

CHARLES CLARKE: CLEAR GRIT.

A POLITICAL STUDY 1826-1871.

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PREFACE

To my knowledge, no study of the political thought and career of Charles Clarke has been undertaken. It is my intention in the following pages of this thesis to attempt such a study.

Charles Clarke was very much a product of the world in which he lived. He was, in a real and significant sense, a part of everything and everyone he met. For this reason, I have devoted my effort to an analysis of Clarke's political career against the background of an age that was instrumental in shaping his thought and determining the course his public life would take.

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AN ADDRESS TO THE YOUNG MEN OF ENGLAND.

Charles Clarke was born in the Stone Bow, an historic building situated in the heart of Lincoln, England, on November 28, 1826. The only son of the city grain inspector, Clarke spent his childhood in a comfortable if modest middle-class home inhabited by a family that displayed little want of affection or friends.

As he grew to maturity, young Clarke often turned his attention from his secure parental environment to the world about him. He would sit by the hour in the living rooms of the Stone Bow gazing out upon the High Street and watching, with a growing sense of wonder and excitement, the varying scenes and happenings which passed in the life below.¹ For such a serious, inquiring young man coming of age in Victorian England, there seemed no end of things to be seen and heard and remembered.

Every Englishman born between 1815 and 1850 was caught up in the combined aftermath of two great social and political revolutions, the American and the French: two great social and economic upheavals, the agrarian and

1. Charles Clarke, Sixty Years in Upper Canada

(Toronto: William Briggs, 1908), 7.

the industrial revolutions, and of two great foreign wars, the French Revolutionary and the Napoleonic. The American and French Revolutions set in motion a whole tide of new forces and ideas in the political life of the Western world. The agrarian and industrial revolutions transformed England from an agricultural nation ruled by squires, parsons and landed gentry, into an industrial nation dominated by new classes produced by economic expansion and business enterprise. Finally, the French Revolutionary and the Napoleonic Wars cut across the effects of both of these other events, speeding industrialization but retarding social and political reforms.²

In the light of these great events it is not surprising that young Clarke found life in Lincoln filled with a spirit of activity and adventure. "It was indeed a valued privilege, "he wrote later in life, "to be born at such a time and amidst such surroundings. The dead level of the eighteenth century...had come to an end. Progress in its protean forms came with the downfall of Napoleon, and the people having felt their strength, slowly but surely asserted it."³

Epochal events were carrying Britain to the brink

2. David Thomson, England in the Nineteenth Century
(Harmondsworth, 1955), 32-34.
3. Clarke, 10.

of an era of prosperity and greatness unrivalled in her whole history. It was a time of strenuous activity and dynamic change, of ferment of ideas and great inventiveness and expansion. At the same time, it was a period marked by recurrent social distress, economic crisis and political strife.

Such was the temper and spirit of Victorian England. It was an age that would leave a profound and lasting impression on the future life and thought of Charles Clarke.

Clarke was introduced formally to Victorian England in the classroom. To begin his education, his parents sent him to a small academy in Lincoln run by Thomas Cooper. Here, Clarke was presented with a variety of subjects devoted primarily to a study of the literature and history of western civilization. His time in the Academy was spent reading in Latin, Greek and French, studying the writings of Milton, Shakespeare and Byron, and learning of the glories of Greece and Rome, the voyages of Columbus and the revolutionary traditions of America and France.⁴

While all of these subjects engaged Clarke's attention, none proved of more interest to him than Cooper's

4. Clarke, 12-13.

studies in the rudiments of citizenship. "We were made as familiar as boys could well be, Clarke recalled in later life, "with the various forms of government and...we were strongly tinctured with the belief that a free republic is infinitely better than an unlimited monarchy." ⁵

Such remarks, coming from a graduate of Cooper's academy, are not without meaning and significance. An exponent of nineteenth century English liberalism, Thomas Cooper was strongly influenced by a political philosophy dedicated to the realization of democracy. He stood among a growing array of Britons who sought peacefully to free their country from the shackles of landed privilege, power and monopoly. Impulsive and positive in his opinions, and energetic in his expression of them, it was to be expected that Cooper would attempt to impart his ideas to his classes.

From their studies of municipal government, the pupils at the Academy learned of the creditable efforts being made by Sir Samuel Romilly, Fowell Buxton, William Wilberforce and Sir Robert Peel, to improve public law and order in the towns and cities of England. Their classes in the character and function of the British parliamentary

5. Clarke, 13.

system introduced them to the varied movements for political reform being led by Lord John Russell and Earl Grey, and by the well known Radicals, Francis Place and Joseph Hume. Finally, their lessons in civic affairs gave them some understanding of the new forms of wealth - manufacturing and commerce - that had been produced by the Industrial Revolution, and taught them something of the popular campaigns of Richard Cobden and John Bright for the repeal of the Corn Laws and the adoption of Free Trade.

After a short stay at Cooper's academy, Clarke left to continue his education in a boarding school at Waddington near Lincoln. Here, he was placed in the charge of George Boole, a self-taught man of liberal principles who was to become a well known Professor of Mathematics at Queen's College, Cork. As an educator, Boole strove, "to travel far beyond the average teacher as to the quality of books put into the hands of his pupils," and he aimed at, "the elevation of taste and cultivation of the mind."⁶ In addition, he frequently assigned his pupils compositions, believing that the essay was the true test of a student's progress. No doubt, this practice in writing stood well with Clarke in his later venture into the field of journalism.

6. Clarke, 18.

The influence Cooper and Boole had on Clarke's life is significant. Men of learning and conviction, they both imparted far more than an academic knowledge of western civilization to their young pupil. They taught Clarke to see and appreciate ideas and men that were shaping his own Victorian world. They instilled in him their own faith in man and the democratic process, and they left him their own sympathy for tolerance, for progress and for reform. Throughout his life, Charles Clarke never hesitated to acknowledge his debt for these lessons.

A premature departure from the classroom, precipitated by the untimely death of his father, did not still Clarke's boyish interest in the political life of his age. Apprenticed at the age of fourteen to a large drapery concern in Lincoln, he forfeited few opportunities to see and hear prominent public figures debate the great issues of the day.

On more than one occasion, he abandoned the drapery shop to hear the local Reformer, Bulwer Lytton, campaign against the evils of Toryism, and once he had the privilege of seeing Daniel O'Connell and hearing the great Irish liberator address a large audience in front of the City Arms hotel.⁷ A short time later, he had another memorable experience in seeing Richard Cobden and John Bright, and

7. Clarke, 23-29.

listening to Bright speak before the farmers of Lincoln on the question of the repeal of the Corn Laws and the adoption of free trade. Of this latter occasion he later wrote, "I stole away from my work for a few precious minutes to obtain a glimpse, however brief, of men whom I admired so much. I had to hurry back, but I had seen them."⁸

That Charles Clarke held such admiration for Cobden and Bright, is not surprising. Indeed, his preference generally for political figures of Liberal leanings is quite understandable when consideration is given to influences that were already sharing in the early moulding of his character.

The ardent Liberalism of Clarke's teachers, their zeal for political liberty and their acid distaste for every Tory prejudice and privilege, was not the only force that was stamping his politics. A product of the nineteenth century urban middle class, Clarke had every reason to sympathize with Bulwer's demand for political reforms that would ensure a more equitable representation in Parliament for the cities and towns of England. In like manner, his social and economic environment persuaded him to endorse the platform of the Manchester Liberals, when

8. Clarke, 29.

it was thought their doctrines would benefit the urban dweller at the expense of the nation's strongly entrenched Tory landlords.

These varied influences, exerted against the background of impressive torchlight processions, vehement political speeches and persuasive campaign slogans, were instrumental in infusing young Clarke with many tenets of nineteenth century Liberalism.

To further his knowledge of this political philosophy, he read extensively from leading reform journals and acquainted himself with Chartist demands for the extension of parliamentary democracy. At the same time, he offered his service to the Manchester Liberals, becoming an active participant in the work of the Anti-Corn Law League.⁹

These activities of an ambitious youthful spirit betray the political path Clarke had chosen. But it was his talent for writing, which through journalism would make his name in future, that revealed the depth and maturity of his burgeoning political thought.

At fifteen, Clarke drafted "An Address to the Young Men" eloquently appealing for the use of the great moral, intellectual and spiritual force of young men in the cause

9. Clarke, 45.

of progress and reform. Submitted to Richard Cobden, and subsequently returned by that great man with a brief note of approval, this single tract epitomized Charles Clarke's burgeoning liberal creed. "If we take but a cursory glance at the great moral force of young men...the interests they represent, the affections they balance, their preponderance in the scale or their influence in society, we may readily come to the conclusion that in every public exertion their aid is especially required."¹⁰

With a passionate youthful idealism, Clarke called upon his political saint to realize the final triumph of English Liberalism by tapping this great reservoir in the body social: "There are thousands of young men who require but a call for Liberty to enlist under her banner (and) achieve for our land...freedom of opinion, justice of decision and liberty of action."¹¹

Once gathered together, these young Britons would,

10. Ontario Department of Public Records and Archives, Clarke Papers, Charles Clarke to Richard Cobden, ca. December, 1841.

11. Ibid.

"open a tremendous artillery of knowledge...upon the dark, hitherto unfathomable dungeons of ignorance of our modern aristocrats, and with their ability would throw down the bulwarks of tyranny and expose to the light of better days the rampant grinding absolutism of our Tory rulers." ¹²

Such glowing expectations were not without the support of historical precedent. Young men in other ages had often displayed an enthusiastic response to the call of liberty:

"If we take the French Revolution as an instance, from whom emanated the brightest visions of glory, whose the clearest principles, whose the moral code, whose the noblest action, whose the most liberal sentiment, whose the greatest will for liberty? It was the young men." ¹³

Other chapters taken from the revolutionary traditions of the Western world supplied Clarke with additional evidence of the concern of youth for the principle of human freedom:

"When America struggled for her independence, who most speedily enrolled under their

12. P.A.O., Clarke Papers, Charles Clarke to Richard Cobden, ca. December, 1841.

13. Ibid.

country's banner, who at Boston turned from the ships the odious tea, who bore the brunt of Bunker Hill, who were the first to elevate the stars and stripes? History tells us, the young men!"¹⁴

If the youth of France and America was willing to fight "tyranny, ignorance and misplaced power" there was no reason in Clarke's mind to expect less from his own countrymen. Victorian England certainly offered her young people an equal number of injustices to combat:

"Adverse conditions of capitalists and labour alike exist in Manchester where Poverty and Tyranny walk the streets. At Stirling and Nottingham, parties parade the streets clamouring for food... in Sheffield and Birmingham riots are a daily occurrence. Ruin, Fall, Desolation are now the watchwords - surely Babylon is fallen."¹⁵

Clarke's talent for observing and reporting national tragedy was matched by the creditable intelligence he displayed in diagnosing the cause of Britain's social and economic ills. In his Address to the Young Men, he

14. P.A.O., Clarke Papers, Charles Clarke to Richard Cobden, ca. December, 1841.

15. Ibid.

stoutly maintained that, "the cause of this present suffering is the Corn Laws," and warned Richard Cobden that, "unless this monstrous evil be immediately and entirely removed, your once happy country will not only be made destitute but it will sink into an insignificance totally unprecedented in the annals of nations."¹⁶

To prevent such a catastrophe, a widespread campaign must be launched for the active support of the nation's young mechanics, scholars, capitalists, farmers, tradesmen and landowners. A weekly periodical, "exposing the nefarious conduct of government" must be circulated, pamphlets must be written, petitions prepared and demands forwarded to high offices. The nation's youth must be persuaded to agitate for the abolition of the infamous Bread Tax and prove by their actions, "that you are guided by feelings of regard for your fellow men and for the happiness of the present and future race." In this way alone, "will the patient of Sir R. Peel be prepared to bear the change which Free Trade must effect."¹⁷

Clarke's "Address" clearly reveals the benign innocence with which he approached the subject of Free Trade. The long and bitter struggle surrounding this

16. P.A.O., Clarke Papers, Charles Clarke to Richard Cobden, ca. December, 1841.

17. Ibid.

nineteenth century doctrine was conducted in very exaggerated terms and the importance both of the Corn Laws and of their repeal was inflated out of all proportion by the demagogic methods of the Anti-Corn Law League. Even with the advent of repeal, prices did not fall greatly, and economic and social conditions remained depressed and unstable for quite other reasons which had been ignored by the opponents of the Corn Laws.¹⁸ Certainly, Adam Smith's doctrine never secured for England the respite from economic and social injustice that young Clarke believed it would.

These observations are not made to detract from the importance free-trade liberalism had on the casting of Charles Clarke's political character. If his "Address to the Young Men" overlooked the battle for higher profits that lay behind this creed, and misread the future changes this doctrine would effect, it did touch on its broader implications for national power, peace and prosperity. When it is remembered that it was this aspect of free-trade liberalism that laid the ideological foundations of Victorian England, it is not difficult to appreciate the influence Clarke's world was exerting on his ideas and beliefs.

18. Thomson, 80-81.

Clarke did not remain in England to witness the final demise of the Corn Laws. Three years after he wrote his famous letter to Richard Cobden, he turned his face westward to begin life in a new land. Perhaps Canada would afford the challenge and opportunity required by a young crusading Englishman anxious to test his newly acquired zeal for reform and progress.

CANADA WEST: RESPONSIBILITY AND REFORM.

The Superb was a timber and cotton ship built on the Clyde many years before, but it was the first vessel to leave Liverpool in that spring of 1844, and time was of the essence for a young run-away apprentice. To be sure, Clarke had conscientious scruples about the manner of his departure from Mr. Norton's drapery concern, "but, alas! they withered almost ere they bloomed."¹ After all, there was no longer any real reason to endure the drudgery of the dry-goods shop. Had not a recent second marriage provided for his widowed mother and left her securely established in Canada? Only a lad totally lacking in the spirit of adventure would turn from the opportunities for a new life that this absence of family responsibility provided.²

Landing in New York with less than ten pounds in his possession, Clarke was confronted with the problem of financing the last stage of his journey to Canada. Fortune however favoured the young immigrant. The day the Superb cast anchor, the liner Hottingeur arrived from Liverpool with Clarke's uncle and his family. By effecting the

1. Clarke, 31.

2. Ibid., 31-32.

necessary loan from his uncle, Clarke was able to quit the city, and on June 23, 1844 he arrived at Port Robinson on the Welland Canal.

Immigrants to Canada in the mid-nineteenth century found a land inhabited by about two million people scattered in a straggling band of settlement that stretched for a thousand miles along the St. Lawrence water system.³ At first, this vast virgin expanse, with its ancient soaring forests and backwoods clearings, appeared wholly unlike the more mature civilizations of the western world. And yet, this outlying, pioneer community was constantly being exposed to more familiar forces that stemmed from without. When Clarke arrived, the storm over responsible government was drawing heavily upon both Europe and America for guidance and inspiration. American principles of equality and democracy together with the hallowed traditions of the Briton's fight for liberty against despotism, were providing the colony's Reform party with powerful ideological support. At the same time however, widespread sentiments of loyalty in English-speaking Canada, coupled with an ingrained popular aversion to republicanism, were supplying the critics of reform with equally strong sources of strength.

3. John Charles Dent, The Last Forty Years

(Toronto: George Virtue, 1881), I, 52-62.

The principles of freedom and parliamentary democracy were constantly being challenged by traditions of authority and oligarchic rule.⁴ The result was to sharpen future conflicts in Canadian affairs.

Other political issues confronting new arrivals to Canada embodied less familiar principles. These sprung from sources within the colony itself. Apart from the question of responsible government, there were disputes over the claims of the Church of England to privileges of establishment, the contest over Anglican endowments in clergy reserve lands, and the struggle to free King's College, the provincial university, from exclusive Anglican control.⁵ And dwarfing all of these problems, there was the ever-present friction between Canada's two great cultures that threatened to erupt and destroy the precarious union of Upper and Lower Canada that had been achieved only a few years before.

These were the outlines of the future rising on the horizon when Charles Clarke stepped ashore at Port Robinson in that summer month of 1844. This was the land to which the young Lincoln lad had come. Here, Clarke would find both challenge and promise offered side by side. Here,

4. Dent, I, 357-360.

5. J.M.S. Careless, Brown of the Globe: The Voice of Upper Canada 1818-1859, (Toronto: Macmillan Company Limited, 1959), 31-32.

he would discover the call of righteous causes to which his whole background and experience committed him.

First however, a place to settle had to be found, a means of livelihood had to be decided upon, and news of home had to be procured. Clarke's step-father John L. Kirk, had already purchased a small farm in the township of Canboro in the Niagara Peninsula and it was here that the first years in Canada were spent. It was hard work, but Clarke enjoyed helping his family reclaim and improve the land. He learned how to seed and harrow and plough, and he acquired additional skills helping erect a frame house and a stable from rough-hewed timbers. Unfortunately however, an allergy to the Canadian thistle brought on severe attacks of fever and forced Clarke to move to a healthier climate.⁶

In 1848 he accompanied his step-father to Elora; a newly formed village nestled on the banks of the Grand River about thirteen miles north of Guelph. Here, John Kirk made his decision to abandon farming for a mercantile life, "which seemed to afford a quicker and better means of securing a comfortable home."⁷ When Clarke and his family arrived, Elora could only boast of two houses, a mill, and

6. J.R. Connors, The Early History of Elora, Ontario

(Elora: The Elora Express and the Fergus News Record 1930), 135.

7. Clarke, 42-43.

a distillery. But, the surrounding countryside was fertile and future prospects seemed bright. In the meantime, there were new friendships to cultivate and a new environment to explore. And of course, there were always welcome letters from home to be read in the evenings.

Soon after his arrival in Canada, Clarke received word that his former teacher Thomas Cooper had been released from prison after having served two years on a charge of conspiracy. Always a man of the people, Cooper had abandoned the classroom for a political career and had quickly risen to a place of prominence in the Chartist movement. Sponsored by the London Workingmen's Association, the Chartists derived their name from the "Peoples Charter," a legislative program containing demands for universal male suffrage, election by secret ballot, and annual Parliamentary elections.⁸

Born out of widespread workingclass dissatisfaction with the Reform Bill of 1832 and the Poor Law of 1834, the Chartists had launched a national campaign for their program. It was while addressing a large crowd of workingmen in the Staffordshire Potteries on the Chartist demands that Cooper had been arrested. A riot had followed in

8. R.L. Schuyler and C.C. Weston, British Constitutional History Since 1832 (Toronto: Van Nostrand Company, Inc., 1957), 34-35.

the wake of his oration, and although he was not directly involved, a charge of inciting to riot had been brought against him. He was tried for sedition and confined to Stafford jail.

Not until 1845 did Clarke learn that his beloved teacher had won his freedom. A former school mate, George Hancock, wrote that Cooper had left Stafford for London, bent upon a literary career. While in prison he had written a poem of some merit entitled, "The Purgatory of Suicides" and he was now determined to compile a religious tract on "The Evidences of Christianity."⁹ "I consider Mr. C. as on the highway to lasting reputation," Hancock concluded. "He is undoubtedly a man of very considerable abilities and attainments."¹⁰

Not confining his letter to news of old friends, Hancock had dwelt at length on political developments in Britain. It was apparent by the winter of 1845, that the elements of time and tide had finally worked in favour of free trade. Bad harvests in England and a potato famine in Ireland had precipitated a national crisis and rumours of the imminent abolition of the Corn Laws were rife. "Every Corn Law Repealer looks forward in a state of joyous

9. Clarke, 14-16.

10. P.A.O., Clarke Papers, Hancock to Clarke, December 10, 1845.

anticipation to the approaching opening of Parliament," Hancock wrote. "Some important measures will certainly be brought forward in the next session. The Times has published a statement tantamount to an admission of repeal. There are rumours of the resignation of the Premier being heard at all the Clubs."¹¹

Finally, the long awaited news had reached Canboro. Repeal had been effected. Sir Robert Peel, the gifted leader of British conservatism, had breached the ramparts of his own class and proposed to abolish the Corn Laws. Faced with rising unemployment and mounting social unrest, and convinced that repeal was inevitable, Peel had resigned office in favour of Russell and the Whigs. It was the refusal of the Whigs to clash with the overwhelmingly Tory House of Lords on the issue of repeal that had brought the conservative leader back into office determined to give the nation what it wanted - free trade. His motion had passed the Commons with the assistance of the Whigs and had received the reluctant consent of the Lords. At the expense of breaking his own party, Peel had terminated a political deadlock and averted a national crisis. Thus the Corn Laws were abolished in 1846.

