LIKE EDEN IN HER SUMMER DRESS:
GENTRY, ECONOMY, AND SOCIETY: UPPER CANADA, 1812-1840
by Robert L. Fraser
Department of History
A thesis submitted in conformity with the requirements for the Degree of Doctor of Philosophy in the University of Toronto.
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ABSTRACT

The purpose of this thesis is to examine the origins of a provincial strategy for economic development in Upper Canada between 1812 and 1840. The first serious treatment of this topic was by Donald Creighton in 1937. Since then historians and political economists have seized upon the relationship between the so-called "Family Compact" and economic development as an example of nascent nationalism, outright commercial interest, or the corporatist roots of the Canadian economy.

The genesis of provincial development policies occurred between 1818 and 1825. The men responsible for marshalling public opinion, setting out the broad framework for policies, and implementing legislation in the House of Assembly were pre-eminent figures in the Compact: John Beverley Robinson, John Strachan, John Macaulay, and Jonas Jones. To a lesser extent Christopher Hagerman and George Markland were also involved. The thesis accepts the legitimacy of the well-established historiographical connection between the Compact and development. It sets out the assumptions which underlay the economic programme of the self-proclaimed gentry but is not a history of economic development during the period or an analysis of development legislation. Rather it is an attempt to delineate the theoretical prerequisites of the idea of development in Upper Canada and its relation to society.

The War of 1812 set the stage for the first discussion by Robinson of the need for a prosperous society. The military vulnerability of
the province and the experience of widespread disaffection during the war prompted the suggestion in 1816 that the colony's first line of defence was prosperity. The most important assumption which endowed the development of the 1820s with its characteristic flavour was the Edenic myth of the gentry — the belief that Upper Canada had been providentially-endowed with a lush natural bounty, comparable to any spot in the world. This faith was the foundation for the gentry's enthusiasm for development on the grand scale, at great cost, with little regard for profit, or how to pay the enormous debt which eventually resulted. The exaggerated sense of provincial capability was grounded in providential belief. Moreover this myth accorded with generally-held assumptions that the resource base of the province was fundamentally agricultural.

The immediate spur to development came from American initiatives with canals in New York State in 1817, the discontent about improvement evident during the agitation of Robert Gourlay in 1818, and most important, the depression which held the province between 1819 and 1821. In 1821 a committee of the House of Assembly reported its findings on the internal resources of the province. The thrust of its recommendations was overwhelmingly agricultural. Timber received short shrift and manufacturing was all but dismissed. The committee's conclusions were that stable markets in Great Britain and the improvement of internal navigation would ensure long-term prosperity. The subsequent Committee on Internal Navigation and the parliamentary committee reporting on its findings were dominated by the gentry. In 1825
through the efforts of Robinson, the province committed itself to
the gentry's programme for canals with an enormous loan to the
Welland Canal raised by debenture financing. Development itself
was a limited matter: canals to get the rich products of the soil
to markets and preferential entry of wheat, flour, and timber to
British markets. In American trade the gentry strove mightily to
maintain a just balance between free trade on certain goods and
protective tariffs on others.

The core of the gentry's beliefs was an agrarian image of society
in its myriad forms: political, economic, and social. This was the
pre-capitalist society of independent commodity producers. The
gentry's political beliefs were rooted in the hierarchical ordering
of an agrarian society. Their political language and their concept
of moral character and virtue were based on the maintenance of an
agrarian society with only limited urban centres and commerce. They
believed that canals were a public trust and should be undertaken by
the province and superintended by those who had only the general
interest at heart - gentlemen. They rejected the egalitarian image
of society held by radical agrarians and the capitalist image of
society advocated by merchants, such as William Allan. The issue which
brought these contending images together was the question of legisla-
tive union with Lower Canada. Throughout the 1820s and the 1830s the
gentry rejected a society in which considerations of finance and commerce
were pre-eminent.

The thesis concludes that the limited strategy for development which
originated between 1818 and 1825 was directly attributable to the
agrarian assumptions, Edenic myth, and political beliefs of the Upper
Canadian gentry.
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# TABLE OF CONTENTS

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Introduction</th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Chapter</td>
<td>Page</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I</td>
<td>14</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>II</td>
<td>47</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>III</td>
<td>104</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>IV</td>
<td>149</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>V</td>
<td>207</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>VI</td>
<td>228</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>VII</td>
<td>256</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>VIII</td>
<td>294</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Conclusion</td>
<td>339</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bibliography</td>
<td>350</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
ABBREVIATIONS

The following abbreviations have been used:

CHR     Canadian Historical Review
DAB     Dictionary of American biography
DCB     Dictionary of Canadian biography
JHA     Journals of the House of Assembly
OH      Ontario History
PAC     Public Archives of Canada
PAO     Public Archives of Ontario
PRO     Public Record Office
SLB     Strachan letter book
TPL     Toronto Public Library
I owe a great debt to Professor Michael S. Cross. More years ago than I care to remember he suggested the topic. Since then he has been unflagging in his support even over half the continent. I am grateful for his advice and supervision. My sincere thanks to Professor G. M. Craig who graciously became involved rather late in the game. Above all others my deepest gratitude is due my wife Barbara, who shares the Culloden mentality, and my daughter, Catherine.
DEDICATION

To my grandfather, Robert Lochiel Fraser, and my father, Robert Lochiel Fraser - Caisteal Dhuni!
INTRODUCTION

This thesis is a study in the relationship between economic development and society in Upper Canada between the War of 1812 and the Union of 1840. Several questions come immediately to the fore. What sort of development was initiated by Upper Canadian society? What were the assumptions which underlay the type of development undertaken? Who were responsible for setting the framework and providing the justification?

The topic has been of some concern to historians although as yet no study has focussed on the broad topic of development and society in Upper Canada. A brief review of some of the pertinent historiography indicates the range of interpretation. In 1937 Donald Creighton described his classic The commercial empire of the St. Lawrence, 1760-1850 as "a study in commerce and politics."1 His purpose was "to set forth . . . the ambitions, programmes and struggles which had their central inspiration in the St. Lawrence River. . . ."2 The focus of this epic tale was the city of Montreal and the merchants who stood athwart the political and economic interests of the great trading system. His analysis extended to Upper Canada in the first attempt to explain the origins of economic development in the upper province. Political opinion was secondary to economic interest, according to Creighton. Individuals usually renowned for their prominence in other than economic circles, such as John Beverley
Robinson, John Strachan, Christopher Hagerman, John Macaulay, and George
Herkimer Markland, were tied to the Montrealers by common beliefs about
the economic future of the Canadas. Arguing that the "only significant
political philosophy which existed at that time in Canada" was "based on
the economic interests of their [merchants'] class," Creighton saw the
conflicts in Canadian society as:

... not primarily a division between two races, or two
provinces or two political philosophies, such as
liberalism and conservatism. It was in the main, a
division between those who thought commercially in terms
of the commercial system of the St. Lawrence and those
who thought in terms of rural and parochial interests
and who instinctively distrusted centralization and
control.3

Since then other historians and political economists have added
to the literature on colonial economic development. One of their major
themes has been the significance for development of the role played
by the "Family Compact." In his study of the Welland Canal Company,
Hugh G. J. Aitken raised the possibility that the politics of this
group played a strategic role in restricting business enterprise in
Upper Canada.4 In his famous Report, John George Lambton, Earl of
Durham, was struck by government's pre-occupation with public works
as the principal difference between American and European governments:

I know of no difference in the machinery of government in
the old and new world that strikes a European more forcibly
than the apparently undue importance which the business of
constructing public works appears to occupy in American
legislation.5

Aitken interpreted Upper Canada's massive financial support for canal-
building as "defensive expansionism." Economic activity stemmed from
awareness of the commercial and military threat posed by the United States.

The foremost student of the Upper Canadian mind, S. F. Wise, detected in this expansionist cast of mind the nascent nationalism of Upper Canadian toryism:

Yet the seeds of a separate nationalism were implicit in the problems involved in public improvements, trade, and banking, for though he might justify a particular policy on grounds of imperial interests, it was the provincial stake he had chiefly in view. Joined to the concern for local interests was a deeply defensive cast of mind. To most Tories, though perhaps not to the aggressive and optimistic merchants, a canal like the Welland was a protective device, to be visualized in political, social and cultural contexts as well as in economic.

It is at this point that the conservative economic policy intersected with the total structure of conservative values; values which have had an influence far beyond the bounds of party, and which indeed lie at the roots of Canadian national feeling. Wise attributed the commitment to canals to a "survival drive" which simultaneously impelled them to protect and to develop.

In a recent article J. T. McLeod credited colonial toryism with determining the subsequent structural framework of the Canadian economy. "Defensive expansionism" and the "Family Compact" coalesce as an explanation of the "corporate" roots of the Canadian economy. In a vein reminiscent of Wise's critique of liberal-democratic models of development, McLeod ascribed the failure to understand Canadian political culture as an inability to grasp "the possibility that the essence of our political economy may be something quite unrelated to . . . liberal-democratic concepts." Thus the "Tory" origins of the Canadian state linked our economic structure to a pre-modern, pre-capitalist "Tory"
paradigm.  

It would be difficult to exaggerate the importance and the formative influence of British Toryism in our national life. In the course of our economic development it seems that the practices of the Family Compact may have been more important than the theories of Adam Smith.

The claims for the impact on the economy of the non-liberal origins of Upper Canadian political culture have been great. At the level of political philosophy George Grant made a compelling case for the loyalist "Toryism" "which pre-dated the age of progress." Yet Creighton had dismissed the "Toryism" of the York and Montreal elites as the political manifestation of their commercial interests:

... and the "Family Compact" in both Upper and Lower Canada was less a company of blood-relations than it was a fraternal union of merchants, professional men and bureaucrats. The group was relatively small; and the names of a few dozen persons turn up again and again, with almost equal regularity in the affairs of business and government, until the extent of their monopoly control suggests the practical identification of the political and commercial state.

More recently Michael Cross has suggested that the early elites of British North America were driven by the "ideals of gentility" rather than the cash nexus of the marketplace or the counting-house. This is a perception worth pursuing.

The purpose of this thesis is to re-examine the origins of economic development in Upper Canada. The focal point of the study is what Aitken called some years ago "a theory of the structural prerequisites of economic development." The thesis is not a history of economic development or development legislation. Rather it is an attempt to illuminate the social and intellectual landscape which gave rise to
the idea of development as it took place in Upper Canada. The
historiographical legitimacy of setting off development against the
so-called "Family Compact" provides the basis for the study.

The gestation period for economic development in Upper Canada
occurred between 1818 and 1825. In the shaping of public opinion,
the formation of key assumptions about the resource base of the economy,
the setting of the strategy, nature, and limits of development, and the
enthusiastic implementation of economic decisions in the provincial
parliament, the names which recur most frequently are John Beverley
Robinson, John Macaulay, and John Strachan. Christopher Hagerman,
Jonas Jones, and George Markland supported their friends' initiatives
and shared their general assumptions. Often lumped together as part
of the "Family Compact," this group is the focus of the discussion. In
place of "Family Compact," the term used to describe these men is
one of contemporary usage. They referred to themselves or their social
peers as "gentry." Obviously borrowed from English social structure
it describes men of lesser stature than aristocracy but set apart by
gentle birth, education, and good breeding, in other words, gentlemen.

With the exception of Hagerman these men were close friends from
their boyhood days at John Strachan's Cornwall Grammar School. As
their careers took them on separate paths and adolescent interests
waned the old coterie of friends narrowed to those of the present study.
Friendship was the strongest bond of this informal group. Robinson
was like Strachan's son. Perhaps only Macaulay ever pierced the strength
of that friendship. The rapport between these men was intellectual
and political as well as convivial. They drew on each other's opinions to measure the leading issues of the day. They shared similar beliefs about religion, politics, and economy. Between the 1810s and approximately 1823 Strachan dominated his younger protégés by his ability, force of character, and the obvious difference in ages. Strachan's pre-eminence did not entail the imposition of identical opinions. Rather he tried to steer his charges in the proper direction on a pressing question. As early as 1818 Macaulay had shown evidence of a strong streak of independence. Jones was more isolated at Brockville until his attendance at the House of Assembly and later the Legislative Council and Court of Kings Bench brought him to York/Toronto. In Markland's case it is difficult to say. The paucity of primary materials makes any judgement risky but it is likely that Strachan's influence was greater with him than with any other. Robinson took longer than Macaulay establishing his independence from the aura cast by his mentor. He was the most able of Strachan's students. At some point in the early 1820s, probably about 1823, his keen intellect, abundant energy, and shrewd judgement led him to eclipse Strachan as the pre-eminent courtier of the administration of Lieutenant Governor Sir Peregrine Maitland. Henceforth until the Union Robinson, even as Chief Justice, quickly became indispensable to succeeding governors, including Sir John Colborne, who was hostile to Strachan and his students. In 1842 Strachan spoke of Robinson as "... wiser than I am... to him I give up in most things, but to no other tho' it would commonly seem, that we arrive even without communication at similar
conclusions. Hagerman never enjoyed the close relationship such as that between Robinson and Macaulay. By 1810 he was acquainted with Robinson and Macaulay and by the early 1820s his legislative career, abilities, and shared political beliefs brought him within the coterie of friends. Although consulted by the others as a matter of course, Hagerman's brashness more than once caused exasperation, and seems for a time at least to have prevented the intimacy which marked the friendships of the others.

Over the course of several decades the gentry were at the centre of the political life of the province. From 1815 to 1840 all or some of them were as close as provincials got to the exercise of the colonial sphere of power. Strachan's purview was that of the leading Church of England clergyman in the province. Throughout his life his foremost interests were religion and education but his political ambitions brought him to the executive council from 1815 until 1835, the legislative council from 1820 to 1841, and various other civil duties. Robinson's public career was long and the most important. He served as acting attorney general during most of the War of 1812, solicitor general from 1815 to 1818, attorney general from 1818 to 1829, chief justice from 1829 to 1862, president of the executive council from 1829 to 1831, speaker of the legislative council from 1830 to 1840, and assemblyman for the town of York and government spokesman in the assembly from 1821 to 1829. Robinson was probably the commanding political figure of the pre-Union era. Hagerman's political base was Kingston where he was
collector of customs until 1828 and a district court judge. He represented Kingston in the eighth parliament (1821–24), eleventh (1831–34), twelfth (1834–37), and thirteenth (1837–40). His key political appointments were solicitor general from 1829 to 1833 and attorney general from 1837 to 1840 when he was appointed a puisne judge, a position which he held until his death in 1847.

Intensely private, somewhat priggish, fervently pious, and probably shy, Macaulay shunned the political arena until 1836. Until that time he was unwilling to sever his local and family ties in Kingston. Merchant, deputy postmaster, and cashier of the Kingston branch of the Bank of Upper Canada, Macaulay came to the fore of provincial affairs as co-editor and owner of the Kingston Chronicle between 1818 and 1822. Rarely emerging from his Kingston lair, Macaulay served a crucial and influential role as an advisor and by his willingness to serve on a host of government committees and commissions. In 1836 he was called to the legislative council and became surveyor general serving until his appointment as civil and private secretary to Lieutenant Governor Sir George Arthur on 16 June 1838. On 1 Oct. 1838 he succeeded George Markland as inspector general holding the position until 8 June 1842.

Markland was one of Strachan's favourites and seemed to have great promise. Shunning the merchant enterprises of his father, Thomas, Markland failed in his bid to be elected to the assembly for Kingston in 1820. Undoubtedly through Strachan's influence he was appointed to the legislative council in 1820, serving until 1838, and the executive council in 1822, resigning on 12 March 1836. Assiduously pursuing
major public office he did not succeed until 1833 when he was appointed inspector general serving until his resignation in 1838.

