

²⁹⁴ Martin, *Britain and the Origins*, 6.

Nova Scotia, Political Union and the French Canadians

Timing, preparation and details of structure and methodology were by no means the only subjects discussed within Nova Scotia's bourgeois public sphere prior to the release of the Quebec scheme. A more fundamental trepidation, over the notion of uniting with French Canada, was a common feature of the colony's editorials, especially those of larger Haligonian publications. These concerns, while discussed with fervor and earnestness, belonged nonetheless to proprietors and editors who remained open and receptive to union in theory, and who could be swayed with effective arguments. The *Acadian Recorder*, on September 21, 1864, presented its own editorial opinions on Nova Scotia's forming part of a bi-national political entity.

Blackadar's writers began by noting the singular unity under which French Canadian society was thought to operate, and seemed at once to both celebrate and denigrate what they saw as the tight bond uniting French Canadians.

There is no concealing that the eyes of every one interested in Colonial Union are anxiously turning to these people to-day. They are a unit, that race, religion and community of tradition bind together with ties stronger than patriotism or legislative enactments. They cling to the *les idées Francaise* [sic] with almost the tenacity that the Hebrew captives, by the rivers of Babylon, clung to the memories of Zion. There is a virtue, and the germ of national greatness in devotion like theirs, providing it accommodates itself to the rapid march of civilization.²⁹⁵

Similar concerns are presented again on September 28, 1864, when the *Acadian Recorder* suggested:

It is difficult to understand what tenable objections Lower Canada can urge against a legislative union. Is she afraid of her Civil Law, or her Language, or her Religion? Which will she prefer to drown these in- a Northern Kingdom or a Southern Republic? Think of this little French drop in the Sea of the American Union. But it is a monstrous imposition upon the common sense of Lower Canada, to believe her delirious with fear that her great

²⁹⁵ *Acadian Recorder*, September 21, 1864.

institutions will be smothered under the weight of a close Northern Union. Have not the laws of Scotland survived the Union? Is not her religion undisturbed? Will the French language become extinct in America because the Gaelic or the Celtic is fast disappearing in Scotland and Ireland?²⁹⁶

Apprehensions over uniting with French Canada were also voiced by William Garvie and the *Halifax Citizen*. On July 28, 1864, the *Citizen* asks its readers whether ethnic antagonism could ever be truly ameliorated by virtue of a wider union, even when the Canadian experiment seemed to cause its further intensification. This question, Garvie held, was all the more relevant should local legislatures be allowed to exist alongside a national parliament.

Then as to the sectional antagonism so rife and growing to a large extent out of the differences of race and creed among the population. Will that antagonism be lessened by the proposed remedy? Will it not rather be aggravated and intensified tenfold? It is a new theory in peace making, this attempt to settle a quarrel by giving the parties to it weapons with which to fight it out more effectually. To give the East and West a separate legislature under present circumstances, would be simply to improve their antagonistic machinery to give them the means by which their battle of sectionalism would be fought out more fiercely and fatally on new ground. The doctrine of State rights would soon grow into magnificent proportions; and some substitute for the black chattle [sic] difficulty, which has been the ground work for dissension in the American republic, could easily be found to give it importance in the affairs of the Canadian federation.²⁹⁷

In this case, the *Citizen* used popular concerns over ethno-cultural and linguistic division, to forward its belief in the value, perhaps even the necessity, of legislative union. Offset by a vicerealty and a term limit on government, one which would closely emulate the English constitution, this formula, the *Citizen* contended, would offer the best possible means for controlling inter-ethnic tension. On September 26, 1864, the *Novascotian* echoed previous hesitation over union with French Canada. With less optimism than its contemporaries, the paper sought to present the issue in stark and uncompromising terms.

²⁹⁶ Ibid, September 28, 1864.

²⁹⁷ *Halifax Citizen*, July 28, 1864.

Nothing but the pressure of a dire political necessity could induce the members of the present Administration to cooperate heartily with each other. Let not the Lower Provinces be too sanguine in their anticipations. A storm is brewing in Lower Canada, before which Cartier and D'Arcy McGee are likely to quail. The French press almost without exception, reject the idea of a federation on any terms except such as would prove a mockery and a snare. New organizations are being started, new papers issued, to resist a change. The advice and opinions of public men in Paris are quoted against the proposed union. No art, no device, no pains will be spared to rouse an overwhelming tempest of opposition.²⁹⁸

Despite the ominous tone with which the *Novascotian* discussed prospects for a bi-national union, even here, cautious optimism was enlisted by Howe and his staff to bring the article to its close. Union, the newspaper argued, though unlikely to be brought about through compromise with the French Canadian faction, will nonetheless emerge in spite of it, as circumstances force French Canadian opposition into obscurity. The article concludes by stating, “[t]he French Canadians will seek to isolate themselves, but this selfish policy and the feelings from which it springs cannot last always. Present embarrassment, inconvenience and disappointment must be patiently endured, but the end is sure.”²⁹⁹

In addition to illuminating a particular topic of dialogue, discussions of French Canada provide insight into the ways in which Nova Scotia’s newspapers approached considerations of British North American union more generally. Cautious deliberation and tempered reflection, even when tainted by nineteenth-century prejudice, flow throughout the province’s editorial assessments. In spite of these anxieties, even those expressed in the most uneasy terms, there exists a genuine belief in the ability of such issues to be overcome. While Nova Scotia’s press viewed French Canada as an obstacle to union, the issue was rarely utilized as an argument against its pursuit. The press was engaging in a public discussion that sought to consider all

²⁹⁸ *Novascotian*, September 26, 1864. On French Canada and Confederation see A.I. Silver, *The French-Canadian Idea of Confederation, 1864-1900* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1982).

²⁹⁹ *Ibid.*

potential conflicts and obstacles to union, not with the intention of hindering its prospects or dissuading its champions, but for the benefit of those public men who would need to overcome such challenges, and for the private citizens who were expected to give due consideration to the principle, and pronounce judgement on potential schemes. These liberal notions of freedom of speech, open dialogue and, perhaps most importantly, public sovereignty, informed virtually all aspects of these debates.

Debt, taxes and tariffs also occupied a great deal of press attentions. Canada's debts in particular, caused editors to express caution over the union question. On September 20, 1864, the *British Colonist* pronounced its views on the issue, by acknowledging popular concerns, while at the same time expressing its sincerest hopes that such problems could, and eventually would, be overcome. On the issue of public debt, A. Grant and the writers of the *British Colonist* declared, "the public debt of Canada, when viewed in the light of her great area, resources, population and revenue, is not so formidable as has been generally considered and her financial position would cease to excite anxiety if Mr. Galt's prediction of a considerable surplus revenue this year should be realized."³⁰⁰ By utilizing information that the *Colonist* judged to be factually sound, if not entirely verifiable, sobered reason was brought to bear on an issue that provoked popular hesitation. This journal utilizes the 'if-then' argumentative structure, already mentioned, when noting that, if certain predictions are realized, popular concerns may then be rendered immaterial. Rather than declaring that the *Colonist's* editors were unconcerned by Canada's debt, one must consider the "if-then" argument as characteristic of the liberal philosophy that guided the union dialogue. In truth, no newspaper was uniformly and simply pro or anti-confederate. Just weeks before the *Colonist's* even-tempered assessment, the publication employed similar

³⁰⁰ *British Colonist*, September 20, 1864.

language to suggest that, while Canada's debt may be overcome, the issue should still inspire pause in those contemplating union. "The great and increasing debt of Canada, although not so disproportionate to her population as at first sight appears and the impossibility of bringing her expenditure within her income, would naturally create disinclination on the part of the Maritime Provinces, in their present prosperous condition, to link their fortunes with the former."³⁰¹ These excerpts, when examined together, provide another example of the danger inherent in applying pro- and anti-union labels at this stage in the public dialogue. While the *Colonist's* commentary of August 13 may indeed suggest an anti-union bias, the more optimistic assessment of September 20, nullifies such conclusions.

By exploring some of the varied subjects of Nova Scotia's public union dialogue, the nature and impact of speculative methodologies for union, and how and why contemporary newspapermen were able to appreciate the significance of the questions they pondered, this chapter has sought to assert that by appreciating their diverse and often conflicting positions, rather than by grouping pro and anti-union publications, analysts may better understand the union debates of the press as they actually occurred. More fundamentally, this chapter has sought to persuade readers that, a thorough and deliberative dialogue of Nova Scotia's bourgeois public sphere, was orchestrated and maintained by the colony's public press on the questions of political union.