11. P.A.O., Clarke Papers, Hancock to Clarke, December 10, 1845.

News from the old world continued to cross the Atlantic following the advent of free trade. In Britain and in Europe, the spirit of progress and reform was evident everywhere. In 1848, Clarke learned of the formation of a new reform party in the House of Commons directed to the original Chartist cause of parliamentary democracy and constitutional reform. Although support for Chartism in recent years had been drawn off by the Anti-Corn Law League and trade unionism, its decline as a political movement was more apparent than real.¹² Under the leadership of Joseph Hume and Richard Cobden, fifty-two members of Parliament were now prepared to renew Chartist demands for vote by ballot, equal electoral districts and universal male suffrage.¹³

On the continent, the spectre of revolution was everywhere in evidence. Hancock observed, "from north to south, from east to west -- from Norway to Italy and from Greece to Spain -- all Europe is turbulence and dissatisfaction."¹⁴ Economic depression coupled with political absolutism had resulted in widespread popular uprisings in almost every area of the continent. Led by a rising group of middle class intellectuals, and characterized by

12. Thomson, 86-87.

13. P.A.O., Clarke Papers, Hancock to Clarke, May 28, 1848.

14. Ibid., May 28, 1848.

demands for liberal constitutions, democratic civil rights and sweeping economic and social reforms, these revolutions had succeeded in toppling the established order in several continental capitals. In Paris, the throne of Louis Philippe had been overthrown and a republic had been proclaimed.¹⁵ In Vienna, "old Metternick has been compelled to fly and more recently his master, the Emperor."¹⁶

From England, Hancock reported that "the Tory fear is that the new order now being established in Europe will lead to excesses and abuses."¹⁷ Such pessimism however was not shared by all Englishmen. Liberals spoke in glowing terms of affairs on the Continent. Hancock's own letters to Clarke were permeated with a spirit of hopeful optimism. Comparing the present upheavals to the previous revolts in 1830, he noted:

"There all was bloodshed and anarchy; the innocent suffered alike with the guilty;- but now, order reigns, peace prevails... Indeed, such has been the sagacity, the moderation, and the wisdom displayed by the leaders of this great movement that I have not seen one newspaper, or heard

15. P.A.O., Clarke Papers, Hancock to Clarke, February 28, 1848.

16. Ibid., May 28, 1848.

17. Ibid., February 28, 1848.

a single individual, who has dared to
condemn their actions.¹⁸

Time unfortunately was to betray liberal expectations. Little immediate benefit would be gained from the new order in Europe. The revolutions of 1848 were to be, "a beacon, warning tyrants of all nations," but within one year Hancock would sadly report to his friend in Canada that, "very little benefit has been achieved:"

Just one year has elapsed since the birth of the (French) Republic, and communism, labour organization, press liberty, and even the Republic itself are out of favour with the people, while the Presidentship seems not unlikely to deteriorate into a life dictatorship, if not a monarchy.¹⁹

Elsewhere in Europe, the future of democracy was equally uncertain. "In Hungary," Hancock wrote, "the war continues." In Prussia, "the king has definitely and formally declined the Imperial Crown of Germany." Any hope of a constitutional solution arising from the work of the Frankfort Assembly, "now remains to be seen."²⁰

18. P.A.O., Clarke Papers, Hancock to Clarke, March 5, 1848.

19. Ibid., February 25, 1849.

20. Ibid., May 11, 1849.

But these were future events. The spring and summer of 1848 saw reform prospects in the ascendency throughout the western world. Good news reaching Elora from Europe mingled indiscriminately with word of liberal triumphs in the colony itself.

In March, the Toronto Examiner brought Clarke word of a non-confidence motion passed against the government in the lower house. The feeble and divided Conservative ministry, having suffered serious reverses in the recent general election, had given way to the Reformers led by Baldwin, Hincks and Lafontaine.

Charles Clarke knew that this was a turning point in Canadian history. A popular government was being peacefully established. A Tory administration supported by the whole strength of previous governors and bolstered by the prestige attached to the claims of loyalty and tradition had been defeated by a political faction which had frequently been called disloyal.²¹ A united Reform party had been accepted by British authority solely on the ground of its approval by the people. The great principle which the Reformers represented - the principle on which they had staked their very existence as a

21. Dent, II, 76.

political party - had at last triumphed. Responsible
Government was a reality.²²

It had been a long and a bitter struggle. Prior to the arrival of Lord Elgin as Governor General in 1847, responsible government had consistently been denied as wholly incompatible with the constitutional status of a British colony. Elgin's predecessors and their superiors in London had steadfastly maintained that the prerogatives of the Crown could only be upheld by keeping constitutional initiative firmly vested in the office of the Crown's representative. In 1843, Governor Metcalf had forced the resignation of the first Reform ministry by entering the electoral lists in defense of this position. The executive Council in the colonial administration exists he said, solely as an advisory body. The Governor is under no obligation, constitutional or otherwise to accept the advice of its members regardless of the degree of confidence they enjoy in the legislative assembly.

Now a more enlightened British official supported by new personalities in the Colonial Office was prepared to abandon precedent and tradition. Henceforth, constitutional initiative would lie not with the Governor

22. Dent, II, 120.

but with his advisers in the Executive Council as long as they enjoyed the support of a legislative majority. The office of Governor General would function in the future in the manner of a constitutional monarchy. The Governor General would not act above or beside his chief ministers as had been the earlier tendency, but through them. The Executive Council would cease to be an independent authority responsible to the Governor alone. It would become a cabinet, through which, and on the advice of which, the initiative in government is taken.

It was Elgin's opinion, and one endorsed by Lord Grey, his superior in the Colonial office, that the constitutional concession they were prepared to make would in no way infringe upon the cherished rights of the Crown. "I have tried both systems," Elgin wrote in 1849. "In Jamaica there was no Responsible Government, but I had not half the power I have here with my constitutional and changing Cabinet."²³

Responsibility in government need not impair the royal authority or disrupt the imperial association. Elgin sincerely believed this, and it was in this belief that he resolved to accept full responsibility as the Crown's

23. Dent, II, 121.

representative for all measures passed by his colonial ministers.

The Reformers were elated. The last great constitutional obstacle to popular government had been removed. In future, the Queen's government would function in accordance with the wishes of the majority. The second Reform ministry, called into existence by Lord Elgin, promised to develop the resources of the province and to promote the social and economic well-being of the inhabitants. Administration and reform were to be its watchwords. The development of Canada would be its sole concern.

The summer and fall of 1848 found Reform ministers busily preparing various important measures for parliament's approval. The Houses were summoned on the 18th of January, 1849. In his speech opening the new session, Elgin promised a year fruitful in reform. Immigration was to be regulated, financial provision was to be made for common schools, and legislation on the judicature of the province and its municipal institutions was to be introduced. In addition, provision was to be made for the creation of a non-sectarian university. The weeks that followed saw the Governor General honour his resolve

to accept responsibility for these and other ministerial enactments. The Baldwin Lafontaine ministry won royal assent to a University Bill for Upper Canada, a Municipal Corporations Bill for Upper Canada, a bill for the more effectual administration of justice in the Courts of Chancery in both Upper and Lower Canada, and a Rebellion Losses Bill.²⁴

It was the latter bill that made 1849 a notable year in the history of Canadian political and constitutional evolution, and it was the Rebellion Losses controversy that formally ushered Charles Clarke into the arena of reform politics in the colony.

It is not surprising that Clarke chose to join in the political ferment of his new home on the side of the Reformers. Ever since his arrival in Canada, his ardent political instincts and his devotion to progress and reform had made him sympathetic to their cause.²⁵ Like the followers of Robert Baldwin, Clarke was strongly influenced by the philosophy of nineteenth century English Liberalism. He believed, as they did, in the free competition of ideas and opinions and the free enterprise in propounding and discussing them, that was the essence of this creed. And he accepted their traditional Liberal

24. Dent, II, 136-143.

25. Clarke, 45.

definition of the goals of society as the attainment of maximum production in economics, individual freedom in politics, free association in society and freedom of religious worship.

Clarke knew that the struggle to achieve these objectives was not confined to Canada and Great Britain. Hancock had already sent word of the fervor of revolutionary progress sweeping Europe, and news of the tide of Democratic radicalism running high in the United States appeared daily in Canadian journals.²⁶ By the middle of the century strenuous efforts were being made throughout the Western world to realize the ideals of freedom and equality. "Men everywhere", Clarke observed, "were being shaken out of their jog-trot beatitude into incipient warfare between parties . . . Everywhere, kingly thrones were tottering and universal crash seemed possible."²⁷

It was a heady atmosphere for a man of Clarke's political convictions and it did strengthen his determination to engage actively in advancing the cause of reform in the colony.

26. Clarke, 46.

27. Ibid.

TRACTS FOR THE TIMES

The year that witnessed the inauguration of the Baldwin Lafontaine ministry found Clarke in the employment of a leading Reform journal in Upper Canada. After leaving John Kirk's dry-goods concern in Elora in 1848 to gain additional business experience in Hamilton, Clarke had come to the attention of Solomon Brega, editor of the Journal and Express. While working as an assistant in a drug store, he had submitted a series of remembrances of the Elora countryside and had been rewarded with a request to call at the editor's office. The subsequent interview had resulted in his appointment as temporary editor of the paper in Mr. Brega's absence.¹ Upon the latter's return, Clarke was assigned to the permanent editorial staff of the Journal and Express, and it was in this capacity that he watched the storm over the Rebellion Losses Bill reach gale force in the province.

This measure, submitted to Lord Elgin by the Reform ministry, provided compensation for losses suffered by Lower Canadians who had participated in the abortive rebellion against British rule in 1837.² Die-hard Tories

1. Clarke, 44-45.

2. Dent, II, 147.

immediately labelled the proposal as "compensating rebels" and "treason to the Crown," and this outburst of racial intolerance threatened the colony with the possibility of armed clashes between English and French.³

Since the measure had already passed the lower house by a majority of 47 to 18 drawn from both Upper and Lower Canada, Elgin could do nothing but accept it.⁴ To reserve the bill would serve only to cast doubt upon the sincerity with which it was intended that constitutional government should be carried on in Canada. To accept responsibility for it would place the Crown in harmony with the colonial majority and discredit the demands of an ultra-Tory minority for racial intolerance in government.⁵ The latter course must prevail.

When, on April 26, 1849, Elgin came down to the legislature, crowds of furious Tories lined the streets of Montreal determined to vent their rage on the man deliberately prepared to bow before the wishes of a "rebel ministry." As the Governor's carriage moved towards the temporary seat of government at Ste. Anne's Market, stones, eggs and verbal abuse were hurled at its occupant. This

3. Dent, II, 147.

4. Ibid., 151.

5. Ibid., 153-155.

foolish attack accomplished nothing. Lord Elgin sanctioned the bill his ministers had submitted for Royal approval. Rebellion Losses was law. Outside, Tory mobs could only wait the opportunity to vent their anger in the tragic and senseless burning of the government building.⁶

Rallying to the defence of the Governor's conduct, Clarke spoke out in the Journal and Express for every supporter of responsible government. "A better day has dawned, and under Lord Elgin, the British Colonists of this province, whilst they enjoy the freedom of British subjects, maintain the rights of a Canadian people."⁷

In Elgin's acceptance of the Rebellion Losses Bill, Clarke saw the first clear instance of full recognition of the principle at the foundation of British rule. The representatives of the people had declared that bill to be a response to the will of the electorate, and His Excellency, having no valid reason to combat such a plain expression of opinion unflinchingly did his duty as a representative of Her Majesty."⁸

6. Clarke, 48-49.

7. Journal and Express, November 2, 1849.

8. Clarke, 50.

A precedent has been established. No longer, Clarke wrote, will "the unstatesman-like policy, the wily cunning, and the antagonism of Lord Metcalfe bring the Tories into power. No longer, will men of his mold be allowed "to subvert the prerogative, bend the constitution (and) elevate to power men of no principle and of inferior minds."⁹ Responsible Government has now been conceded in practice as well as theory. Henceforth the colony would be ruled as a British Canada and not as if it were a Russian Siberia:

We shall be excused for boasting that our high object has been the advancement and establishment of popular institutions. ...we have never deserted our flag, but British Freedom and Canadian Rights has ever been, as it ever shall be, the guiding star of our political exertions.¹⁰

For a man little experienced in provincial politics, Clarke had defended the cause of responsible government with skill and vigour. With this great principle assured, he offered his pen in the service of further reform.

9. Journal and Express, November 2, 1849.

10. Ibid.

In the winter of 1850, while still associated with the Journal and Express, he wrote a series of articles entitled "Tracts for the Times." Written under the pseudonym Reformer, these able papers appeared in the Journal and Express, the Toronto Mirror and other leading newspapers, and quickly brought Clarke to the attention of the Reformers in Upper Canada.

"Tracts for the Times" included demands for reform in several important branches of government. Betraying the author's growing regard for American examples, an appeal was made for the direct election of all public officials. Decrying the fact that the County Judge, the Coroner, the Clerk of the Peace, the Sheriff and the Police Magistrate were all nominees of the Crown, the paper called for the immediate application of the elective principle to all of these offices:

"The Election of Local Officers by the common vote is nothing more than a demand which an intelligent population would be expected to make. It is a carrying out of that representative system which found its birth in the

first civilized nations and which has
 been so successfully grafted upon the
 British Constitution.¹¹

The existing system of allowing the Crown to
 appoint public officers was inherently unjust in that
 appointments were dispensed at the Royal pleasure as
 rewards for services rendered. If direct responsibility
 is accepted as a good principle in the case of the
 House of Commons, it should be accepted in the case of
 local offices. The inclination of the people towards
 liberalism and democracy must not be opposed, "by every
 old absurdity and the timorous opponents of every
 proposed change."¹² Canadians would do well to adhere
 to the example set by the American Republic where the
 elective principle binds all local officials, with the
 result that "in the most free and stable
 states of the Union...the power of the people is really
 recognized and made to work harmoniously in many
 different depositories for the general good."¹³

In another article appearing in the Journal and

11. Journal and Express, February 22, 1850.

12. Ibid.

13. Ibid.

Express on February 26, 1850, Reformer dealt at length with the rising demands for retrenchment in government. Admitting the prevalence of extravagance in the province, Clarke cautioned the proponents of financial reform against the dangers of rushing into the opposite extreme. To limit expenditures in government in the interest of economy would not only hamper effective administration, it would leave the way open for theft and bribery. "A mean must be found between salaries that are too high, thus producing lazy aristocrats, and salaries that are too low."¹⁴ To achieve this mean, Clarke sought to make responsibility, "a real and direct thing."¹⁵ Only by having all public officers elected by the common vote and thus answerable to the people for their conduct in office could the present state of official extravagance be curbed and the great object of retrenchment achieved.

To avoid the pitfalls of financial extremism, Reformer again drew the reader's notice to the United States:

New York State...is a pattern already
in our hands. Its justice is cheaper

14. Journal and Express, February 26, 1850.

15. Ibid.

than ours and as good; its schools are
 equally efficient; its Legislature as
 wise; its officers as business-like;
 its Public Works as well kept; its
 property as safe.¹⁶

It was Clarke's opinion, that although the cost of
 government was considerably less in proportion to Canada,
 "in no department is New York State behind us, either in
 despatch, or any other particular. He was convinced
 that, "What can be done there, ought to be equally well
 done here."¹⁷

The following month "Tract for the Times"
 appeared in the Toronto Mirror. In a column devoted to
 the, "question of democracy," Reformatory issued a glowing
 appeal for the expansion of free and popular institutions
 in Canada. "Free institutions must flourish, popular
 liberty must be extended and intelligence must increase,
 or an ignorant apathy and certain ruin will take their
 place."¹⁸

Well aware of the advances made in government
 in the provinces, Clarke cautioned those who believed
 that power was now wholly vested in the People. "A

16. Journal and Express, February 26, 1850.

17. Ibid.

18. The Toronto Mirror, March 5, 1850.

defective representative system, an extensive Crown patronage and an extravagant remuneration of public officers so appointed prove this to be false."¹⁹

Responsible Government alone had not succeeded in wresting the citadel of authority from the opponents of democracy. Much more was required before the will of the People was really effective. But Reformer was optimistic:

"...the power of the People exists and is every day making itself more palpable. This People thinks, reads, works and is conscious of its importance. It speaks of Household Suffrage, Vote by Ballot, Equal Political Rights, Full Power to Elect all Officers, Cheap Government, no Monopolies and Religious Liberty."²⁰

Clarke warned men in high places to take heed. The "question of democracy", he wrote, must be resolved in favour of the People, and it would be resolved only when their demands were met. No utopia was being envisaged.

19. The Toronto Mirror, March 5, 1850.

20. Ibid.

"A pure democracy is an impossibility and exists nowhere; a sensible modification of it is the very best form of government which can be instituted."²¹

To ensure future peace and prosperity, Reformer called for such a modification to be made in Canada. This would be achieved by abolishing all existing practices and institutions that limited true freedom and equality by elevating the few at the expense of the many. Examples of such practices and institutions with their inherent injustices existed in abundance. "A trammelled trade produces class interests and is opposed to equal rights; a preponderant Crown influence destroys any approach to equality; an extravagant government creates an unhealthy aristocracy; a dominant Church destroys the toleration so essential to true freedom."²² The existence of these numerous barriers to progress and reform resulted, in Clarke's opinion from an attempt to assimilate Canadian institutions to those of older

21. The Toronto Mirror, March 5, 1850.

22. Ibid.

states: "A petty Monarchy, a House of Lords, a Commons Parliament, a large Crown patronage, an expensive Judiciary, a costly State Church are carefully transplanted and sought to be nurtured into vigorous life."²³

Such an attempt could only end in failure. "People in Canada," Clarke believed, "are unable and unwilling to appreciate the public institutions of England."²⁴ He was convinced that what Canadians wanted was not expensive but "cheap government, cheap law and cheap learning."²⁵ The many evils and injustices that now plagued the provinces of Upper and Lower Canada would only be eradicated when statesmen realized that the people, "are filled with a democratic feeling which prescribes the greatest happiness for the greatest number."²⁶ In Clarke's opinion, "the transcript of British institutions must all vanish before the one great fact - that the people of this Colony are essentially democratic."²⁷

"Tracts for the Times" established Clarke's reputation as a knowledgeable and perceptive political critic. As a commentary on Canadian affairs, his articles revealed a maturity and depth of understanding not found in his earlier writings. Age had tempered the youthful

23. The Journal and Express, March 5, 1850.

24. Ibid.

25. Ibid.

26. Ibid.

27. Ibid.

idealism of "A Letter to the Young Men of England" with a more thorough, systematic approach to reform. Now Clarke's demand for an end to inequality and injustice carried with it a real knowledge of both their cause and effect, and he offered his readers specific proposals and recommendations for reform, based on a careful study of British, American and European politics.

No longer would a moral crusade suffice to achieve democracy. Knowledge, thought, and perseverance; these alone would realize that end. And ample opportunity was being provided to put these qualities to the test.

CLEAR GRIT

In the winter of 1849-50, the majority of Reformers still supported Baldwin and Lafontaine in their reluctance to press for further reforms and appeared content to regard responsible government as an end in itself. There was however, a significant minority within the Reform party for whom Clarke spoke who had come to look upon that principle as a means to a greater end: the way to unlock the door to more thorough constitutional changes that would destroy every remaining vestige of privilege.

The seeds of Reform division had been sown in January 1849, when the Baldwin Lafontaine ministry brought down its legislative program. Impatiently, the party Left had waited for this much-heralded program only to find that there was little in it that could be regarded as fundamental constitutional reform. The need for party unity in the face of Tory discontent alone prevented an open rupture in the ranks at this time. But after the passage of the Rebellion Losses Bill, demands from

the Left for further reform had risen in force.