Jones was perhaps the most independent of the group politically. He was a member of one of the most prominent families in Leeds and Grenville. The family were the largest local landholders and Jones himself had extensive private holdings. A lawyer, he had a firm hold within the court structure of several districts. A prominent and effective assemblyman Jones was cast in the mould of an independent country gentleman. He sat in the seventh parliament (1817-20), eighth (1821-24), and ninth (1825-28) for Leeds, and in the thirteenth (1837-40) for Grenville. He was appointed a puisne judge in 1837 serving until his death in 1848. On 27 Feb. 1839 he was sworn into the legislative council (serving until 10 Feb. 1840), and acted as pro tem speaker during Robinson's absence.

The gentry then occupied a unique position to influence a provincial strategy for development prior to the Union. Indeed the strategy that did emerge, limited as it was to an agrarian society, imperial markets, canal-building, and a balance between protective tariffs and free trade with the United States — belonged to them. But these men were not primarily businessmen. Only Macaulay could properly be called a merchant and he longed to cut his mercantile ties. Why such men should promote the massive canal projects for example cannot be satisfactorily explained by Creighton's analysis. Nor does Toryism, defensive expansionism, or nationalism shed much light on why canals were built by these men with such enthusiasm, with so little regard
for profit, and such unrealistic projections of immediate returns on investments.

Between 1819 and 1821 the fundamentally agrarian society of Upper Canada was reeling under the effects of depression. For the first time the province was forced to examine its economic base and consider long-term measures calculated to alleviate the distress and put the economy on a sure and prosperous footing. The first concerted attempt to focus public attention on the need for economic development was carried out in the editorial columns and letters to the editor of Macaulay's Kingston Chronicle. In 1821 a committee of the assembly tabled their findings on the internal resources of the province. Their recommendations were turned over to a commission of which Macaulay was the dominant member. By 1825 a joint committee of the assembly and council co-chaired by Robinson and Strachan urged implementation of the commission's recommendations. Thus within the span of six years the type and scope of development was set and the economic priorities of the province established. The men most responsible for these developments were the gentry, especially Robinson, Macaulay, and Strachan.

The War of 1812 had no direct effect in spurring economic development. But by 1816 Robinson was thinking about it within the widest framework and most general of terms. The canal-building initiatives undertaken in New York State in the late 1810s occasioned the first real response by the gentry to the need for an economic strategy. The almost simultaneous grievances about improvement which marked the 1818
agitation of Robert Gourlay underlined the need of government to consider how best to ensure a prosperous and hence contented society. In answer to these grievances Macaulay brought together the British constitution and the potent myth of the Upper Canadian Eden. No notion had more powerful consequences for the over-estimation of provincial resources, enthusiasm for rapid development, and willingness to absorb an enormous provincial debt on slender financial resources.

The catalyst for economic development in its Upper Canadian guise—canal-building—was the depression of 1819 to 1821. When the assembly considered provincial resources the agrarian framework for subsequent strategy began to emerge. The emphasis was on agricultural staples and canals carrying the products of the soil to imperial markets. Timber was neglected and the possibility of manufacturing all but dismissed. Upper Canada was to be a society based on primary agricultural production. Development, in the limited sense which emerged from the depression, meant canals and markets. Canals would lower transportation costs and open the rich western part of the province to markets. The fervent faith of the gentry in the success of canals resulted from their belief in a rich national bounty, providentially bestowed. Sure of reaping an immediate return the gentry began the process of debenture financing which by 1838 had brought the province to near bankruptcy. Their belief in national bounty consistently led them to miscalculate costs, completion times, and probable returns.
The gentry's rather limited notion of the development necessary to ensure a prosperous, agrarian society was buttressed by political beliefs dependent upon the hierarchical ordering of a landed society. Within the framework of this society virtue, independence, and indeed, moral character were rooted in the possession of land. Commerce was limited to a necessary role as the adjunct of agricultural productions. The gentry believed that they as gentlemen were the proper rulers in society rather than merchants, businessmen, or farmers. This belief led them to reject the yeoman visions of William Lyon Mackenzie or the commercial society of the Montreal merchants. There may be many reasons for the present structure of the Canadian economy. What is to be learned from a study of pre-Union economic development is that its essential direction was fixed by the agrarian assumptions, the Edenic myth, and the political beliefs of the Upper Canadian gentry.
FOOTNOTES


2. Ibid.

3. Ibid., 217.


9. Ibid., 11-12.


15. John and Robert Cartwright Papers, 1828-1881 (privately held, microfilm at PAO), Strachan to John Solomon Cartwright, Toronto, 10 Jan. 1842.
CHAPTER I

1812, POLITICAL SURVIVAL, AND DEVELOPMENT

... the first defence of Upper Canada is to be sought for in it's [sic] own internal increase in opulence, and population, and that every thing which aids the growth and prosperity of this infant Colony, is, in its peculiar Situation, of most important consequence to its security, since it may happen that for a time at least, its means of protection may be almost entirely confined to its own internal resources.

John Beverley Robinson

The theme of survival seems to be an idea whose time has come for the understanding of the Canadian experience. A group as diverse as Northrop Frye, H. G. J. Aitken, Margaret Atwood, and S. F. Wise have used variants of the theme to explain different aspects of the Canadian experience. Wise, in particular, has argued the aptness of the theme to explain certain features of the political culture of nineteenth-century British North America, especially that of Upper Canada. Borrowing from the perceptions of Alexis de Tocqueville and elaborated by the historian R. R. Palmer, Wise has applied to Upper Canada the conflict between aristocratic and democratic models of society which was so apparent from the mid-eighteenth to the early twentieth centuries in European society.

In the Upper Canadian experience this conflict was rooted in the loyalist opposition to the American revolution, intensified during Great Britain's protracted struggle with first revolutionary, then Napoleonic France, and culminated in the War of 1812. War within their own boundaries gave the gentry cause to ponder their response to the exigencies of an obviously perilous situation. Their frontier
was long and exposed, military forces were inadequate, interior lines of communication were poor, foodstuffs, especially grain, were scarce, and many of the population were disaffected. The tenor of their response was given an added dimension by what seemed the miracle of survival against overwhelming odds. The war proved the reality of the threat of a hostile, republican neighbour and forced certain of the gentry to consider what measures would be appropriate to ensure Upper Canadian survival.

The primary effect of the war was political. It heightened the gentry's awareness of possible democratic, egalitarian, or oppositionist strains in their own society and honed their sense of a life-and-death combat between two contending political views of society. But there is no reason to suppose that at the conclusion of the war any of the gentry drew up a concerted plan for initiatives in economic development as a means of either defusing internal political discontent, or strengthening the province to withstand another invasion. Yet the war occasioned a rather inchoate perception by Robinson that to some extent survival would depend upon the improvement of the province's internal resources.

In 1816 reports that the imperial government was considering removing the capital of Upper Canada from York to Kingston spurred Strachan and Robinson to write lengthy memorandums denouncing the measure. Strachan drew a picture of a hostile United States eager to seize the verdant lands west of Kingston. His concern was to preclude a change of the capital by focussing attention on York's military
and economic advantages over Kingston. But the more interesting analysis was the work of the young solicitor general, then reading law at Lincoln's Inn in London.

With characteristic lucidity Robinson asserted an inexorable connection between political survival and economic development. Although his language is redolent with an image of exposure and vulnerability, it is not paranoid or hysterical. What Aitken called "defensive expansionism" and Wise called "survival drive" is evidenced in Robinson's analysis of Upper Canada's wartime experience. He interpreted the war as a struggle between monarchy and democracy. If revolution was to be held at bay the province would have to be sufficiently strong to withstand temporarily the obvious military hostility of the democratic United States. This strength was to be found in the development and improvement of internal resources.

The war had exposed Upper Canada's tenuous grasp on survival. York had been occupied twice; the Niagara frontier had been plundered; the territory west of York had been open to American armies and bands of marauders throughout 1813; and disaffection, neutrality, and desertions from the militia had been pervasive. Internal transportation was at best difficult. A shortage of specie or a circulating medium of exchange hindered commercial intercourse. Grain was scarce and the government was forced to resort to martial law in some areas and the prohibition of using grain for distilling as desperate attempts to secure sufficient supplies for their troops. In short the problems of the war were only in a narrow sense military and in this context
Robinson made the connection between survival and economic development:

Upper Canada happily preserved from Subjection in the late War, by the powerful Assistance generously afforded her by the Mother Country, and indeed miraculously saved in the beginning of that War before such Assistance could reach her, has unhappily for it's [sic] inhabitants, to look forward to a constant struggle for independence against a powerful, and unprincipled neighbour, who will obviously seize upon the moment when Great Britain may be most embarrassed, and most occupied in other quarters (no matter in how good a cause she may be engaged) to attempt to rob her of her Colonies— I humbly submit to Your Lordship [Earl of Bathurst] that in these circumstances the first defence of Upper Canada is to be sought for in it's [sic] own internal increase in opulence, and population, and that every thing which aids the growth of prosperity of this infant Colony is, in its peculiar Situation, of most important consequence to its security of protection may be almost entirely confined to its own internal resources.

I fear it must be confessed, however reluctant a Canadian may be to believe it, that in the present state of Canada, while from its thin population, the defence of a frontier of six hundred miles against a powerful, and treacherous enemy depends almost wholly upon that effectual and prompt assistance from our Mother Country, which her situation at the present moment, seized upon by the Enemy may not enable her to give, it is idle to talk of absolute Security any where in the province. It must continue to be so, until years of prosperity may give to Canada a population whose united efforts can suffice to withstand the first shock of invasion, and maintain the contest till assistance can arrive. . . . that the first consideration should be, where it [the capital] shall be placed, so as to be the most effectual for all its purposes, and so as most to encourage, and facilitate the general improvement, and, growth of the Province.

This fear for survival sustained Robinson's initial attempt to unite an unspecified programme of economic development with political survival. The War of 1812 had coalesced concerns decades old. Since the American revolution the governing elite in British North America had been anxious about the spread of revolution. The French revolution, the rise of Napoleon, and minor revolts, from Ireland in
1798 to Poland and even the Caribbean, generated recurrent alarms of Jacobin conspiracies.\(^3\) Between 1801 and 1808 the governors of Upper and Lower Canada were particularly fearful of possible combinations of Jacobins, democrats, and United Irishmen in the border states conspiring to foment revolution in the Canadas.\(^4\)

The decade prior to the war witnessed the rise of loose groupings of political opposition in almost every British North American colony: James Glenie in New Brunswick, James Bardin Palmer in Prince Edward Island, William Cotnam Tonge in Nova Scotia, Pierre Bédard and the Parti Canadien in Lower Canada, and Robert Thorpe in Upper Canada. The Chesapeake crisis of 1807-1808 renewed fears of war with the United States. In 1808 John Strachan, fretful over the rumors of war, damned the United States for their rashness:

They were quarrelling with the only free government on earth altho' they must be sure that were England to fall, they must become a province of France- What a monstrous Coalition will democracy and despotism make- After this the most opposite things may be reconciled. ...

The experience of opposition in Upper Canada combined with the possibility of war occasioned Strachan to pen, A discourse on the character of King George III. ... Written in 1810 the pamphlet was an attempt as Robinson put it, "to make the disaffected among us loyal and contented."\(^5\) Although Strachan's effort was met "with little regard", it was a notable attempt to defend the constitution from "the wicked spirit of party."\(^7\) The body of the text consisted of adulatory pap about the character of the king and the royal family, whereas the footnotes contained incisive comments about political
institutions and recent history. Strachan's intended readership is uncertain but it is possible he aimed at the doubtful sympathies of a significant segment of the loyalists. Many loyalist assemblymen such as Thomas Dorland, David McGregor Rogers, Ralph Clench, Peter Howard, and Ebenezer Washburn had figured at various times among the Thorpe opposition to Lieutenant Governor Francis Gore.\(^8\)

In the columns of Joseph Willcocks', Upper Canadian Guardian, such prominent loyalist families as the Secords of Niagara had disputed the administrative view of loyalism which robbed it of its oppositionist content.\(^9\)

Strachan took as his task to delineate clearly the true meaning of liberty within the constitution, a constitution which secured both liberty and property to all British subjects. In an era of "innovation", "men have mistaken licentiousness for liberty" and in the confusion believed that liberty was secured by the absence rather than the presence of the restraints of law, tradition, custom, religious education, and duties.\(^10\) In the revolutionary age Britain alone had hallowed these liberties in its constitution approved by the ages.\(^11\) Strachan concluded that; guarded by a magnanimous king in the due exercise of his monarchical prerogative, the British nation was the freest on earth, sure in its property and rights.\(^12\)

In Upper Canada the loyalist experience, the proximity to the United States, and fears of revolutionary activity did not allow the gentry the equanimity which enabled Edmund Burke to distinguish
between the American and French revolutions. In British North America the distinctions faded before the alliance between the United States and the despotism of Napoleonic France to forge both revolutions into one historical moment eliciting a similar response:

The revolution in France has been the scourge of the world since its commencement. This dreadful convulsion was accelerated, if not entirely produced, by the rebellion in America. 13

This tendency to interpret the struggle in North America as a clash between contending ideologies indelibly marked the gentry's mind with a passionate concern for political order and an abiding suspicion of political opposition or discontent. In a patriotic exhortation to the militia forces of the Home District, Robinson linked the American republic to French despotism:

The disciplined legions of France with the tyrant at their head those boasted armies who have triumphed over liberty in almost every Nation [King crossed out] in Europe have been defeated, taken and destroyed by the valor, and patriotism of the Russians- and shall the American States the feeble abettors of expiring despotism be suffered to indemnify themselves in an iniquitous war by ravaging this valuable country from the protection of a Nation who is fighting the battles of the world. 14

The rallying standard for the gentry was the defence of the constitution which secured their liberty and their property. In language common to counter-revolutionary thought Strachan evoked prescription as the sure standard of the soundness of the constitution:

It is not, therefore, the work of a day; it rests upon old and tried foundations, the more durable, because visionary empiricks [sic] have not been allowed to touch them. No fine spun theories of metaphysicians, which promise much and end in misery, have shared in its formation; such men may destroy, but they can never build. All the privileges which Englishmen possess are ours. 15
In 1810 Strachan warned Upper Canadians against attractions which ultimately lead to "anarchy . . . despotism and oppression." During the war he believed that the sole American motive for war was the subjugation of Upper Canada. The gentry never faltered in this belief which became a mainstay of many of their political actions. A quarter of a century after the war Robinson reiterated his faith that the Americans had engaged in war "mainly for the purpose of subjugating the Canadas. . . ." The experience of invasion marked Upper Canada apart from her sister colonies in British North America. Lower Canada saw some fighting within its boundaries but in New Brunswick for instance it was possible for merchants to carry on normal commercial relations with the Americans while Upper Canada was barely holding out against the enemy. The experience of war brought home the vulnerability of a long and thinly settled boundary. Recognition of this fact occasioned the Duke of Wellington in 1825 to order James Carmichael-Smyth to prepare the only major analysis of British North American defence which considered the territory west of Kingston defensible. Early in 1812 Governor George Prevost had notified the Earl of Liverpool that Upper Canada was most liable to American attack. Even Isaac Brock flushed by his victory at Detroit and confident of his ability to "sweep everything before me between fort Niagara and Buffalo" realized that "my success would be transient—" Were the Americans gored on their own territory, "A Spirit—would probably arise . . . that would soon compel me to relinquish even the hope of being able to keep possession of this province." The consequent
defensive posture struck by the British military during the war later received the sound approbation of Carmichael-Smyth. But military prudence received short shrift from the gentry and their anxiety wore a cloak of bellicosity. No wonder Strachan was so harsh on Prevost when he was convinced that Upper Canadians were facing "the most formidable conspiracy against the civilization of man that was ever contrived." Throughout the war Strachan had advocated pre-emptive strikes. And as late as 1846 Robinson regarded Prevost's military conduct as "utterly incapable of being defended." Robinson believed that the events of the war had proved "that safety was not to be purchased by forbearance." The war also brought a concern for political survival on a level other than the military presence of the United States – the breakdown of internal order and widespread disaffection. Perhaps the latter affected the gentry most of all. Strachan's 1810 discourse was calculated to sway or bolster the minds of that segment of the population whose allegiance was dubious. Michael Smith estimated that 60 per cent of the population was non-loyalist American motivated to settle in Upper Canada only "to obtain land upon easy terms." This fact had led many Americans to the tactical belief that if an army was "sent into the province with a proclamation of independence, the great mass of people would join the American government." This attitude was perhaps best expressed in the Federalist satire, The war of the gulls:
Plant but a standard in Canada and the subjects of oppression will rush by thousands to receive the oath of allegiance, and to become incorporated with the great nation of the Celts.  