³⁰¹ Ibid, August 13, 1864.

Chapter Five: Rarely Pure and Never Simple:
Regional Identity and Maritime Union in Nova Scotia's Deliberative Public Press

In Nova Scotia at the present time, a project for the Union of the Maritime Colonies meets with the support of the leading men of both political parties and with the advocacy of the journals recognized as their respective organs, it being, we fear, almost the only measure in which they are in accord. Surely then, here at least there must be sincerity. This measure is no mere political kite thrown up to serve a party purpose.

—*British Colonist*³⁰²

* * * * *

This chapter examines Maritime union, its subjects, prospects and the sentiments that inspired its entertainment in the deliberative union debates of Nova Scotia's public sphere. What must be stressed from the outset is that while this thesis approaches the subject in a dedicated chapter, evidence suggests that contemporaries treated the topic as an integral part of their larger debates on union and colony's future. Therefore, rather than being considered a unique string of dialogue, this chapter argues that contemporary reflection on union must be assessed as part of a comprehensive discussion that occurred prior to the Quebec Conference of October 1864. It is only for conceptual and structural purposes that this subject receives independent treatment.

Fundamental to the claim that Maritime union formed part of a comprehensive union dialogue, is the notion that regional sympathies existed peaceably alongside colonial and imperial conceptions of self. Without posing confliction, these perceptions remained congruent elements of a singular whole, and not as independent constructs that required reconciliation or ranking. Therefore, an individual could at once, and without fear of contradiction, self-identify as a Nova Scotian, Maritimer, British North American and loyalist Briton. That identity may be singular and contented, while containing multiple layers of self-description, is likely not too foreign a concept to most readers. Today, few would find it difficult to call themselves both

³⁰² *British Colonist*, November 19, 1863.

Nova Scotian and Canadian. Much like nationality, gender, ethnicity, religion and sexual orientation can today form facets of a complete perception of self, many contemporary Nova Scotians found no inconsistency in the maintenance of a singular, yet multifaceted identity. As we are reminded by, among others, British historian Linda Colley, “identities are not like hats. Human beings can and do put on several at a time.”³⁰³ The extent to which a true regional ‘identity’ existed, is not a subject this study seeks to consider. Instead, it focuses on expressions of pan-Maritime and sometimes pan-Atlantic sentiments that emerge from within public commentary on the prospects for Maritime union. In this way, rather than arguing for a regional ‘identity’, the chapter utilizes a more neutral and less rigid terminology; less assuming language that examines pan-Maritime sentiments or sympathies.

Maritime Union Historiography

One aspect of Maritime union has occupied a disproportionate amount of scholarly attention in conventional historiography. Emerging from traditional preconceptions concerning the impetus for Maritime union, traditional assessments note Maritime frustrations toward Canada, over the latter’s cancellation of the Intercolonial Railroad, as the central stimulus for the regional union concept. It was Canadian deception over the railway, some have argued, that was uniquely responsible for considerations of Maritime union in the 1850s and 1860s. The notion also that Maritimers saw a presumptuous Canada as commandeering their conceptions of regional union uninvited, is also central to conventional historical treatments of Maritime

³⁰³ Linda Colley, *Britons: Forging a Nation 1707-1837* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1992).

union.³⁰⁴ These traditional assertions have at times however been overemphasized and perhaps even misunderstood by relevant histories. An older piece of historiography, which continues to inform current scholars, further concludes that Maritime anger and resentment toward Canada, was indeed the “only emotional force” behind Maritime union.³⁰⁵ Contrary to these assertions, and as discussed in Chapter Four of this study, a thorough, wide-ranging and sophisticated debate endured throughout 1863 and 1864, alongside what were momentary public expressions of dissatisfaction with the Canadian element. The fact that such a comprehensive debate was operated with open-minded receptiveness causes serious doubt as to the effect that anti-Canadian sentiments had, at least on Nova Scotians of the public sphere, in this pre-resolution period. If, as traditional historiography claims, Maritimers were so upset with Canada that they were driven to consider the regional option, what is to be made of their deliberative debates on British North American union? And how, if these claims are accurate, might one reconcile the fact that equally deliberative debates over Maritime union existed alongside those entertaining the larger scheme, certainly within the same journals, and often within single articles?

If not Maritime resentment and anger toward Canada, then what was responsible for the colonial debates devoted to the smaller scheme? This study argues that regional sympathies, effective argumentation and consistent advocacy on the part of public officials, together motivated deliberative discussion of the Maritime option. As these impulses are systematically explored, this chapter will argue concurrently that conceptions of Maritime union received the same sort of deliberate treatment that was afforded to the larger British North American

³⁰⁴ Those histories which accent the role of Maritime disillusionment with Canada include, among others Waite, *The Life and Times*; Whitelaw, *the Maritimes and Canada*; Beck, *The Briton Becomes Canadian*; Reid, *Six Crucial Decades*.

³⁰⁵ Originally published in 1934, Whitelaw’s text was again published in 1966 and 1990. Whitelaw, *The Maritimes and Canada*, 201.

proposal.³⁰⁶ Some of the subject matter that received the attention of Nova Scotia's bourgeois public sphere, including defence, colonial readiness for union, conceptions of the proposed state and economic and governmental efficiency, will be examined in order to exhibit the breadth and insight achieved by the colony's deliberative reflection. Finally this chapter will explore whether contemporary Nova Scotians considered the two variants of union to be mutually exclusive and will conclude by examining the degree to which Nova Scotians were instructed, by the political elite, to expect the pursuit of Maritime union. On the question of whether a meaningful deliberative debate on the regional scheme was ever truly hosted in the Lower colonies, extant historiography has again settled on claims that may be challenged by evidence of the historical record. Peter B. Waite is one of the earliest modern scholars to assert the ineffectual nature of the Maritimes' public debates on regional union, a belief that has endured by way of its adoption and re-assertion by more recent histories. Waite contended in the 1960s that while certain political leaders may have supported the concept of Maritime union, "popular support was negligible and public enthusiasm non-existent."³⁰⁷ Waite's position was reprised by John G. Reid when, in his 1987 study, he suggested that "the extent of the provinces' commitment to serious discussion of Maritime union in 1864 was open to question."³⁰⁸ Likewise in Phillip Buckner's 1990 "reassessment" of the Maritimes and Confederation, he declared that, "the Maritime Union movement, despite strong imperial pressure, collapsed because of lack of colonial enthusiasm."³⁰⁹ In 1993, Historians E.R. Forbes and D.A. Muise again echoed this traditionalist assertion, in what is still considered to be the best historical treatment of the Atlantic colonies in Confederation, by arguing that despite a general recognition that union could "ennoble colonial

³⁰⁶ On the debates had on the wider union scheme, refer to Chapter Four of this thesis.

³⁰⁷ Waite, *The Life and Times*, 51-52.

³⁰⁸ Reid, *Six Crucial Decades*, 103.

³⁰⁹ Buckner, "CHR Dialogue," 21.

politics by opening the door for new economic initiatives,” it continued as an unlikely possibility through the summer of 1864.³¹⁰ Despite these conventional claims, and those of other likeminded historians, deliberation on Maritime union in Nova Scotia’s public sphere formed a major component of the colony’s wider union debates. By neglecting the extent of the dialogue, reductionist assessments contribute to the traditional identification of conservative parochialism as a mainstay feature of Maritime politics, culture and public discourse.

Histories which maintain the weak and ineffectual nature of Maritime considerations of union, often suggest that the movement flagged, most notably, when the Intercolonial Railway was revived as a viable project for inter-provincial collaboration.³¹¹ Waite maintains, for example, that following Lord Monck’s February 20, 1864 dispatch to Charles Hastings Doyle, Governor of Nova Scotia (in which he informs the Governor of Canada’s intention to resume the Intercolonial survey at its own expense), even the largely ineffectual talk of Maritime union quickly fell silent. He further asserts that once Maritime resentment over the Intercolonial’s cancellation was calmed by the project’s resurrection, the “press fell silent and public interest in Maritime union seemed non-existent. In short, by the early summer of 1864, Maritime union was all but forgotten.”³¹² To support his claim, Waite also maintains that the only motivation for the manifestation of the Charlottetown conference was that Canada’s governor sought to contribute delegates to a gathering that rumour had brought to his attention. He concludes “if the

³¹⁰ Historian Malcolm MacLeod has called the study “the most important book on regional history [in the last] 30 years [...]” MacLeod, “Another Look at,” 191-197; Forbes and Muise, *The Atlantic Provinces*, 31.