Advocates of a more progressive party platform sought universal suffrage, secularization of the Clergy Reserves, judicial reform, vigorous retrenchment in government expenses and the immediate application of the elective principle throughout the administration.¹

Baldwin and Lafontaine however, considered these plans too extreme. They regarded them as the product of pro-American annexationist sentiment. The Toronto Globe, the official Reform organ, declared that the proposed sweeping application of the elective principle and universal suffrage were reforms which, "embody the whole difference between a republican form of Government and the limited monarchy of Great Britain."²

Party "ultras", however, convinced that power had sapped the party's true reforming zeal, had gathered together in the winter of 1849 under the guise of the "Old Reform Party". James Lesslie, the proprietor of the Toronto Examiner and Brown's chief rival among the Reform editors, had called openly upon the discontented minority to repudiate existing party leadership and policy. Resentful of the recent elevation of the Globe as the

1. Dent, II, 186.

2. Toronto Globe, March 23, 1850.

official organ of the Reform party in Upper Canada, the Examiner had denounced responsible government as a costly failure and a sham. "Must we," Lesslie had asked, "abjure a republican simplicity and assume the paraphernalia and ape the pageantry of an aristocratical government."³ An answer was not long in coming. In December 1849, Lesslie's own newspaper boldly proclaimed the creation of a, "Reform and Progress Party...for a long time swallowed up in the present Government party."⁴

The new party began to take shape in a series of meetings held in Toronto. Presiding over these meetings in his King Street office was William McDougall, a young and aggressive lawyer, "whose love of discussion and convincing character was marred by a personal coldness which appeared to be cynical and repellent."⁵ The iron-fibred figure of James Lesslie was in evidence of course, and accompanied by a young Englishman, Charles Lindsey, who was helping to edit the Examiner. David Christie, a prosperous Wentworth farmer of Scottish ancestry was also present as were Peter Perry and Malcolm Cameron - two Reformers of long lineage.⁶

Perry, a country miller by trade, had played a

3. Toronto Examiner, September 19, 1849.

4. Ibid., ca., December 1849.

5. Clarke, 57.

6. Dent, II, 187-188.

prominent role in the founding of the original Upper Canada Reform group in the legislature of 1824.⁷ It was his refusal to declare himself openly on the topic of annexation in the autumn of 1849 that had delivered the final and decisive blow to Reform unity.⁸ Malcolm Cameron was a successful western timber merchant who had participated in the rebellion of 1837. A blunt outspoken personality endowed with natural oratorical prowess and insatiable political ambition, he had recently resigned his post as Assistant Commissioner of Public Works following Baldwin's refusal to consider him for a more important office in the ministry.⁹

Caleb Hopkins, a farmer of local influence in Halton county and a former member of Parliament, completed the original roster of advanced Reformers.¹⁰ Others would enter McDougall's office later. One would be Dr. John Rolph, an Upper Canadian lawyer of some repute who had already given excellent service to the Reform cause both in and out of parliament.¹¹ Another would be Charles Clarke.

The winter and spring of 1850 witnessed many

7. Dent, II, 187.

8. Careless, 108

9. Clarke, 75-79.

10. Dent, II, 187.

11. Ibid., 188.

meetings of the type being held in Toronto. The Upper Canada press contained reports of gatherings at Lawrenceville, Pelham, Hamilton and Smithville. While the resolutions passed at these meetings varied a good deal from those under consideration in McDougall's office, retrenchment and a settlement of the Clergy Reserves question were always demanded.

Abounding in plans for the future, McDougall would soon write Clarke of his resolve, "to roll the country down to a common-sense democracy."¹² Already in possession of newspaper experience acquired with an agricultural weekly, the Canada Farmer, McDougall would shortly found the North American as the official vehicle of a new and vigorous political party. Initially, Lindsey would help to edit McDougall's paper as well as the Examiner and Christie would come forward with generous financial aid.¹³ Perry, Cameron, Hopkins and Rolph were all destined to occupy seats as the party's first representatives in the legislature, while from Hamilton would come Charles Clarke to lend the keen mind and literary skill of Reformer to the formulation of party principles for presentation to the public.

12. Clarke Papers, McDougall to Clarke, August 20, 1850.

13. Ibid.

For the present however, McDougall and his colleagues were mere objects of scorn and derision. "Bunkum-talking cormorants, the Globe labelled them, "who met in a certain lawyer's office on King Street and announced their intention to form a party based on "clear-grit" principles.¹⁴ Future events would prove Brown's lighthanded observations false, but his initial denunciation of the advanced Reformers did serve to popularize their new name. Henceforth, the label "clear grit" would identify those individuals who, for reasons already mentioned, bolted the Upper Canada wing of the Baldwin-Lafontaine ministry in the winter of 1849.

The origin of the term clear grit is uncertain. Clarke first recalled its use in a Whitby newspaper, in a letter written by Peter Perry, in which the words "clear" and "grit" appeared as qualities of "rock, hard, cold, Scotch granite."¹⁵ Another suggested origin points to a conversation between David Christie and George Brown, when Christie remarked that the new movement wanted men who were "clear grit."¹⁶ A third explanation is that the phrase was adopted from American party phraseology meaning men who declared themselves to be, "the unadulterated

14. Toronto Globe, January 10, 1850.

15. Clarke, 67.

16. Ibid.

political commodity."¹⁷ Whatever its origin, "clear grit" did carry with it connotations of purity and resolve that would identify the political aspirations of this new Reform party in Canada West.

From its inception, the Clear Grit party steadily advanced. By February 1850, its press support included Lesslie's Examiner, the vocal Roman Catholic Toronto Mirror and the Journal and Express. And there were clear indications from the western countryside that many of the province's farmers were prepared to support Clear Grit candidates in their bid to increase party representation in parliament.

With Perry and Cameron already in the House, the Grits moved to bolster their strength by entering Caleb Hopkins in a by-election contest in Halton County.¹⁸ Called to confirm John Wetenhall's appointment to the Reform ministry as Cameron's successor in the post of Assistant Commissioner of Public Works, the Halton election gave the Clear Grits their first real opportunity to try their strength before the country.

Covering the election for the Journal and Express, Clarke noted that Wetenhall enjoyed a large personal

17. Clarke, 67.

18. Ibid., 78.

following in the county. It was assumed by many that as a loyal government supporter and a man of proven administrative ability, he would carry the day with little difficulty. This was before Malcolm Cameron entered the fray on Hopkins' behalf. Bent upon revenge for earlier treatment at the hands of Robert Baldwin, the gruff and stocky Westerner launched a series of blistering stump speeches in which he inveighed against both Wetenhall and the government.¹⁹ Following his would-be successor from one public meeting to the next, Cameron hammered away at the ministry's failure to economize and its stubborn refusal to end special treatment for clergy lands by secularizing the Reserves.²⁰

Replacing Hopkins as the champion of Clear Grittism in Halton, Cameron promised his audiences cheap, simple government dedicated to the general well-being of the common man. Against such sweeping assurances voiced by a man already famous for his oratory, Wetenhall's maundering diction held little appeal.²¹ Moreover, the outnumbered Tories in the county fell in behind the Grit candidate, the loyal Scots vote in the farthest districts failed to materialize because of impassably muddy roads,

19. Toronto Globe, March 12, 1850.

20. Ibid., February 14, 1850.

21. Clarke, 78.

and an innocent curse uttered by the Reform candidate brought down the wrath of the Rev. Jennings, a Presbyterian minister from Toronto.²² The unexpected end came on March 11, in the total defeat of Wetenhall and the return of Caleb Hopkins.

The morning after the polls, a gaunt oddly-dressed figure shuffled into Clarke's office holding a lantern and a staff and asking for the whereabouts of an honest man. It was John Wetenhall, "the sad wreck of an amiable and disappointed man."²³ His mind shattered by the outcome of the campaign, Wetenhall was shortly thereafter admitted to the Toronto Asylum for the Insane where he died. In a sincere personal tribute to this tragic figure Clarke declared, "that a more honest and trustworthy man than he never sought the suffrages of the people."²⁴

Encouraged by their victory, the jubilant Grits held a mass meeting at Markham on the day following the election to lay down a complete platform for their party. In quick succession, the cheering crowd adopted resolutions calling for the appropriation of the reserves to education, the extension of the suffrage, an elected governor and elected upper house, and the abolition of the expensive

22. Clarke, 78.

23. Ibid.

24. Ibid., 79.

court of Chancery.²⁵

That same day, the Journal and Express carried an article by Reformer calling for the adoption of the elective principle in the choice of Legislative Councillors. Adding his voice to those being raised at Markham, Clarke denounced the practice of appointment to the Upper House as, "incompatible with the full system of Responsible Government which has been given to Canadians," and accused the existing body of being, "a mere shadow of a senate, unworthy of the confidence of the people, and an encumbrance upon legislation".²⁶

The issue of senate appointment clearly revealed the cordial support the Clear Grits could expect from Charles Clarke. In his articles for the Journal and Express, Reformer had explained and defended the proposals of the advanced Reformers in column after column of print. By March 1850, Clear Grit strategists in Halton County and elsewhere numbered his pen among those factors that had contributed to the party's early good fortune.

From the beginning, the ideas and beliefs of McDougall and his followers were synonomous with those

25. Toronto Globe, March 21, 1850.

26. P.A.O., Mackenzie-Lindsey Collection,

Hamilton Journal and Express, March 12, 1850.

of the young Hamilton journalist. Clarke believed as did the Grits, that the demands of the Canadian people for a popular democratic constitution could no longer be met by a government that remained fundamentally predisposed toward the traditional practices and institutions of Great Britain. Canada, it was argued was wholly unlike the mother country. It lacked the soil necessary to sustain a House of Lords, a costly State Church, an expensive judiciary and a large Crown patronage. These manifestations of privilege and class were being artificially cultivated in a simple backwoods pioneer environment that was naturally suited to the fullest measure of liberty and equality.

As champions of agrarian democracy on the Canadian frontier, Reformer and the Clear Grits drew heavily on several intellectual traditions. Unlike the moderate Reformers in Canada West who continued to pay fealty to the nineteenth century liberalism of the British middle class, they created a new political philosophy that represented a unique blend of native North American republicanism and British and European radicalism. The latter tradition, stemming from the abortive liberal revolutions of 1830 and 1848, offered Canadian democrats

ideals of constitutional liberty and social and economic justice. British radicalism, embodied in the "Peoples Charter" and in the Utilitarian doctrines of Jeremy Bentham and John Stuart Mill, supplied principles which aimed no less at popular democracy and the destruction of inequality in church and state. And American republicanism, with the all-pervading and fundamental inspiration of Thomas Jefferson and Andrew Jackson, afforded a bright and vigorous example of a simple, inexpensive agrarian democracy guaranteeing economic security, political freedom and religious equality to the humblest citizen.²⁷

While the vital origins of Clear Grittism were found in the concrete needs of the day, the varied external influences in this political philosophy did serve to enhance its early appeal in western Canada. At the same time however, the intrusion of foreign ideas and beliefs proved instrumental in limiting that appeal.

Moderate Reformers who deplored the Clear Grits' preference for American elective institutions over British responsible government were joined by Tory loyalists who considered the equalitarian tendencies in Grit democracy as, "fit only for Yankee uses."²⁸ The Globe, in editorials

27. Arthur M. Schlesinger Jr., The Age of Jackson

(Boston, 1950), 306-311.

28. Clarke, 61.

denouncing universal suffrage in France as the foundation of tyranny, had already rallied strong opposition to the foreign doctrines contained in Grit political thought.²⁹

The powerful Anglican church and the equally influential Roman Catholic hierarchy were alienated by what was regarded as a secular-minded anti-clerical movement imbued with American and European notions that threatened their traditional conception of state assistance for the spiritual and cultural activities of the church.³⁰

Lastly, the wealthy commercial interests in Montreal and Toronto found little attraction in a political party that held to the free trade, anti-monopolistic tenets of Jacksonian democracy that railed against government intervention on behalf of the business community in the form of customs houses and high import duties.³¹

Regardless of its origins and of its opponents the Clear Grit faction was optimistic. The Halton victory and the celebrated Markham Convention had already served to brighten future prospects, when in May 1850, the first editions of McDougall's long-heralded North American came out forcefully in defence of party platforms and Grit principles.

29. Toronto Globe, January 1, 1850.

30. D. Creighton, John A. Macdonald: The Young Politician (Toronto, 1956), I, 182.

31. Schlesinger, 314-317. (see also) North American, February 14, 1851.

By August, plans were in the making for a second convention as a prelude to a general movement against the government. "A convention is the only thing that will enable us to prepare properly for the next election," McDougall informed Clarke. "The leading progressive politicians of both the old parties are in favour of it, and if we manage it rightly we can give the democratic element a decided superiority."³² If Clarke would consent to write a series of articles for the North American on the planks of the Grit platform, a good beginning would be made in rallying the people and the leading Reform newspapers to the banner of advanced reform.³³

32. P.A.O., Clarke Papers, McDougall to Clarke, August 20, 1850.

33. Ibid.

PLANKS IN THE GRIT PLATFORM

Clarke did not doubt the reception a Clear Grit offensive would receive. His own plea for the adoption of just such a strategy had already been presented in the North American, in an article entitled "Seeds for the Fallow," and it had received warm applause.¹ Now, there were signs of generous support for McDougall's proposed campaign coming from both the western counties and the ridings of York.²

Disillusionment and dissatisfaction with the Reform ministry was mounting steadily in Upper Canada. From the first meeting of the new session of parliament in May, the government had shown itself none too ready to deal with judicial reform and retrenchment. On the question of the clergy reserves, the position of the ministers was evasive. Claims by Reform leaders that this matter could not be disposed of until a measure was obtained from the Imperial Parliament, had already led James Lesslie to suspect that, "the administration has sold us on the question of religious equality. If this

1. P.A.O., Clarke Papers, McDougall to Clarke, August 20, 1850.

2. Ibid.

be the case, he wrote William Mackenzie, "they are ruined."³

Anger and frustration over the government's apparent reluctance to deal boldly with the reserve issue had also resulted in open charges of French domination. As Roman Catholics, Lafontaine and the other French Canadian ministers could not be expected to approve the principle of separating church and state implicit in secularization, and it had often been hinted in Grit circles that Baldwin had bowed before the wishes of his Catholic supporters in refusing to proceed with this matter. "What does Hincks mean", Lindsey wrote Clarke, "by saying that the French do not feel much interest in settling the reserves? Why that they oppose it of course."⁴

The Clear Grit offensive proposed by McDougall in the summer of 1850 concentrated upon the government's failure to settle the great question. Convinced that the French Canadian supporters of the Reform ministry were impeding progress in this regard, the Grit leader marshalled support for the newly-formed Toronto Anti-Clergy Reserves Association, and lashed out against the government in the press.⁵ "Upper Canada rights," cried the North American, "are in the keeping of Lower Canada Catholics."

3. P.A.O., Mackenzie-Lindsey Papers, Lesslie to Mackenzie
March 4, 1850.

4. P.A.O., Clarke Papers, Lindsey to Clarke, January 18, 1850.

5. P.A.O., Clarke Papers, McDougall to Clarke, May 11, 1850.

We are bound hand and foot, and lie helpless at the feet of the Catholic Priests of Lower Canada."⁶

To counter Catholic influence in government, Grit spokesmen came forward in support of the "voluntary principle", that is that all churches should be maintained solely by the contributions of their members, whereas the state should have no church connection and grant support to none. The voluntary concept found fertile soil among Upper Canadian democrats.⁷ Voluntaryism quickly became the Grit rallying cry in their battle for secularization of the clergy reserves.⁸

While McDougall promulgated anti-state-church ideas, Clarke went ahead with the task of defining the Clear Grit platform. Not until February 1851 was it completed and ready for publication. Although McDougall took credit for the final draft, the article that appeared in the North American under the banner headline "Our Platform," was composed largely of planks that Clarke had already lucidly defined and explained in his own series, "Tracts for the Times."⁹

"Our Platform," listed eleven major demands followed by thirteen minor proposals, subject for

6. North American, July 2, 1850.

7. P.A.O., Mackenzie-Lindsey Papers, Lesslie to Mackenzie, March 4, 1850.

8. North American, June 21, 1850.

9. Public Archives of Canada, William McDougall Papers, II, Memoirs Personal and Political, 1837-1892.

immediate legislation. Carried to the far corners of the province in the pages of the Toronto Examiner, the Hamilton Journal and Express, the Paris Star and the Dundas Banner, the original article in McDougall's paper advocated the implementation of the elective principle, "from the highest office of the Government to the lowest," as well as the abolition of property qualifications for parliamentary representatives, the extension of the elective franchise, retrenchment in all departments of state, vote by ballot, biennial parliaments and the cancellation of all pensions attached to any office.¹⁰

Along with these traditional demands, the new Grit platform called for reform in the system of representation.¹¹ This plank clearly revealed the growing fear of French Roman Catholic influence in Canada West. As long as the Union Act of 1840 remained in effect, French Canada would be entitled to equal representation with Upper Canada in the Legislative Assembly. Only an immediate constitutional amendment that recognized population as the basis of representation in parliament would allow the numerically superior Protestant population to defend their rights against the mounting

10. North American, February 14, 1851. (see also) P.A.C., William McDougall Papers II, Memoirs Personal and Political, 1837-1892.

11. Ibid.

onslaught of "priestism." Already a papal brief had created a full Roman Catholic hierarchy in England for the first time since the Protestant Reformation. And even now, this new, aggressive, authoritarian Rome, the harbinger of clerical privilege, the ally of political despotism was reaching across the Atlantic. Only a stronger Protestant voice in the halls of government would thwart this papal aggression. We are determined, McDougall had thundered, that, "no foreign ruler shall intervene in English affairs."¹²

Aside from mirroring the growing religious controversy, the Grit platform spoke out forcefully for a greater measure of independence for Canada. With the exception of the question of peace and war, an appeal was made to place "commerce and intercourse with other nations entirely in our own power."¹³ In addition, it was suggested that the Canadian legislature be given the power "to alter or repeal any Act or Charter, Imperial or otherwise, affecting ourselves only, and which the Imperial Parliament itself might alter or repeal."¹⁴ Undoubtedly, the author of the stirring phrase, "Canadian Freedom and British Rights," had no mean role to play in

12. North American, November 29, 1850.

13. Ibid., February 14, 1851.

14. Ibid.

the drafting of these particular resolutions.

Among those measures deemed subjects for immediate legislation, Clarke and McDougall listed the application of the clergy reserves to educational purposes, the repeal of all laws giving special privileges to particular religious denominations, the abolition of the Court of Chancery, the ending of the present monopoly of the legal profession and the sale of all public land - "cheap and for cash." They sought too, the immediate improvement of agriculture, "by a judicious application of public grants," the abolition of Customs Houses and duties on imports, and the establishment of a uniform decimal currency.¹⁵

Although Tory diehards denounced it as "revolutionary and republican, "and the Globe assailed it as "radical and mischievous," the Clear Grit platform won wide acclaim.¹⁶

The Baldwin-Lafontaine ministry, fearing the loss of its Catholic support, had pursued a moderate course, but had continued to alienate large segments of its Protestant following. Some moderate Reformers in Canada West, fearful of Grit extremism on the one hand and disenchanted with the government's apparent pro-Catholic sympathies on the other, rallied under the leadership

15. North American, February 14, 1851.

16. P.A.C., William McDougall Papers, II, Memoirs Personal and Political, 1837-1892.

of George Brown,¹⁷ Many others however, turned to the Grits in the belief that their party alone possessed a program worthy of Reform endorsement.

This growing estrangement between the government and its Upper Canadian supporters was not long in making itself felt. In June 1851, less than one month after the Third Parliament opened in Toronto, William Lyon Mackenzie, the newly elected member for Haldimand, eloquently defended the Clear Grit's demand for an end to the costly and complex chancery and the establishment of low-priced justice, easily available to the poor but honest litigant.¹⁸

Although Mackenzie's motion was subsequently defeated, a majority of Upper Canada members voted for it. Regarding this vote by Canada West as indicative of non-confidence in himself, Robert Baldwin resigned office. A few days later, his friend and trusted lieutenant, Louis Lafontaine, announced that he too would leave public life at the close of the session.¹⁹ Both men were out of sympathy with the growing extremism in politics and were prepared to leave the cause of Reform to other hands. Their departure marked a sad and discouraging end to the

17. Careless, 123-128.

18. Dent, II, 236.

19. Ibid., 237.

Great Ministry of 1848.

By the summer of 1851, liberalism in Canada was in crisis. Shorn of its leadership and disrupted by the dual forces of voluntaryism and Clear Grit radicalism the whole western Reform camp was in turmoil. With a general election fast approaching, it fell to Francis Hincks as Baldwin's chosen successor in Upper Canada to rebuild party unity. The fortunes of Clear Grittism would hinge on this man's approach to the pressing problem of Reform reconstruction.