On 12 July 1812 the first overt act of hostility by General William Hull's Western Army was a proclamation appealing to the American population of Upper Canada. Convinced of the despotic nature of Upper Canadian institutions, Hull appealed directly to people who had shared in the revolutionary struggle and desired the freedom and independence enjoyed by the Americans. Brock's administration was quick to respond to this potentially disruptive document. Evidently they feared that such language would strike a responsive chord. Brock responded with a proclamation written by William Dummer Powell. But Brock and the military administrators who succeeded him had little use for wars fought with words. By mid July 1812 Brock perceived that the allegiance of the civilian population was in doubt. In short in the early months of the war a crisis was precipitated as Brock put it, "not from any thing the enemy can do, but from the disposition of the people."

Brock sought practical means of ensuring order and encouraging loyalty. Despairing of reliance upon the dubious allegiance of the majority of the populace, he recalled the various means adopted by Britain in times such as the period 1792 to 1795 when "the ordinary course of Criminal Law has been found inadequate to secure ... Government from private Treachery as well as from open disaffection. ..." To defend against the threat of disaffection Brock proposed: martial
law, the suspension of habeas corpus, an oath of abjuration, and increased militia expenditures. Publicly he invoked king and constitution to get the assembly to enact his measures, but privately doubted both their abilities and political beliefs. He was adamant that, "unless strong coercive measures be adopted to restrain the infamous proceedings of the disaffected the province will be lost without a struggle." In 1812 Brock was unable to overcome a recalcitrant assembly but gradually over the course of the war his proposals were adopted to stem the apparent breakdown of order west of York. Events bore out his early fears regarding the allegiance of the population. His analysis was confirmed by the effects of Hull's proclamation. On 13 July 1812 Hull reported that, "all inhabitants who have seen it appear satisfied." Two days later its effect seemed more dramatic: "the Canadian militia are deserting from Malden in large parties; about sixty came in yesterday." The militia abandoned their posts; armed American sympathisers rode from town to town reading the proclamation with disturbing results - some towns sent petitions to Hull seeking his protection. When ordered to march the Norfolk militia refused. Events were sufficiently unsettling to lead Prevost to report on them to Liverpool.

With the appearance of an American army the veneer of order was shattered. The absence of a British military force ensured the
quiescence of the loyal and emboldened the activities of marauding bands of the disloyal. In spite of the increasingly audacious behaviour of the disaffected, an oath of abjuration did not pass the assembly until 1814. Brock's extraordinary conclusion was that military struggle was futile, "unless more powerful restraint could be imposed on the Militia than the actual Law admits & that he had power to restrain the general population from treasonable adherence with the Enemy a neutrality by summary proceeding & punishment." Even after the victory at Detroit Brock feared his military objects might not succeed because of "the number of Americans in our ranks." Moreover Detroit had not stemmed desertion from the militia ranks. His failure to gain passage of pre-emptive civil legislation seemed to exacerbate a dire situation and a discouraged Brock wrote that the assembly and the populace "considers the fate of the country as already decided."

Early on in the war Strachan seized upon the importance of military victories to confirm the disaffected and to add spirit to the loyal. He feared that recent settlers from the United States were not "acquainted with the obligations which they contract when they come to live under this government." The American writer Michael Smith noted after the war the effect of the Detroit victory in overawing disaffection. He also observed as did an anonymous correspondent of Colonel Solomon Van Rensselaer, the importance of the implied threat to property in subduing the disaffected. But 1812 proved the beginning not the end of the civil problem. As the
war continued, desertion from the militia, disaffection, and treason increased. By 1813 and 1814 it was necessary to declare martial law to obtain forage for the troops and even this measure was resisted by the assembly.

The military administrators had little patience with the normal procedures of civil justice during wartime. This is not unusual but disorder had a profound effect upon many prominent civilians. This experience taught the gentry to be wary not only of activities south of their borders but within their borders as well. The outbreak of disorder during the American occupations of York in 1813 was a watershed in the advocacy of stern measures from civil quarters. It portended not only the threat of political upheaval associated with democracy but also the spectre of social upheaval. The collapse of British military authority in the Home District revealed a seething, sub-political seam of discontent. Public declarations of sympathy for the enemy, incautiously uttered tavern oaths, denunciations of monarchy, crude egalitarian sentiments, and fraternization alarmed the respectable and the loyal.

Major-General, Baron Francis de Rottenburg ordered acting Attorney General Robinson to report on the activities of the disaffected, who were "dangerous to the public security, and evidently hostile to our Cause, that I may adopt such measures as the public good demands." Rottenburg's concern stemmed from the report of a committee of information suggested and picked by Robinson consisting of: Strachan, Peter
Robinson, William Allan, Duncan Cameron, Thomas Ridout, and Alexander Wood. John Beverley Robinson with access to the confidential information available to his department, acted as an *eminence grise*. Throughout the war Robinson often seemed to be the sole bulwark of due process, upholding habeas corpus and attending to the abuses of justice normal in a deteriorating military situation and under martial law. But he was willing to admit:

The Country must not be lost by a too scrupulous attention to forms, and where the civil administration of justice is found inadequate to our protection in times perilous, and unusual as the present, recourse must be had to measures more effective, and the necessity must, and will justify their adoption. Robinson never apparently considered the times so unusual as to abandon the normal procedures of the law.

In July 1813 Prevost, possibly on information supplied by Powell, empowered Rottenburg to convene general courts martial. By December Robinson had received the order for a special commission "for the trial of all Treasons committed in the District of London—" After the war he commented that, "the frequent cases of treason rendered it necessary to check by example the progress of rebellion. Others had learned different lessons from the events of 1813. After the York occupations Justice Powell wrote in support of a petition of York magistrates:

... it is obvious that measures of as much energy as our circumstances admit should be instantly adapted to preserve order and prevent anarchy; to support & encourage the loyal; to suppress the disloyal and to confirm the wavering."
Powell recommended to Prevost "the permanent Station of a body of Troops" making frequent excursions through the settlements to enforce a change in the manners and language of the populace.  

He feared the consequences of military defeat: "little reliance is to be had on the power of the well disposed to repress and keep down the Turbulence of the disaffected who are very numerous."  

William Allan argued that the crisis necessitated measures to be taken, "more expeditiously than anything that can be warranted by the common operations of the Law..."  

The young Robinson was recalcitrant and resisted bending justice to military exigencies: "The law must sometimes be superseded in cases of extreme emergency, but it never should be strained to answer any end however necessary or proper."  

This concern prompted the exasperation of Sir Gordon Drummond, who was more concerned with making examples than serving justice. But the situation was worsening on all fronts by late 1813. In October Strachan had steeled himself to the loss of "the Province... as far as Kingston if the enemy shew the smallest vigour & activity, nor do I think Kingston by any means safe."  

He had every reason to be disconsolate; he had not yet heard of the victory at Châteauguay; the victory at Crysler's Farm was almost two weeks off; York had been occupied for a second time and Commodore Robert Barclay had surrendered naval control of Lake Erie to Commodore Oliver Perry.  

In 1814 disaffection became manifest at every stratum of society. Most distressing was the lassitude of the assembly in enacting legislation calculated to stem disaffection. The desertion of two
members of the assembly, Joseph Willcocks and Abraham Marcle, along with a former member, Benajah Mallory, and their part as officers in the irregular Canadian Volunteers signified the malaise of Upper Canadian society. Only in 1814 did the assembly acquiesce to passing measures recommended by Brock in 1812. The desertion of the above mentioned, the increased ferocity of the war along the Niagara frontier and in Norfolk County, coupled with the gradual assertion of British military power eroded the traditional hostility of the assembly to the suspension of habeas corpus and martial law. Drummond was hopeful that the legislation would effectively "suppress, or keep in awe that spirit of sedition and disaffection." In the same speech he also noted the appropriation of a large sum of provincial revenue to improve roads, "which are at present in many places impassable for Troops, Artillery, or carriages of any kind. . . ." This statement catches the burden of post-war development - the combination of economic improvement and military security.

The war and the well-known problems with the population were not sufficient to spur the sorts of development associated with the 1820's: banking, currency, roads, bridges, and canals. But the war gave an edge to the gentry's priorities in education, settlement, land policy, trade and development. At that only Robinson seems to have understood the connection between a prosperous community and civil order, and the development of internal resources and a limited military security. The touchstones of the gentry's mind were politics and religion and these were emphasized in varying degrees.
Strachan's first interests were the church and education; Robinson's the constitution of 1791 and law; Macaulay's development and politics; Hagerman's politics and law; and Jones's the constitution and law. But at the back of their minds, sometimes dormant, depending upon circumstances, was the memory of invasion and disaffection. This gave a razor's edge to Upper Canadian politics missing in the other colonies with the exception of Lower Canada and possibly Newfoundland.

Between the war and the rebellion various events occasioned the gentry to voice the concern for survival which was rooted in the War of 1812, and in the memory of the loyalist exodus. In his speech on the alien bill to the ninth parliament in 1825, Robinson outlined the dilemma of the opening days of 1812:

... The country which many of them [Americans] had very recently left, was now in open hostility against us, and General Brock, the governor at that day, having his attention necessarily called by that event to the political condition of the various descriptions of Americans in the province, seemed to have been impressed with the perfect conviction, that there were many among them who could only be conceived to owe, like other foreigners, a temporary allegiance to our government, so long as they resided in it, and whom it would therefore be unjust to compel to serve against their countrymen, who were now become our enemies; he issued a proclamation allowing all who choose to withdraw from the province into the United States, and a number availed themselves of this permission.\footnote{74}

Prior to the war Lieutenant Governor Francis Gore had tried to make loyalism conform to support of the government and failed.\footnote{75} In 1825 Robinson gave loyalism a context which it had lacked prior to the war. The gentry resisted American emigration into the province because it would introduce a political element sympathetic to democracy.
Christopher Hagerman expressed the point neatly. Prefacing his remarks as "the son of a Loyalist — as a native of the Country — as one deeply interested in the honor and happiness of the land of my birth —", Hagerman wondered if these former enemies in war will "be suffered to remain subjects of a country whose morals and political principles are most congenial to their own..." Above all else he declared:

... investing them with the same political character possessed by the sons of men who shed their blood in opposing these very principles and doctrines they are now anxious of endeavouring to disseminate... 76

In 1838 at the trial of the rebels Robinson recalled in his charge the treason trials of the War of 1812:

The motives to this treasonable conduct were probably various. Some were influenced, perhaps, themselves by favoring an enemy who they imagined must succeed in making himself master of this Colony; others, no doubt, were led to betray their country, and to forfeit their allegiance, from entertaining political opinions which, if they had been the citizens of a republic, might not have been out of character, but which led them to violate the strongest obligations of duty, both civil and religious, when they prompted them to join the enemies of their Sovereign, and to turn their arms against the Government which had protected them. 77

The struggle for survival whether in 1812 or later in 1838 was first and foremost a political struggle: how best to secure a monarchical society from the external and internal threats of democracy. The external threat from the United States tied Upper Canada to Great Britain. This link provided the framework for the gentry's notions of military defence, economic ties, and constitutional support. The lack of Upper Canadian strength and the viability of monarchy in
North America necessitated the attachment to Great Britain. Several weeks after the rebellion with rumblings in American border cities beginning Robinson wrote William Hamilton Merritt that unless Great Britain showed "plainly that they mean to keep the Country... we shall have no peace or security in Upper Canada...". The combined effect of the rebellion, the border troubles, and the proposals for union and responsible government strained the gentry's capacity for prolonged struggle. Age and toil had taken its toll and the buoyant confidence with which Robinson had greeted the post-war struggles had evaporated. Equanimity replaced determination. As early as 1828 Robinson had cast a wistful glance at the repose and tranquillity of public life but two years earlier. From the vantage of the 1830s foresight had become painful. In 1838, just ten years later than Robinson's exercise in nostalgia, Macaulay looked out on a world cast off from its natural moorings, a colony besieged internally, threatened politically by the solutions of British statesmen, and exposed on its frontiers to marauding vagabonds and a bellicose United States:

... Nothing can surely be more uncertain than our future political destiny - One fact is perfectly plain - We can never return to our former state of security & repose for we not only know that we nourish desperate traitors in our own bosom but have to guard against the insidious schemes, & unprincipled violence of foreign enemies - But from these dangers for some time to come we shall be protected by the Aegis of England - which seems now alive to our danger & the designs of her subtlest enemy - But granting that we are protected from the dangers of War, what will be the civil changes we are to undergo?...

... The Americans have betrayed their secret desires during the winter - we can never again place confidence in them - They are as Ambitious & grasping as ever were the Romans, or any other republicans[...]
A generation after the war the wheel of events had come full circle and once again survival was the pre-eminent concern. John Solomon Cartwright feared, "... we are destined to experience some of those trials which drove our fathers from their former homes to seek shelter in this Province under the Expectation that this should be a resting place for their Children's Children."  

Almost a quarter-century of struggle had been for naught. In the topsy-turvy world of the late 1830s nothing seemed beyond the whimsy of outrageous political fortune. The pillage which the gentry associated with the rebellion and the border raids betrayed a disquieting intent abroad in the world to sack existing institutions. Robinson in 1837 felt the efforts of the past 20 or 30 years had been "in vain." Strachan's musings on "the care and anxiety, sorrow and disappointment" of this period were apocalyptic, "... we have arrived at the perilous times of the last days which precede and usher in the second advent." He saw "the very foundations of social order shaking, and society itself tottering to its fall[.]

In his rebellion sermon he interpreted recent events as the singular judgement of a wrathful God upon an erring and sinful people.  

The anxiety of the 1830s gave way to a gentlemanly resignation to a bleak future. The wrenching of familiar institutions occasioned more than the expected bereavement felt by woeful members of a passing political order. They fought the good fight as honour demanded and never accommodated themselves to the political cline of the 1840s. The gentry concern for survival was a political commitment to a specific political order. As such its deepest imprint was upon specifically
political issues, such as the alien bill. The connection with economic
development represented a spillover from its main effect.

The lesson of 1812 was twofold: the military threat of the
United States, and the internal threat of a dubious population. In both
cases Upper Canadian survival seemed miraculous. The relationship
between survival and economic development was not immediately apparent.
When in 1816 Robinson made the connection for the first time the
reference was a vague one to increasing general opulence and prosperity
as a first defence. But he did not state what sort of development he
envisaged. Probably he had not thought much about it. With the
exception of Macaulay who had commercial connections most of the
gentry's ideas about development emanate from 1819 to 1821 when the
province was coming to grips with the effect of depression. The
pattern for development until the Union of 1840 was set in the early
1820s, for the most part, by the gentry. The concern with survival
like their belief in bounty helped spur the enthusiasm with which they
embraced the schemes of the 1820s.

The military aspect of survival became an often used criterion
for judging the worth of a public work. It was a dimension which
buttressed arguments rather than providing the foundation. In 1821
Strachan preferred a canal route from Kingston to Ottawa over a
St. Lawrence canal because the latter could too easily be disrupted
in a war with the United States. The first report of the commission
appointed to report on the internal navigation of the province considered
three of four prospective navigational improvement plans for the
eastern area of the province, susceptible to the objection that the
commerce of the proposed routes would be dangerously exposed to
obstruction, or destruction by their proximity to the border. Because
"the objects of commerce" were not the sole considerations the routes
were rejected in favour of the fourth route which combined the
advantages of the others without the fatal military flaw. The
prerequisite of any proposed route was that it be "not only . . . eminently
useful for our trade in time of peace, but it would form a secure channel
of intercourse for military purposes in time of war." The House of
Assembly concurred with the commissioners' report that the Rideau
canal was critical to success in a future war. The military importance
of this proposed canal was undisputed. The commission applied the
same reasoning "but in a less degree" to the canals proposed to connect
Lakes Erie and Ontario. The flaw of the latter canal project was its
dependence on the British retaining control of Lake Ontario rendering
the "benefit of such a work partial and uncertain."  