³¹¹ Reid, *Six Crucial Decades*, 103-105.

³¹² Waite, *The Life and Times*, 56-59. Similar sentiments are expressed in, among other works Swift, “CHANDLER, EDWARD BARRON.”

Canadians were going to come to a Maritime union conference, then there had to be a conference for them to come to.”³¹³

Though dated in terms of historiography, Waite’s assertions, and those of even older scholarship, like William Whitelaw’s study of 1934 (reprinted multiple times between 1934 and 1990) or Chester Martin’s of 1935 (reprinted multiple times between 1955 and 1981), are likely responsible for informing parallel assumptions found in more current histories.³¹⁴ Contrary however to these prominent claims of historiography – that a weak, trivial and ineffectual public debate was all that was had over Maritime union – a substantial collection of divergent evidence may be gathered from the historical record. A number of relevant excerpts taken from between the pages of Nova Scotia’s leading publications demonstrate a public dialogue quite characteristic of the thoughtful and thorough deliberation exercised on questions of the larger union, but also on similar matters of public interest throughout the colony’s history.³¹⁵ This chapter examines a small sample of the diverse and well-considered subjects that comprised the ongoing union dialogue of the Nova Scotian press.

Ancient Forecasts, Regional Sentiments and Maritime Union

The notion of Maritime union was first rekindled by the efforts of a series of New Brunswick governors: Sir Edmund Head (1848-1854) and his successors, John Manners-Sutton

³¹³ Waite, *The Life and Times*, 60. Similar assertions are contained, in among other works Reid, *Six Crucial Decades*, 104-105; W. Stewart MacNutt, *New Brunswick: A History: 1784-1867* (Toronto: MacMillan of Canada, 1984), 419

³¹⁴ Waite, *The Life and Times*; Whitelaw, *the Maritimes and Canada*; C Martin, *Foundations of Canadian Nationhood*. A direct example may be found in Phillip Buckner’s assertion, “As Chester Martin pointed out, Maritime Union might have become a reality had it been pushed as vigorously as Confederation.” Buckner, “CHR Dialogue,” 42.

³¹⁵ See chapters three and four of this thesis.

(1854-1861) and Arthur Gordon (1861-1866).³¹⁶ In 1859, Henry Pelham Clinton, the fifth Duke of Newcastle, adopted the policy that would be sustained by the British Colonial Office for the next five years, namely, that legislative union of the Lower provinces would be beneficial in itself and that rather than being an impediment to any future union with Canada it would, "place such a measure upon a more just footing by rendering it more nearly a union of equals."³¹⁷ As deliberation over the concept of Maritime union continued to spread among the leading public men of the region and the Empire, it was quickly adopted and indeed embraced by Nova Scotia's press. Much of the same subject matter found in public reflection on the wider scheme, is similarly characteristic of contemporary examinations of the regional variant including matters of defence, colonial preparation, identity, organization, governance and economics. On September 20, 1864, the *Halifax Citizen* published a letter to the editor that well-expressed the sentiments of many colonists concerned with matters of colonial defence. Clearly a supporter of Maritime union, Atlas, the letter's author, attempted to justify the pursuit of Maritime statehood based upon his analysis of imperial interests and strategic doctrine. Despite the author's conviction, his use of pertinent argumentation rather than bellicose rhetoric or emotive expression, supports the notion that deliberation, rather than nativist predisposition or any similarly ideological outlook inspired his stated conclusion. "I conclude," wrote Atlas, "that while a union of the Maritime Provinces tends to increase our strength, a union with Canada will but increase our weakness [...]. Let us unite these lower Provinces. They have common interests, common feelings and the same measure of protection from England." Atlas continued:

³¹⁶ Martin, *Britain and the Origins*, 98.

³¹⁷ Reid, *Six Crucial Decades*, 102-103; Minute by the Duke of Newcastle on Lieutenant Governor Manners-Sutton to the Duke of Newcastle, 29 September 1859. Cited in G.P. Browne and Janet Ajzenstat, *Documents on the Confederation of British North America* (Montreal & Kingston: McGill-Queens University Press, 2009), 29.

Canada is separated from us not only by distance but in all these other particulars: and no paper union – no hatching of new institutions – no squandering of our means – no derangement our hardly won prosperity – no amount of gratification to the ambition of our politicians – so openly avowed as one of the inducements to them to favour this union – can ever make us one in any important sense.³¹⁸

Atlas's use of "us", with which he refers to the Maritime colonists, is especially noteworthy. He invokes the common interests and feelings that bind the Maritimes, and refers to their similar relationships with England. Atlas is surely not the only Nova Scotian to determine that the Maritime colonies share a common "interest" and "feeling", especially when compared with far away Canada. The editors of the *Halifax Citizen*, William Garvie and E.M. Macdonald, must also have felt that the regional sentiments expressed by Atlas were common enough to justify their publishing his correspondence. The letter continues, "The strength of a nation to resist aggression depends less on numbers than on union and that union includes not only unity of race, of language, of commercial interests, but unity of position."³¹⁹ Atlas's Maritime sympathies thus clearly contribute to his conclusions on political union and collective defence. It is because the Maritime colonies share a common race, language, commercial interests and position that, in Atlas's view, the defensive utility of a united Maritime region may be presumed.

As was the case for the wider British North American scheme, a number of contemporary assessors of Maritime union voiced great concern over colonial readiness for the project. On November 2, 1863, the *Novascotian* for example, noted what its editors perceived to be the great disparity currently separating the Maritime colonies from one another. In their assessment, a great number of preparatory steps had to be taken before any meaningful union could be effected. Despite their concerns, the newspaper remained a staunch supporter of the scheme, certain of its value, and an advocate of its pursuit.

³¹⁸ *Halifax Citizen*, September 20, 1864.

³¹⁹ *Ibid.*

Detached, isolated, and independent of each other as they now are, they never can reasonably aspire to a position of importance, either in their own or the world's estimation. With different currencies, different tariffs, enacting different statutes in different Legislatures on a Lilliputian scale, if matters were to constitute so far another hundred years, still the maritime provinces would be a class of pigmies, dwarfs, stunted, and of inferior proportions. Let the six hundred and fifty thousand people, however, that now populate Nova Scotia, New Brunswick and Prince Edward Island, stand fast and firm together as one people, with one Legislature, one tariff, one currency, having but one aim, one object, one interest and how different would be the result of the close of the next decade.³²⁰

The *Novascotian* clearly supports the principle behind regional unity, and espouses the belief that with substantive shifts in governmental policy, the scheme could inspire meaningful advances within a decade's time.

Similar apprehensions over colonial readiness were expressed by the *Acadian Recorder*. Supportive of the Maritime union theory, the newspaper's editors, led by the Blackadar family, sought, like earlier publications, to clarify the extent of preparatory effort that they considered necessary for such a union to succeed. An excerpt drawn from the *Recorder's* April 2, 1864 issue suggests that the rancorous rhetoric of union proponents contributed little to the scheme's ultimate realization, and as such, those who engage in similar frivolity at the expense of preparatory groundwork should be condemned.

There is room for complaint against those who have talked so much among us of union, that they have not practically set themselves to work to put things in order for a union. At one instance here we have been all winter consolidating the laws of Nova Scotia. Has there been a word in the debate as to what the law is in New Brunswick or Prince Edward Island? We have not heard it. These ten years back we should have put the Statutes of the other Colonies on our knees with those of Nova Scotia: we should have asked the other Colonies to respond, and our laws would now not materially vary. Are we to commence squabbling over a revision of the laws for Acadia? We should have had union associations or leagues established over the country, and union reports and plans for union and union statistics, before adopting a union delegation. We hope that proposed delegates will have studied the geography and history of the territory they are about to

³²⁰ *Novascotian*, November 2, 1863.

unite. It is very easy to agree on a law for union. The difficult matter is to settle on a plan which will prevent antagonism of interest.³²¹

Here, the *Recorder* focuses its critique almost exclusively on matters of law. Similar statutes, they argue, are a prerequisite for the political unification proposed and thus must be enshrined prior to its pursuit. Their use of the term “Acadia” is especially intriguing when considering contemporary conceptions of regional likeness. While an official name for the Maritime state envisioned remained undetermined, The *Recorder's* editors employed an epithet, first used by the Ancien Régime of France to refer to the Maritime region of its North American possessions, and which retained a certain cultural appeal in the contemporary Maritimes colonies.³²²

In Nova Scotia, the concept of a united Acadia long represented a popular desire for the restoration of the region's once unified status: with the separation of Prince Edward Island in 1763, and of New Brunswick shortly after in 1784, Nova Scotia retained only a fraction of its ancient landmass. For many contemporaries who considered these divisions, Acadia continued to serve as an idealized abstraction of regional greatness. This collective construct and the sentiments it inspired, most certainly contributed to the consistent resurgence of regional union dialogue in nineteenth-century Nova Scotia. In fact, Nova Scotians entertained the scheme for Maritime union, to varying degrees, in 1826 and 1838, then consistently from 1854 onward to Confederation and then even into the present day.³²³ In 1861, the colonial assembly even passed

³²¹ *Acadian Recorder*, April 2, 1864.