To recapture the government's hold on the western province, Hincks held a series of closed meetings in Toronto.²⁰ Here the initial task was to find an influential journal to replace the Globe as the government's official voice in Upper Canada. Brown had already declared that his paper would not support a ministry that refused to stand on anti-church-state principles.²¹

Accordingly, Hincks choice was limited to the Mirror, the Examiner and the North American. The Mirror however, was not prepared to abandon its Roman Catholic basis, and Lesslie was too ingrained a voluntaryist to have anything to do with a government that showed leanings

20. Toronto Globe, July 31, 1851.

21. Sir Francis Hincks, *Reminiscences of His Public Life*, (Montreal, 1884), 252-3.

to Catholic state-church principles.²² McDougall's paper alone remained, from the beginning a bitter foe of the government. Yet the ministry's need was urgent, and in that need McDougall saw a golden opportunity for a Clear Grit triumph. If Hincks would give the Grits representation in the cabinet, McDougall informed Lindsey, the North American would be placed at the government's disposal.²³ The Reform leader accepted the offer gratefully.

"The government have knocked under - struck their colours," McDougall wrote gleefully to Clarke. Cameron and Rolph were to enter the cabinet - "these being the men I have insisted should be accepted."²⁴ The new ministry, declared the Grit leader, would go forward with, "all reasonable progressive measures," although, "the Platform as a whole of course must be laid aside."²⁵ Concluding on a personal note, McDougall spoke glowingly of the benefits that lay in store for party stalwarts. No longer would Clarke have to supplement his income from journalism by working in a drug store, "If we can get to the top of the heap, we can perhaps do for you something more congenial than standing behind a counter."²⁶

22. Toronto Globe, July 31, 1851.

23. P.A.O., Mackenzie-Lindsey Papers, McDougall to Lindsey,
July 17, 1851.

24. P.A.O., Clarke Papers, McDougall to Clarke, July 25, 1851.

25. Ibid.

26. Ibid.

It was a daring scheme to bring together the Ultra and Ministerial factions in the Reform party. Nevertheless, Clarke sanctioned it. As a shrewd tactician he saw possible benefits to be derived for both parties. He knew as well as Hinck's supporters that "unless the Clear Grit section of the Reform party was represented in the Cabinet, the government would go to the polls shorn of one third of its power."²⁷ Given this representation however, it would be possible to sustain the present ministry and at the same time open the way for serious consideration of Grit proposals in the cabinet.

Let Brown and the Globe denounce Hincks and McDougall for, "sinking their principles in the interest of keeping or obtaining power."²⁸ No fundamental principles were being sacrificed as far as Clarke was concerned. The issues of sectarian schools and ecclesiastical corporations were not being shoved aside for the sake of union.²⁹ Present efforts to reunite the Reform party were not based on these debatable questions, but rather, "on the general principles of Reform and Progress."³⁰ The satisfactory disposal of the Rectories, the secularization of the Clergy Reserves, elective reform and

27. P.A.C., Francis Hincks Papers, 1841-1870, James Morris to Francis Hincks, October 6, 1851.

28. Toronto Globe, August 7, 1851.

29. Ibid., August 19, 1851.

30. Journal and Express, August 19, 1851.

retrenchment would all be taken up in detail and worked out by the new parliament.³¹ To attempt any such examination before the coming election, as Brown proposed, would accomplish nothing.³² Such a move, in Clarke's opinion would sever the Reform party at the polls and ensure a Tory victory.

While offering Hincks and McDougall support, Clarke reminded Clear Grits of their responsibility, "to lead in the extension of the popular power."³³ Whatever course was decided upon by party strategists, the real work of reform would only be completed when, "a government existed, self-appointed and created from, and obeying the will of, the people."³⁴ If a Hincksite-Grit coalition could accomplish this end, all well and good. If it could not, Clarke would expect his fellow Grits to join with him in paving new avenues to reform.

31. Journal and Express, August 19, 1851.

32. Toronto Globe, August 21, 1851.

33. P.A.O., Clarke Papers, Draft of a political speech dealing largely with democratic ideas, ca., September 1851.

34. Ibid.

THE ELORA BACKWOODSMAN

On February 10, 1852, a company was organized in Elora for the purpose of publishing a local Reform newspaper. The first two editors were William Mowat and Burton Campbell, but it was understood from the outset that most of the editorial work was done by Charles Clarke.¹ With the publication of the first edition of the Elora Backwoodsman on April 3, 1852, Clarke set out on another phase of his career as a journalist-politician. For the next six years, much of his energy would be directed toward making this paper a vocal advocate of reform in Canada West.

Entitled, "Our Politics," Clarke's first article for the Backwoodsman sought, "to make our readers acquainted with our general political opinions and to lay down briefly the course we have chalked out for future guidance."² While promising to, "advance all views in sincerity and truth," Clarke pledged the support of the Elora paper to the cause of "reform and progress in the widest sense."³ Elaborating forcefully on this theme,

1. J.R. Connon, The Early History of Elora, Ontario (Elora, 1930), 137.
2. Elora Backwoodsman, April 3, 1852.
3. Ibid.

he wrote:

"We believe that the world was not made to stand still and satisfy itself with things half perfect. Whatever pulls down old abuses, and sets up something better - whatever annihilates an evil and replaces it by a good: we call reform; whatever opens up new paths to happiness - whatever advances the general weal - whatever gives impetus to the onward tramp of civilization, which ever moves too slowly: we call progress."⁴

Subscribers to the Elora Backwoodsman were to enjoy a newspaper, "that stood on the broad grounds of liberalism and truth."⁵ The standard of true Reform was being planted in the backwoods, Clarke declared; a standard that would symbolize the forces of liberty, conscience and principle in their struggle against privilege, monopoly, coercion and intimidation.⁶ It was not difficult for the people of Elora to recall reading similar declarations in the Journal and Express and the North American. In its firm belief in man's

4. Elora Backwoodsman, April 3, 1852.

5. Ibid.

6. Ibid.

right "to the fullest possible measure of justice and freedom," Clarke's journalism had displayed a marked consistency.⁷

The months immediately following its inauguration found the Elora Backwoodsman allied with the North American in defence of the reconstructed Reform ministry. Francis Hincks and Augustin Morin, the leader of the French Canadian Reformers, emerged from the election campaign in December 1851 with a majority in both Canada East and Canada West.⁸ With the support of the Grits led by Dr. Rolph, Hincks drew up a program designed to plaster over past divisions in the Reform ranks. Trusting in the government's good intentions, Clarke spoke in favour of "giving it a chance of saying and doing something previous to its condemnation by the country."⁹ Such determined opposition as was being mounted by George Brown was, at this time, both unreasonable and unwarranted, as far as Clarke was concerned.

For his part, Clarke found much to be said for the government measures that were brought down in the winter and spring of 1852. Under the supervision of James Morris, many new Post Offices were placed at the people's disposal.

7. Elora Backwoodsman, April 3, 1852.

8. Dent, II, 252-253.

9. North American, May 28, 1852. Article entitled

"The Cabinet," from the Elora Backwoodsman.

An improvement, Clarke commented, "that could hardly have been expected from a tory government for the next ten years to come."¹⁰ In addition, there was every indication "of a willingness on the government's part to support retrenchment as well as reform in the system of Crown Land."¹¹

For these reasons alone, Clarke felt the Hincks-Morin cabinet deserved public support. Given this support, he felt there was every reason to hope for future legislation that would deal effectively with the Rectories and Clergy Reserves.¹² Those who would deprive the government of the time required to place its full program before the people, "were not basing their arguments on good motives," Clarke wrote. "They were merely trying to gratify their spleen for some disappointed project or other."¹³

It was not until the late summer of 1852 that the first indication of disillusionment with ministerial policies appeared in Clarke's writings. Then, it was the matter of University Reform that brought Hincks his first challenge from the Backwoodsman. The Baldwin Act of 1849 had committed the Reformers to a secular University

10. North American, May 28, 1852. Article entitled "The Cabinet," from the Elora Backwoodsman.

11. Ibid.

12. Ibid.

13. Ibid.

of Toronto. Since that time however, Clarke wrote, "the Baldwin Act has fallen far short of the expectations of those who carefully observed its workings."¹⁴ Now, more than two years had passed and, "the management of the institution is yet virtually, if not nominally in the hands of high-church professors."¹⁵

Hincks' failure to effect, "sound University Reform," after promising positive action in that direction was a disappointment to Clarke.¹⁶ But it would prove a minor irritation compared to the government's handling of the separate schools and ecclesiastical corporations. Already, in the autumn of 1852, legislation dealing with these church-state issues was setting Protestants against Catholics and Upper Canadians against Lower. Within one year, Clarke's cherished dream of lasting union among Canadian Reformers would be smashed on the shoals of racial and religious antagonism.

At the outset, the Hincksite-Grit alliance tried to submerge religious and sectional antagonisms in an ambitious railroad program. By emphasizing the construction of a great main line from one end of the province to the other, the architects of Reform unity hoped to

14. Elora Backwoodsman, August 13, 1852.

15. Ibid.

16. Ibid.

bring about a truce in the party feud.¹⁷ Unfortunately, the prospect of a great intercolonial railway linking the British American provinces from the Atlantic to the West failed to compete for public interest with questions of church and state. By the winter of 1852 the Reform ranks were once more in a state of disarray.

Clarke knew that Clear Grit acceptance of the ministerial coalition was founded in the first place on a firm declaration from Hincks to accept secularization of the reserves as government policy. Personal correspondence with Rolph led him to expect an announcement on this point when parliament met in August 1852.¹⁸ It was not to be. In February of that year, Lord Russell's Whig administration, which had promised to transfer control of the clergy reserves to Canada as a first step toward secularization, had been replaced by the Tory regime of Lord Derby who was strongly opposed to tampering with existing arrangements.¹⁹

When, in September, Hincks introduced a set of resolutions warning of the dire consequences likely to arise from Derby's refusal to carry out the Whig policy, Clarke spoke out forcefully against the Premier. He

17. Dent, II.

18. P.A.O. Clarke Papers, George Thomson to Charles Clarke, forwarding a report on the political situation at the request of the Grit leader in Quebec.

19. W.L. Morton, Kingdom of Canada (Toronto, 1963), 293.

seconded George Brown's denunciation of the resolutions as, "a sham and empty threat - and hid the government's failure still to pronounce for secularization."²⁰

Clarke shared Brown's opinion that, "if the government really wanted to impress the British authorities, let them pass a suspended secularization bill, to remain in abeyance till an imperial transfer was effected."²¹ If the Hincks ministry could not carry such a measure, the Backwoodsman told its readers, "it is not a whit stronger than the Baldwin-Lafontaine cabinet on this question, and the people of Canada will derive no more benefit from it."²²

Mounting dissatisfaction over the government's inability to settle the reserves issue was intensified with the introduction of Hincks' long-awaited University Bill. Once again, Clarke spoke out against the coalition ministry on behalf of the western Grits; once more, the Backwoodsman found itself allied with its former antagonist, the Toronto Globe. Both Clarke and Brown sought the creation of a single public institution, free from all church influence and wealthy enough to attract the brightest talents to its staff.²³ Hincks' bill however,

20. Globe, September 28, 1852.

21. Ibid.

22. Elora Backwoodsman, September 11, 1852.

23. Globe, March 8, 1853. See also, Elora Backwoodsman
August 13, 1852.

proposed the transfer of the provincial university's teaching functions to a state-maintained University College with church colleges having the right to affiliate with the University and share in any surplus income.²⁴

The result, Brown forecast, would be to reduce the provincial university to little more than an examining body and to erect in its place, "a multitude of small sectarian colleges, with chairs filled with inferior men and the youth educated as sectarians and sent abroad with all the prejudice of a narrow education."²⁵

Overshadowing the University question however, were the explosive issues of separate schools and ecclesiastical corporations. The spring of 1853 saw the government bring in legislation granting Roman Catholics a separate financial structure for their schools in Upper Canada directed by their own incorporated boards of trustees. The school bill for Upper Canada represented Augustin Morin's attempt to win the same educational privileges for Roman Catholics in the West as those enjoyed by Protestants in the East.

It was a just-sounding formula but it failed to take into consideration the differences in education in

24. Careless, 170.

25. Globe, March 8, 1853.

the two provinces. The English majority in Upper Canada argued that separate facilities for the Protestant minority in Canada East were necessitated by the fact that in that province the Roman Catholic majority controlled the common schools. In the West however, education was secular in character thus removing any need for separate schools for particular denominations.

This argument was of no avail. Petitions calling for the abolition of separate schools were ignored. When George Brown and William Lyon Mackenzie moved amendments to block his government's measure, Hincks accused Brown of "producing a very pretty little agitation."²⁶ With the full weight of Lower Canada votes, the school bill passed the House. Of the members for Canada West, only ten could be found to stand with the ministry.

For their part, the Clear Grits either stayed away or voted reluctantly for the government - well aware that such manouvering satisfied few of their constituents. To the English Protestant majority of Upper Canada, the School Bill was further evidence of growing Roman Catholic influence in government. ~~When~~ this measure was followed by legislation incorporating Catholic religious societies,

26. Careless, 171.

hospitals, colleges and monasteries in seeming violation of the voluntary principle the western countryside rang with denunciations of the ministerial coalition.²⁷

The Hincksite-Grit alliance was not working. That much was clear to Clarke by the summer of 1853. Born in the hope that party union would breed fruitful and lasting reform, it was rapidly foundering on sectarian and sectional disagreement. Only French Canada seemed to be gaining from the alliance. Moderate Reformers and Clear Grits from the West had won little or nothing of importance. Hence the prospect of a new political alignment soon became a common topic of discussion in Upper Canada Reform circles. All that was needed was a single unifying issue and a leader of stature. Unwittingly, the Hincks-Morin ministry provided both.

27. Creighton, 186.

THE END OF A GALLANT EXPERIMENT

In March 1853, the government had passed a Representation Act that increased the number of seats in parliament from 84 to 130, 65 from each section of the Province.¹ This act, designed to adjust representation on a more equitable basis and bring it in line with the progress made in Canada since the Union of 1840, encountered determined opposition from George Brown. Taking up a plank in the original Grit platform, the Toronto journalist demanded that the principle of representation by population be accepted.² As the census of 1852 showed that Upper Canada had a population 60,000 in excess of that of Lower Canada, "rep by pop" was the one principle which, if adopted, would give Canada West a dominant place in the union.

Brown believed the elimination of separate sectional membership in parliament would strengthen the economy of Upper Canada. Representation by population was not offered as a challenge to the east. It was left to his

1. Dent, II, 272.

2. Globe, March 15, 1853.

political opponents to heighten sectional agitation with charges of an Upper Canada Protestant conspiracy to relegate French Canada to a minor and subservient role in national affairs.

Brown had hoped in introducing "rep by pop" to foster a strong union. The immediate effect however, was to bring him forward as the champion of only one half of that union. John A. Macdonald, a leading conservative spokesman, was already referring to him as, "the natural leader of the Grits."³ And if this statement was premature it was made in the knowledge that Brown was winning considerable support in the West. In time, this support would be instrumental in placing George Brown at the head of a new Liberal party, founded upon a new organization, shorn of church-state principles, and standing firmly for the doctrine of representation by population.

The construction of such a party however, would not be accomplished with ease. The first step-- the destruction of the present Hincksite - Grit coalition, encountered immediate and significant opposition. Even though the government's record angered many Grits in the country and left their members of parliament open to

3. Careless, 172.

ridicule and abuse for, "voting for the government against their principles," few were willing, at this time, to come out in support of Brown.⁴

It is a fact, that Clarke for one, found much to applaud in the recent stand taken by the Toronto editor on the school bill, the government's handling of the reserves, and its failure to deal effectively with university reform. He had no quarrel with Brown's arguments against ecclesiastical corporations, whereas representation by population was a principle Clarke had supported for some time. In all of these matters, and more - in matters relating to the extension of the suffrage, to the adoption of reciprocal free trade with the United States, and to the construction of a trunk-line railroad from the sea to the western boundary of Upper Canada, Clarke held common ground with George Brown.⁵

Nevertheless, in company with many fellow Grits, he refused to consider Brown in place of Hincks and Rolph, as the leading voice of reform in Canada West. For his part, Clarke could not forget the Globe's fierce attacks on the Grit movement in the beginning. As a strong advocate of elective reform, he still looked on

4. Globe, March 24, 1853.

5. Globe, November 15, 1852.

Brown's refusal to advocate the election of legislative councillors as reactionary.⁶ To place the future of reform in the hands of such a man was, in Clarke's opinion, tantamount to sacrificing the cause of popular democracy in Canada to the Whig - Liberal traditions of Victorian England.

Speaking before a gathering of Reformers at Waterloo in the summer of 1853, Clarke warned his listeners that men like George Brown, "while shouting "Reform" until they were hoarse, were working vigorously to overthrow a genuine Reform Government."⁷ This false reformer, this demagogue, was in league with "A conglomeration of Tadpoles and Tories who sought to render Reform a by-word of reproach", and destroy the recent union of true believers in reform.⁸

In Clarke's view, the Hincksite - Grit coalition, for all its shortcomings, had made outstanding contributions. Thanks to this alliance, he argued, "the name Reformer had come to mean something."⁹ It was no longer used as a term to describe, "a powerless and persecuted

6. North American, March 26, 1852. Article entitled
An Elective Legislative Council referring to the
Globe's opposition to such a proposal.

7. P.A.O. Clarke Papers, Speech delivered at the Reform
Banquet in Waterloo, July 15, 1853.

8. Ibid.

9. Ibid.

opposition." It was no longer a title, "to be laughed at, sneered at, rendered synonymous with rebel, and used as a contemptuous epithet."¹⁰ Rather, Clarke declared, that label had become, "the fitting title of a party which had pushed Canada half a century ahead of its position in 1840, in material prosperity, political liberty, and social reform."¹¹

Appealing to his audience to share his pride in that fact, Clarke called for, "the firm and lasting union of the Reform party." He was convinced that unity alone would, "secure the final harvest of reform."¹²

Had a similar speech been delivered a year before, it would have received a warm reception. But coming in the summer of 1853 it met with only polite applause. Even as he spoke, the alliance Clarke sought to preserve was being dealt a fatal blow. In Quebec, Father Gavazzi's inflammatory speeches on the evils of popery incited wild anti-Protestant riots. When these disturbances continued apparently unchecked, Upper Canadian suspicions of the government's pro-Catholic, pro-French bias seemed confirmed. News of corruption in high places coming in the wake of the Gavazzi affair sufficed to destroy the

10. P.A.O. Clarke Papers, Speech delivered at the Reform Banquet in Waterloo, July 15, 1853.

11. Ibid.

12. Ibid.

coalition ministry.

Commenting on charges that the Crown's first minister had used public money in his private stock operations, William McDougall, the veritable architect of Reform union wrote gloomily to Clarke of his intention to oppose both Hincks and Rolph. "God knows," he exclaimed "I have been willing to say nothing of many things - but this is too much."¹³ Hincks had to be rejected as leader, "openly and boldly," and Rolph with him.¹⁴ Perhaps James Lesslie could be persuaded to take up the reins, McDougall declared, and, "we can work our cards so as to get support of the Brown rank and file at the polls while repudiating him as leader."¹⁵

The editor of the North American was in favour of scrapping the union of 1851 completely in favour of a new beginning. Before you build on the old foundation, McDougall told Clarke, "you must clear away the rubbish that now covers it."¹⁶ For once, the Elora journalist disagreed. While sharing the North American's disgust with Hincks' recent activities, the Backwoodsman felt that the course McDougall was mapping would play into the hands of the enemies of reform. Hincks of course must go,

13. P.A.O. Clarke Papers, McDougall to Clarke, September 17, 1853.

14. Ibid.

15. Ibid.

16. Ibid., McDougall to Clarke, April 4, 1854.

but not Rolph. In Clarke's view, Rolph was the only honest and available leader of the Clear Grit party.¹⁷ To replace him with James Lesslie, a secret and ardent abetter of the Brownite faction, "would destroy that union," in which our chances of success alone exist."¹⁸

Regardless of McDougall's decision, Clarke believed that the future would see, "a powerful democratic party formed - and after a trial of union of the provinces will come what I long to see...Canadian Independence."¹⁹ A belief in the natural goodness of man and the instinctive rightness of the masses had led Clarke in the past to bring forward optimistic arguments for faith in the democratic system. He believed that, in time, history would place ultimate power in the hands of the Canadian people. Given this power, they would achieve far more than domestic liberty. They would end their colonial status, and win a place for Canada in world affairs as a sovereign nation state. It was this vision that Clarke would present again to subscribers of the Stamford

17. P.A.O. Clarke Papers, Clarke to McDougall, April 24, 1854.

18. Ibid.

19. Ibid.

Mercury in his articles, "Canada and the Canadians."²⁰

And it was this vision that brought him to Rolph's defence in the election campaign of 1854 at the cost of an open break with members of his own party.²¹

The campaign began immediately on dissolution of the Fourth Parliament in June. Turning aside an offer to stand as a candidate, Clarke began immediately to formulate strategy in conjunction with the party faithful in North Waterloo, North Wentworth and in the North Riding of Wellington.²² Correspondence with George Pirie, Robert Spence, George Thomson and others resulted finally in a platform calling for the adoption of the elective principle and "the preservation of party integrity and honest administration, against the return of Hincks' candidates to the coalition cabinet."²³

20. P.A.O. Clarke Papers, William Louson to Charles Clarke commenting on the views expressed in the Mercury, June 13, 1854.
21. P.A.C. John Rolph Papers II, 1824-1885. David Gibson to Dr. Rolph, May 20, 1854. Earlier references to Clarke's desire to protect the Grit leader are to be found in Gibson's correspondence with Rolph, ca. February 1854.
22. P.A.O. Clarke Papers, George Pirie to Charles Clarke, June 26, 1854.
23. Elora Backwoodsman, October 4, 1854. Comments on "the recent general election."