As it happened the assembly was unwilling to provide financial
support for the proposed Rideau canal but willingly accepted the
role foisted on them by John Beverley Robinson of backing the
Welland Canal. Lieutenant Governor Maitland hesitated giving his
backing to the Welland Canal because of its military vulnerability.
The priorities for canals set by the Macaulay Commission and adopted
by the Joint Comité de Internal Navigation (1825), co-chaired by
John Strachan and Robinson was to secure with British aid an internal
communication connecting the interior without the fatal weakness of
being militarily suspect, Secondly, to connect Lakes Erie and
Ontario, and finally, to link the Great Lakes to the ocean by canals
along the St. Lawrence. But this view did not predominate. The British built the Rideau without Upper Canadian aid while the province concentrated on the Welland Canal. In spite of this the military justification of building the Welland was a favourite refrain of its backers.

Whenever the exigencies of construction demanded yet another infusion of money, the ebullient William Hamilton Merritt never failed to make the telling point, that the canal opened interior communications away from the border, which strengthened the military defences of the province and provided needed facilities and protection for the navy. Directors such as John Henry Dunn, the receiver general of the province, noticed that, in certain of its aspects, the plans of the Welland Canal Company complemented the report of Major-General Sir James Carmichael-Smyth on the defence of the Canadas. In fact this report recommended the construction of what would have been the largest fortification in British North America on Wellington Heights in the Niagara Short Hills overlooking the Twelve Mile Creek and adjacent to the canal.

During the first session of the ninth parliament (1825), Robinson, chairman of the select committee appointed to report on the petition of the Welland Canal Company, stressed the symbiotic relationship between improvements in transportation and military defence:

The Committee cannot but consider the completion of such a work as an object of very great importance to this Province. It would give an inland communication, not easily to be interrupted by an enemy, which would so connect the great chain of waters, that vessels of the description best adapted to their navigation could pass
and repass from lakes Erie and Huron to Prescott on the river St. Lawrence. And if this object is attained, there can be little doubt, that within a few years the accomplishment of improvements upon the river St. Lawrence, which are even now contemplated, will enable vessels of the same kind to continue their voyage to Montreal and Quebec.

Commenting on the assembly debates on the petition, William Morris noted to Maitland's powerful secretary, Major George Hillier, that:

Should the Mother Country unfortunately ever be involved in War with the United States of America the line of Communication in question would prove the salvation of the Country, as the Navy of the lakes could be supplied with all kinds of stores without the risk of interruption during their transit, which undoubtedly will happen if no other water conveyance is in possession of this Government besides the St. Lawrence.

In 1838, after the scares of the rebellion and the border incidents, Macaulay informed Merritt that profit was incidental to security as the major criterion for completing the construction of the canal:

If the Province can afford to go on with this work with such little hope of advantage there from in a pecuniary point of view, I should be the last person in it, to say or do ought which could have the effect of deterring our financial rulers, because I believe that until we become a portion of the Republic . . . this line of water communication is essential to the defence of our Niagara Frontier.

Security whether internal or external was more likely to weigh more heavily in times of peril. In other times it ranked on par with commerce as an important consideration of development. In 1824 Maitland drew the close relationship between the two for Bathurst in a discussion of the merits of the proposed Burlington canal:
The war then had a two-fold effect in spurring the gentry to a strategy of economic development. The war proved that political survival necessitated internal and external vigilance. In both areas development had a role to play. Internally prosperity would bring contentment and diminish the tendency to rebel or level. In 1838 Robinson was incredulous that Lount and Matthews rebelled when their lot had been a plentiful one. Externally development, particularly of the river transportation network, would facilitate the movement of troops and supplies crucial to a successful defence of the province. Political beliefs made survival an important theme but survival did not shape the gentry's plans for development either immediately after the war, or give any specific content to them in the 1820s. Survival was one of several reasons why development was important. The experience of the war was one of several reasons why the gentry embraced development with such enthusiasm.
FOOTNOTES


3. J.-P. Wallot, Intrigues françaises et américaines au Canada 1800-1802 (Montreal, 1965) and Un Québec qui bougeait trame socio-politique au tournant du xix siècle (Montreal, 1973); John Strachan, A discourse on the character of King George III addressed to the inhabitants of North America (Montreal, 1810).

4. PAC, RG 7, G18, 15, Edward Thornton to Robert Milnes, Philadelphia, 29 Nov. 1801; MG 11, Q 311/1, Francis Gore to Castlereagh, York, 21 March 1808; PAC, RG B, C 673, pp. 90-96, Robert Milnes to Peter Hunter, Quebec, 20 July 1801.


7. Ibid., 15 Feb. 1811.


11. Ibid., 20-21.

12. Ibid., 22.

13. Ibid., 32.

14. PAO, Robinson Papers, Address to the militia of the Home District, n.d. [probably 1813].


16. Ibid., 41.


18. J. B. Robinson, Canada and the Canada Bill ([East Ardsley, Yorkshire and New York], 1967), 14.


21. RG 8, C.1707 (Freer Papers), Sir George Prevost to Lord Liverpool, 18 May 1812.

22. MG 11, Q 316, extracts of letters from Major-General Sir Isaac Brock in Canada, addressed to his Brothers in England, 3 Sept. 1812.

23. Ibid., 18 Sept. 1812.

24. Quoted in Hitsman, Safeguarding ... 93.

25. Strachan letterbook, 16, 18; 49.


27. Michael Smith, A geographical view of the province of Upper Canada (Hartford, 1813), 62, 86.


31. Ibid., 53-55.


33. Wood, I, 352-53; 386-87, Brock to Prevost, 28 July 1812; Cruikshank, IV, 158, Wm. Dummer Powell to Prevost, 28 June 1813; PAC, MG 24, A41 (Sir Gordon Drummond letterbook); 57-58, Drummond to Prevost, York, 19 Feb. 1814; RG 8/C 679/1, pp. 148-49, Powell to Prevost, York, 28 June 1813.

34. Documents relating to the invasion of Canada and the surrender of Detroit 1812. ed. E. A. Cruikshank. (Ottawa, 1912), 106-07, Brock to Baynes, 29 July 1812.

36. Ibid., 390-91, Speech of President Brock to the two houses of the provincial parliament of Upper Canada, July 1812.

37. Ibid., 387, Brock to Prevost, 28 July 1812.

38. Ibid., 390, Speech of President Brock.

39. Ibid., 409, Brock to Baynes, 4 Aug. 1812; 475-76, Prevost to Bathurst, 17 Aug. 1812.

40. Ibid., 408-09, Brock to Baynes, 4 Aug. 1812; 396, Brock to Baynes, 29 July 1812; 475-76, Brock to Liverpool, 29 Aug. 1812.

41. Documents . . . Detroit, 58, Hull to the secretary of war, Sandwich, 13 July 1812.

42. Ibid., 60, 15 July 1812.

43. Ibid., 61, Lt.-Col. St. George to Brock, Amherstburg, 15 July 1812; RG 8, C 676, 180-81, Elliott to Wm. Claus, Amherstburgh, 15 July 1812.

44. Ibid., 86, Daniel Springer to Brock, Delaware, 23 July 1812.

45. Ibid., 94, Thomas Talbot to Brock, Oxford, 27 July 1812.


47. Ibid., 401, Prevost to Liverpool, Quebec, 30 July 1812; RG 8, C 1219, p. 14, Prevost to Bathurst, Montreal, 17 Aug. 1812.

48. RG 8, C 1219, p. 1, Brock to Prevost, Detroit, 17 Aug. 1812.

49. Wood, I., 408, Brock to Baynes, York, 4 Aug. 1812.

50. RG 8, C 1219, p. 14, Prevost to Bathurst, Montreal, 17 Aug. 1812.


52. Ibid., 459-60, Orderbook of Lt.-Col. John Macdonell, Fort Amherstburg.

53. Ibid., 408, Brock to Baynes, 4 Aug. 1812.

54. Strachan's letterbook, 13.
55. Smith, Travels . . . quoted inHitsman, The incredible War of 1812: a military history ([Toronto], 1965), 80. An anonymous letter to the American Major-General Stephen Van Rensselaer attributed both the reaction to Hull's proclamation and the subsequent reaction to Brock's as a concern with the security of property. The anonymous author concluded that after Detroit, "a determination now prevails among the people to defend their country." Cruikshank, I, 268-69, 16 Sept. 1812. Both accounts were exaggerated. Time, at the very least, proved the effect a temporary one.

56. The returns of deserters and forfeited estates in the Upper Canada Sundries (PAC, RG 5, Al, 16), the correspondence of the various military administrators, the Robinson Papers in the PAO, and the Joel Stone Papers in the PAC (MG 23, H II, 1 [McDonald-Stone Family Papers]) give an impression of the magnitude of the problem of disaffection. This crucial aspect of the war awaits study. See also E. G. Firth, The town of York 1793-1815 (Toronto, 1962), 314-15.

57. Cruikshank, V, 124, Proclamation, Sandwich, 13 Sept. 1813.


60. Ibid.

61. Ibid.


64. Ibid., The memorial of John Beverley Robinson, solicitor general of the province of Upper Canada, 14 March 1815.

65. Cruikshank, V, 94-95, Proceedings of the magistrates &c, of York during the possession of that place by the enemy, enclosure in letter of W. D. Powell, 4 June 1813.

66. RG 8, C 679/1, 148-49, Powell to Prevost, York, 28 June 1813.

67. Ibid.

RG 8, C 688C, William Allan to Rottenburg, York, 14 Aug. 1813.
69. RG 5, Al, 6704-09, Robinson to Foster, 26 Jan. 1814.

70. Strachan letterbook, 49-50.

71. PAO, Strachan Papers, Strachan to Brown, 30 Oct. 1813.

72. PAO Report (1912), III, 163-64.

73. Cruikshank, VII, 260, Drummond to Bathurst, 20 March 1814.

74. [J. B. Robinson], The house having resolved itself into a committee upon the bill sent down from the legislative council, for conferring civil rights on certain inhabitants of this province, Mr. Walker in the chair, the attorney general spoke in substance as follows: 5 Dec. 1825; 14.

75. MG 11, Q 311/1, Gore to Castlereagh, York, 21 March 1808; Gore to Edward Cooke, York, 28 March 1808; 314/2, "Old Woman" to the editor, Upper Canada Guardian, 19 Dec. 1809; 313/2, Upper Canada Guardian, 24 Aug. 1807.

76. RG 5, Al, 4326874, Christopher Hagerman to George Hillier, Kingston, 27 Nov. 1826.

77. [J. B. Robinson], Charge of the Honorable John B. Robinson, Chief Justice of Upper Canada, to the grand jury, at Toronto, (Thursday, 8th 1838), on opening the court appointed by special commission to try prisoners in custody on charges of treason (Toronto, 1838), 4-5.

78. Robinson, Canada and the Canada Bill, 18, 19, 22-23.


82. Macaulay Papers, Macaulay to Ann Macaulay, Toronto, 19 March 1838.

83. Ibid., 13 March 1839.

84. Ibid., J. S. Cartwright to Macaulay, 7 Jan. 1843.

85. Ibid., Macaulay to Ann Macaulay, Toronto, 20 Nov. 1838.

87. Strachan Papers, Ms sermon on the text: "And that knowing the time that now it is high time to awake out of sleep: for now is our Salvation nearer than when we believed The night is far spent the day is at hand let us therefore cast off the works of darkness and let us put on the armour of light."

88. Ibid., Ms sermon on the text: "And thy judgments are as the light that goeth forth." Hosea 6: 5, "A Fast day by public proclamation on account of the rebellion & attacks from the U States."


Maitland supported this line of reasoning because it was vital to "the general advancement of the Province and with a view to its future strength and defence," that it was unnecessary to detail the reasons. PRO, CO 42/368, Maitland to Bathurst, York, 22 Jan. 1822. In an 1824 memorandum to the colonial office on the use of convict labour, Strachan moderated his original line of thought. Now the Welland Canal gripped the imagination of the gentry. The Kingston-Richmond canal would only be useful to the district through which it passed, and in time of war, whereas, the Welland would be useful immediately to the prosperity of the entire colony. CO 42/374, 400-01, John Strachan msdm. on a pamphlet entitled Suggestions on the propriety of introducing British convict labour into British North America, 1824.

91. Reports of the Commissioners of Internal Navigation, appointed by His Excellency Sir Peregrine Maitland, K.C.B. &c. &c. &c. in pursuance of an act of the provincial parliament of Upper Canada. Passed in the second year of His Majesty's reign, entitled, "An act to make provision for the improvement of the internal navigation of this province." (Kingston, 1826), iii.

92. Ibid., 82. See also JHA, 46, 24 Dec. 1825; 60, 4 Jan. 1826; 64, 10 Jan. 1826; 69, 11 Jan. 1826.

93. Ibid., iv.

95. CO 42/375, 309-10; Maitland to Bathurst, Queenston, 8 Nov. 1824.

96. PAC, RG 43, B4 (e), 305, pp. 17-18, Merritt to Goulborn, 8 July 1828; RG 43, B(4) C, 298, Merritt to Dalhousie, Quebec, 8 March 1824.


98. JHA, 40-41, 16 Feb. 1825.


100. PAO, Merritt Papers, package 13, John Macaulay to Jonas Jones, 5 March 1838.

101. CO 42/373, Maitland to Bathurst, York, 9 Oct. 1824.

102. See chapters V and VI.
CHAPTER II

PROVIDENCE, BOUNTY, AND DEVELOPMENT

Are we not at this moment the most happy people on the face of the globe, possessing a fertile country, "which smiles like Eden in her summer dress," and a free Constitution of Government?

John Macaulay

In 1968, in a pioneering study, S. F. Wise described "the providential sense of mission" by which the orthodox clergy attempted to provide British North America with a unifying myth, powerful enough to forge a common bond between the disparate groups which comprised colonial societies. Wise's essay discerned "some unfamiliar variations" on the group myths of providential theology most often associated with French Canada, New England puritanism, or the puritanism of seventeenth century England. The 'unfamiliar variation' was the applicability of providential theology to 'English Canada' in the early nineteenth century. Historians have most often used the term providence in the sense of mission imparted to a particular people. The definition is somewhat narrow representing but one aspect of providential belief. The belief in providence was a particular interpretation of the relationship between God and man in which all human events, all changes within creation were attributable to a God actively intervening in the world in accordance with divine purpose. Providence
in the sense of mission was God's will manifest on earth in a chosen people.

Wise's work is a departure because it delineates the more "unfamiliar variation" connecting providentialism to the gentry notion of the bounty of Upper Canada, and the effect of this belief on their practical plans for reaping the bounty. Of necessity, because of the lack of specialized secondary literature, conclusions are both exploratory and tentative. More substantive conclusions await detailed study of the religious beliefs of the early nineteenth century, particularly that found in the vast sermon and pamphlet literature of both the clergy and the laity.

To bring together providential belief and the Welland canal project, for example, is a difficult and somewhat elusive task. But it is crucial to understanding the fervent faith and hopes which the gentry brought to their view of the nature of the Upper Canadian economy. In a recent review Hugh Aitken has called for modification of the "simpler versions" of defensive expansionism as a suitable explanation for "the belief in economic progress" prior to 1840. Self-interest was a natural motive for merchants and businessmen to embrace economic progress for its own sake but had no significant bearing upon the gentry's motivation. When in the years between 1819 and 1821 depression and restricted markets forced Upper Canadians to make fundamental decisions about the resource base of the economy and the options available to develop, no notion was more important than the belief that Providence had bestowed upon them an Eden-like
land of benign climate and rich soil. This option dovetailed with their political language which predisposed them to the virtues of an agrarian society, limited their concern for non-agricultural aspects of the economy such as timber, and spurred their enthusiasm and hopes for potential prosperity.