³²² Marc Johnson, ed. “Acadia.” in *The Canadian Encyclopedia*. Historica Canada, 2014-, accessed June 12, 2014, <http://www.thecanadianencyclopedia.ca/en/article/acadia/> (accessed June 14, 2014).

³²³ For an example of the ongoing debate over Maritime union, see for example Adrian Humphreys. "Maritime Union: Senators ask Canadians to 'Think Big' and Merge Provinces." *National Post*, November 27, 2012-, accessed June 26, 2014, <http://news.nationalpost.com/2012/11/27/maritime-union-senators-ask-atlantic-canadians-to-think-big-and-merge-provinces/>

legislation that formally recognized its appeal and advocated its adoption.³²⁴ Nova Scotia was not alone in this regard, as New Brunswick and Prince Edward Island each entertained the idea of Maritime union at varying times throughout the nineteenth century.³²⁵ Even Newfoundland remained at times open to the concept; for example, a number of its political leaders were willing to engage in relevant discussion in 1858.³²⁶ Despite certain contradictory assertions, P.B. Waite recognized the fact that Maritime union had long been a favoured subject of “after dinner speakers and restless politicians.”³²⁷ On April 2, 1864, the *Acadian Recorder* synthesized cultural conceptions of a unified Acadia, and, in reference to the separation of New Brunswick and Prince Edward Island, drew attention to the historical injustice.

The year 1864 will form an era in the history of Maritime British America. A step has been taken to correct a mistake under which these Colonies have been suffering for Eighty years and more. Under the administration of General Doyle, we are learning to hope for an amendment to the separation effected in the rule of Governor Parr. There is every reason to believe that before very long three of Her Majesty’s loyal colonies will flourish under the common euphonious title by which the French De Monts designated his possessions in the New World, Acadia.³²⁸

This excerpt exhibits the desire with which the *Recorder’s* editors reflected on regional union, “There is every reason to believe that before very long [...].” Clearly, Garvie and his writers viewed the concept as more than a fanciful abstraction; the passion with which they comment also indicates that they had far more invested in the ideal than would be expected if the scheme

³²⁴ Nova Scotia. House of Assembly, *Journals and Proceedings of the Assembly for 1861* (Halifax: 1862), 128.

³²⁵ House of Assembly of Prince Edward Island, *Journal of the House of Assembly of Prince Edward Island* (Charlottetown: G.T. Haszard, 1863), 142.

³²⁶ See Bannerman to Lytton, Oct 11, 1858. Cited in Browne and Ajzenstat, *Documents on the Confederation*, 13.

³²⁷ Waite, *The Life and Times*, 50.

³²⁸ *Acadian Recorder*, April 2, 1864.

was truly instigated by the frustration and disillusionment resulting from Canada's railroad cancellation.

Maritime or Atlantic Statehood: Regional Union and Newfoundland

The extent of regional union was also, to a certain degree, open for discussion. On April 9, 1864, a letter to the editor was again published by the *Acadian Recorder*. In this case, its author, A. Marvel, called for a widening of the scheme to embrace Newfoundland. Though rarely included in discussions of Maritime union, Marvel considered Newfoundland reasonably like-minded to the Maritime colonies. He adopts his position, it seems, as a result of having dedicated due consideration to the great nautical potential of a united Atlantic British American nation.

Sir,- I am happy to see that a move in making a Union of the Lower Colonies; but why is Newfoundland excluded? Look at the map and I think you will perceive that the junction of that Colony is essential to complete the plan of a great Naval power at a future period. I believe according to the Law of Nations when any inland Sea or Gulf, like that of the St. Lawrence has all its shore owned by one Power, that sea or Gulf becomes the property of that People; in that case it would be entirely under our control if Newfoundland and the Labrador shore were constituent parts of the Union. Canada has the power of unlimited expansion westward, and could well spare us Labrador and the Magdalen Isles. Let us anticipate the time for a renewal, by an Union of all the lower Colonies, and then our united voice will secure the attention of the Home Government not to give up our Fisheries; We should have the command of the Fish market, have an unlimited nursery for our Seamen, which the Americans would be deprived of. Let us not be bound down by any commercial Treaty. But let them understand, that as they treat us so shall we reciprocate, as from time to time we think advantageous to ourselves.³²⁹

The concept Marvel illustrates, is that of a united American maritime colony that would remain firmly within the British Empire. Britain's Atlantic American colonies retained, in the 1860s, their long-held focus on the Empire abroad, those entities to which many Maritimers felt intimately connected by the sea. For many in Nova Scotia's public sphere, colonial greatness was

³²⁹ Ibid, April 9, 1864.

to be achieved by capitalizing on the colonies' geographic location in order to further entrench its status as the Empire's gateway to the continent.³³⁰ Marvel envisions a colony tied inextricably to its geographic circumstances: an Atlantic nation that could exploit the ocean's resources in order to construct its economic and defensive capacities. Newfoundland, he argues, is an indispensable component of that anticipated entity, as its inclusion would enclose a massive space of land and sea. Note the central role of regional sympathy in his scheme, as Marvel's vision for an Atlantic colony depends on a likeminded population which shares a common dependency on maritime activity. While fishing and naval power would garner the attention and sentiments of all citizens of this Atlantic entity, Canada, says Marvel, has its future in its westward expanses and as such, stands apart from the sea and its exploitation. In this way, Marvel, like Atlas, extols the maritime virtues that bind Britain's Lower American colonies. He asserts that, rather than remain divided, their common purpose and interests should be advanced through their unification. Together, he argues, Britain's Maritime colonies would not only better defend against American seaward encroachment; they could also attract added attention and respect from Britain, while exercising greater influence over the imperial government. That the *Acadian Recorder* chose to publish Marvel's letter again indicates the extent to which Nova Scotia's press remained dedicated to a thorough and deliberative public dialogue on Maritime union concepts.

In truth, Marvel's inclusion of Newfoundland in his expression of regional sentimentality, may not have been as foreign to the average Nova Scotian as certain scholars

³³⁰ Margaret R. Conrad and James K. Hiller, *Atlantic Canada: A History* (Don Mills: Oxford University Press, 2010), 131.

have argued.³³¹ That connections were shared between the Maritime colonies remains uncontested. Newfoundland, long treated independently by historians, was however, by the mid nineteenth-century, increasingly tied to the independent colonies of Nova Scotia, New Brunswick and Prince Edward Island. A network of agricultural and primary material exchange was a major thread that bound nineteenth-century Newfoundland to the Maritimes. Produce steadily crossed the Cabot Strait; so much so that Middle River, Cape Breton, situated about 500 miles from St. John's, consistently shipped the majority of its economic output to Newfoundland. Nova Scotia grown foodstuffs were also regularly exported eastward, and by 1858, 10% of Prince Edward Island's exports were being shipped to Newfoundland, which remained a steady and reliable market for the Island.³³² As early as the eighteenth-century, fishing, shipbuilding, mining and forestry also connected these four independent colonies. Each was tied, until 1840, to the same British mercantilist system, and Nova Scotians remained reliable participants in Newfoundland's herring fishery.³³³ Newfoundland was also a central consumer of Maritime industrial output, and it was Newfoundlanders who provided a market for Prince Edward Island's incipient lumber industry, while, in turn, Maritimers provided much of the manpower necessary for the development of Newfoundland's forestry and mining developments.³³⁴

³³¹ Some historians deny the existence of an Atlantic regional consciousness. See, among others J. Murray Beck, "An Atlantic Region Political Culture: A Chimera, in Eastern and Western Perspectives," *An Atlantic Region Political Culture: A Chimera, in Eastern and Western Perspectives: Papers from the Joint Atlantic Canada / Western Canadian Studies Conference*, ed. David Jay Bercuson and Phillip A. Buckner (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1981).

³³² Corey J.A. Slumkoski, *Inventing Atlantic Canada: Regionalism and the Maritime Reaction to Newfoundland's Entry into Canadian Confederation* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2011), 49-52.