It was a platform consistent with Clarke's belief that the present alignment of Reformers under Rolph's leadership offered the best hope for the future. Unfortunately it failed to rally support. By endorsing the government while calling for the dismissal of its leader, the Backwoodsman not only angered many Grits; it begged opposition from ministerialists and Brownite Reformers alike. Against such formidable forces, the divided Grit camp barely survived.

True, a minor success was scored by Clarke's forces in North Waterloo where William McDougall was defeated on charges of, "stepping in to divide Reform ranks."²⁴ But this failed to compensate for losses suffered in adjacent ridings. In Halton, Cameron's inability to overcome Brown's well-oiled machine reduced Grit representation in the coalition cabinet by half. Of the original Grit representation in the House, only a handful survived to meet the Fifth Parliament when it opened in September.

The election of 1854 did more than weaken the Clear Grits; it destroyed the Reform coalition of 1851. Faced with charges of corrupt leadership, Hincks found

24. Elora Backwoodsman, October 4, 1854. Comments on "the recent general election."

his ministry without a majority when the new House assembled. In Upper Canada, both Macdonald's Conservatives and the Independent Reformers led by Brown made gains at the expense of the ministerialists. Similarly, in Canada East the government suffered losses. Here, the anti-clerical French Canadian Rouges, who endorsed the separation of church and state, had found it profitable to play down their party's original republican and democratic doctrines in favour of a platform that concentrated on such immediate issues as the abolition of the old seigneurial system.²⁵

These election returns were interpreted by Clarke as the end of a gallant experiment. Other Reformers however, notably George Brown, looked upon the destruction of the government's majority as the pre-requisite to Reform reconstruction. What Brown and others like him now envisaged was the creation of a new Reform party that would embrace the liberal progressive elements of all the other parties. "Liberal French, liberal Conservatives, liberal Reformers would all be rallied under one banner and find no differences sufficient to divide them," Brown wrote earlier.²⁶ The result, in his view, would be a broad based new political combination upholding British

25. Mason Wade, The French Canadians 1760-1945

(Toronto, 1956), 342-343.

26. Globe, May 14, 1853.

constitutional principles while at the same time maintaining the cherished voluntary principle. It would be left to the main body of the French, the Bleus, together with the die-hard Tories, to combine in defence of state-church principles and oppose truly progressive government.

Brown had every hope of realizing his grand design in the new House. He saw good prospects of winning over substantial numbers of Conservatives in Upper Canada considering the large majority that had expressed strong resentment of Catholic power in politics. Many Western Conservatives had declared openly in favour of secularizing the reserves during the campaign itself and it would not be difficult, Brown felt, to persuade this faction to unite with anti-government Reformers and disgruntled ministerialists to overthrow the Hincks' ministry.

To effect this alliance, Brown appealed to John Sandfield Macdonald, the Speaker of the last House and a firm foe of Hincks. If Macdonald would take command of the Reform forces and bring about a union with Conservatives on Liberal voluntaryist terms, a majority government pledged to, "separation of church and state - representation by population - and non-sectarian schools,"

could be formed.²⁷ If this were done, Brown promised to support Macdonald, "with all my heart and vigour."²⁸

There remained the possibility however, that the Conservatives in Upper Canada would not fall in with Brown's designs for the future. The prospect of their joining with Hincks had not escaped Brown, but he felt certain that the Conservative rank and file would much prefer, "a progressive Protestant alliance to union with, "the corrupt Hincks and his faction."²⁹

Should Conservatives choose to follow the latter course, any real hope of building a new Liberal party would rest with the remaining Western Grits. Brown's forces, together with Clarke and his followers might be able to erect a second Reform combination. But it would be a difficult task. Clear Grittism had been born in a rejection of the very creed George Brown personified. To bring together the champions of republican institutions - the representatives of popular frontier democracy - the advocates of Canadian independence, and unite them with men steeped in the traditions of Victorian Liberalism would be a remarkable political feat.

27. Careless, 191.

28. Ibid., 191.

29. Globe, January 26, 1854.

ACCORD WITH BROWN

Clarke anxiously awaited the opening of the Fifth Parliament of the Union. With seven rival minority factions in the assembly he knew coalition government was a certainty. In this respect the new house would be no different from the old. Yet so fluid was the party situation as the members assembled that Clarke could do little but speculate as to the nature and composition of the next ministry.

News of the formation of a new alliance was not long reaching Elora. On September 11 Clarke learned that a cabinet consisting of three Conservatives, two Hincksite Reformers, four French Canadian Bleus and one Lower Canada English member was to be sworn.¹ Three days earlier the Hincks-Morin government had resigned. In its place stood a new administration representing an entirely new alignment of forces. Responding to the Governor General's request to form a government Sir Allan MacNab had entered into coalition, not only with the Bleus, but with a large segment of the Hincksite Reformers as well.²

1. Cornell, P.G., The Alignment of Political Groups in the United Province of Canada Ph.D. Thesis, 115.
2. Dent, II, 308-310.

Canada was to have a government made up of both Liberals and Conservatives; a government that would command an overwhelming parliamentary majority.

Clarke reeled at the news. A year earlier McDougall had hinted at the prospect of Hincks joining a Liberal-Conservative coalition.³ And Clarke may well have remembered a biting editorial in the North American denouncing the Premier as an "unscrupulous politician" quite capable of throwing in his lot with just such a combination; a combination composed of the odds and ends of all parties and not actuated by patriotic feelings or honest principles."⁴

Still, he could not believe that this prophecy had been fulfilled. Clarke had expected the Premier to resign when Parliament met, but he did not anticipate the gravitation of Hincks and his followers to the "right" of the political spectrum.

George Brown of course had hoped to see exactly the opposite. His grand design had called for a comprehensive left - and - centre ministry comprising the liberal elements in both the Conservative and Reform parties. But Brown had been outmanoeuvred from the start. By defeating Sandfield Macdonald's bid, Hincks deprived

3. P.A.O. Clarke Papers, McDougall to Clarke, February 2, 1853.

4. North American, February 1, 1853.

Brown's Independent Reformers of a victory that might well have shaped a very different alignment of forces. Then, by accepting overtures for an alliance from MacNab, Hincks had effectively breached the Liberal front Brown had hoped to construct.

Clearly, church-state issues had not created the party combinations Brown believed they would. By the autumn of 1854, Protestant Conservatives and Hincksite Reformers generally were more concerned with the prospect of holding power than they were with French Catholic influence in government. To obtain power, both parties displayed a willingness to accommodate a growing conservatism among Quebec Reformers by putting aside the voluntary principle and representation by population. In turn, French Bleus and English Conservatives saw mutual benefit to be derived by coming to terms with the railway era initiated by the Hincksite Liberals. The politics of power and the politics of railways were responsible for the complexion of the new administration.⁵

Momentarily stunned by the sudden turn of events, opponents of the Liberal-Conservatives reacted quickly. The day the Hincks-MacNab government was announced Liberal

5. Dent, II, 306-307.

elements on the "left" made up largely of Clear Grits, Independent Reformers and Lower Canadian Rouges issued a statement condemning the ministerial alliance.⁶ While only thirty-eight men lent their names to the final draft the significance of this gesture was not lost to the editor of the Globe. Here was the making of an effective opposition to the Liberal-Conservatives and the potential source for an alternate government.

Confident that a measure of collaboration could be worked out with the Rouges, Brown knew his real task lay in closing the rift between his followers and the Clear Grits. Both parties shared much in common: their views on church and state and French Catholic domination. If they could bridge the chasm of bitterness and distrust, a new power to combat the present ministry might yet take shape.

Signs of a better understanding between Grits and Brownites appeared early in the new parliament. Representatives of both parties found themselves voting together during the debate on the government's Clergy Reserves Bill. With Clear Grits supporting his amendments, the leader of the Independent Reformers observed that

6. Globe, September 15, 1854.

there was no longer "any reason to complain against the Grits".⁷ In Brown's view they had redeemed themselves by opposing the Hincksite administration and he was now prepared to offer them "co-operation at all events."⁸

In reply, William McDougall declared that "it is not remarkable that the Globe, North American and Examiner, George Brown and John Rolph should all row in the same boat."⁹ George Brown's opposition to the Hincksite-Grit coalition had seemed wrong at the time but, remarked the North American, "we do not view his opposition in the same light now."¹⁰

These first hesitant steps toward Reform reconstruction were followed by a merger of the radical press. In February, the North American, plagued by financial losses, was absorbed by the Globe and shortly thereafter Brown's journal took over the Examiner as well.¹¹ Before leaving to join the Globe's editorial staff, McDougall remarked that "there is no cause for division, no excuse for separate cliques or factions."¹² In his opinion a

7. Globe, September 15, 1854.

8. Ibid.

9. North American, October 18, 1854.

10. Ibid.

11. P.A.O. Clarke Papers, McDougall to Clarke, tells of his decision to give up the North American, April 4, 1854.

12. North American, February 14, 1855.

union of the Clear Grits and Independent Reformers was both logical and necessary.

Clarke was not ignorant of the sentiments favouring an entente with Brown that were being expressed within the Grit party. Nor was he blind to the need for an effective alternative to Hincks and ^{McNair} Morin. From the moment the Liberal-Conservatives took their oaths of office, he had been in constant touch with a wide circle of Clear Grit editors and party workers. Yet unlike McDougall, he scrupulously avoided any move that would result in an alliance with Brown.

In March 1855, following the sale of the Backwoodsman to F. Frank, Clarke was approached with an offer to act as political correspondent for the Globe in the West.¹³ That offer was refused. Together with most Grits, Clarke was as determined as ever to "go for the elective principle."¹⁴ As long as Brown repudiated that principle he would receive a cool reception in the western countryside. On more than one occasion Clarke had labelled the Globe editor a reactionary and an enemy of true reform. Now, despite the political crisis and the urgings of old friends, he made it clear that his estimate of George

13. P.A.O. Clarke Papers, Gordon Brown to Clarke, March 24, 1855.

14. Ibid., George Thomson to Clarke, January 25, 1855.

Brown had not changed.

John Rolph or Sandfield Macdonald were Clarke's nominees to head a new alliance. He was willing to join in the building of a Reform coalition providing one of these men was chosen to lead it. Unlike McDougall, Clarke never discounted Rolph as "an aging politician who could no longer be trusted,"¹⁵ and he refused to consider arguments that Macdonald's catholicism would act as a serious obstacle. It was Brown who could not be trusted. It was that man's brand of Liberalism that stood in the way of future success. The principles and aspirations of Canadian democrats were not to be purchased with arguments that George Brown had the reputation as the champion of Upper Canada rights and that he alone possessed the necessary political machine.

Clarke's arguments for either Rolph or Macdonald were not well received. Brown remained the choice of the majority of Reformers in Upper Canada. Nevertheless, by turning down McDougall's plea for ~~co-operation with~~ Brown, Clarke was instrumental in blocking the proposed alliance of the "left." Unfortunately he would claim no lasting success. By the spring of 1855, new developments

15. P.A.O., Clarke Papers McDougall to Clarke, April 4, 1854.

were forcing Clarke and the majority of Grits to review their attitude toward Brown.

In May of that year, Taché, the Lower Canadian government leader guided an Upper Canada School Bill through parliament. This bill would enable Catholics to establish separate schools in that province and thereby have a claim on public funds. What antagonized voluntaryist opinion still further was the fact that a bill of such importance to Canada West should be passed largely by eastern votes. Rarely had French Catholic domination been so obvious.¹⁶

Clarke's initial reaction was to demand the dissolution of the union. In the past, he had argued with fellow Grits that elective institutions and pure government could only be achieved when Upper Canada was free from Lower Canadian influence.¹⁷ Now, Clarke, together with local western journals and Grit politicians urged Protestants to endorse petitions for the repeal of the Act of Union.¹⁸

Not all Upper Canadian Protestants however, were ready to take such a step. Brown for one denounced separation of the Canadas as, "the advice of the coward."¹⁹

16. Careless, 202-203.

17. North American, August 16, 1850.

18. Examiner, August 8, 1855.

19. Globe, March 6, 1855.

Dissolution, in his view, would spell economic ruin. Upper Canada's commerce needed free access to the outside world. Leaving the union would mean giving up the use of the St. Lawrence route. If that happened, the West would be left facing trade barriers both North and South.

Provincial union might be a political failure, but, the Globe knew it to be an economic success. As an alternative to Clarke's demand for dissolution, Brown suggested representation by population. If the Reformers in Canada West would unite around that principle they might still check French Catholic power without destroying the union. A united Upper Canada Reform party could carry "rep by pop", Brown declared at Brampton.²⁰ Would Clarke and his friends abandon their present strategy and put aside past animosities for the sake of mounting a united Reform campaign on that principle?

Renewed religious discord in the months that followed, together with a new appraisal of his party's position brought an affirmative reply from Clarke. Early in 1856, Bishop Charbonnel declared that Roman Catholic electors who did not vote for separate schools were guilty of mortal sin.²¹ News of this had no sooner

20. Globe, July 23, 1855.

21. Toronto Mirror, January 25, 1856.

spread through Upper Canada when it was learned that a Catholic judge and jury had acquitted seven members of their own faith of the charge of beating Edward Corrigan, a Protestant, to death, despite strong evidence of guilt.²²

Both episodes strengthened the Opposition. In parliament, Brown found himself speaking for an Upper Canadian majority. Clear Grits, Hincksite Liberals and even some Conservatives joined with Independent Reformers to demand an inquiry into the Corrigan case. The motion presented drew but two negative votes from Canada West. When the ministry moved to have the permanent seat of government fixed at Quebec its representation from Upper Canada again voted with Brown, and in May, "rep by pop" won a majority of votes from the West.²³ Mounting suspicion of Lower Canadian domination and French Catholic power was weakening the MacNab-Taché coalition. Only overwhelming support from the eastern section of the province was saving the government from defeat.²⁴

It was against this background, that Charles Clarke agreed to consider George Brown's policies. Alone, he knew the Grits could accomplish little, even against

22. Globe, January 28, 1856.

23. Ibid., May 12, 1856.

24. Creighton, I, 228-237.

a weak and divided government. Neither the elective principle nor the campaign for dissolution had appealed to the majority of Upper Canadians. Brown however had a program capable of rallying mass support. Throughout 1856, his well-oiled machine had been hard at work formulating a platform demanding "rep by pop", non-sectarian education and annexation of the Hudson's Bay territories.²⁵ By endorsing this program Clarke saw the possibility of erecting a western Liberal alliance strong enough to block further Lower Canadian encroachments on Upper Canadian rights. "At least," a fellow Grit declared "an administration with Mr. Brown at the head would be an improvement over the present ministry" Therefore, "let us have it."²⁶

The first positive step toward reorganizing the forces of Liberalism was taken in December. Clarke attended a meeting of the Opposition and Reform journalists in Toronto from which a circular was addressed to Reformers in every provincial constituency asking them to send six delegates from their respective ridings to a convention to be held the following month. The purpose of the convention was to define policy, lay down a platform and create an organization capable of achieving common aims.²⁷

25. Careless, 232.

26. P.A.O., Mackenzie-Lindsey Papers, J. Malcolm to William Mackenzie, September 13, 1856.

27. *Globe*, January 12, 1857. See also, Eric Jackson "The Organization of Upper Canada Reformers 1818-1867," *Ontario History*, LIII, (1961), 109.

This course was being taken, the Globe informed its readers, to oppose "the reckless administration of public affairs"; to oppose: "a government supported by only one section of the province and pursuing a sectional policy which was humiliating to the western section and detrimental to the whole province."²⁸ Lastly, the Globe declared, the convention was being called to oppose "an unprincipled office-holding government with all its patronage, extravagance, debt and taxation."²⁹

The platform Brown's journal announced called for the complete separation of church and state, uniform legislation for the whole province and constitutional restraints on the administration. In addition, earlier demands for Rep by Pop, non-sectarian education and the incorporation of the North West into the province were included.³⁰

To promote these reforms it was decided that an association should be formed whose, "object shall be to circulate reliable political information, and aid the

28. Globe, January 12, 1857. See also, Eric Jackson
"The Organization of Upper Canada Reformers 1818-1867,"
Ontario History, LIII, (1961), 109.

29. Ibid.

30. Ibid.

return to parliament of representatives favourable to the Association."³¹ This organization was to be named the Reform Alliance and it would consist of a Central Committee in Toronto and a committee in each constituency in the Province. In January, the convention unanimously adopted the resolutions embodying both the platform and the Alliance.³²

The meeting in the public hall on Temperance Street opened a new chapter in the history of Canadian Reform. Champions of popular agrarian democracy and advocates of mid-Victorian Liberalism had met together and agreed on a common program and strategy. "The Reform Alliance is a decided success" McDougall wrote happily to Clarke. "Now let us begin a new movement and forget all past dissensions."³³

31. Globe, January 12, 1857.

32. Jackson, 109.

33. P.A.O., Clarke Papers, McDougall to Clarke, January 2, 1857.

A full description of the proceedings of the Reform Convention may be found in the Globe supplement, January 16, 1857.

DISSOLUTION PROPOSED

Clarke's work on behalf of the Reform Alliance had actually preceded McDougall's urging. In November he had introduced George Brown at a political dinner in Elora. By the time the grand convention opened in Toronto, he was ready to support the Globe's platform as the program of a reconstructed Reform party.

Clarke knew this platform expressed the outlook of moderate Victorian Liberalism far more than radical agrarian democracy. This was brought home sharply to him in the convention itself with the defeat of a motion to establish vote by ballot. From the early days of Grittism, Clarke had urged the adoption of the ballot as a means of protecting the elector from threats and intimidation.¹ Yet this Grit plank was turned down by a majority of delegates for fear it would open the way to further demands for sweeping constitutional reform.²

It was a middle-of-the-road platform finally erected in Toronto. But Clarke gave his approval to each principle adopted and he pledged to help place the new

1. Clarke, 103-109.

2. Toronto Globe (supplement) January 16, 1857.

planks before the people in his own riding. For all its shortcomings, Clarke felt the convention promised a measure of party unity. There was the prospect of acquiring the fertile North West for land-hungry Grit farmers and there was reason to hope that "rep by pop" would effectively check rising French Catholic influence in Upper Canada.

Clarke's stature as a Reform spokesman earned him the post of Secretary of the Central Committee. As such, he would be installed automatically as secretary of the subordinate committee in Wellington. Shortly after the convention ended, Clarke returned to that county to begin the work of party organization in preparation for the next general election. Other delegates, representing the constituencies of Durham, Lambton, Kent, Lincoln, West Durham and North York had already left the city on a similar mission.

Reorganization was something that many Reformers in the Wellington ridings knew was needed. If the scheme Clarke represented could improve the party machinery they would, "be glad to hear from him concerning it."³ It was left to Clarke now to spread the news of the Alliance,

3. P.A.O. Clarke Papers, Alexander Crichton to Clarke, March 28, 1857.

to set its mechanism in motion and to ensure support for its program.