It may seem tangential to devote so much space to the explication of the providential beliefs of the gentry but this assumption was so basic to their mind that it is impossible to render an account of providential bounty without first describing its source. To do so is to outline an early nineteenth century variant of an old aspect of Judaeo-Christian belief. The gentry ascribed causation for all events in the temporal sphere to the purposive hand of God actively working out human life in accordance with heaven's design. As a churchman Strachan's writings are an especially rich source for the study of providentialism. The assumption was so basic that even the speeches, letters, books, and pamphlets of the laity abound in references to providential design.

In a religious sense, the bonds of the small group of this study were remarkably cohesive. All belonged to the Church of England, of which Strachan was the leading churchman in Upper Canada and with the exception of Hagerman each had been educated by Strachan at the Cornwall Grammar School. The emphasis on cohesiveness in no way detracts from their real differences in religious matters. Macaulay, for instance, was more willing to accommodate himself to a more limited
version of a state church than the others and Robinson in the 1840s was castigated for his willingness to donate his land for Methodist churches and schools. Yet all were active in defence of their church, participated in its charitable, missionary, and educational projects and led lives, for the most part, distinguished by the piety so characteristic of the period.

In his study Wise singled out the belief in a particular providence to distinguish between the providentialism of the sects and that of the established churches. The former accepted it and the latter rejected it for a grander notion of providence on the scale of societies and nations. With particular reference to Upper Canada he interpreted two of Strachan's sermons as the quintessence of Anglican providentialism: Wise characterized these sermons, delivered during the two major upheavals of the colonial period, the War of 1812 and the rebellion, as political analysis more appropriate to the rostrum than the pulpit.

According to Wise, Strachan's providentialism derived from his understanding of recent history, informed by the lessons of the Old Testament. From this odd concoction of the Old Testament and revolutionary politics emerged the notion "that the British are God's chosen people" - the Anglican myth of British election. Thus for Wise, Strachan's providential utterances were the rationale for "Tory" politics, a sort of narrowly conceived defensive expansionism cast in religious hues. Because of the lack of secondary work, Wise's work
stands alone as the path-breaking foray into this uncharted region of
the gentry's mind. Although the concern of this study is to fix
the provenance of the notion of bounty firmly within the fold of
general providential beliefs, and hence, identify it as central to
gentry assumptions, it may not be amiss to conclude in the process
that Wise's perceptions took him further than the evidence allowed.
The point bears repeating that Wise interpreted the distinguishing
feature of Anglican providentialism as the emphasis on nations over
the particular providence of individual lives. Whether Wise has
depicted the beliefs of the sects too narrowly or not is beyond
the scope of this study; suffice it to say that Strachan's providentialism
was neither restricted to nations nor to a nineteenth century British
rendering of the Mosaic covenant between God and the Jews.

In 1811, under the pseudonym of 'Reckoner', Strachan penned, in
the Kingston Gazette, an explicit avowal of his belief in a particular
providence:

Those, said Alphonso, who deny a particular providence,
seem to me never to have examined human life, which consists
almost wholly of such trivial matters, as they suppose unworthy
of the divine notice. Were they to indulge a little in serious
reflection, and to trace even their own actions through a few
of their consequences, or to investigate the causes from which
they proceed, they would not rest satisfied with attributing
the blessings they enjoy or the evils they suffer, to change, to
fortune or to fate; words of no meaning, and which can afford
no satisfaction to a thinking mind . . . But if we can be
persuaded to examine them more closely, we shall discover that
all the events of this present life are so interwoven, that
nothing can be done which may not give rise to a thousand effects over which the primary agent has no control.

We may say, I will do this, or I will not do it— but we can neither prevent the consequences that proceed from the performance, nor those that arise from the omission. He therefore is much mistaken who supposes that interest, which disturb districts or kingdoms, promote revolutions or change the prospects of nations, everything we do possesses the most extensive influence, though we may not be always able to perceive it, and promotes ten thousand actions, which never cease to operate— If good, they go on promoting happiness among mankind: and if bad, promoting misery. . . .

In vexatious times, when the turn of events left human agency and earthly institutions devoid of one's allegiance and it no longer seemed that the hand of heaven rested upon the gentry's endeavours, Robinson found personal solace in providential design. Kings and nations might crumble but the salvation of the individual soul and the sureness of heavenly redemption were not subject to earthly decay:

All sorts of rumors are afloat— My confidence in Governments has been long shaken— From the moment I found that truth & right could be deserted for supposed expediency, I have felt all to be uncertain— However happily "there's a Divinity that shapes our ends Rough hew them how we will"— & we seem at any rate as well off as others in this age of commotion.

The gentry varied both in the manner and degree to which they espoused this faith but the "Mercy of Heaven" was never far removed from the vicissitudes and mutability of private and public fortunes. John Macaulay and his mother, Ann, hoped that his wife Helen would bear sons, yet after the successive births of daughters, neither Macaulay nor his mother cavilled at his fate, but rather vouchsafed that "what God sends is for the best", and that "all
things are ordered for the best."9 The imminent death of family, even children, occasioned no more than supplications on behalf of the afflicted. Deep piety and an abiding sense of the presence of the Divine, even in suffering, kept grief from degenerating into despair or self-pity. By 1852, Macaulay, who had borne more than his share of domestic affliction, might well have questioned whether bachelorhood might have spared him such anguish but such reflections were momentary and fleeting. All grief and joy, both public and private, issued from the hand of God:

If the cares of children are great the possession of them even for a season is a great joy— they are gifts from the Lord & a blessing while with us— Has not the Giver a right to resume his bounty when it seems good that it should be so? And can it be doubted that when so resumed, it is generally an act of mercy towards the children, tho' early taken from this world, and at the same time a fatherly chastening of the bereaved parent? The best qualities of the heart are acted on and expand, when parents duly act as their part towards their families. 10

In the same year, Robinson was staggered by the loss of his daughter, Louisa. The death of Macaulay's "dear little girl" rekindled his own grief, "But we could not hope to live, and escaped— God's will must prevail— and we may be sure that it is best."11 In 1829, Christopher Hagerman attributed the death of his child to the hand of Providence, "It has pleased divine Providence since I left home to bereave me of one of my infant children."12

Robinson believed that Providence superintended every aspect of human existence, "that the cleverest management possible could have done nothing better for me, after all— so in this, as in other things,
we may be well content to trust to Providence." Even personal health was but a matter of "reformed habits & the blessing of Providence." In August 1837, after his health had collapsed, Robinson surveyed a life preoccupied with "laboring & worrying myself in a great measure in vain." Without prospects for betterment, he edged uncomfortably close to despair: "I could have been well content to have had the chain then parted that bound me to the earth, if it were not for the interest I could not but take in the fates & fortunes of others." However, his faith was cheerful, not gloomy, and its healing balm shattered forever his momentary despair. Upon his recovery, he wrote his sister, Sarah Boulton:

After all, my dear Sister, it comes I think to this, that living innocently, and striving earnestly to do our duty, in all things, we must bring ourselves to feel that while we are thus acting we are fulfilling the will of God— and that whatever we are doomed to bear in the dispensations of his Providence can not properly be regarded by us as misfortunes, but must be intended for our good.

The most severe affliction, capable of pulverizing a weak spirit, battered in vain against the steadfast faith of providential belief, which saw both fortune and misfortune, bounty and scarcity, happiness and misery, issuing from the loving hand of an omnipresent God. During the late 1840s, R. A. Tucker urged John Macaulay to submit to his family's affliction because it originated in Divine Will:

Occasions, on which our only solace must spring from that humble & entire submission to the Divine Will, which can alone result from a close communion with God, & that calm reflection upon His dispensations which will at length convince us, that, however afflictive they
may at first appear, they are mercifully designed, & admirably adapted, to advance our best & greatest interests. 16

Robinson was sure that the uncertainty of life, so manifest in times of war and pestilence, issued "as Providence has wisely decreed." 17 Yet in such personal calamities which jeopardized individual lives, it was possible to discern benefits extending beyond individuals to nations and societies. In reference to the War of 1812 and the cholera epidemics, Robinson believed that, "It must be acknowledged however that the Mercy of Heaven has signally accompanied these inflictions - The War to which I allude produced of course many cases of suffering and affliction, but in its' [sic] consequences it was highly favorable to our future prosperity." 18

At the height of the cholera epidemic of 1832, he was sure that the contemplation of "our all merciful father & friend" would soothe and relieve distressed minds. 19

It was clear to the gentry that man was incapable of interpreting providential intention and must be content with submission to divine wisdom. Robinson wrote:

By those who are sufficiently humble to believe in the existence of a superior intelligence, it is very frequently remarked, as they pass through life, how much better matters have been ordered for them by Providence than they would have ordered by themselves, if their wishes had availed them. 20

He had not always been capable of such unequivocal quiescence. Resignation to providential design was acquired through bitter experience.
I have worried myself too much through life from an anxiety that in public matters all things should go as they ought—... I flatter myself sometimes that I have learned some little wisdom from experience & that I shall be able to look on things with a more quiet indifference than I have been used to do— and at least to leave the result to Providence with more resignation.

Such unstinted trust stemmed from a belief that the working of providence was animated by love not wrath, and supported man's faith without withering his spirit. It was an "unhappy error" to dwell "only on the chastenings of God, and despairing of His Mercy." This error blasted the spirits of those tragically led to a belief in their own unremitting sinfulness before the judgments of a vengeful god. God's grace, alone, was sufficient to secure man's salvation. His mercy was infinite and "... requires from us nothing that we are not able to perform— It is an unhappy weakness of the mind that leads some people to think only of their own utter helplessness, & of their merciful father only as an angry God." The abiding belief in the mercy and love which animated God's Providence consoled Robinson throughout his life. He enjoined his sister:

May God, my dearest Sister support you, as he has wonderfully supported me under many & most severe trials, so that you may wait patiently & with hope your appointed time & may be in all things meekly & cheerfully resigned to His will."

Providential mercy attended nations as well as men in their trials. In 1812, Robinson attributed to a timely intervention by providence Upper Canada's "miraculous" preservation. In 1820, in the editorial column of the Kingston Chronicle, John Macaulay...
trusted "that by the energy of government, under the blessing of an all wise & superintending Providence, the rising tumults [in Great Britain] will be suppressed & internal tranquility [sic] and comfort restored to every part of the United Kingdom." On more than one occasion, when radical reform threatened "to burst asunder all the sacred ties of social order, and to plunge themselves into a sea of anarchy and blood," providence was invoked to save and protect. In 1831, with all Europe seemingly poised on the brink of revolutionary upheaval, Macaulay saw nothing standing between order and the revolutionary abyss but the miraculous intervention of providence:

I do not like the appearance of things in Europe—especially in England where there are signs of convulsion + revolution so evident that nothing but a remarkable interposition of a benignant Providence can protect the venerable institutions of that great and glorious country from being prostrated in the dust.25

At almost every juncture of life the gentry saw the visible intervention of God. Robinson interpreted the death of King William IV and the accession of Queen Victoria as the "dispensation of Divine Providence."26 In 1838, Helen Macaulay, John's wife, called on Providence to "dispers[e] our enemies who seek only to plunder us and enrich themselves, without respect to the Laws of God or man."27 After the burning of the Caroline, William Macaulay "hoped that the same merciful Providence that has so far signally protected us will continue to do so."28 Robinson believed that providence would protect Upper Canada from the evils of union29, and, in 1838, wrote Sir John
Colborne that appearances to the contrary, "perhaps Providence after all is ordering all things for the best."30 During the 1830s, it was not unusual for Robinson, in a grand jury charge, to attribute the lack of crime in a particular district to the blessing of providence.31 In 1840, William Macaulay exclaimed that providence had protected the lawful authority of Queen Victoria from the bullet of a would-be assassin.32

If there is a difference between the sects and the established churches, it is not over a "particular providence". The gentry believed in a particular providence which extended to individuals, but they tended to see in particular providence a design which was often national, if not global, in compass. The divine order animated humanity in its myriad forms: individual, familial, or national. Mutability and chance were merely part of the unfolding of divine intend. Perhaps this sentiment was best expressed by Alexander Pope:

All Nature is but Art, unknown to thee;  
All Chance, Direction, which thou canst not see;  
All Discord, Harmony, not understood;  
All partial Evil, universal Good:33

The Montreal Presbyterian divine, Alexander Sparks, in 1814, ably expressed the connection between nations and individuals:

Nations, like private persons, have their characters, and according to their characters, so are they also dealt with by Providence. This rule is more certain and uniform in the case of nations, than of individuals. As it is abundantly evident that no people will exist as a nation, or be subject to national punishment in a future state of existence, hence the awards of justice, in respect of nations, must be expected to be complete and perfect, in the present life; a dispensation which doth not apply to individuals.34
The crux of Wise's thesis is his interpretation of John Strachan's sermons. Wise asserted that Strachan's providentialism formed:

... the doctrinal basis of post-war conservative policy. As it happened, John Strachan, the most extreme exponent of the idea of the Elect Nation among the colonial clergy, was also in the best position after the war to translate the implications of that idea into the shaping of the future of a colony... The ruthlessness and intolerance of his political style derived from the absolute belief that the prescriptions he defended in church, state and society were part of the providential order, that Upper Canada had a special mission to preserve them in North America, and that any opposition to them was a sign of the grossest and most blasphemous infidelity, and of a dangerous sympathy for the condemned revolutionary society of the United States. 35

Wise's Strachan is little more than an ideologue in the pulpit.

As Wise would likely be the first to agree, his interpretation is by no means the last word on the gentry's providential beliefs.

With Strachan as an example, Wise could develop his argument further. With a less pugnacious character such as John Macaulay, or a more temperate personality such as Robinson. Unlike some of his former charges, Strachan relished a good fight and was always a formidable opponent. As a young buck in Scotland, Strachan became embroiled in a fight with two militia men. He soundly whipped both, leaving them "murmuring and spitting blood." 36 He loved to give battle and on one occasion, late in his career, remarked to his congregation that, if he could have chosen another career, nothing could have surpassed the military command of a regiment. 37 But the style and language of a man locked in combat is not always a full
or fair portrayal of the man himself, and Wise's two sermons depict Strachan at his combative best.

The Strachan manuscript collection contains almost 400 unpublished sermons. There are also extant numerous published sermons. Some of these sermons are duplicates and some were preached on numerous occasions. In all probability, they are only a small fraction of the actual number Strachan wrote. By 1806 he had almost two hundred sermons in manuscript. As to their originality, he claimed "I write always from my own reflections, and seldom have any other books on the table but the bible, when composing them." If Wise is correct in his interpretation, then the two sermons on which he based his argument must be understood to be the quintessence of Strachan sermon literature.

Wise's interpretation depends on the assertion of the providential role in the history of nations. Strachan's providentialism took its bearing from the Old Testament, particularly the concept of a covenant between God and the holy nation of Israel. As the elect nation, Israel's special role was to bear witness to divine truth. Strachan derived from his observation of the revolutionary age that the British were now God's elect people. Wise's interpretation of these two particular sermons is not in question, but rather, whether this interpretation can be sustained over some 400 sermons.