³³³ *Ibid*, 53-54.

³³⁴ *Ibid*, 56-57.

Recent historiography has begun to reconsider the way academics conceptualize Atlantic Canada.³³⁵ Some scholars believe that all four colonies may be assessed through a common framework. These historians recognize that, all were British colonies, with similar economies, cultures and population mixes, and each shared a common identity as a member of the British Empire.³³⁶ Links between them were multifaceted; formal and informal, personal and institutional; and as James Hiller acknowledged, just because Newfoundland would eventually choose a different political path, that did not override its “essential family relationship with the Maritime provinces.”³³⁷ Most Canadian history textbooks used in universities now likewise recognize the existence of an Atlantic Canada.³³⁸ That A. Marvel, and surely a number of his contemporaries, included Newfoundland in their popular regionalist sentiments is entirely plausible. Again, that the *Recorder* published Marvel’s proposal suggests not only its editors’ hopes for an extensive dialogue, but also that his construct of a North American British Atlantic nation was likely to have some wider appeal in the colony.

Economics and Governance

Just as the public sphere sought to examine British North American union in terms of economic expediency and governmental efficiency, its standards of assessment were equally applied to considerations of the more regional prospect of Maritime union. Governance and the

³³⁵ See for example, Malcolm Macleod, *Nearer than Neighbors: Newfoundland and Canada before Confederation*, (St. John's: Harry Cuff Publications, 1982); John G. Reid, "Towards the Elusive Synthesis: The Atlantic Provinces in Recent General Treatments of Canadian History," *Acadiensis*, 16, no. 2 (1987): 107-121; MacLeod, "Another Look at," 191-197; James K. Hiller, "Is Atlantic Canadian History Possible?," *Acadiensis*, 30, no. 1 (2000): 16-22.

³³⁶ James K. Hiller, "Is Atlantic Canadian History Possible?," *Acadiensis*, 30, no. 1 (2000): 21.

³³⁷ *Ibid.*, 21.

³³⁸ *Ibid.*

economy were after all the central focus of most examinations of union contained in Nova Scotia's public press. An excerpt from an article contained in the November 9, 1863 edition of the *Novascotian* considers relevant questions. Note the striking similarity between this assessment and those in which the public press deliberated on the wider British North American scheme for union.³³⁹

Can these three Provinces of Nova Scotia, New Brunswick, and Prince Edward Island, or the two former, have their Governments advantageously consolidated into one? Might not this be done with great advantage to every public interest, with much benefit to the several communities of which they are composed, collectively and individually? For instance, would not the expenses of Civil Government, over the whole, be greatly reduced? One Lieutenant Governor instead of three. One set of Heads of Departments instead of three. One Legislature instead of three. One Revenue to collect instead of three. [...] but then the expansion of our markets that would result, would be such an incentive to the investment of capital in all industrious pursuits. The foreign merchants would at once feel that they had three quarters of a million of people as customers. Manufacturers would realize the same truth. Skilled labour would come in competition with rival energies on a larger scale, and tend to be a higher standard of perfection, as well as vastly cheapen all kinds of manufactures. Hostile tariffs would no longer embarrass energetic enterprise within the jurisdiction of the United Provinces, and farmers and stock producers could select their markets over a much wider range of country than at present. A uniform currency would greatly facilitate trade and commerce, and that best adapted to the condition of the Provinces united, we shrewdly suspect, would be the sterling money of Great Britain. Men would know each other better, and the petty feuds that now disturb a single Province would be powerless to disturb or influence the union.³⁴⁰

Efficiency in government, the expansion of markets, increased foreign investment, the proficiency of labour, cheaper manufacturing, tariff reductions and increases in trade and commerce would all, in the minds of Howe and his editors, be effected by the adoption of Maritime union. Economically, a good case may easily have been made to suggest that the Maritimes had no need for stronger ties to colonies westward. Maritime exports generally, were

³³⁹ Refer to Chapter Four of this thesis.

³⁴⁰ *Novascotian*, November 9, 1863.

complementary rather than competitive with major networking economies.³⁴¹ Prince Edward Islands' trade paired well with those commodities leaving the United States; New Brunswick's supplies of mainly lumber were well-aligned with those of Great Britain; and Nova Scotia's substantial fish exports, effectively balanced those of the British West Indies.³⁴² In addition, tariffs in all three were traditionally kept quite low. In contemplating a wider union however, Canada and the Maritimes were often revealed to be competitors, most notably for export staples like fish and lumber; and protective Canadian tariffs were maintained, at least in part, to offset Maritime competition. It should be noted however that contradictory claims were simultaneously being utilized to advance the wider union model as well. This was not, after all, an isolated dialogue on Maritime merger, but a component of the press's wider considerations of political union. That these debates were thorough and deliberative is without question. Claims of an inarticulate or indifferent dialogue are directly contradicted by evidence in the historical record.

Disillusionment, a Regional Conference and the Union Message

There exists, outside of the debates of the public press, a factual basis with which one may reject the reductionist assessments prevalent in relevant historiography. Those claims that assert the ineffectual nature of Nova Scotia's deliberations on union and which maintain that Maritime disappointment over the cancellation of the Intercolonial was uniquely responsible for its instigation are contradicted when examining certain chronologies and events. As William L. Morton asserted in his 1968 assessment, an April 1st letter addressed to Samuel Tilley of New Brunswick and written by Thomas D'Arcy McGee (in which McGee informed the Maritimer of

³⁴¹ Martin, *Foundations of Canadian Nationhood*, 295.

³⁴² Ibid; Gwyn, *Excessive Expectations*, Chap. 4.

the new Canadian administration's support for the Intercolonial railway), allowed for the Maritimes to divert from their indignation for Canada and re-devote themselves to the cause of Maritime union.³⁴³ It should also be noted that only after receiving word of Canada's intention to revive the Railway did the legislatures of Nova Scotia and New Brunswick, in March and April 1864 respectively, instruct their governors to begin assembling conference delegations.³⁴⁴ These assertions directly contradict Waite's original claim, and those proffered by later histories, that the cancellation of the railway was uniquely responsible for deliberations of Maritime union, for if resentment toward Canada was now to ease, so too, conventional scholarly wisdom suggests, would deliberation of the scheme.

Evidence also suggests that contrary to the notion that a union conference would not have been organized but for Canadian intervention, Charlottetown was already being discussed as a potential meeting place for Maritime union delegates in as early as mid-April 1864.³⁴⁵ In September 1863, Charles Tupper, once and future premier of Nova Scotia, who voiced support for Maritime union first in 1861, visited Saint John to assure New Brunswick of his commitment to the Maritime scheme.³⁴⁶ Beyond simply endorsing the principle, Tupper, Gordon and Tilley worked together to create detailed sketches of how such a project might best be achieved; a complete legislative and administrative union emerged as their ultimate objective. The threesome also anticipated that the first session of a joint legislature would be composed of assemblymen of the three previous regional houses, and that these members would be charged with determining

³⁴³ University of New Brunswick, Tilley Papers, McGee to Tilley, 1 April 1864. Cited in Morton, *The Critical Years*, 143-144.

³⁴⁴ Public Records Office, Colonial Office 188/140 Gordon to Newcastle 12 April 1864. Cited in Morton, *The Critical Years*, 143.

³⁴⁵ University of New Brunswick Library, Gordon to Tilley, 4 April 1864. Cited in Morton, *The Critical Years*, 143. Ged Martin acknowledges Charlottetown's selection by the Maritime colonies prior to Canadian enquiries. See Martin, *Britain and the Origins*, 19.

³⁴⁶ Forbes and Muise, *The Atlantic Provinces*, 30.

the fundamental articles of a new joint constitution.³⁴⁷ Their discussion was more than theoretical, as is evidenced by the extent of the detailed diplomacies they determined, including for example, that Prince Edward Island would be exempted from railway taxation given its lower proportion of carried debt.³⁴⁸ By October of that year, the idea of Maritime union had been picked up by the press, and a full public discussion of its values and limitations was begun in all three Maritime colonies, receiving notably strong support in Nova Scotia.