This task was accomplished with little difficulty. Clarke was in touch with a wide circle of party editors and workers. As a former Grit journalist and later as road commissioner he had become sufficiently well known to be elected one of five councillors to represent the village of Elora at its recent incorporation.⁴ With the Grit organization behind him and a well established image of public service, Clarke was able to call numerous Reform meetings in Wellington and organize local committees down to the township level.

In November, word reached Clarke in Elora that elections would be held almost at once. Faced with a revitalized opposition and a severe economic crisis resulting from overextended railway building and the failure of the wheat crop, the Liberal Conservative ministry moved for a sudden dissolution.⁵ John A. Macdonald, the government's first minister and Cartier, his eastern lieutenant, hoped in this way to catch their opponents unprepared.

The Reform Alliance, however, was ready. Soon

4. Clarke, 99.

5. Morton, 305.

after the polls closed in January it was apparent that the government's strategy had failed. The new Reform organization met its first challenge by defeating three of the five western cabinet ministers and by carrying seat after seat across the countryside.⁶ Conservative and Hincksite representation was reduced to a fraction of its former size. Only in Canada East did the coalition hold its own and thereby retain a majority in the union as a whole.

For Clarke, the victory of the Alliance in Upper Canada was enhanced by a personal triumph. Not only had he worked successfully to return Reformers in Wellington, he won election as reeve of Elora. Now, his work in provincial affairs would be accompanied by efforts in the municipal field to improve local education and construct new roads in the county.⁷

For the time being, provincial matters remained uppermost in Clarke's mind. Despite an excellent showing at the polls, it was plain the Reform Alliance had not defeated the Coalition. Nevertheless, there remained the possibility of accomplishing that end if a minimum of eastern support could be secured. If a satisfactory

6. Creighton, I, 258-259.

7. Clarke, 99.

agreement could be worked out with the Rouges and the English-speaking Liberals in Canada East, a majority might be found to carry the program of the Alliance through parliament. In the months that followed, Clarke and his associates on the Central Committee followed Brown's advice and gave earnest consideration to the problem of how best to win Lower Canadian support for "rep by pop."⁸

This was an enterprise demanding patience and skill and a willingness to compromise. The Rouges might stand against clerical influence in politics and misrule in government, but they were still French Roman Catholics. From the start, it was clear to Clarke that they would not support Upper Canadian demands for representation by population without assurance that the rights and vital interests of their own section would be protected. To guarantee that protection, A.A. Dorion, the Rouge leader, had suggested federation of the two Canadas as an alternative to "rep by pop."⁹ By giving each section a separate provincial government to handle local affairs, charges of sectional domination could be eliminated. While the provincial governments would protect special interests, a new federal legislature could be set up to deal with

8. Globe, January 23, 1858.

9. Careless, 251.

matters common to Upper and Lower Canada.

The federal scheme outlined by the Rouge leader was one solution to the problem of union. Yet it was regarded by Clarke and other Reformers in the West as a remote possibility. Clarke felt it was far too complex to be put into effect quickly and haste was essential. He knew that the House was "deep in the mysteries of the double majority principle" that would require future governments to keep a majority in each province of the union.¹⁰ Should that principle be adopted, Clarke believed it would guarantee the continuation of sectional dualism. With Brown, he agreed that the only way out of present difficulties was "a genuine legislative union with "rep by pop." If that failed there would be time enough to take up the dissolutionist cry.

Despite varied remedies for the ills of the union, the Reform Alliance and Liberals from the East were prepared to chart a course on which they could agree fully and frankly. Not until July 1858 however, and the resignation of the government on the seat-of-government question, was it known whether such a course would be mapped. In the new legislature, the government was on the

10. P.A.O., Clarke Papers, George Sheppard to Clarke, May 19, 1858.

defensive from the start. The ministers were accused of failing to solve the constitutional crisis that threatened to dismember the union. The commercial depression had deepened and there was a mounting deficit that the government tried vainly to offset by raising the tariff.¹¹

As early as March, George Sheppard, the chief editorial writer of the Conservative Toronto Colonist, reported to Clarke that, the ministry could not last even though, "they are buying up all the loose fish."¹² Although the government defeated an Upper Canadian bid for "rep by pop" early in the session, their subsequent handling of national affairs failed to attract any significant support. Aroused by the ministry's failure to alleviate economic hardship and its inability to come forward with an effective solution to the union problem, Sheppard led the chief government journal in the West in open revolt:¹³ In a biting editorial he wrote:

"A season of extreme financial difficulty is before us, and how do the ministry propose to pilot the vessel of state through the rocks. By what policies are we to be governed, by what principles are we to be guided."¹⁴

11. Dent, II, 355-357.

12. P.A.O. Clarke Papers, George Sheppard to Clarke, March 17, 1858.

13. Ibid., July 18, 1858.

14. Colonist, June 29, 1858.

In Sheppard's opinion these and other issues must be faced. "Worse can happen," he concluded, "than a ministerial defeat."¹⁵

By July the government itself was aware that something drastic would have to be done if their position were to be saved from complete deterioration. Their solution was to resign, charging the Opposition with an "act of discourtesy and rudeness" in their refusal to accept the Queen's choice of Ottawa as the permanent seat of government. Leaving office on a high note of loyalty Macdonald and Cartier deliberately placed the responsibility for forming a new government on the shoulders of leaders of the Opposition. It was their contention of course that the Reform groups would never be able to form an effective administration and would simply prove their incapacity to rule.¹⁶

This tactic failed. On July 31, George Brown informed Governor General Head that he would undertake the formation of a new ministry. A cabinet embracing Liberal opinion in both Upper and Lower Canada was successfully formed and stood ready to take office. The Reform Alliance and the Rouges by patient negotiation and

15. Colonist, June 29, 1858.

16. Dent, II, 369-371.

a willingness to compromise, had reached agreement on a platform that included representation by population along with constitutional guarantees for Quebec.¹⁷ With that program, the followers of Brown and Dorion, and a small number of independent members, were willing to join in a government pledged to settling the great problems facing the union.

It was a remarkable achievement. Reform critics were taken completely by surprise. Unfortunately, the incoming ministry was without a parliamentary majority and suffered defeat almost at once. With the assistance of the Crown's representative who argued against Brown's motion for dissolution, the Liberal-Conservatives returned to the benches on the right of the Speaker. Then, to avoid vacating their seats to seek re-election, the principal officers in the reconstituted Cartier-Macdonald ministry temporarily assumed new offices before returning to their former portfolios.

By shifting ministers from one cabinet post to another Macdonald and Cartier had hit upon a device that enabled all senior members of their government to keep their places in the Assembly at the very moment when the

17. Careless, 266-268.

ex-ministers of the Brown-Dorion Cabinet had lost both their parliamentary seats and their political power. This "double shuffle" was an insufferable affront for Reformers. It was an outrageous swindle, a fraudulent evasion of the constitution.¹⁸

Brown and Dorion had been dealt a humiliating blow. Yet, despite this setback they had shown themselves capable of forming a united front. French Catholic and English Protestant Reformers had submerged sectional and sectarian differences in a common program of action. An apparent unity had been given to the Liberal party of Upper and Lower Canada.

In the autumn of 1858 Clarke attended a round of Reform meetings and public demonstrations intended to cement that unity. In Hamilton he met with Brown and prominent eastern Liberals to denounce Head for his ruling on dissolution and the Liberal-Conservatives for mass perjury on the part of ministers who had sworn to perform the duties of offices they had no intention of occupying. Following this meeting, Clarke gave notice of a public dinner to be given at Elora by the Reformers of North Wellington.¹⁹

18. Creighton, I, 268-269.

19. P.A.O. Clarke Papers. Circular letter addressed by Clarke as Secretary of the Central Committee to the Reformers of North Wellington, September 11, 1858.

Held in honour of the members of the late Brown-Dorion administration, the Elora dinner took place in Baine's Commercial Hotel. Arrangements for it were made by Clarke personally. He obtained hotel accommodations, acquired passage for the guests from Guelph to Elora and managed the sale of nearly 200 tickets.²⁰ When that meeting closed with declarations of unwavering comradeship by former ministers representing Upper and Lower Canada, Clarke left with his guests to attend a similar function²¹ staged by the Reformers of Brant County.

By the winter of 1858-59 Clarke had completed the rounds of Reform demonstrations and was back in Elora. In January, he was involved in an election campaign to replace the late member for North Wellington. James Ross, the Reform candidate made known his views on public matters in a letter addressed to the "Independent Electors of North Wellington." In some respects, Clarke shared the opinions expressed in that letter. He agreed that retrenchment in all departments of government was worth fighting for. Like Ross, he was against the Liberal Conservative "double shuffle" that had allowed ministers to take false oaths of office. And both men regarded

20. P.A.O. Clarke Papers, Notes on the Opposition Demonstration Dinner in Elora, September 24, 1858. (see also) Clarke, 138.
21. Ibid., John Young Brown to Clarke, invites Clarke to the Public Dinner given by Brant County Reformers, September 20, 1858.

Head's refusal to grant dissolution as a breach of the constitution.²² There however, the similarity ended.

Although he admitted no opinion on the seat of government question, Ross was convinced that representation by population was essential to the maintenance of the union.²³ For his part, Clarke was no longer interested in its preservation. In sharp contrast to Ross, he now took up his original dissolutionist argument as the one remaining solution to the problems confronting the two Canadas.

This of course was a reversal of Clarke's previous position. Less than six months before he had played host to politicians who had left a ministry pledged to "rep by pop" and the preservation of the union. There was good reason however for the dissolutionist posture Clarke now assumed. At no time had he placed complete confidence in the Brown-Dorion entente. The exclusion of Clear Grits from the cabinet had left Clarke uneasy. As a voluntaryist his suspicions had been aroused by the large number of Roman Catholics who had joined the ill-fated ministry. Yet even in defeat, Brown had continued to rely on Clarke's support in the West. As long as the

22. P.A.O., Clarke Papers, James Ross, Letter to the Independent Electors of North Wellington, January 20, 1859.

23. Ibid.

Brown-Dorion understanding held out the prospect of carrying "rep by pop" and thereby protecting Upper Canada from eastern domination, Clarke willingly endorsed it. Now however that prospect seemed lost to sight.

The sense of comradeship, the hope of realizing victory, so apparent at the Reform gatherings in 1858 were replaced in the new year by a widening gulf between western and eastern Liberals. Rather than minimize sectional differences both groups took occasion to emphasize them. This was apparent during discussions over the seat-of-government question, tax sharing procedures, the ²⁴galt tariff and religious education. Talks centering around the use of public funds for compensation for the loss of seigneurial rights threatened to tear both groups completely apart. In the eyes of the Reform Alliance, eastern Liberals seemed willing recipients of political, religious and economic favours handed to them at the expense of Canada West by a predominantly French Catholic government. Many Lower Canadian Reformers in turn looked on the West as the bastion of Protestant English opinion bent on the annihilation of Quebec's vested rights and interests.

24. Dent, II, 329-393; (see also) Careless, 290-299.

In Clarke's opinion the time had come to sever ties with the East. James Ross and Reformers like him were deluded in thinking moderate constitutional alterations would right the many wrongs that had accompanied Upper Canadian membership in the union. Before the year's end, Clarke would present the dissolutionist viewpoint before a full assembly of the Reform party in the West.

In the meantime, Ross would have his help in North Wellington. There was no point in throwing the game to his opponent, James Webster. Consequently, Clarke carried the Reform campaign into the eastern townships organizing party workers and laying plans for polling day.²⁶ Here Clarke acquired the support of the Elora Satirist, a new publication given to ridiculing local celebrities. Charles McLusky the editor of this sheet presented a series of articles on Ross' behalf that helped carry the day for the Reform candidate. In one such article, a poem entitled, "The Ministerial Candidates Lament" was included:

"Though I've lots of fellows
 canvassing on promises of pay,
 What good the pack are like to

25. Dent, II, 394.

26. P.A.O. Clarke Papers, T.S. Parker to Clarke, February 4, 1859
 (also) Stirton to Clarke, February 10, 1859.

do, t'would puzzle me to say;
 'Tis plain they can't bamboozle
 folks, tho' some are skilful, too -
 For one I take from Ross' side,
 he aye from me takes two!"²⁷

The Satirist was convinced that "Webster's character was so low, his principles so imbecile, his jobbery so glaring, his chiseling so transparent, that not one honourable man would defend him."²⁸ The majority of electors in North Wellington agreed.

Once Ross was elected it was time for Clarke to give full attention to the issue of dissolution.

27. The Elora Satirist, February 11, 1859.

28. Ibid.

LETTERS FROM SHEPPARD

In March 1858, a meeting of the North Wellington Constitutional Association was held at the St. Andrews Hotel, Fergus. The purpose of this gathering was described by Clarke in a message sent to the delegates appointed to attend. A society was to be formed with branches in every "Township, Village and Ward" for the promulgation of constitutional liberal principles.¹

Many Reformers in the West felt the need to re-examine Canada's constitution in the light of recent happenings. Memories of the Brown-Dorion failure and the "Double Shuffle" still haunted them. The close of that disastrous session and the sectional bitterness that had followed in the Reform camp had left little but counsels of despair. Now, in a search for a way out of their despondent frame of mind many listened to Clarke and Sheppard present a new program of action.

Like Clarke, George Sheppard was an able journalist of advanced opinions. In England he had written for numerous journals, some of Chartist sympathies. Clarke

1. P.A.O. Clarke Papers, Circular letter sent by Clarke to the Reformers of North Wellington, March 21, 1859.

first met him in Hamilton while contributing articles to the local press and had struck up a lasting friendship.² Now on the staff of the Globe, Sheppard collaborated closely with Clarke in a campaign to win acceptance for dissolution.

Sheppard shared Clarke's view that only drastic changes could save Upper Canada from economic and political catastrophe.³ Like his fellow democrat in Elora, he felt Canada West must break the union and run its own affairs. They had supported a common front for eastern and western reform and it had collapsed. They had supported representation by population to win justice for the West while preserving the union and it had failed. Now, the union had again become the instrument whereby Upper Canada was ruled against the will of its majority. Unprincipled ministers were abusing the broad executive powers granted them in the British system of responsible government to keep themselves in power and they were being abetted at every turn by a partisan governor.⁴

In December 1858, the Globe had denounced court

2. P.A.O., Clarke Papers, Sheppard to Clarke, November 4, 1856.

Mention of this early acquaintance is also made in a letter to Clarke dated October 6, 1857.

3. Ibid., February 14, 1859.

4. Globe, February 15, 1859, article on the constitutional question written by Sheppard.

rulings giving legal approval to the Liberal-Conservative Double Shuffle and warned that "the decision in these cases will materially strengthen the hand of those who demand a written constitution after the American model."⁵ This article may have been the work of Sheppard. With Clarke, he shared the conviction that American institutions were preferable for Canada. Events since then had only strengthened their belief that governments in the North American environment had to be controlled by explicit constitutional injunctions. A republican constitution containing checks and balances and making broad use of the elective principle should be fashioned for a separate Upper Canada.

On March 10, Sheppard launched a campaign in the Globe for dissolution of the union and curtailment of executive power according to American example.⁶ Throughout May and June his editorials analysed the failure of the cabinet system in Canada, demanded a written constitution and called for the separation of the executive from the legislature. These radical attacks on the union and its British parliamentary institutions aroused response throughout the West. Some Reform journals were openly

5. Globe, December 20, 1858.

6. Ibid., March 10, 1859.

hostile. Sheppard was preaching disloyalty and annexation. Many others however welcomed discussions of dissolution and constitutional changes. At Guelph, Barrie, North Oxford and elsewhere popular approval was found for both dissolution and constitutional reform.⁷

Gradually however opposition mounted. George Brown, Sheppard's employer had allowed his brilliant editorial writer free rein. The Globe's publisher, disappointed at the failure of his political designs had harboured thoughts of abandoning the union and the principle of responsible government. In the light of sectional discord both seemed destined to end in failure.⁸

With the passage of time however, Brown put these thoughts from his mind. During the summer, he began modifying Sheppard's controversial editorials on dissolution and sweeping constitutional change to a discussion of some workable federal arrangement. The idea of British North American federation had already become Liberal-Conservative policy. But Brown was not yet interested in this larger interpretation of the federal principle. This ministerial policy was a pretence, "an excuse to do nothing, since it depended on other provinces." Dorion's

7. Globe, June 11 (see also) July 1, 1859.

8. Ibid., June 6, 1859.

earlier suggestion however had merit. A federation of the two Canadas in Brown's view might solve many outstanding problems. By offering protection for the rights and interests of Upper and Lower Canada, dual federation promised to end sectional discord. In addition, it offered an effective means of incorporating the North West into Canada. It would not violate responsible government and it opened the way for the adoption of representation by population.⁹

Brown's change of heart had been anticipated. Sheppard wrote Clarke that Brown's refusal to give serious consideration to radical organic change in Canada's constitution stemmed in part from an ignorance of basic principles of government. "Take him into the forum of abuses, financial blunders, sectionalism and so forth and he is the strongest public man in Canada. But off this ground he is an ordinary man. He has never studied political principles and knows nothing of constitutional questions."¹⁰

One other explanation Clarke was given was that Brown and other prominent figures in the former Reform ministry having had a taste of office were eager for it

9. G.W. Brown, "The Grit Party and the Great Reform Convention of 1859." *Canadian Historical Review*, (1935) XVI, 250-251.
10. P.A.O. Clarke Papers, Sheppard to Clarke, July 5, 1859.

again. Thus, Sheppard wrote, "they do not wish to compromise their position with too radical a policy."¹¹ In consequence, he continued, "I have reached the conclusion that the present leaders of the opposition will not press for the changes which you and I believe to be essential."¹²

Clarke was still hopeful however. Opposition within the Reform hierarchy would not prevent a discussion of Sheppard's proposals among the party rank and file. Already the countryside was full of talk of a Reform convention to examine the merits of federation, dissolution and a written constitution. If the mass democracy of that convention could be persuaded to speak out for ideas like George Sheppard's, Clarke felt it might encourage Reform leaders to make a stand for fundamental reform.

The formal decision to call a convention was made at a meeting of the western parliamentary opposition in the Rossin House in Toronto on September 23. The day following, Clarke received a note from Sheppard urging "consultation and co-operation amongst those of us who want free play rather than cut and dry proceedings."¹³

In a second letter, Clarke was given a vivid

11. P.A.O. Clarke Papers, Sheppard to Clarke, July 5, 1859.

12. Ibid.

13. Ibid., September 24, 1859.

description of the sharp differences of opinion in the party headquarters over the decisions reached at the Rossin House. "I may say that Brown and even McDougall would like to restrict both talk and action within limits framed by the little committee here...discussion on such delicate points as elective governor and written constitution are to be pared to the finest possible point."¹⁴ Clarke now knew that, with Dorion's blessing, Brown and his lieutenants had adopted a series of resolutions for presentation at the convention which rejected all schemes other than federation as a remedy for constitutional ills." You should prepare yourself for tough work," Sheppard advised Clarke. "Personally, I have no thought of taking any part in the affair. Notoriously pro-American, it is best I remain aloof."¹⁵

In all, six resolutions were submitted to the convention by the committee on resolutions. The fifth resolution proposed federation.

"That in the opinion of this assembly the best practical remedy for the evils now encountered in the government of Canada is to be found in the form-

14. P.A.O. Clarke Papers, Sheppard to Clarke, October 27, 1859.

15. Ibid.

ation of two or more local governments to which shall be committed the control of all matters of a local or sectional character and a general government charged with such matters as are necessarily common to both sections of the province."¹⁶

When it was learned this resolution was scheduled for debate by the full assembly, Sheppard changed his mind and decided to attend. Amid warm applause both he and Clarke took the floor to argue against its acceptance. In their opinion federal union would solve nothing. Underlining the cost and complication of such a scheme Sheppard warned delegates "you will be perpetuating in a stronger form every extravagance and source of ruin and difficulty which we have under our present system."¹⁷ In any case, federation was related far more to national than to colonial status. "I do not think you can find any union of colonies based on the federated principle." After all, had not that very principle emerged in the United States with independence.¹⁸

Were Clarke and Sheppard offering to support

16. London Free Press and Daily Advertiser, (special supplement), November 18, 1859. Also, Toronto Weekly Message, Dec. 31, 1859.
17. Globe, November 11, 1859.
18. Ibid.

federation on the one ground that it be considered a step toward Canadian independence? Many suspected as much. Loyalists regarded their proposals for dissolution and a written constitution as "an infamous step on the road to rebellion." It seemed Clarke and his fellow radicals were bent on destroying the monarchical form of government at all costs.¹⁹

As the debates wore on, the Convention seemed to be moving to a breaking point. When Sheppard offered an amendment to the resolution on federation that called instead for "totally unqualified dissolution" he immediately aroused the Lower Canadians.²⁰ Easterners warned that they would never accept repeal of the union on any terms. At this juncture, an open split in party ranks was prevented by the intervention of William McDougall. To placate both western dissolutionists and their opponents he proposed an alternative amendment to Sheppard's that avoided the term federation and replaced the term "general government" with the vague phrase "some joint authority."²¹ In an eloquent appeal for party unity Brown urged the delegates to accept this amendment. In his words it afforded "room for an honourable compromise by all parties."²²

19. London Free Press and Daily Advertiser, November 18, 1859.

20. Brown, 251.

21. London Free Press and Daily Advertiser, November 18, 1859.

22. Careless, 321.

When the vote came, only four delegates cast ballots against it.