Strachan's sermons are rarely so political as Wise would have it. On momentous or cataclysmic occasions, such as the Napoleonic wars, the War of 1812, the rebellion period, the cholera epidemics,
and the Indian Mutiny of 1857, Strachan vindicates Wise's judgement. In all, about ten sermons are so overtly political, and none more so than the two sermons which Wise has chosen. In the absence of an argument that these two sermons can be properly taken as the quintessential Strachan, one can hold in abeyance Wise's perception. In spite of Strachan's pugnacity and political concerns, he had no need of the deathbed recantation of Cardinal Wolsey! Of Strachan's extant sermons (unpublished) 75 per cent (288 of 382) are based on New Testament texts. Moreover, of these, over 50 per cent are based on the Gospels and Acts of the Apostles: 44 from Luke, 42 from Matthew, 37 from John, 8 from Mark, and 26 from Acts. Of the Old Testament sermons, only four are based on the minor prophets, including the rebellion sermon which was taken from Hosea. The largest concentrations of Old Testament sermons (94 of 382) are 22 from Psalms and 12 from Isaiah. The statistics for the Old Testament are particularly revealing. If Strachan was an Old Testament divine then one would expect his sermons to be taken from books which emphasized history and the law, but instead Strachan's apparent Old Testament favourites are Psalms, a rather standard source for Christian homilies, and Isaiah, the book dealing with the breach of the old covenant and the need for a new all-inclusive covenant. In other words, Strachan chose from the Old Testament the books most congenial to an essentially New Testament preacher. The recurring theme of Strachan's sermons was the inadequacy of the exclusive Jewish covenant and the superiority of the universal covenant of Christianity. His sermons concern New
Testament homilies and pieties, the leading of a Christian life—they do not reveal a Burke in priest's robes. Against his many other sermons, the hyperbolic language of the War and Rebellion sermons seems rather the exaggerated puffery of an agitated mind reflecting on disturbing issues.

Strachan's utterances on so seeming a political topic as subordination and inequality are often merely the commonplace musings about the cosmology associated with the great chain of being. Accordingly, Strachan praised notions traditionally associated with this concept: gradation, subordination, order and purpose, with man as the middle link between the higher and lower orders, or more properly in Christian terms, between the wholly spiritual and the wholly temporal. Man's middle position in the order of nature symbolized the uniqueness of his being. On earth, man is both spirit and flesh; his soul cohabits with his body. The Pauline writings depict the perilousness of the state in which body and soul are in conflict. The order of nature was the Christian universe infused with divine order and purpose. Man was born into an order in which he is a creature but not the creator, the judged and not the judge. Moreover, man's short span on earth was but the beginning of existence:

The Kingdom of God embraces man in all his relations domestic as well as social. Christians are appointed to dwell for a season in this the first state of their existence and frequently to encounter much trial and difficulty even misery in their various stations, and although such are subordinate to things essentially spiritual they are not separable from
them far less to be neglected or despised. Hence all the duties which we are called upon to discharge and all the privileges which we enjoy, are interwoven with each other and in proportion as they are disjoined, the duty is the worse performed, and the privilege the less enjoyed.42

Earthly existence prepared and disciplined man for the perfection of the heavenly state:

As this world by the appointment of infinite wisdom is the first place of our destination we must neither refuse its joys nor expect to avoid its inconveniences— and as it is a state of discipline— and has a reference to another state of existence— as it is only a part of the stupendous scheme of Gods [sic] moral Government— We must not suffer it to limit our views nor allow our desires to be wholly engrossed by its pleasures—but submitting to its trials with patience with resignation and with piety we shall by degrees feel that it is working out our good and extending our thoughts to a better country and to a more exquisite enjoyment.43

The standpoint of Christian gentlemen vis-à-vis the world was a constant reference to the horizon of eternity. In accord with this, the New Testament contained two doctrines, both essential to Christianity, but one peculiar to it:

The first consists of those simple rules for virtuous conduct, which all good men had known and endeavoured to act upon in all ages and which the heathens ought to have known as well as the Jews— For example such graces as veracity, purity, charity, piety in fine all that constitute natural religion— All that human reason assisted by the natural light of conscience might have taught to persons anxious after truth— This is the class of Doctrines which our Lord here speaks of under the title of earthly things.44

The second class of doctrine was peculiar to Christianity:

Our Lord calls heavenly things those mysterious truths which we could not have known except by a revelation from God and which he has thought fit to communicate to us by Messengers especially commissioned for that purpose.45

Examples of these truths included the hold of good and evil spirits
over the affections of men, the reward of righteousness and the
punishment of wickedness, and most particularly, the blessings
secured to man by the shedding of the innocent blood of Jesus
Christ. Saint Paul, and Christ himself, explained "that the earthly
things and the heavenly things were all part of the same glorious
System— and that the latter was only the completion of what the
former was the beginning".46

In fine the two classes of doctrine called in the
text earthly and heavenly things are intimately united
under the Gospel dispensation— the virtues of natural
religion are sanctified & exalted by the Christian
verities & partake of their heavenly character— both
become one in their nature and object— they embrace
both worlds— they are wedded together & made one through
Christ & are employed under the guiding influence of the
holy Spirit in preparing & Moulding us for our heavenly
inheritance[.] Hence again the most sublime truths and the
deepest Mysteries in leading us to a blessed eternity are
made perhaps as level by the teaching of the Gospel to
the capacity of the meanest as of the highest human
Intellect— By neither are they fully understood— but
by both they may be truthfully and affectionately
believed on the sure testimony of divine Revelation—
They connect heaven and earth[,] time and eternity— They
belong equally to all men the high and the low and the-
rich and the poor, the young and the old— They [are] especially
calculated to cherish the emotions of awe and reverence
faith and hope— which give a reality to the divine
presence & a confidence in the divine mercy which can
never be shaken and which will at length transport
those who possess it to that blessed Kingdom where our
Lord Saviour forever reigneth.47

God animated the whole order of being through providential
dispensation and intervention. Unaided human reason (which Strachan
never disparaged) was limited in understanding the divine purpose
and intent. The mysteries of the universe were illumined by
revelation or messengers of God:
Let us remember that the system of the world depends in a way unknown to us on God's Providence and on human Agency. Every event, every cause of action has two faces or aspects— in the one it is divine and perfect and in the other it is marked with sin and imperfection. Because it belongs to man— Thence it is peculiarly of Holy Scripture to represent the world on its Providential side ascribing all that happens in it to him who rules and directs it, as it moves along, tracing events to his sole agency or viewing them only insofar forth, as he is pleased to act in them.48

Strachan did not make the proper ends of a priest subordinate to the exigencies of his political concerns. He never forgot that the purpose of God's workings on earth was salvation. Strachan's bearing, which seems to have been shared by the gentry of this study, was eternity, a concern for the pre-eminence of the heavenly things. In many respects, Strachan echoed the Christian teleology of Richard Hooker, and interpreted political events from that standpoint, sharpened by the recent history of the revolutionary age.

It was both folly and presumption for man to do other than to submit to providence. The inscrutability of divine design was impervious to the limited reasoning powers of men— the deficiencies of which were compensated for by divine revelation. Through revelation God imparted to the middling rank of nature the purposes of creation. Man's weakness and imperfection demanded humility before the perfection of divine purpose and reverence for the "umerring hand of Divine Providence":

And we should further remember that both Scripture and reason teach us that all events in this lower world are ordered by the good providence of God whose highest Perfection is love[.]. We nevertheless admit that the
consideration of Gods [sic] moral Government suggests many perplexing and harassing questions which from the weakness and limited nature of our reason we are wholly unable to explain. His judgments are unsearchable and his ways past finding out. He says himself as the heavens are higher than the earth so are my ways higher than your ways, and my thoughts than your thoughts. . . . 49

The order of nature, whose fount was divine wisdom, was eternal, immutable, unerring and unassailable; whereas humanity was subject to the vicissitudes of mutability, alteration, and extinction: 'To this certainty of change in all human institutions there is only one exception the religion set forth in the holy Scriptures of which not one fundamental principle has changed since the Creation of the world.' 51 All human systems were based on false or vain presumptions which did not take cognizance of fundamental human weakness and imperfection. The truth of revelation was inviolate because it did not partake of original human imperfection:

Human systems of morals and religion commence with assuming certain principles, as the basis of future reasonings—These become the foundation of the building and if they or any of them be discovered unsound the whole edifice fails to the ground—Now it has so happened that all such systems proposed for promoting the true happiness are founded on false principles and partake of man's ignorance and corruption—Revelation on the contrary proceeds upon different grounds it rests not on assumptions or visionary theories; but on facts which cannot be disputed—these events upon which it stands no reasonable being can deny—and these events are intimately interwoven or rather become themselves the fundamental principles or doctrines of the Christian Religion[.] The incarnation of our Lord itself a miracle proclaimed the truth of prophecy and the mercy of God who instead of the wrath which we deserved sent his son to offer pardon instead of punishment happiness instead of misery. . . . 52

The order of nature was lovable because it was infused not with wrathful judgement but with love.
The evident truth of revelation was the rehabilitive purpose of God's intent: "that the great plan of Providence [was] the restoration of the human race," and that this intent was "uniform consistent and intelligible from the earliest age of the world and will so continue to the consummation of all things." Providence was not only purposive, but progressive. The innocent son of God, Jesus Christ, suffered and died on the cross for the redemption of mankind. The progression of providence was the extension of salvation throughout the world.

The Christian religion was founded on three great doctrines: that there is only one God, that God is love, and "that the Providence and moral Government of God extends over all, over the small as well as over the great." The natural corollary of the acceptance of these Christian principles was to revere, accept, and obey the order of nature. God was love. His providence operated to the good and benefit of all mankind. Divinity superintended creation directing all within its order to the fulfillment of their particular purpose and lot. A sparrow did not fall but by the will of God, and "deprived of his Providence Creation would resolve itself into its primitive Chaos." Within the order of nature, "man is intended for rational happiness and progressive improvement." Yet the progressive dispensations of God would not culminate in the universal reign of peace and tranquility. Strachan's reading of the New Testament, particularly Matthew, offered no intimation of divine suspension of the laws of nature in order to convert the entire world. Instead, earthly
existence was a battleground between good and evil, with alternating periods "of advancing and receding light." Providence worked its mysterious ways.\textsuperscript{57} on beings capable of accepting or rejecting it. Hence the earthly state was often characterized by trial, suffering, and affliction:

The purpose of God runs through a long period of accomplishment by a series of events falling at last into one great completion. Prophecy communicates his design viewed as a whole, and as one from first to last gathered into one object of sight, the end anticipated in the beginning. And this beginning as well as its Progress is dependent on human Agency— it may (for so God permits) be marred thwarted delayed by mans wilfulness or folly or neglect; and so the— Prophecy will seem but ill to correspond with this its imperfect realization— but at the end it shall speak, and not be' thought to tarry, wait for it because it will surely come it will not fail at Gods appointed time— Hence again the great principle under our— consideration is this, that whereas God is one— and his will one and his purpose one and his work one— whereas all he is and does is absolutely perfect and complete independant of time and place and he is the Sovereign over all the Creation whether inanimate or moral yet in his actual dealings with this world he makes use of instruments and permits man to interfere— now man is imperfect, has a will of his own, lives in time and is moved by circumstances and through man God works by means and ends by steps by victories hardly gained, and failures repaired and sacrifices ventured. Hence it is only when we can view Gods dispensations at a distance as the Angels do we see their harmony their unity and perfect-order—whereas Holy Scripture anticipating the end from the beginning places at their very head all that belongs to them respectively in their fulness. \textsuperscript{58}

The gentry's assumptions about the nature of the Christian universe and the loving order of divine design are the source of the vital notion that, within providence, God had bestowed a special dispensation upon Upper Canada - that even with local geographical
variations, Upper Canada was potentially a verdant garden which only lacked the hand of man to reap its riches and benefits.

Professor Wise posits two assumptions regarding the nature of Strachan's providentialism: first, that it applied to nations rather than to individuals; and secondly, that it broached the election of the British as God's peculiar people. As previously mentioned, this interpretation assumes the Old Testament to have been more central than the New Testament to Strachan's religious beliefs, or more accurately, that the Old Testament better suited Strachan's political beliefs. It seems, however, that Wise's thesis does not bear scrutiny without more complex elucidation. This is borne out by an examination of Strachan's preaching on the superiority of the New Testament covenant over the Old Testament covenant.

If frequency of usage can be taken as a measure of favouritism, then Strachan cherished Luke above all books of the Bible. In reference to this book, Strachan fondly extolled the superiority of the New Testament covenant, but was always careful to point out the essential unity of the Old and New Testaments. The crucial difference between the two testaments was the life, crucifixion, and resurrection of Jesus Christ. The cross symbolized God's eternal love—a love so great and so pure that an innocent Christ was allowed to suffer for the sins of mankind. His death forged a new and better covenant between God and man:
We shall find that we are under a better covenant than the law of Moses—That we have been favoured with a greater display of the Goodness of God. It is not now a single nation but the whole human race, that have access to the privileges of religion, and that are called to partake of the new covenant and to be blessed for evermore. 60

The Old Testament excluded all but the Israelites from the grace of God, but Christ’s death shattered the old covenant in favour of a new and universal covenant, "... for righteousness is bound to no climate, nation, or station, but is to be found among all ranks & degrees of men." 61 Although Christianity retained an exclusiveness common to Judaism:

... that exclusion was to be effected in a different manner—It was not like the Church of the Jews to be marked by natural boundaries and geographical lines, but by something belonging to the Church itself, and these are its sacraments, its Faith or Articles of belief—its discipline or rule for godly life, and its Ministry.

Unmarked by culture, rank, or nationality, the rending of the veil of the temples:

... signified the abolition of the Mosaic ritual, the removal of the partition wall between Jew & Gentile and the admission of all nations into heaven in the terms of the Gospel covenant of which the Holy of Holies was a type—All distinction between Jew & Gentile was henceforth removed—Christ by his death cancelled the Hand writing of ordinances he nailed it on the cross and abolished all those Institutions by which the Jews were distinguished from other nations—Moreover the rending of the veil signified the consecrating and opening of a new and living way to God—the veil prevented the People from approaching the most holy place but it being rent shewed that Christ by his death opened a new and living way to God.

It is reasonable to assume that Strachan read the Old Testament in the light of the New Testament. The Old Testament, especially
Isaiah, foretold the shattering of the limited Mosaic dispensation
and its replacement by a universal, rather than exclusive, covenant:
"... And altho' it pleased God to confine his revelations for a
time to one Nation yet these Revelations [coming of Jesus Christ] are
full of proofs & intimations that the great deliverance was to
embrace the whole of the human race." 64

The antient [sic] Church of the Jews was circumscribed by
the Holy land, but her boundaries were now to be enlarged,
her curtains that of her privileges under guidance of
divine power and mercy were to be so generally diffused
that no place or nation on the face of the Globe should
be prevented from sharing in the benefits belonging to
Christ's Kingdom on Earth ... and embrace all nations
bringing them to the obedience of the Faith. 65

The coming of Christ signified, not a departure from the Old
Testament, but rather the completion of it. "Thus the history
delivered in the Old and New Testament looks forward to the
Establishment of a universal and Spiritual Kingdom which God had
ever intended for mankind." 66 Indeed, the missionary aspect of
Christianity derived from the new covenant:

Hence the encouragement given to his disciples to go
forth in his name for he was able to make them more than
conquerors[..] Our Lord gives them a Commission Go Ye
therefore and those who in succeeding ages shall be
regularly entrusted with the same Gospel & teach all
nations for the partition wall between Jew & Gentile is
broken down and the Salvation purchased is offered to
all mankind- Carry the glad tidings of the Gospel into
every land and make disciples baptising all those whom
you convert in the name of the Father and the Son and
of the Holy Ghost.

The institutions and customs which had distinguished and marked
the Jews apart had been replaced by new ones unconnected with a
particular covenant. Circumcision which marked the Israelites, "as
the only visible Church as the favourites of heaven & taken
nationally as God's Family . . . had served its appointed time and
purpose & been done away, those whom Abraham knew not as his
Children even brought within the place of the new covenant &
offered salvation as well as the Jews." In some ways, circum-
cision paralleled baptism, although Strachan hailed the latter as
infinitely more excellent. Baptism regenerated human nature
corrupted by original sin, whereas circumcision conferred only earthly
gifts. Christ's presence on earth sustained the idea of a visible
church which preserved and cherished the pure worship of the one true
God. God initiated the covenant with Abraham and a "particular
people . . . [but although] the Priesthood of the new Covenant be
derived from Jesus Christ through the Apostles yet it is not hereditary
nor assigned to one tribe or family as it was among the Jews."