When in the summer of 1864, the Lieutenant Governors of Nova Scotia and New Brunswick received Governor General Monck's request to dispatch a Canadian contingent, the Maritime officials were indeed forced to reconsider the nature of the meeting. The impasse and deadlock that long characterized Canadian politics had been overcome when in 1864 George Brown and his Upper Canadian Clear Grits consented to participate in a "Great Coalition" government with their one-time opponents, John A. Macdonald, George-Étienne Cartier and their Liberal-Conservative party. In June of that year, the Macdonald-Taché coalition had fallen in a vote of confidence. Rather than proceed to yet another election, as this would be the second in a year's time, Brown and his Reformers decided that a constitutional solution to the colony's political gridlock would have to be pursued from within a large coalition government.³⁴⁹ While the Maritime governors did contemplate a shift in the conference's purpose, they ultimately decided to maintain its original *raison d'être*, and agreed to receive the Canadian delegations as guests, without official status.³⁵⁰ Despite preserving the summit's original purpose, Governors MacDonnell and Gordon most certainly recognized the likely shift in tone and atmosphere that

³⁴⁷ MacNutt, *New Brunswick: A History*, 415.

³⁴⁸ *Ibid.*

³⁴⁹ Russell, *Constitutional Odyssey*, 17-19.

³⁵⁰ Public Records Office, Colonial Office 216/100 Dundas to Monck, 25 July 1864; MacDonnell to Cardwell, 18 August 1864. Cited in Morton, *The Critical Years*, 148-149.

would be caused by the inclusion of Canadian delegates. Governor MacDonnell of Nova Scotia, though unwilling to refuse Canadian participation, made sure to acknowledge that a discussion of general unification was likely to impair the pursuit of Maritime union.³⁵¹ Assured however that the two unions were not necessarily incompatible, the lower provinces agreed to host a meeting with uncertain objectives. It may be that the governors shared, with an element of the press, a certain faith in their governments' steadfast resolve for the pursuit of Maritime union. Confidence in the Maritime governments' dedication to the regional scheme was also voiced for example by the *Morning Chronicle* on August 6, 1864. Charles Annand and his editorial team believed that in spite of Canada's attendance, Nova Scotia's delegation would respect its original mandate and ensure adequate attention was paid to the Maritime proposal.

In view of these facts the alarm exhibited by the Chronicle on this subject is simply ludicrous. We are happy, however, to be able to allay their fears. The policy of the present Government is entirely different and clearly expressed. They, in concert with the Governments of New Brunswick and Prince Edward Island, have obtained the authority of the respective legislatures of these three colonies to confer in reference to a Legislative Union of the Maritime Provinces. [...]. If Canada has any proposition to make to the Governments of these Provinces it will, no doubt, when submitted to their Governments, receive the respectful attention it would deserve, but we think the straightforward, independent, and statesmanlike manner in which the three Governments have so far dealt with the question of the Legislative Union of the Maritime Provinces ought to be sufficient to assure the Chronicle that, unlike the last Government, they have a policy from which they will not be easily turned aside.³⁵²

As recognized by the Governors of Nova Scotia and New Brunswick, the two unions were by no means mutually exclusive, and could in fact be pursued with equal vigor. The notion that legislative union of the Maritime colonies was intended to, and thus should, predate discussion of a larger union with Canada, was indeed a common sentiment expressed in the

³⁵¹ Public Records Office, Colonial Office 216/100 Macdonnell to Cardwell, 18 July 1864. Cited in Morton, *The Critical Years*, 149.

³⁵² *British Colonist*, August 6, 1864

contemporary public sphere. The *Acadian Recorder*, for example, outlined this chronology in its August 20, 1864 edition.

Far be it from our purpose to say that we should not unite with Canada. We believe that after Acadia has become a reality that she must seek still further a union of territory and we have not the faintest belief that she will have any desire to shut Canada half the year from the ocean by legislative impositions, as the Federals have done or try to do. The time will come, and we hope very soon, when Canada may, if she prepares, be in a position to join us in the national march. We can be nothing by ourselves and it will be our interest, as it will be hers, to unite to save or prevent a less desirable union.³⁵³

Just a few months earlier, Conservative Premier of Nova Scotia, James William Johnston, had pronounced a similar expectation, thus contributing to Nova Scotians' familiarity with, and indeed anticipation of, Maritime union. On March 28, 1864, Johnston proclaimed in the Nova Scotia's House of Assembly:

My scheme originally was for union of the whole of the British American provinces. It seems, however, there are such difficulties in the way of this greater union as to render it impracticable for the present. I look at the union of the lower provinces as a step towards the larger one. I have never favoured a union of the provinces by way of federation, for it did not appear to tend to the greater object we had in view. What we want is to produce a real unity – make the parts that are now separate a homogeneous whole – give them a oneness of existence and of purpose.³⁵⁴

As the Charlottetown conference evolved, sentiments in favour of Maritime union continued unabated. As reports of the conference agenda trickled out of Charlottetown, it soon became clear that, contrary to common expectations, Maritime union was being supplanted by the larger project. A segment of the Nova Scotian press, led by the *Halifax Citizen*, voiced displeasure after hearing that, in spite of the delegates' mandate, regional union had not received their attention. On September 13, 1864, the *Citizen* voiced its discontentment, and noted that the

³⁵³ *Acadian Recorder*, August 20, 1864.

³⁵⁴ James Johnston, House of Assembly, March 28, 1864, found in Ajzenstat, et. al., *Canada's Founding Debates*, 262.

delegates' decision to overlook Maritime union in favour of the wider scheme was likely to create "widespread feelings of dissatisfaction."

There is reason, however, to believe that the real object for which the convention was summoned has not been forwarded. The delegates were specially authorized by the legislatures of their respective Provinces, to consult on the subject of a Union of the Maritime Colonies. So far as can be learned, this subject has hardly engaged their attention at all; they have exceeded their instructions, they have gone beyond the duties assigned them, and have devoted their labors wholly to the subject of a federal union with Canada. This may be inferred from the tenor of articles that have appeared in the *Charlottetown Islander*, and in the *Morning Chronicle* of this city, both journals inspired by members of the convention; and it is stated that another convention, summoned by the government of Canada, will assemble in Quebec about the 10th of October, to further deliberate, and if possible complete the negotiations for federal union. This announcement will take many persons by surprise, and create for a time, wide spread feelings of dissatisfaction in Nova Scotia; not because the people are opposed to union, but because it is not the kind of union they want, and have been taught to expect. Nova Scotia has always occupied an advanced position on this union question, and is now ready for any union which, while promoting the interests of the whole, will not place her in a false position.³⁵⁵

That the *Citizen* expects "widespread feelings of dissatisfaction," as this is "not the kind of union they [Novascotians] want[ed]," establishes the extent to which Maritime union was entertained and perhaps even favoured by the citizens of the colony. The article's reference to the kind of union Nova Scotians were "taught to expect," further indicates the prevalence with which the scheme was discussed, and indeed espoused, within the public sphere.

Evidence of this popular instruction can be found not only between the pages of the colony's press, but emanating also from within the colonial legislature in Halifax. When the Conservative government was returned to office on May 28, 1863, it was elected on a platform supported by three main pillars: a railway extension to Pictou and Annapolis, the establishment of a tax-funded, free and compulsory school system, and the organization of an inter-colonial

³⁵⁵ *Halifax Citizen*, September 13, 1864.

conference for the advancement of Maritime union.³⁵⁶ On March 28, 1864, Charles Tupper, who would inherit the premiership from Johnston in less than two months' time, further ingrained the Conservative government's intention to champion Maritime union.

The house will see that if the subject of a union with Canada were even in contemplation, no wiser step could take place than the union of the Maritime provinces in the first instance. Hostile as I believe the sentiment of Canada is at the present time to a union with the Maritime provinces, the day is not far distant when it will be for the interest of both to unite, and Canada will, I have no doubt, seek in that union the solution of those difficulties that are now found insuperable in the government of the country. These provinces, I am proud to know, would present a sufficient area, population, and resources to exercise no small amount of influence in the scale between the two sections in which Canada is divided. They would find in the Maritime provinces that which they seek for in vain in their own country – that is, a united people – divided by no sectional antagonism and embarrassed by no separate system of jurisprudence. They would find a country in which civil and religious liberty is enjoyed by all, and in which I am happy to know there exist no hostility between different races or religions. We would present a country to their view that might be united on a common bond of union with Canada – a union which is essential to the solution of the difficulties that now divide the two great sections of that province. This union when required will be, as I have said, more easy of accomplishment when these Maritime provinces are united than at present.³⁵⁷

Notice that Tupper begins his statement by distinguishing between the two schemes for union.