The Globe interpreted the agreement reached on McDougall's amendment as "the dissolution of the existing union with the creation of some central authority to deal with subjects which have relation both to Upper and Lower Canada."²³ As far as Clarke was concerned this was a cleverly worded resolution designed to foist federation on the unsuspecting western countryside. Sheppard was quick to note that no mention whatever of a written constitution was made in the final resolutions adopted and dissolution was merely "impliedly reserved." In their place were the words "some joint authority;" words no one had taken the trouble to explain.²⁴

Clarke's reading of McDougall's amendment was in marked contrast to that of the Globe. In a report to the Reformers of North Wellington, he set forth the basis of the compromise achieved at the Convention in a manner that stressed the dissolutionist point of view.²⁵ Clarke learned from Sheppard that this interpretation was refused insertion in the Globe. Brown was determined to press for party unity and federation. "All dissenters,

23. Globe, November 11, 1859.

24. London Free Press and Daily Advertiser, November 18, 1859.

25. P.A.O., Clarke Papers, Sheppard to Clarke, November 27, 1859.

all dissenting views are to be snuffed out without ceremony," Sheppard reported angrily. He and Clarke were victims of a swindle.²⁶ "Virtually, constitutional struggle is now ignored by the Globe...The one thing talked about is the prospect of getting office, the one thing to be written about is what you rightly call the old rigmarole of party votes."²⁷

This was ground enough for Sheppard's determination to resign from the Globe. But an interview with his employer persuaded him to remain until the close of the next session of parliament. Commenting on this talk with Brown, Sheppard informed Clarke that, "he seemed good natured and not unreasonable."²⁸ Brown defended the need to abstain from further discussion because he believed only the generalities already agreed upon could now provide the basis of agreement between the Liberals of both Canadas.²⁹

"He declared that the next session will determine his course of action; that if the Lower Canadians concur he will content himself with the moderate platform of the Convention; that if they do not concur he will feel compelled by their obstinance to accept our "extreme

26. P.A.O., Clarke Papers, Sheppard to Clarke, November 27, 1859.

27. Ibid.

28. Ibid., December 4, 1859.

29. Ibid.

views," as he was pleased to call them, and battle for them "hammer and tongs."³⁰

Accordingly, Sheppard stayed for the time being while in Upper and Lower Canada efforts were made to win general acceptance for the doctrine of the convention according to George Brown.

Clarke however, was not content to await the outcome of this campaign. Unlike Sheppard he placed little faith in George Brown and began immediately to place his arguments for dissolution before the people of Upper Canada. Although they had been denied space in the Globe, Clarke's writings found their way into the pages of the Hamilton Weekly Times. In March 1860, this sheet carried a series of articles by Re-formator attacking both the existing Legislative Union and the federal principle defined and carried in the convention.

For Clarke, it required no elaborate knowledge to prove that the Legislative Union of the Canadas was a failure. In his opinion, the only question remaining was "whether to seek its dissolution or endeavor to remove the abuses of which it is the parent."³¹ These

30. P. 110., Clarke Papers, Sheppard to Clarke, December 4, 1859.

31. The Weekly Times, March 2, 1860.

are the two alternatives which, according to Reformer
"now agitate the Upper Canada mind."³²

The Legislative Union of Upper and Lower Canada
"on any terms," Clarke told his readers, was "an unstates-
manlike blunder" and, "the continuance of it is the source
of all our difficulties."³³ It has been compared, Re-
former wrote, "to the harnessing together of an ox and
a horse with the too willing horse drawing the largest
share of the public burden."³⁴

It should not be difficult, Clarke went on, "to
see the incongruity of the arrangement which gives to one
Lower Canadian nearly as much governing power as two Upper
Canadians and which compels the more enterprising Western
man to bear a treble load of taxation when compared with
that carried by his Eastern yoke-mate."³⁵ Such an
arrangement bringing together two peoples whose institut-
ions, customs and laws are essentially different was,
for Reformer, "unnatural and unfair."³⁶

In its origin, Clarke wrote, Legislative Union
was looked upon as a doubtful experiment. "It was never
heartily adopted as a panacea - never looked upon as a
cure-all."³⁷ Union of the two Canadas, Reformer informed

32. The Weekly Times, March 2, 1860.

33. Ibid.

34. Ibid.

35. Ibid.

36. Ibid.

37. Ibid.

his readers, "was based upon compromise and it has been carried on by expensive concessions."³⁸ Now at the end of twenty years, Clarke pointed out, this union can only be maintained by constant sacrifices, "yielded by the numerically stronger to the numerically weaker, made stronger by an unjust system of parliamentary representation."³⁹

Since the days of Sydenham this union has been the bane of Canadian politicians. It may be blamed, Clarke wrote, "for the misdoings of Draper, the shortcomings of Baldwin and Lafontaine, the corruptions of Hincks, the compromises of McNab and the subserviency of Macdonald."⁴⁰ Now, Reformer suggested, "the time has come when the bulk of Upper Canadians, regardless of regular party lines, are asking, not whether the Union shall be preserved, but how its dissolution shall be best effected."⁴¹

In letters addressed to the editor of the Evening Times, Reformer claimed that the convention of November 1859 "went half-way toward solving the difficulties arising from the present Union and stopped."⁴² Many

38. The Weekly Times, March 2, 1860.

39. Ibid.

40. Ibid.

41. Ibid.

42. Ibid., Two letters by Reformer to the editor of the Evening Times were included in this edition of the Weekly Times.

delegates, Clarke went on, were for dissolution "pure and simple," but, "unanimity was deemed requisite, and the Federal resolutions were toned down so as to mean anything or nothing, and the Dissolution amendment was not put to the vote."⁴³

At that gathering Clarke had been told that "Union in some shape is requisite to our existence as a people."⁴⁴ Now, as Reformer, he asked "is this ground tenable"? "Is a federal form of government required or suited to the circumstances of a Province? In continuing the connection with Lower Canada in a new form do we rid ourselves of evils confessedly flowing from union? By throwing aside Legislative Union because it is costly and cumbrous, do you gain aught in building up a system comprising three distinct governments, and in which the third must necessarily prove nearly as expensive as the one now in force?"⁴⁵

For Reformer, the answer to all of these questions was no. The scheme outlined by Brown would solve nothing. "Federation, if it means anything," Clarke wrote, "means joint government upon equal terms" but, "this definition will never be accepted by Eastern man - who now enjoys

43. The Weekly Times, March 2, 1860. Letters to the editor of the Evening Times.

44. Ibid.

45. Ibid.

a legislative power superior to that of his Western colleague."⁴⁶ Despite all arguments to the contrary, Clarke was convinced that dissolution was the one course left open to the people of Upper Canada.

Confronted with the controversy raging in Reform circles in Canada West D'Arcy McGee pleaded for unity. "There is a great need," he told Clarke, "for all Reformers of all sections of the country to maintain a good intelligence among themselves and to observe the common enemy with the eyes of Argus." The Reform party which won for Canada its civil and religious freedom...which abolished the very semblance of connection between Church and State... which projected and honourably upheld the framework of responsible government, has now to restore the constitution, shattered and debased by six years of coalition debauchery and to place it for the future beyond the power of any Cabinet or any governor-general."⁴⁷

By the time this letter reached Elora, little hope remained of a united Reform party bringing down "the quaking coalition" with the rallying cry "Constitutional Rights and Constitutional Reform."⁴⁸ Liberalism

46. The Weekly Times, March 2, 1860.

47. P.A.O., Clarke Papers, Thomas D'Arcy McGee to Clarke, December 10, 1860.

48. Ibid.

was again in crisis. Federal union, the policy Brown had hoped would reunite the shattered Reform forces and win for them the next general election had not been accepted by the party rank and file. It had only served to divide and weaken Reform and discredit Brown's leadership.

In North Wellington, Clarke levelled attacks not only at the contents of the Convention resolutions, but at the manner in which they were introduced and passed. Together with Michael Foley, the member for Waterloo, he denounced Brown for the dictatorial fashion in which he and his Toronto lieutenants had managed the Convention. Here, he concentrated on charges that Brown had packed the all important resolutions committee, and thrust his opinions on the delegates without prior consultation. He had agreed openly with Foley's early charges in the House that "from that day to this the members of the Opposition had never been called together to consult upon any subject."⁴⁹

Charged with bungling, tactless leadership, George Brown retired from parliament, ill and worried and sick at heart. "I doubt if he will ever be able to enter public life again," Ross told Clarke, and there was no

49. Creighton, I, 298.

one able enough to take his place. "Mowat does not have energy enough for a leader. Cameron is not reliable. McDougall is not popular, Sandfield has isolated himself from the party this session and Foley is too drunken."⁵⁰ Upper Canadian Reformers seemed ill prepared to challenge the government. As the election campaign of 1861 drew near, Macdonald could announce pleasantly that, "the Reform party amounted to nothing more than a number of atoms accidentally placed together but without any principle of adhesion and indeed without any principle at all."⁵¹

In Clarke's view the Liberal-Conservative leader was badly mistaken. The removal of Brown as party chieftain opened the way for the adoption of a principle he felt certain would unify western Reform. The new decennial census showing Upper Canada with nearly 300,000 more citizens than Lower Canada was already reviving the old agitation for representation by population.⁵² If this principle were carried to the people, Clarke believed a way might be found in place of dissolution to guarantee Upper Canadian rights and effect sound constitutional reform.

50. P.A.O., Clarke Papers, James Ross to Clarke, April 5, 1861.

51. Creighton, I, 297.

52. Dent, II, 411. See also, Clarke Papers, James Ross to Clarke, April 5, 1861.

Western Liberals did adopt "rep by pop" as their rallying cry but election returns proved a bitter disappointment. Clarke did not count on Conservative candidates taking up this principle in place of federation. The result was a loss of the Reform majority in Upper Canada.⁵³ As for Quebec, the reaction from Dorion's followers had been expected. Eastern Liberals flatly rejected any change that would destroy the electoral equality of the two sections and they were joined by Cartier's Bleus in a determined defense of the existing system.⁵⁴

Clarke saw Reformers and Liberal-Conservatives emerge from the contest of 1861 almost exactly balanced. Both major parties, having abandoned their respective interpretations of the federal principle, had drawn back to traditional lines of battle that left them weakened and divided. The basic politico-cultural problem of the Canadian union had not been settled. Instead, Canada was suspended in a state of uncertain equilibrium at a time when the American Civil War threatened the very existence of British North America.

53. P.A.O., Clarke Papers, James Ross to Clarke, May 8, 1860.

54. Wade, 317-318.

FEDERATION RECONSIDERED

The climate of sinister uncertainty that accompanied the American conflagration brought many Canadians to re-examine the whole question of political unions in general and federal unions in particular. After 1861 federation was looked to more and more as the one remaining solution to the puzzle of how to govern a united yet divided province; a puzzle inextricably linked with the issues of western expansion, external defence and interprovincial union.

For his part, Clarke still saw little merit in the federal schemes under discussion in political circles. Together with other western radicals, he continued to spurn suggestions that a federal union of either Upper and Lower Canada or of all British North America would remove at one fell swoop the principal difficulties facing the Union. Sheppard's letters from the United States had already given Clarke an appreciation of the whole federal principle and the collapse of that nation's constitutional system afforded ample proof that federation was no remedy for sectional suspicion and distrust.¹

1. P.A.O., Clarke Papers, George Sheppard to Clarke, October 8, November 5, January 24, February 4, 1861.

While Clarke's cure for the troubled Union called for the destruction, rather than the preservation of sectional dualism, it no longer involved dissolution as an alternate means of effecting that cure. Despite Sheppard's sympathetic interpretation of the Confederate cause, states rights and secession were no more appealing to Clarke than federalism.² In the years immediately following the contest of 1861 no analogy was drawn by him between the southern states and Canada West.

Together with James Webster, David Stirton, Thomas Parker and other western radicals, Clarke argued for the adoption of the representation principle to end sectional equality and check the growing power of French Catholic conservatism. In Clarke's opinion, legislative union with "rep by pop" would not only resolve the present constitutional crisis and pave the way for the eventual settlement of the related problems of western expansion, external defence and interprovincial union, it would also remove a traditional obstacle to popular democratic reform.

Legislative union however was still anathema to large segments of the Union's populace. Writing from the

2. Actually, Sheppard's correspondence with Clarke reveals the latter's sympathy for the cause of Union and Abolition in the United States. See Clarke Papers, Sheppard to Clarke, January 24, February 14, 1861.

office of the Quebec Morning Chronicle on his return to Canada, Sheppard warned Clarke that "everybody here is on the side of the powers that be."³ Public opinion in Canada East remained unequivocally opposed to a constitutional formula that promised to erect a democratic union on the remains of French Catholic culture. This attitude on the part of Quebec, coupled with dissension in the Upper Canadian opposition seemed destined to leave power in the hands of the Liberal-Conservatives indefinitely.

In the spring of 1862 however, Clarke was told of a special session of the legislature and warned to expect a "taste of chaos."⁴ The steady deterioration in Anglo-American relations arising from the Civil War had persuaded John A. Macdonald to bring down a Militia Bill providing for an active force of 50,000 to be raised by volunteers or if necessary by ballot from the militia at a cost of 480,000 pounds.⁵ Clarke had registered disapproval when the government's new defence policy was first made public. He not only objected to the monetary sacrifice but also to the ministry's intention to dispense with the services of his own company, the Elora Volunteer Rifles.⁶ Now, came word that other Canadians, notably the French members

3. Clarke Papers, Sheppard to Clarke, March 3, 1862.

4. Ibid., March 15, 1862.

5. Morton, 313.

6. P.A.O., Clarke Papers, James Webster to Clarke, April 21, 1862.

in the House, shared his dislike for so costly and forceful a measure.⁷ The outcome of the special session left the Liberal Conservative ministry without a majority from Canada East for the first time since 1854.

Clarke expected the fall of the Cartier-Macdonald ministry to open the way for the adoption of "rep by pop", but he was mistaken. Although the new ministry headed by Sandfield Macdonald and Louis Victor Sicotte, a former Cartier supporter, was Liberal, it was not Clear Grit. It included no one Clarke could expect to sponsor electoral reform. The ministers now in office would best be remembered, not for their endorsement of "rep by pop" but for their adherence to the principle of Double Majority.⁸

For over a year the Union was governed weakly and incoherently by this mildly left-of-centre ministry. While Conservatives levelled attacks against the government for its failure to assume responsibility for defense and accused its leaders of precipitating the breakdown in negotiations over the Intercolonial Railway project, Clarke reserved his criticism for the Grits who had gone over to Macdonald.⁹ It was clear to him, that Michael

7. P.A.O., Clarke Papers, Sheppard to Clarke, April 24, 1862.

8. Morton, loc. cit., 313.

9. P.A.O., Clarke Papers, David Stirton to Clarke, March 7, 1863 asking that Clarke make certain Grits opposed to the "rotten tottering ministry" are given every advantage in the forthcoming campaign.

Foley and William McDougall, by supporting a government whose avowed policy was the Double Majority, had rejected the principle of representation by population; and it was equally apparent as a result of their conduct during the debates on R.W. Scott's Separate School Bill that they had abandoned the traditional Grit belief in non-sectarian schools as well.

The antics of these men however counted for little. Although a majority of the whole House voted in favour of Scott's bill to improve the position of separate schools in Canada West, the passage of that measure against a majority vote of Upper Canadians destroyed the fundamental guiding principle of the Macdonald-Sicotte government. With the ministry in possession of the now obviously untenable principle of Double Majority, Clarke was told to expect "a dissolution within the course of the next ten days and an election immediately afterwards."¹⁰

Bent upon recovering support in Canada West, Macdonald lost no time reorganizing his ministry following word his motion of dissolution had been granted. In the summer of 1863, Sicotte and the moderates of Canada

10. P.A.O., Clarke Papers, David Stirton to Clarke, May 8, 1863.

East were replaced by Dorion and his more radical followers and Oliver Mowat, a colleague of George Brown was substituted for Michael Foley. At the same time, it was announced that henceforth electoral reform was to be treated as an open question.

Clarke had had little to do with George Brown since the Toronto convention. The blows struck by the Globe at that gathering against the Grit campaign for "organic changes" - a written constitution and executive checks were still fresh in his mind when news came of Brown's return to the political arena. Nevertheless, he was shrewd enough to appreciate the value of the offer now being made to Macdonald by the Toronto editor to campaign for "rep by pop" in the forthcoming election.¹¹

In preparation for the contest to come, Clarke wrote letters to his political correspondents in the western ridings recommending candidates, advising about strategy and tactics and pleading for reconciliation and unity among all Reform factions. Acting as agent for Thomas Parker in the North Riding of Wellington, Clarke also helped with the registration of new resident voters, and on election day he presented himself as Parker's agent at the polling place for the Township of Peel.¹²

11. P.A.O., Clarke Papers, David Stirton also expected Brown to give "at least partial support" to Macdonald's new policy.
12. Ibid., Ian Innes to Clarke, June 11, 1863. See also, Thomas Sutherland Parker to Clarke, June 11, 1863, sending a copy of the notice naming Clarke, "my true and lawful attorney to act as my agent in furthering my interest as a candidate."

Election returns were encouraging. United as they had not been for years, and free from any stigma attached to Scott's Separate School Bill, Reformers emerged with a clear majority over their Conservative opponents in Canada West. At the same time however Clarke knew the east had been lost to John A. Macdonald.¹³ Soon after the new parliament met, he learned of Conservative negotiations with Sicotte aimed at founding a new combination strong enough to remove Sandfield Macdonald from power.¹⁴

Brown's return as Reform leader in Canada West had undoubtedly strengthened "rep by pop" in that section of the Union, but there was no possibility of carrying that principle in the Assembly. In fact, the delicate balance of power evident in parliament stifled all legislative activity. "Business cannot proceed, Parker told Clarke in a house equally divided."¹⁵ Clarke did not know from one day to the next whether the government would survive. "John A. is confident of defeating us," Parker wrote."¹⁶ "Almost every interest in the Province is in the lobbies using every influence to overthrow the government."¹⁷ From these reports, Clarke could only

13. P.A.O., Clarke Papers, Thomas Parker to Clarke, September 3, 1863.

14. Ibid., September 7, 1863.

15. Ibid., September 29, 1863.

16. Ibid., October 6, 1863.

17. Ibid., October 12, 1863.

conclude that Canadian politicians, unable to break the political deadlock, had fallen to a series of desperate attacks without any legislation.

In March 1864, Clarke learned from Sheppard that the Macdonald-Dorion government, conscious of loss of support in the Assembly and the country had tendered its resignation. "Confusion and uncertainty are prevailing here", Sheppard wrote. "It would be desirable to form a strong government, but the Lower Canadian party has made no offer which can be accepted."¹⁸ Finally word came that Etienne Taché had formed a Conservative ministry that included two former Liberals, Michael Foley and D'Arcy McGee.¹⁹

"Our leaders have lost the game" Parker wrote angrily. "They have put themselves out of court by downright mismanagement. Our leaders are now at a loss what course to pursue."²⁰ Clarke agreed that careless mismanagement by Reform leaders had given the day to "John A." and his followers and he agreed with Parker that unless steps were taken to curb individualism in the interests of party solidarity "years of opposition would lay ahead."²¹ Only concerted action by all Liberal

18. P.A.O., Clarke Papers, George Sheppard to Clarke, March 21, 1864.

19. Ibid., Parker to Clarke, March 30, 1864.

20. Ibid., May 11, 1864.

21. Ibid.

elements within the Union could deprive Conservatism of power.