The promises of the old covenant were temporal in nature, such
as a promised land, and concerned only the worldly state of the
Israelites, but the new covenant promised heavenly rewards. Christ's
birth of "mean Parentage and destitute of the comforts and even of the
Common necessaries of life" declared that the Messiah was not to be
the "great temporal Prince" awaited by Israel. Even the apostles
possessed a "narrow Jewish cast of thought" which had temporarily
obscured from them "juster notions of the nature of the Kingdom of
Jesus which they were appointed to found extend among mankind."
The Mosaic dispensation considered as a particular covenant—made with the Jews at Mount Sinai promised no other than temporal blessings—plenty & prosperity & the happiness of this life. . . . Under the Christian economy all the promises are pure & spiritual—It is not a temporal Canaan—It is not external prosperity that are [sic] promised but the Kingdom of Heaven, reconciliation with God, the forgiveness of Sin & eternal life.

To link Strachan, without qualification, to the claims of an elect people belies his continuous teaching on the superiority of the new covenant, which denied the possibility of there being another covenant of exclusive relations between God and a particular people:

Jesus is the Mediator of a better covenant than the old because established upon better promises—The promises of the new covenant so affectionately given—so frequently renewed—so solemnly ratified lay a wide and sure foundation for our hopes. . . eternal life is his promise & this promise he will assuredly make good. . . .

Strachan never denied that God could raise up a particular nation to facilitate the unfolding of his providence, but he resolutely denied a relationship between God and a people on the basis of the Mosaic dispensation—that covenant had been forever rendered asunder. In a favourite sermon from Ephesians 4:5 "One Lord, One Faith, One Baptism", Strachan outlined the connection between providence and nations in the light of the new covenant, the "Church, as St. Peter says ought to be a chosen generation, a Royal priesthood an Holy nation, a peculiar people to shew forth the praises of him who hath called you out of darkness into his marvellous light. . . ."

But the reward for the righteous no longer entailed the earthly rewards of the Israelites, or dominion over earthly domains, such as Canaan, but rather promised Christ's dominion over the hearts of
men. In this regard, the exclusion particular to the old covenant was gone forever:

. . . To any person reading the history of mankind as recorded in the old [sic] Testament the necessity of a divine revelation will appear obvious—He will there discover that whatever knowledge Adam and his immediate offspring might possess in divine things it was soon lost, and all ideas of goodness overwhelmed in the general inundation of wickedness—But he will farther learn from the same work that it calls itself the Revelation of God and the internal evidence it contains will convince him that its pretensions are well founded—He will further learn that a peculiar people were set apart to be the depositaries of the Divine revelation but that this revelation on the very face of it bore testimony to one much more precious and which should not be confined to a particular nation but diffused over the whole world. . . .

Providence worked through the order of creation "to the propagation of his Gospel and the establishment of his kingdom in every quarter of the habitable globe." With Christ's ministry on earth, dispensations of providence to nations became transitory, lasting only as long as it suited divine purpose. The grace and favour of God was no longer confined exclusively to geographical or cultural boundaries. The message of the son of God "was preached to the Gentiles as their Saviour as well as the Saviour of the Jews." Strachan derided the "contracted spirit", whose vanity supposed itself the "peculiar favourites of heaven and exclude all from that privilege who belong not to the same denomination". The true meaning of Scripture "did not countenance their odious distinctions—They would perceive that it had no respect to the limitation of the Christian." All the ends of the earth, from the north, south, east and west are
called to the Kingdom of God. The covenant of the new Testament recognized no particular people, nor did it limit salvation to a worthy few.\textsuperscript{79}

Since the birth of Christ, God had raised up various nations to effect this moral government, and when the purpose had been served, discarded them:

Nor would it be difficult to show from the history of the last eighteen centuries that God has upheld nations while they continued instruments for the execution of his holy will in disseminating the truths of his blessed revelation and that he has discarded and depressed them and even blotted them out from the face of the Earth when they departed from the faith and ceased to become the mediums of its propagation.\textsuperscript{80}

Strachan's statements about election cannot be understood exclusive of his preaching regarding the new covenant, and the temporary role of nations within the providential order. In his most fervent flights of praise for the glories of the British empire and the role of the empire in upholding providential arrangements, Strachan clearly stated that, although temporarily favoured, the British empire was by no means a chosen people as were the Jews:

First we should improve the present occasion by forcing our consciences a lively recognition of the hand of God in the Government of the world- This lesson is the more necessary because the spirit of the age is to look no higher than second causes But this is not the Teaching of the Bible- That holy book opens to our view the mysteries of Gods Providence and enable us in many instances to trace the more minute causes of the most astonishing events & makes us capable of comprehending the more general results of divine Providence and of giving God the Glory- And this sublime knowledge we can only learn from the book of Revelation and more especially from the old Testament- There we are made acquainted with Gods.
dealings with the nations and with the secret springs by which their history is directed—God according to his purpose brings on wars and famines. He shakes the Scourge of pestilence over the world—He permits revolutions and restrains their wrath—they are the Ministers of his vengeance and of his mercy... The passions of men intent on their own gratifications are the reins and bits with which God directs human affairs to the consummation of his won will. Nations are chosen to be his servants or rejected as their obedience or disobedience deserve—Yet his designs are not impeded whether they refuse or obey—Not only was the history of the world bent as God please so as to prepare for the first advent & was therefore closely connected with Gods chosen people the Jews but the Worlds history since our Lords ascension is no less connected with his second advent & altho' no one people has been selected as the Jews were yet those who discern the signs of the times can during the 1st 1800 years perceive that certain nations have—had at different periods more influence than others in promoting or impeding the progress of Christianity—And at the present time no one can be so blind as not to see in the British Empire a great fortress of Scriptural Faith and true liberty—within whose institutions are contained elemental principles for the gradual regeneration of mankind and the purification and extension of true religion—

No earthly spectacle is so grand and singular as our Mother Country at this day presents—Without any desire to be a Conqueror she is by Providential arrangements possessed of the largest and most powerful Empire in the world—Her language is spoken in the East & West—The sun never sets in her dominions—her flag is found in every sea—Like the stone cut from the living quarry of the Divine Councils which became a great Mountain and filled the earth so the British Empire growing from small beginnings has increased and bids fair to become in the hands of God an instrument to extend the knowledge of Christ who is the living stone of the Gospel, by her arms, influence & institutions unto every corner and remote island of the Ocean—The Universal Empire of arms will never again exist on this Earth but a Universal Empire of Goodness is to be established by one or more nations as human Agents appointed by God for this purpose there is not one so fitted to the tasks at present not one to which this design has been hitherto so clearly & graciously entrusted as to the British people in their Protestant Constitution of Church and State.
Strachan divided mankind into three social institutions: the family, the nation, and the church.

They are the immediate Creation of God himself and our perfection depends upon the correctness with which we discharge their several and distinct duties. Corrupt domestic life—weaken national bonds, disturb the Unity of the Church and you destroy the perfection of human Society.  

The family was the basis of all social bonds. God's providence extended to mankind as individuals, members of families, nations, or churches. What morally threatened to destroy an individual, also threatened the family, nation, and church. A nation, an individual, as a head of a family (Abraham), or a church could temporarily serve providence. During the revolutionary epoch, Britain seemed to have been a Christian bastion against atheistic democracy. During his life, war, revolution, famine, and pestilence were troublesome reminders to Strachan of the ephemerality of divine favour. Each of these visitations, in turn, was grim testimony to the precariousness of divine dispensation. On more than one occasion, Strachan saw the parallels in modern times of actions which had in Biblical times chastened the Jews. Ingratitude and disobedience had jeopardized the position of the Israelites, so too "the love of Riches and infidelity to Christ" menaced Great Britain's temporary favour. Famines, revolutions, wars, and pestilence were the divine means of chastising those of wavering faith. The affliction, associated with these visitations, was just as much a part of the providential order as happiness and prosperity. Though wary of imputing too much to
indications of divine judgement; "for the ways of God are unsearchable we see only as through a glass darkly—Enough however may be seen to convince us that calamity is fraught with instruction." 90

Wise aptly called the rebellion sermon a "cry of despair", 91 yet the ephemerality of divine favour accorded wholly with Strachan's preaching, that Great Britain temporarily served, and hence received, divine favour. Strachan had long countenanced the fall from favour from the Napoleonic wars, 92 through the materialism of the 1840s, to the Indian Mutiny of 1857. 93 Only so long as a nation served the moral regeneration of the human race, could it expect to wear the mantle of God's favour.

The rebellion and its aftermath had traumatized the Upper Canadian gentry, and none so much as John Strachan. On 15 July, 1838, he took his text from Romans 13:11 & 12 "And that knowing that the time that now it is high time to awake out of sleep: for now is our Salvation nearer than when we believed The night is far spent the day is at hand let us therefore cast off the works of darkness and let us put on the armour of light." 94 Often in his sermons, Strachan adverted to the conditions of the "last days":

The first is the great falling off and Apostacy which is predicted to mark the last times and which will have reached its crisis and been fully developed in the man of Sin when the Lord shall consume him with the Spirit of his mouth and destroy him with the brightness of his coming. 95

On this Sunday morning "after the Death of Peter Robinson", Strachan prepared his flock for the advent of the Second Coming. The
tergiversations and vicissitudes of recent times indicated that the
"last times" were at hand:

Is it not high time to awake from the sleep of indifference
when every point which prophecy has set up to mark the course
of time seems to indicate that we have arrived at the
perilous times of the last days which precede and usher in
the second advent—That this day of terror to God's enemies
is rapidly approaching and as the Apostle fearfully express
it "their damnation slumbereth not that the Salvation of
God's people is nearer than when they believed, that the
night of this reign of order of purity and peace is at
hand[.] And does not the present aspect of affairs among
the nations loudly call upon us to awake out of sleep—Are not
the present times those of awful & universal convulsion—
Are not the very foundations of social order shaking and
society itself tottering of its fall Is there any solid
security for property for tranquility, for life? If you
sleep is it not a heaving volcano charged with the
elements of havoc and devastation & which a touch may
explode? Is it not then high time when earth is failing,
to send the heart & the treasure towards heaven— to cast
your anchor within the veil and not go down with the
wreck of this sinful perishing world[.]

Like Robinson, Strachan had long tried to see that things went as
they ought in earthly affairs, but still he could behold the end
with equanimity and not despair, for the Second Coming would
mark the end of the beginning, a step on the way to eternity in the
heavenly kingdom:

Thus look for & thus hasten my Brethren to the
coming of the day of the Lord; and when this night
of care and anxiety, sorrow and disappointment has
vanished away for ever and been succeeded by the mild
dawn of a cloudless and eternal day you shall pass
through the grave and gate of death to a joyful &
happy resurrection— and an abundant entrance be
ministered unto You unto the everlasting Kingdom of
our Lord & Saviour Jesus Christ.
It is a commonplace of historical scholarship to understand the language of another age on its own terms. Needless to say, whether from a lack of evidence, an unwillingness of the subject to get down to first principles, or the failure of the historian's imagination, the assumptions of another age often prove an elusive will-o'-the-wisp. No assumption was more crucial in directing the nature and scope of the gentry's attitude to development than providence. They believed providence had bestowed a national bounty - land of unparalleled fertility - upon Upper Canada. The province was thus particularly fitted to agricultural production rather than other staples such as timber, or other types of production such as manufacturing. Development was limited to securing markets for agricultural produce and linking Upper Canada to those markets by canals. The enthusiasm with which they undertook canal-building stemmed from the Edenic myth of national bounty. Canals of the largest dimensions could be undertaken by debenture financing on slender financial resources without regard to payment of interest or principal because the gentry expected Eden to yield immediate returns. It was not difficult to nurture what Robinson would call the "anticipating spirit" when economic development was not regarded as a gamble but rather a sure thing.

The rapturous enthusiasm for development which characterized the gentry seems somewhat paradoxical and incongruous. Unlike the commercial elite which also found its way into the councils: the
William Allan's, William Dickson's, Thomas Clark's, James Crooks's, and George Crookshank's, few of the gentry were entrepreneurs. Their schemes and plans rarely were measured against the businessman's standard - profit - although they certainly did not disdain it. For men who stood to make little personal gain, they espoused the cause of development with an almost reckless scorn for the economic resources of Upper Canada. This attitude in economic concerns contradicts the prudence which impugned such conduct in politics, religion, or social relations. The exigency of political survival adds a certain plausibility to their ardent advocacy, but in the late 1830s the gentry, with the notable exception of John Macaulay, delighted in the plans and prospects of development, regardless of the possibility of such plans plunging the province into economic ruin. Robinson was unequivocal in his understanding that internal economic development was the first-line defence for Upper Canada, but the enthusiasm which characterized the survival drive had its origins elsewhere than in such hard-nosed political analysis, or concern for profit. In an era which "conceive[s] the world as an historical process, ... time as history and man as an historical being", it is extraordinarily difficult to grasp at the assumptions of men who began each day not with a newspaper, but with family prayers. The horizons of the gentry were not history but eternity. They believed the world to be God's creation, and duly revered their Creator daily. Their religious beliefs were coloured by providential notions which ascribed all
causation to divine design and intent. It is impossible to understand their seemingly naïve belief that Upper Canada was a North American Garden of Eden without reference to the pervasive providential beliefs.

The application of providential bounty to the Edenic myth took its bearing from the belief that God actively manifested his love through creation. Thus it bore witness to his "affection and gratitude." As Strachan said:

He points out happiness as our true and legitimate destination, the object which we ought ever to have in view, and misery the object of abhorrence, which we ought always to shun. To become happy is, therefore, the end of our being; to this all the works of nature and all the powers and faculties of our minds are intended to contribute. . . .

Strachan believed that "man is made to be ultimately happy, . . . but hastened to add that this Christian definition did not exclude a "moderate concern about the means of subsistence," or "worldly comfort," because God, "not only by his constant Providence does he support them [mankind] in being — by the many beauties and bounties of nature."

Creation harboured the essentials for man's happiness and comfort:

His love and benevolence extend through the whole of his dominions and like the light and heat of the Sun diffuse themselves over all lands and while they sanctify the hour of joy & prosperity penetrate with their cheering rays the lowliest Cottage & the deepest abyss of Sorrow: Go where you will the kindness of God bears witness of his bounty— are not we ourselves fearfully & wonderfully made is not the Earth full of riches for our benefit & teeming with the Elements of our happiness— That God is as good as he is great— that his benevolence is as vast as his wisdom and that our well being is his constant concern even as our existence is derived and continued by his kind & Creative will must now be allowed by every reflecting mind[.]."
Bestowed with such riches man's duty was to cultivate. The gentry knew enough of the world to realize the inequality of the providential dispensation. By the 1820s British North America was becoming an "asylum" for Great Britain's poor. In this period Robinson argued that only Upper Canada in British North America was uniquely fitted by the excellence of soil and climate for agricultural settlement. 104

The particular dispensation of Upper Canada was good soil and an excellent climate. In many respects this image of the province as an almost exclusively verdant garden dictated the perimeters of the development plans of the assembly committees of the early 1820s. The outstanding features of this image were agricultural. Coincidentally this fit well with their political and social beliefs which had an agrarian basis. 105 The passage of years and the hard reality of Upper Canadian geography would eventually wither their ecstatic hopes. But in the 1810s, the 1820s, and the 1830s (with the exception of Macaulay by 1838), the gentry were enraptured by the prospects of turning their hands to the abundant bounty of the Upper Canadian Elysium. Their pastoral image of the province was etched with extravagant language depicting the rich hues of the landscape which held out the promise of unlimited fecundity. Their development policies were limited measures which would allow Upper Canadians to reap the promise of prosperity by linking the garden to a market. This meant adequate transportation networks and securing entry to British markets. To do this Upper Canada had but to follow the design traced by nature 106
and hold to the empire.

During the course of the Gourlay agitation in 1818, Macaulay suggested that Upper Canadian happiness had been secured by the fortuitous combination of the British constitution and divine bounty. In an almost incidental, but nonetheless extraordinary utterance, he asked:

Are we not at this moment the most happy people on the face of the globe, possessing a fertile country, "which smiles like Eden in her summer dress," and a free Constitution of Government?¹⁰⁷

This hyperbolic survey of Kingston's hinterland was not universally shared by the local community and his musings brought a sharp rejoinder in the pages of the Kingston Chronicle from "Common Sense."