Regardless of the unification of British North America, he asserts that, “no wiser step could take place than the union of the Maritime provinces in the first instance.” With these sorts of declarations in mind, the origins of the colony's widespread assumption that Maritime union would be pursued at the Charlottetown conference, is made quite clear; as the *Citizen* stated, they were “taught” to expect so. As similar sentiments were consistently articulated in former Liberal premier Joseph Howe's *Novascotian*, the colony's two mainstream parties each spoke regularly of their own robust support for Maritime union.³⁵⁸ Charles Tupper was, after May 11, 1864, the

³⁵⁶ Forbes and Muise, *The Atlantic Provinces*, 31.

³⁵⁷ Charles Tupper, House of Assembly, March 28, 1864, found in Ajzenstat, et. al., *Canada's Founding Debates*, 328.

³⁵⁸ See, among many articles *Novascotian*, November 9, 1863.

colony's premier, and Nova Scotians it seems had every right to expect that what legislators and the press had been advocating for months, if not years, would be brought to fruition at the earliest moment of regional convenience. That there would exist, as the *Halifax Citizen* anticipated, "widespread feelings of dissatisfaction," after their failure to do so is hardly surprising given these and similar pronouncements.

Maritime union was indeed afforded thorough and deliberative debate in Nova Scotia's bourgeois public sphere. Along with the larger British North American scheme, it formed part of a comprehensive dialogue that was sustained by the press in the pre-resolution era. Contrary to dominant assumptions of historiography, Nova Scotians embraced the scheme as a potential plan of action, and public support was certainly greater than that which is allowed for by conventional assertions. Rather than the singular motivation that some historians have claimed was uniquely responsible for talk of regional union, namely Maritime disillusionment with Canada over the cancelled Intercolonial Railway, evidence suggests that a number of more nuanced impulses stimulated the scheme's entertainment within the public sphere, including: pan-Maritime sentiments, rational argumentation and consistent advocacy on the part of the colony's leading political figures. This chapter has explored some of the subject matter that received the attention of the colony's bourgeois elite, including defence, colonial readiness for union, conceptions of the proposed state and economic and governmental efficiency. Contemporary conclusions concerning the two union schemes' inherent independence, and their ability to be simultaneously achieved, led to even greater expectations for the pursuit of the regional option.

Chapter Six: Conclusion

Public opinion shapes our destinies and guides the progress of human affairs.
–Frank B. Kellogg

* * * * *

Between October 10th and October 27th, 1864, thirty-three delegates from the three Maritime provinces, the Province of Canada and Newfoundland, negotiated a series of seventy-two resolutions that would forever change the deliberative public dialogue. Canada's delegation, comprised of the colony's twelve-member Cabinet, set the agenda, proposed the resolutions and essentially dominated the conference.³⁵⁹ Canadian Prime Minister Étienne-Paschal Taché served as its chairman, and Canada was afforded two votes to each of the Atlantic colonies' single ballots.³⁶⁰ Controversy ensued over the configuration of Parliament, as representation by population was rejected by Prince Edward Island. The composition of the Senate and the distribution of powers between the federal and provincial governments caused more disagreement. The conference's conclusions, contained within the series of seventy-two resolutions, would only be ratified by the colonial legislature of the Province of Canada. Regardless, the resolutions formed the foundation of the Constitution Act and received few alterations at the London conference in 1866.³⁶¹

The entire Quebec conference, conducted in the reading room of Quebec's Legislative Council, took place behind closed doors. As delegates signed the resolutions, substantive constitution making was essentially complete. All that was required for the federation to be

³⁵⁹ Phillip A. Buckner, ed. *The Canadian Encyclopedia*. Historica Canada, 2006. s.v. "Québec Conference." <http://www.thecanadianencyclopedia.ca/en/article/quebec-conference/> (accessed June 28, 2014).

³⁶⁰ *Ibid.*

³⁶¹ *Ibid.*

essentially established was ratification by the imperial parliament.³⁶² The seventy-two resolutions were never approved by the legislative assembly of Nova Scotia, and the first opportunity for any democratically-elicited popular verdict on their terms arose only after the founding of the new Canadian state. In Canada's first federal election in September 1867, the anti-confederate faction took eighteen of Nova Scotia's nineteen seats. In the provincial election, thirty-six of the legislature's thirty-eight seats were occupied by members who opposed the Quebec scheme.³⁶³ This thesis has shown that rather than begin the Confederation debates, the Quebec conference could really only stifle the deliberative dialogue of the public sphere. In Nova Scotia, what was once a spirited and open-minded public debate evolved into a critical assessment of specific resolutions prepared in secret by the political elite. No longer could the principles of union be debated on their merits. Advantages and disadvantages of union were now limited by the parameters of the proposed framework.

This thesis has argued that the public sphere in Nova Scotia hosted a deliberative and sophisticated debate on the varied questions of union. Members of the bourgeois elite were required to maintain the wealth necessary to ensure their continued access to the vehicles of information and public opinion, which, in the nineteenth-century, were newspapers. Discussed first by Jürgen Habermas, in his 1962 study, *Structural Transformation of the Public Sphere*, the bourgeois public sphere was defined as the communicative space that facilitated wider access to public discussion and debate through print culture, sociability and public involvement in political affairs.³⁶⁴ This thesis further argued that despite its nineteenth-century restrictions, the public sphere of contemporary Nova Scotia was open and equal to an extent rarely seen before its

³⁶² Russell, *Constitutional Odyssey*, 27.

³⁶³ *Ibid*, 30.

³⁶⁴ Habermas, *Structural Transformation of the Public Sphere*.

construction. The chief purpose of the public sphere was to host well-reasoned and deliberative debate on all matters of popular interest. In order to advance rational and responsible government, the judgement and opinion of the public had to be determined and advocated through collective deliberation. Likewise, the conservation of a largely uncensored forum through which informed individuals could exchange thoughts and opinion, was thought by the bourgeois elite, to be the best method for securing individual liberty and justice. These precise sentiments were responsible for the sophisticated, nuanced and deliberative debates hosted on the questions of political union, both in Nova Scotia and throughout British North America. This thesis has also demonstrated that, in addition to both orchestrating and moderating the public dialogue, newspapermen of the day were among its greatest contributors. Editors and publishers with diverse views and opinions endorsed the sort of widespread debate that was had within the colony's public arena.

A central contention of this thesis, as presented in Chapter Two, was that by the start of the pre-resolution debates, in the early to mid-1860s, political liberalism was sufficiently entrenched that Nova Scotia may be viewed by historians as a young liberal democracy. The dominant status of the liberal philosophy is central to the framework that helped illuminate why the debates were able to maintain their deliberative nature. The foundations for the definition of liberalism outlined in Chapter Two, and pursued throughout this study, were gathered from the central arguments of Ian McKay's liberal order framework. Some of McKay's assertions however (including the Gramscian qualities inherent in the liberal order, and the primacy of property in a hierarchy of liberal values), limited the extent to which his theory could be effectively applied to a study of the union debates. Due largely to the theory's failure to recognize the particularities of contingency and individual agency, a wider and more context-

appropriate political interpretation was constructed. McKay's three central constituents of liberalism – individualism, property and equality – remained significant components of the construct. Additional features outlined in the chapter included: equality before the law, freedom of expression and freedom of conscience. Other constituent elements were offered by a number of scholars, also included: reason, universalism, meliorism, justice and popular sovereignty. British constitutionalism and the influence of popular loyalism were also recognized as major factors in expressions of British North American liberalism. Chapter Two also showed how the men who debated questions of political union operated as liberals, by expressing a wide range of views, and engaging with each other's ideas in well-reasoned terms. The diffusion of liberalism was studied in relation to Nova Scotia's non-partisan political environment and a survey of the colony's newspapermen exposed a pattern of liberal sentiments and expression.

Chapter Three explored the fundamental historical events and experiences that contributed to the entrenchment of liberalism and the creation of the bourgeois public sphere in Nova Scotia. By analysing certain individuals and features, it documented how the colony evolved into a deliberative democracy. The chapter examined: the colony's earliest intellectual foundations, implanted by waves of immigrants that arrived even before the loyalist influx, as well as the contributions of loyalists, Scottish settlers, the clergy, pious missionaries and the colony's first merchants. Nova Scotia's earliest literature of knowledge, the Mephibosheth Stepsure and John Young letters, libraries, the mechanic's institute and the intellectual offerings of literary and scientific societies were also examined in the chapter. Most significantly, it surveyed the colony's first publications including magazines like the *Acadian* and *Halifax Monthly*, and the newspapers that later organized, moderated and participated in the Confederation debates of the public sphere.