In mid-June word reached Elora that a united Reform offensive had brought down the Taché government.²² With its defeat, the fabric of Canadian politics crumbled. Clarke had hoped for a Liberal victory, but victory was no longer possible for any political party or political principle that commended itself to a majority in only one section of the Union. If the great issues of external defence, western expansion and interprovincial union were to be settled, it was imperative that the constant clash of Upper and Lower Canadians over the question of constitutional formulas end.

At this juncture Clarke was confronted with an almost incredible turn of events. George Brown let it be known that he was prepared to enter a coalition with the Conservative leaders to attempt a federation. Since 1861, John A. Macdonald had made cautious approaches to the Reform leader with a view to joint action to resolve the growing paralysis of Canadian politics but no response had been forthcoming. Since that time however, Brown's thoughts had moved steadily from representation by population through a local federation to the contemplation

22. P.A.O., Clarke Papers, Parker to Clarke, June 15, 1864.

of "full British North American union."²³ Now, in order to end deadlock and drift he was willing to sink personal and party considerations and attempt Macdonald's scheme for a general federation of British North America.²⁴

Clarke did not appreciate the sacrifice. Like Parker and other western Grits he looked "with strong disfavour upon the proposed changes as a remedy for existing evils."²⁵ Together with Parker and George Sheppard, he denounced the whole affair as a swindle.²⁶ Legislative union was still Clarke's rallying cry. He had supported that even though its realization under Brown's leadership would have meant a severe curtailment of future democratic reform. Like Parker, he believed that federation would not be accepted by the public, and that it would only be a matter of time before that scheme was shelved for ever.²⁷

Events quickly proved Clarke and Parker wrong.

23. J. Careless, Brown of the Globe: Statesman of Confederation, 1860-1880, (Toronto: Macmillan Company of Canada Ltd., 1963), II, 167-168.
24. P.B. Waite, The Life and Times of Confederation 1864-1867, (Toronto, 1962), 43. Brown's speech on the day the coalition was announced appears in the Globe, June 20, 1864.
25. P.A.O., Clarke Papers, Parker to Clarke, June 28, 1864.
26. Ibid., George Sheppard to Clarke, August 17, 1864.
27. Ibid., Thomas Parker to Clarke, June 20, 1864.

Gathering at Quebec in the spring of 1864, Brownite Liberals and Macdonald's Conservatives argued that only a general federal union offered a workable solution to the problems besetting British North America. Upper Canada wanted not only freedom from the French in domestic affairs; it also wanted, and the Brownite forces especially, to annex the North West and build a Pacific railway.²⁸ But Lower Canada could scarcely agree to annexation of the North West unless offset by guarantees of its historic rights in the new union and by adherence of the Atlantic provinces to that union to balance the growing population of Upper Canada. Neither, would French Canada and the Atlantic provinces assent to the cost of building a Pacific railway unless that were matched by the building of the Inter-Colonial. No legislative union could possibly satisfy all of these varied groups and interests.

Adding weight to arguments for Confederation was the mounting fear that the United States might use its military might to remould the continent to its hearts desire. Although a Northern sympathizer and a champion of many American political practices, Clarke had expressed his own fear of the North's continental ambitions.²⁹

28. Careless, loc. cit., II, 168.

29. Clarke, 110-120.

Beginning in 1861, he had devoted serious attention to militia affairs and as commanding officer of the Elora Volunteer Rifle Company he continued to play a leading part in the organization of defensive forces on the western frontier.³⁰

Most Canadians were agreed that the dangers posed by the huge Union armies and the truculence of the government that controlled them was reason enough for Confederation. In England, the Colonial Secretary, Edward Cardwell came out firmly and even emphatically as a supporter of federation of all British North America as the one remedy for the basic indefensibility of the British colonies.³¹ From the standpoint of defence alone a legislative union of Upper and Lower Canada was impractical and unsatisfactory.

For Clarke, legislative union was a matter of principle. Confederation however was a matter of practical utility; a realistic, workable means to strength and independence. Like Clarke many of the proponents of Confederation were motivated by a powerful antipathy to the whole federal principle. Like him they suspected

30. Clarke, 110-120.

31. Morton, op. cit., 315.

that federation caused the American Civil War. Nevertheless, Clarke's critics hastened to point out that whereas legislative union was impossible in every respect a general federal union, delicately balanced, might work. In any event, it must be tried.

By 1865 the overwhelming majority of newspapers in Canada West - Conservative and Reform - supported the Coalition and its program, and Clarke understood that Confederation was almost certain to be carried.³² "I have made up my mind to vote for it," Parker informed him "even though I cannot speak for it."³³ On February 6, 1865, John A. Macdonald moved the Address to Her Majesty which formally introduced the question of Confederation.³⁴

Clarke now faced a dilemma. He could, like Sheppard, attack Brown and Macdonald for the haste with which they were pressing great constitutional changes and for their avoidance of a formal verdict of the people on the question of Confederation or he could abandon legislative union and support the platform Brown was placing before the people of Upper Canada.³⁵ After careful deliberation he resolved to follow neither course.

32. P.A.O., Clarke Papers, Thomas Parker to Clarke, January 26, 1865.

33. Ibid.

34. Clarke, 70.

35. P.A.O., Clarke Papers, George Sheppard to Clarke, March 14, 1865.

When Brown made a clear declaration of his reasons for supporting a union of the British American colonies he spoke of Confederation as a means of raising us from the attitude of a number of inconsiderable colonies into a great and powerful people.³⁶ As a means of preserving sectional rights and interests a federal union held no appeal whatsoever for Clarke at this time. But, as a way of creating a new nationality by facilitating immigration, territorial expansion, economic growth and external defence, Confederation held a certain fascination for him.³⁷ Yet he steadfastly refused to recommend it.

What Clarke objected to after 1865 was not the scheme of government being devised by Macdonald and Brown, but the coalition of forces that had been created to bring federal union into being. In many respects, Clarke found in a study of Macdonald's federal plan many features of a legislative union. Determined to erect a federal system of government strong enough to avoid the evils which had befallen the United States, the architects of Confederation made little mention of the question of the rights of the provinces in the new union. Local

36. Clarke, 71. See also Careless, II.

37. Ibid., 72.

governments were spoken of in Upper Canada as if they were to be little more than appendages of existing institutions, designed merely to lighten the load of sectional difficulties the Canadian government had hitherto been obliged to carry.³⁸ On more than one occasion Clarke heard of government leaders hinting before audiences in the West that in time federation might prove sufficiently strong and centralized so as to approximate to a legislative union.³⁹

Clarke's real fear was for the survival of the Reform party as a distinct force in Canadian life. For him coalition of any kind was distasteful because it inevitably called for the sacrifice of principle.⁴⁰ Already, the defections of McDougall, Howland, and Fergusson Blair to the government camp, had resulted in the strengthening of the anti-democratic, anti-republican Right and threatened to render the term Reformer extinct. Despite external dangers posed by American expansionists and Fenianism Clarke was not at all prepared to abandon the traditions of the Left entirely. Acknowledging Canada to be "a country worthy of defense", Clarke continued in his capacity as a

38. Careless, loc. cit., 168. See also, Clarke, 134.

39. Creighton, I, 389.

40. Elora Observer, March 3, 1871. On the occasion of Clarke's "Address to the Electors of Centre Wellington."

militia officer to strengthen the defences along the western border and he readily responded to the call to arms when the abortive Fenian invasion took place.⁴¹ During all of this time however, he worked with equal zeal and determination to reorganize the Reform party in the western ridings.

Following his re-election as reeve of Elora in the winter of 1866, Clarke received word from James Halliday that he had been chosen by the Reformers of Maryboro as their candidate in the next Federal election. "You are very much aware" Halliday told him, "that the future welbeing of our country very much depends upon the kind of men we may select for our next Parliament. Like true patriots we are seeking to put into office only those men that are honest and of good repute, having intelligence and energy sufficient for the arduous duties of a true representative of the people."⁴²

This offer was graciously declined. Clarke was already hard at work in North Wellington calling upon Reformers to meet together for the selection of candidates.⁴³ In the months that followed, Clarke turned aside a second

41. Clarke, 122-133. Full details of Fenian activities were given to the people of Elora in the pages of the Elora Observer, June 6, 7, 1866. Clarke was promoted to major.

42. P.A.O., Clarke Papers, James Halliday to Clarke, February 28, 1867.

See also, Elora Observer, February 29, 1867.

43. Elora Observer, March 4, 1867.

request that he stand for the North Riding of Wellington and devoted himself to the work of selecting fellow Reformers to represent both the North and the Centre Ridings.⁴⁴ Determined to present the electorate with a full slate of candidates willing to run on the Reform ticket "pure and simple," Clarke held meetings with party leaders from Bramosa, Swissford, Parkinson and Langhrin in Fergus.⁴⁵ From talks with these men it was clear that the next campaign would find the Reform party hard pressed to halt the Coalition. In many ridings, Conservatives and Brownite Liberals were virtually unopposed.⁴⁶

Confederation was carried by the Coalition. Try as he might, Clarke could not combat the principle of coalition in the interests of preserving the Reform party as a strong, independent political force. When the new session opened in November 1867, the remnants of the Upper Canadian Reform party prepared to enter into opposition "as soon as a battleground could be taken."⁴⁷

Naturally, Parker and the other Reform members expected Clarke to join them in fashioning a suitable battleground, but he refused to commit himself. Whatever

44. P.A.O., Clarke Papers, Thomas Parker to Clarke, March 14, 1867.

45. Ibid., James Innes to Clarke, March 15, 1867.

46. Ibid., Thomas Parker to Clarke, April 5, 1867.

47. Ibid., November 18, 1867.

distaste he had felt for the Brown-Macdonald alliance, whatever fears he had harboured for the future of the Reform party; a nation had been born.⁴⁸ Perhaps, Clarke suggested to Parker, "it is time to end reminiscences and recriminations over the past. We have been beaten by superior statesmanship."⁴⁹ While Confederation in Clarke's opinion, represented an imperfect union, hastily conceived and implemented, it nonetheless stood for unity. The task remaining in his view was not to initiate policies designed to wreck the federal union, as Parker was suggesting, but to work to remold Canada's⁵⁰ new national identity along more democratic lines.

It was this line of reasoning that had caused Clarke to campaign for the preservation of the Upper Canadian Reform party following the creation of the Coalition. He knew Confederation was inevitable and in many respects he welcomed it. At the same time he foresaw the need for keeping intact an opposition dedicated to

48. P.A.O., Clarke Papers, Thomas Parker to Clarke, November 18, 1867. Parker took this occasion to tell Clarke that he saw "great difficulties in the adoption of your views".

49. Ibid.

50. Ibid., It was Parker's belief that "the people are thoroughly against Confederation." He further declared that, "union should never have been legislated without their consent."

the removal of those features of Macdonald's constitution, particularly the monarchical trappings, and the appointed upper house, that threatened to fashion the young nation in the image of the mother country.

Until his election to the Ontario Legislature for Centre Wellington in 1871, Clarke helped to preserve the Reform or Liberal party in Upper Canada as something more than a negative, destructive phenomenon in national affairs. To do that, he willingly joined again with George Brown, offering him the nomination for Centre Wellington following Brown's defeat in South Ontario, in August 1867.⁵¹ Together with Brown and Edward Blake, he formulated a new Reform platform calling for economy in government, a strict interpretation of the new federal constitution and the independence of the legislature from undue executive influence.⁵²

It would seem as though adherence to the latter two planks ran counter to Clarke's persistent appeals for a strong, highly centralized form of government. To denounce Sandfield Macdonald for permitting himself and his coalition government in Toronto to become mere adjuncts of the Ottawa government, and to attack

51. P.A.C., George Brown Papers 1848-1867, Charles Clarke to Brown, August 29, 1867.

52. F.H. Underhill, "Political Ideas of the Upper Canada Reformers, 1867-78" Canadian Historical Association, (1942), 106. See also, Elora Observer, February 14, December 24, 1868. Also, Clarke, 155-156.

John A. Macdonald's interference with Ontario legislation through the disallowance power was to fly in the face of all he had said in favour of a legislative union.⁵³

Yet if he seemed to be returning to Clear Grit regionalism, Clarke felt justified. Like Brown his aim was to return men to Ottawa who would work "to secure a reformed constitution doing justice to Upper Canada."⁵⁴ In the absence of a strong Reform party in the Capital the Dominion government would continue to exercise its power and influence in matters of local Ontario concern without being bound by any real sense of responsibility to act in the interests of the majority in that province. As long as the Conservatives held sway over national affairs, provincial autonomy afforded the only safeguard for the rights and interests of Canada West.⁵⁵

While expressing fear lest the central power of the state endanger fundamental liberties, Clarke also returned to an earlier Grit claim, that the British cabinet system, as applied to a government busy with the construction of railways and public works, gave too much power to the executive. Pointing out that this system was making possible "a new era of jobbery and partonage," he

53. Clarke, 139-140.

54. P.A.O., Clarke Papers, George Brown to Clarke, October 31, 1868.

55. Elora Observer, March 3, 1871. Clarke's speeches during his election campaign were carried regularly in this Reform sheet.

suggested once again the necessity of a system of checks and balances similar to that contained in the constitution of the United States.⁵⁶

Clarke placed these and other suggestions for improving Canada's political system before the electors of Centre Wellington during his campaign for election to the Ontario Legislature. At the same time, he pledged his loyalty to the Reform party "which has always been identified with the advocacy of Canadian Rights and Progress" and promised, if elected, to combat the coalition which like all coalitions "leads to mutual sacrifice of principles by those forming them."⁵⁷ If returned, he concluded "I will try and restore party lines on principle and I shall, at all times, strenuously oppose uncalled for expenditure as I believe good government is, of necessity, economical government."⁵⁸

Throughout March 1871, Clarke carried his campaign to the people of Centre Wellington. Speaking for a full hour at Ennottville he laid stress on the numerous misdeeds of the coalition. Taking as an example of "the full power of the Cabinet to divert the surplus funds of the country

56. Elora Observer, March 6, 1871.

57. Ibid., March 3, 1871.

58. Ibid.

to suit their own purposes, he dealt at length with the proposal of the Government to grant aid to any railway without seeking the approval of the Legislative Assembly.⁵⁹

"The sooner this lavishly corrupt coalition is ended" Clarke told his audience at Pilkinton, "the better."⁶⁰

Election returns, published in the Elora Observer on March 24, gave Charles Clarke a majority of 677 votes.⁶¹

Immediately after his election, Clarke took up the issue of ballot voting that he had advocated in the past and, in 1873, it was introduced as a government measure and become law.⁶² In his book "The Early History of Elora, Ontario", J.R. Connors paid tribute to Clarke for his efforts on behalf of that issue:

"To his industry and energy in gathering information and pushing this matter of ballot voting to a successful conclusion, Charles Clarke is fairly entitled to the honour and credit of causing the ballot to be used at both municipal and parliamentary elections in Ontario."⁶³

59. Elora Observer, March 6, 1871. Also, Clarke, 168.

60. Ibid., March 11, 1871.

61. Ibid., March 24, 1871.

62. Clarke, 103-109.

63. Connors, 144.

Among other important bills which Clarke introduced in the Ontario Legislature was a measure to make the covering of exposed parts of the machinery of threshing machines compulsory and a bill establishing a system of County Poor Houses throughout the Province.⁶⁴

As chairman of the public accounts committee and of the House when in committee Clarke showed ability which was recognized in 1880 when he was elected Speaker. He continued in that position under two parliaments, for seven consecutive sessions. In 1892, he accepted the position of Clerk of the Assembly which he occupied until January 1907. During this period, he held commissions which, in case of need, authorized him to act as Lieutenant Governor. At the same time, he compiled "The Members Manual", a book of rules governing parliamentary procedure, which has become the standard guide to successive legislators.⁶⁵ Retiring in 1907, he began work on "Sixty Years in Upper Canada", a book to which this writer has often referred.

Charles Clarke died in the spring of 1909. On April 14, the Citizen Band of Elora, in regimental uniform and with muffled drums, led the cortege from his

64. Connors, 144.

65. Elora Express, April 14, 1909.

home to St. John's Anglican Church along a route thronged with people. Following the simple yet impressive burial service of the Church of England the solemn ceremony was concluded, "with the sounding of the last bugle call."⁶⁶

66. Elora Express, April 14, 1909.

CHARLES CLARKE: CLEAR GRIT

Charles Clarke's political creed was fashioned at an early age by an association with such radical and liberal personalities as Thomas Cooper, George Boole and John Norton. These individuals instilled in Clarke an enduring belief in the dignity and worth of man and left him convinced of man's capacity for freedom. The remainder of Clarke's life was intimately involved in a struggle to win that freedom.

As strategist and spokesman for the Grits in Canada West, Clarke saw his role in public life as a champion of reform and progress against "the timorous opponents of every proposed change who willingly perpetuate outmoded practices and institutions in government and society."¹ Acting in this self-styled capacity he lent his voice and his pen to demands for the election of all public officers, for equal political rights, for vote by ballot, for economy in government and for the separation of church and state.

In articles for leading Reform journals and on

1. Hamilton Journal and Express, February 22, 1850.

the public platform Clarke expressed the belief that these reforms were essential for "the extension of popular liberty and the development of free institutions."² The winning of responsible government had not liberated the Canadian people. In Clarke's opinion they were still bound by a constitution far removed from their control. The shackles of privilege, monopoly and misplaced power still remained in the guise of "a defective representative system, an extensive Crown patronage, an appointed Upper House, an expensive Judiciary and a dominant State Church."³

In his effort to remove these shackles, Clarke frequently turned to American institutions for guidance and inspiration. For him these institutions offered proof of man's capacity for freedom. They showed Clarke believed, that by the widespread application of the elective principle, government could be made more responsive to the popular will, and that self-governing institutions in close relation to the people provided a bulwark against the inherent authoritarianism of distant government.

Much of the frustration and disappointment that accompanied Clarke in his pursuit of a Canadian polity in which "power is vested wholly in the People" was the

2. Hamilton Journal and Express, March 5, 1850.

3. Ibid.

product of his environment. Clarke might draw ideas from the revolutionary traditions of America, but these ideas could hardly be expected to take hold in a society inhabited by a majority that had turned from the practical application of the doctrines that all men are born equal and are endowed by their Creator with the inalienable rights of life, liberty and the pursuit of happiness.

At a time when the Papacy in Europe was struggling to counteract the appeal of anti-clerical liberalism, and Whig rule was pushing aside the working-class radicals in Britain, both Conservatives and Moderate Reformers in Canada were making a concerted effort to slow down all movements in the direction of the democratization of politics and society. To Macdonald, to Cartier, and to George Brown, the urge toward greater democracy that Clarke spoke of on behalf of the western English-Protestant farmer, posed a threat, not only to the British connection and to French Catholic culture, but to the very survival of Canada as a separate entity.

The limited success Clarke enjoyed as a champion of democracy cannot be attributed entirely to his environment. In large measure, his failures stemmed from a frequent

inability to correlate principle to the realities of Canadian politics. To label George Brown an enemy of reform was to evoke the hostility of powerful urban business and professional men who saw in the Globe's Whig-Liberalism a philosophy of reform more in keeping with their temperament and training than the agrarian democracy of the Grits. To adhere to planks calling for organic constitutional change and a written constitution to the point of demanding dissolution, alienated many in Upper Canada whose desire for reform was accompanied by an equally strong determination to retain British ties and institutions. Finally, to demand religious freedom by calling for an end to French Catholic influence in government was to misread the historic role Catholicism played as a champion of French Canadian culture and tradition and to invite charges of religious intolerance. The result of these activities was to restrict rather than enlarge the appeal of Clear Grit democracy.

A study of Clarke's thought and his career as strategist and spokesman for the Grits does much to explain the weakness of this movement of the Left. At the same time however, an undertaking such as this challenges the

popular twentieth century conception of the frontier as a "closed society" by revealing the Grits intimate knowledge of liberal and radical democratic movements in Europe and America. To win cheap justice, cheap land and cheap government for the debtor farm populace in the western countryside, Clarke drew into the ken of the farmer political and economic doctrines that had served European Liberals, British radicals and Jacksonian and Jeffersonian democrats alike.

By doing this, Clarke helped to create a climate of opinion in Canada that nurtured the democratic ideal. In time, that ideal would transcend the purely agrarian environment of the Grits to become the instrument for the creation of a sovereign nationality.

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