In Chapter Four, this thesis sought to evidence its central claims: that a multitude of prospective consequences of British North American union were debated and, that in the pre-resolution period, newspapers, rather than standing in support or opposition, remained receptive to persuasive argumentation. It illustrated how, over two years, conclusions had yet to be drawn and a truly deliberative dialogue was able to be had in the public sphere. The chapter also explored the efficacy of a long-exercised practice among historians to divide contemporary Maritimers into pro- and anti-union clusters. It concluded that greater historical insight may be gathered through qualitative description of the debate's characteristics including, even-handed reflection, deliberation, receptiveness, and reserved judgement. In this regard, Chapter Four affirmed that labels like pro-union and anti-confederate are in fact unhelpful, and fail to capture the nuance and evolution of opinion that were so essential to early contemplations of union. The chapter further argued that categorization not only obscures nuance, but denies the roles of historical contingency and individual agency in the development of personal and editorial opinion.

The fifth chapter of this thesis examined the place occupied by Maritime union in the deliberative union debates of Nova Scotia's public sphere. Though approached in a dedicated section, it outlined the tendency for contemporaries to treat the topic as an integral portion of their larger debates on union. Thus rather than consider Maritime dialogue as distinctive, Chapter Five argued that scholars should assess all relevant reflection as part of a comprehensive phenomenon. Fundamental to the chapter's claim that Maritime union formed part of a larger union dialogue, was the notion that regional sympathies existed peaceably alongside colonial and imperial conceptions of self. The chapter argued that, rather than independent constructs, these

perceptions were compatible elements of a singular whole that required neither ranking nor reconciliation.

After providing an overview of Maritime union historiography, the chapter emphasised that regardless of certain scholarly claims to the contrary, Nova Scotians thoroughly engaged with the regional option. Evidence presented in Chapter Five led to its concluding that the scheme was afforded the same thorough and sophisticated deliberation as was its larger, British North American concomitant. Subjects of Maritime union reflected in the public sphere, and which were examined in this discussion included: regional sentiments, desires for the restoration of ancient Acadia and prospects for an Atlantic nation, in addition to matters of colonial defence, regional development, economic expedience and governmental efficiency. Chapter Five also questioned the accuracy of conventional scholarly wisdom concerning the impetus for Maritime union, and confronted the notion that regional disillusionment with Canada was responsible for the scheme's discussion. Instead, it concluded that regional sentiment and persuasive argument can alone account for the colony's thorough deliberation of the regional option. Maritime union was much more than a conservative program overridden by a progressive successor (B.N.A. union).

The pre-resolution debates examined in this thesis are essential to history's understanding the ways in which Nova Scotians appreciated their prospects for political union. Alternative to the dialogue that ensued after October of 1864, which pertained exclusively to a specific framework, produced in secret, by a small cadre of the political elite, the pre-resolution debates of the public sphere better represent the genuine attitudes of politically engaged Nova Scotians toward the principle and theory of political union. By understanding the well-considered and

reflective nature of these debates, one can also gain insight into the repeal movement that developed in Nova Scotia immediately following Confederation.

The evidence examined in this study is representative of Nova Scotian attitudes toward political union that is accessible in the historical record. The confrontation of certain inconsistencies or fallacies maintained by conventional scholarly wisdom was a central objective of this work. By refocusing academic attention toward a brief period, that has been chronically under-examined by historians, it has attempted to modify history's impression of a conservative and parochial region. Additionally, this thesis has sought to affirm the agency of those Nova Scotians who contributed toward a series of thoughtful and deliberative union debates, where argument, reason and reflection could alone determine the evolution of public opinion.

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Halifax *Gazette/Royal Gazette* and *Nova Scotia Chronicle and Weekly Advertiser*

Halifax, *Journal*

Halifax, *Morning Chronicle/Weekly Chronicle*

Halifax, *Morning Sun*

Halifax, *Nova Scotia Gazette and Weekly Advertiser*

Halifax, *Nova Scotia Packet and General Advertiser*

Halifax, *Novascotian*

Halifax, *Novator*

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Halifax, *Royal American Gazette, Port Roseway Gazette and Shelbourne Advertiser*

Halifax, *Telegram*

Halifax, *Weekly Chronicle/Acadian*

Liverpool, *Transcript*

New Glasgow *Eastern Chronicle*

Pictou, *Colonial Patriot*

Pictou, *Colonial Standard*

Pictou, *Observer*

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Appendix A: Directory of Publications Consulted³⁶⁵

Publication Name³⁶⁶	Publishers and Editors (P & E)	Term of Publication
<i>Newspapers</i>	*****	*****
Antigonish, <i>Casket</i>	Angus Boyd, (P. 1860-1888) Rev. D. MacGregor, (E. 1860 - ?)	1852 -
Bridgetown, <i>Free Press</i>	I.B. Gidney, (P. 1863-1872) Angus M. Gidney, (E. ?)	1863-1872
Halifax, <i>Acadian Recorder</i>	Philip J. Holland, (P. & E. 1824-36) John English & H.W. Blackadar (P. & E. 1837-63) Blackadar Brothers (P. & E. 1863- ?)	1813-1930?
Halifax, <i>British Colonist</i>	A. Grant, (P. & E. 1855-1874)	1855-1874
Halifax, <i>Citizen</i>	William Garvie, (P? & E. 1863-1866) E.M. MacDonald, (P? & E. 1863-1870)	1863?-1877
Halifax <i>Gazette/Royal Gazette and Nova Scotia Chronicle and Weekly Advertiser</i>	E.M. MacDonald, (P. & E. 1860- ?)	1769-1837
Halifax, <i>Journal</i>	William A. Penney, (E. & P. 1856-65)	1781-1870
Halifax, <i>Morning Chronicle/Weekly Chronicle</i>	W.M. Annand, (E. 1844-99?) Thomas Annand, (P. & E? 1855-1864) Charles Annand, (P. & E? 1864-1927)	1844-1900
Halifax, <i>Morning Sun</i>	A.J. Ritchie, (P. & E. 1857-1864)	1857-1864?
Halifax, <i>Nova Scotia Packet and General Advertiser</i>		
Halifax, <i>Novascotian</i>	Joseph Howe, (E. on and off between 1840-92) Thomas Annand, P. 1855- 1864) Charles Annand, (P. 1864-1889?)	1840-1925
Halifax, <i>Novator</i>		1809-1810?
Halifax, <i>Reporter</i>	Crosskill & Bourinot, (P.? & E. 1860-1864)	1860-1864
Halifax, <i>Royal American Gazette, Port Roseway Gazette and Shelbourne</i>		1789-1903?

³⁶⁵ All information for this table was collected from Hicks, Murphy and Vohra, *Nova Scotia Newspapers*.

³⁶⁶ Consult Ibid. for a complete inventory and all changes to publication names and additional publishers and editors.

<i>Advertiser</i>		
Halifax, <i>Telegram</i>		
Halifax, <i>Weekly Chronicle/Acadian and General Advertiser</i>	W.M. Minns (P. & E? 1786-1827)	1786-1827
Liverpool, <i>Transcript</i>	S.J.M. Allen, 1854-67	1854-1867
Pictou/New Glasgow <i>Eastern Chronicle</i>	Geldert & Patterson, (P.1843-1953) John D. MacDonald, (E. 1847?-1866?)	1843-1953
Pictou, <i>Colonial Standard</i>	S.H. Holmes. (P. & E. 1858-1907)	1858-1907
Pictou, <i>Colonial Patriot</i>	J.S. Cunnabell (P. 1828) Jotham Blanchard (E. ?-?)	1827-1834
Pictou, <i>Observer and Eastern Advertiser</i>	W.M. Gossip (P. & E. 1831-1835) Andrew Reid (P. 1834)	1831-1835?
Sydney, Cape Breton News	J.P. Ward (P. & E. 1850-1872)	1850-1872
Yarmouth, <i>Herald</i>	Alexander Lawson, P. & E. 1843-45, 1851-95	1833-
Yarmouth, <i>Tribune</i>	Richard Huntington. (P? & E. 1855-1883)	1855-1883
Yarmouth, <i>Telegraph and Shelburne Advertiser</i>		1831-1831
Magazines	*****	*****
<i>Nova Scotia Magazine and Comprehensive Review of Literature, Politics and News,</i>	Rev. William Cochran (E. 1789- ?) John Howe (P. 1789-1792, E. 1790-1792)	1789-1792
<i>Acadian Magazine or Literary Mirror</i>	J.S. Cunnabell (P. 1826-1828)	1826-1828
<i>Halifax Monthly</i>	J.S. Cunnabell (P. 1830-1833)	1830- 1833