The allusion to the writings of Thomas Paine, and the tone, manner, and probing intelligence of the writer, suggests the author was Barnabas Bidwell. Sarcastically he exposed the flaws in Macaulay's metaphor:

What a rhapsody! a fertile Country! where are its rich yieldings? Do they consist in the Beef, and Pork, & Flour, and Butter and Cheese that are imported for our sustenance, from Jefferson County and the Genesee? Why the people of Kingston would be starved to death; all His Majesty's Troops would die of Hunger if they depended for food on the fertility of Upper Canada. Let me ask whether or not there are three Farmers in the Township of Kingston whose Farms produce them Bread? What signifies a country being fertile if it be not cultivated! "Smiles like Eden in her Summer dress"! "Genesis II, 8th and 9th verses.

"And the Lord God planted a Garden Eastward in Eden; and there he put the man whom he had formed, and out the Garden made the Lord God to grow every tree that is pleasant to the sight and good for food."

Let any man, whether he have common sense or not, look around him and say whether Upper Canada answers to this account of the Garden of Eden or no? Who has planted it? Who has caused therein to grow every tree, that is pleasant
to the sight and good for food? If it smile it is a ghastly smile, a smile of contemptuous reproach on man.

Penetrate the dark recesses of your immeasurable woods; there behold the teeming land choked with rank and poisonous weeds; and your oozy swamps engendering reptiles "smiles like Eden in her Summer dress"! Ha! Ha! Ha!... 108

Yet Macaulay was unrelenting and sure of a bounty which extended even to Kingston. In an 1819 editorial he applauded the opening of new lands in back townships which were remote from water communication and market towns. He was sure that the land was of high quality and that farmers would find a ready local market in pork and beef heretofore supplied from the United States. Thus, his description of the Kingston hinterland:

... no other obstacle exist to impede the settlement and improvement of the lands, than their distance from our market towns, we may soon hope to see instead of a lonely forest and dreary wilderness in our rear, rich and populous districts, supplying us with such provisions as are now imported from a foreign country. 109

Macaulay continued to apply the Eden metaphor to Kingston and its environs as late as 1832. In his remarks as chairman of the Court of Quarter Sessions for the Midland District, he reiterated his belief in the garden image and national bounty:

If we turn our view homeward, can we be otherwise than grateful to the Giver of all Good for the singular happiness of our own condition in this fertile and thriving Province? Here the people are blessed with abundance. Every man enjoys in peace the fruit of his exertions, and no one can take it from him. - Labour is ever in demand, for our numbers are not, as in older countries, so great as to outstrip employment, or press too hard on the means of subsistence... Emigration pours its living tide into the province, causing its solitary wastes
to "smile like Eden in her summer dress," and adding incalculable
and with unexampled rapidity to its wealth and strength.
Such being the state of things in this country, what other
can at the present moment compare with it in point of real
happiness, and substantial prosperity? I certainly am not,
for my part aware of any. . . .

Two years later Macaulay's prose had lost its florid bloom. He
outlined the prosperity of inland towns being dependent on one or both
of "two grand sources" - "a circumjacent country of some extent, and
fertility" or "Manufacturing facilities". The "almost stationary"
prosperity of an agricultural town compared unfavourably to a
manufacturing centre which "knows no limits to its progress in a
flourishing trade." The once enthusiastic advocate of a Midland
District, Eden satisfied himself with the caveat that Kingston was
"not situated in a barren desert." By the mid 1830s what had been
apparent to other regions of the province as early as the War of 1812
struck Kingstonians. York/Toronto's rise to prominence was based on
an extensive trade drawn from a fertile and populous hinterland.
Kingston's hinterland was neither fertile nor populous. Its potential
was limited and hence Kingston's survival necessitated a search for
alternatives. Macaulay's 1834 address was an explorative essay
outlining what seemed to be the only alternative - manufacturing.

Perhaps Macaulay's attempt to impose a pastoral image upon
Laurentian granite illustrates the compelling attractiveness of
the belief in the agrarian bounty of Upper Canada. Both Robinson and
Strachan had the good sense not to extend Eden as far east as
Kingston. In their 1816 arguments against transferring the capital
from York to Kingston, they denigrated the agricultural potential
of the area. Strachan protested that "the soil is bad" and incapable of feeding an army — a crucial consideration because of the war. Robinson stressed that "the most valuable and interesting parts of Upper Canada as far as the two great requisites of climate and soil are considered lie above York . . . Kingston, on the contrary, is a barren rock." But during the crucial years of the early 1820s Macaulay was held by his faith in an Eden image extending from Sandwich to Kingston and it was his role as a commissioner of internal navigation which proved critical to the determination of the requisite improvements to be made for an agricultural society.

The fecundity of Upper Canada was a durable article of the gentry's faith. Even in Macaulay's case it survived 16 years on an outcrop of the Canadian Shield. The crucial question in the debate concerning the gentry and economic development is — what sort of development they favoured? The gentry's enthusiasm about the potential prosperity of the province was a boosterism not for exploitation of the staples of the shield, or the dormant potentiality of manufacturing, but an ardent faith in an agricultural society trading its surplus within the empire for manufacturing goods. It was by no means as limited an agrarian vision as that of agrarian radicals such as Mackenzie or Alexander Chisholm. But it was nonetheless a vision in which development was held within the framework of an agricultural society, and limited by pre-capitalist political and social beliefs.

Robinson was as capable as Macaulay of trumpeting Upper Canada's
endowments as the most abundant since the Garden. In his published correspondence with Sir Robert Wilmot-Horton on Irish emigration, Robinson used the Eden metaphor to explain the loyalty of Irish immigrants during the Rebellion of 1837:

These people had lived in one of the very finest parts of Upper Canada, and had enjoyed, for thirty years, the protection of good laws and a mild government; compared with the rugged wilderness these poor Irishmen came from the land they inhabited is like the Garden of Eden. . . .

Providence had provided for even the most trivial of contingencies. Robinson believed the divine design had set out suitable sites for cuts on proposed canal routes on the Ottawa River: "I am persuaded that Providence has so ordered things for the future good of mankind, that some favorable niche will be found in the ridge. . . ." He was sure that "this favored portion of the world" reaped its prosperity and happiness from "the blessings we derive from a bountiful Providence. . . ."

This theme provided a favourite and recurring topic for Robinson's grand jury charges during the 1830s in which he encouraged Upper Canadians to express "gratitude [for] the overflowing measure of prosperity which Providence preserves to us, in this period of almost general [world] distress." The blessings of Providence upon the province were fortuitous for the gentry. They understood how crucial prosperity was to the contentment of men in society. Prosperity gave society an edge in overcoming anti-social behaviour rooted in human nature and set in motion by hardship, oppression, and scarcity. The universal access to property and the right to enjoy its fruits.
undiminished by taxation, and secured by a benevolent constitution were the sure foundation of social harmony. The access to land allowed the possibility of "overcoming habits injurious to the peace of Society."\textsuperscript{120} Robinson had no doubts that hard work, moderation, and "the impartial administration of the law, will under the blessing of Providence contribute to lay a sure foundation for the enjoyment of social happiness & rational freedom [liberty scratched out] in an abundant a measure as the nature of mankind will permit."\textsuperscript{121}

Robinson's prose exalted the richness of Upper Canada's garden. It compared favourably to all other lands within the empire, and indeed, within the world. This notion came to the fore in his 1831 address to the king from the legislative council:

\ldots there is not a colony or country in which the people are enjoying a greater degree of prosperity and happiness than in this peaceful and flourishing province. Exempt from those causes of distress which afflict so many of the portions of the world, your Majesty's subjects in Upper Canada are pursuing with industry and success, the labors of agriculture and the enterprises of commerce, under circumstances of peculiar encouragement, from the great natural advantages of this province, and from the favorable terms on which its productions are admitted into the ports of the united kingdom.\textsuperscript{122}

Robinson could not think of a country, "which in mere material things is at this moment in a more hopeful way than Canada- Certainly California is not- nor Texas."\textsuperscript{123} In \textit{Canada and the Canada Bill}, he gave short shrift to the other British North American colonies but:

\ldots when we turn to Upper Canada, we find a country of large extent with a soil unsurpassed in fertility, and a climate that admits of the cultivation of the very finest wheat; abounding in valuable timber, and in the most useful minerals with the advantage of navigable waters running
through it, and around it, in a manner that cannot be seen without admiring so beautiful an arrangement of nature. In his writing nature assumed a grandeur of its own. He wrote of the St. Lawrence River pursuing its majestic course through fertile lands as if it were a royal progress. He rejoiced at Upper Canada's prospects when its bounty was fully reaped. The lush fertility would lead to "prodigious and inevitable increase in population, in wealth, in trade. . . ." But Robinson's metaphor of bounty was an agrarian one. As he wrote in the early 1820s the province "must ever depend mainly upon agriculture." This opinion, buttressed by the complementary political and social beliefs of the gentry, tied Upper Canada to a commercial position within the empire. Robinson was explicit: "The British possessions on the continent of North America are precisely those which the circumstances of Great Britain require." Providence was nothing if not thorough.

In its Biblical context rebellion was coeval with the garden yet Robinson was incredulous at the Upper Canadian manifestation of ingratitude. His judicial judgement on the convicted rebels, Samuel Lount and Peter Matthews, is incomprehensible devoid of the context of his faith in bounty. He attributed the chief cause of their "dreadful fall" to their "wilful forgetfulness of your duty to your Creator, and of the purposes for which life was bestowed upon you." They had enjoyed "very many advantages beyond what are possessed by the inhabitants of most other countries."

Consider now, since you were in these circumstances, how many thousands of persons have come to this Province almost penniless, and, without the help of relations or friends, have raised themselves among strangers by their honest industry to independence and comfort, and are now contented subjects of our Queen, and living in cheerful obedience to
the same laws which you have been endeavouring to overturn. Consider also, on the other hand, how many thousands there are, I might almost say millions, of the subjects of the same Crown, who, while they have no privilege or advantage which you did not enjoy, but are subject to burthens from which you are free, are labouring in dangerous and sickly occupations, in dark and unwholesome mines, or amidst the storms of the ocean, upon rugged coasts, and in the dreary cold of winter, gleaning in contentment a scanty subsistence, by far greater exertion than was necessary to place you, in this favoured country, in a state of ease and comfort, and perhaps of affluence.

If, in that spirit of love to God, and to our neighbour, which the Christian religion enjoins, you had reflected upon the condition in which Providence had placed you, and had compared your lot with that of the many millions of your fellow creatures, you would have been convinced that where there was one person who had more to be thankful for than yourselves, there were thousands who would have envied your condition, and who have thought themselves happy, indeed, if possessed of but a portion of those blessings which you have wantonly thrown away.

The experience of internal political disorder during the War of 1812 and the proximity of the democratic United States drove home the gentry's understanding of the relationship between a prosperous society and a harmonious polity. But this did not spur their beliefs in bounty, rather providential beliefs of a national bounty which took an agrarian configuration limited their economic strategy to facilitating agricultural prosperity and blinded them to "Common Sense." The oddity was Macaulay's euphonic eloquence on the potentiality of Kingston granite rather than Bidwell's derisive howls. Their faith was in the potentiality of a landscape marked by noble rivers, basking in a benign climate, and rich in fertility. They derived from this article of faith a provincial rather than a
local concept of development, and a concern for the public good, which meshed with their political beliefs in the role of gentleman. By 1816 the gentry were mindful of the need to satisfy the legitimate material wants of society which were so integral to both personal happiness and social stability. Providence which had preserved them politically and militarily had extended its dispensation to the very geography, thus laying the foundation for prosperity and harmony. "Common Sense" was an increasingly rare phenomenon by the late 1820s when development became a mania. The cryptic comments of a Bidwell were beyond the pale. Merchants such as Thomas Clark and William Dickson provided opposition to the gentry only insofar as the gentry's legislative plans threatened their immediate speculative interests. The accidental death of Robert Nichol in 1824 removed from the scene one of the most able men in the province whose leadership in the House of Assembly extended to development unlike such later leaders as John Rolph or M. S. Bidwell. Nichol had been a merchant prior to the war and his experience as quartermaster general of the commissariat combined with his commercial experience to produce a more sanguine opinion of the potentiality of the resources of the province. In the 1830s Mackenzie's agrarian vision of an egalitarian yeomanry never claimed the faith of much more than a rump in the assembly. Consequently the work of the Commission on Internal Improvement and its implementation by the Joint Committee on Internal Navigation (1825) chaired by Robinson and Strachan were the inspiration of the gentry without the limitations of "Common Sense", or a concern
for profit. The natural brakes of limited capital resources, financial constraint, and a scrupulous attention to profit were singular by their absence in the lexicon of Christian gentlemen, who professed no concern for personal economic gain in the public realm, or the narrow political views of selfish, private interests.

Although the gentry's faith in national bounty would wane after years of striving for limited successes and gradually be supplanted (for all but Robinson) by a more realistic belief in the limited possibilities of agrarian richness, yet in the crucial decade of the 1820s their minds had been seized by a vision of the great future and potentiality of the Upper Canadian garden. As Strachan wrote in 1828:

The whole of this extensive and beautiful country is a continuation of the most fertile soil. The climate is fine, the conveniences of its local communications astonishing, and its capacity of containing millions of inhabitants unquestionable. . . Nature has, indeed, done more for Upper Canada than for most other counties of equal extent; yet such is the delusion which many still labour under with respect to its character, that they compare it to the deserts of Siberia. But its real advantages begin now to be known, and its fine climate to be understood. . .
FOOTNOTES


2. The term is one of descriptive convenience and is not meant to imply cultural bonds inappropriate to a heterogeneous society.


5. Ibid., 53.


11. Ibid., Robinson to Macaulay, Toronto, 20 July 1852.

12. PAC, RG 5, Al, pp. 50888-91, Hagerman to Mudge, York, 8 Jan. 1829, See also Macaulay Papers, Rev. Wm. Macaulay to Helen Macaulay, Picton, 5 Dec. 1844.


14. Ibid.

15. Ibid.


17. Canada and the Canada Bill, p. 36.

18. Robinson Papers, Charge to the grand jury, Toronto, 1 April 1834.


22. Ibid.


26. Robinson Papers, Proposed speech on the opening of Parliament in 1838 by J. B. Robinson. "Sir F. Head declined thus & gave instead that for which he has been so much censured."


30. MG 24, A40 (Colborne Papers), 12, pp. 3498-3500, Robinson to Colborne, Toronto, 3 Jan. 1838.

31. Robinson Papers, Charge to the grand jury, Cornwall, 15 Aug. 1831.


34. A sermon preached in the Scotch Church, in the City of Quebec, on Thursday the 21st April 1814, being the day appointed for a general thanksgiving by the Revd. Alexr. Spark. Quebec, 1814, p. 16.

35. Wise, "God's . . .", 56.

37. PAO, Strachan Papers, Ms. sermon on the text "There was a certain
man in Cesarea called Cornelius a Centurion of the Band called the
Italian Band- a devout man and one that feared God with all his
house, who gave much ams to the people and prayed to God alway [sic]"

38. TPL, Alexander Wood Papers, Strachan to Wood, Cornwall, 7 April
1806.

39. Ibid.

40. The figures are based on my own calculations from the Strachan Ms.

41. Strachan Papers, Ms. sermon on the text "And Elisha prayed
and said Lord I pray thee open his eyes that he may see. And the
Lord opened the eyes of the young man and he saw and behold the
Mountain was full of horses and Chariots of fire round about Elisha"
2nd Kings 6:17, copies 29 Sept. 1847.

42. Ibid., Ms. sermon on the text "Another parable spake he unto
them; The Kingdom of Heaven is like unto leaven which a woman took
and hid in three measures of meal, till the whole was leavened"
St. Matthew 13:33. 1 Feb. 1835, 14 Jan. 1838, 6 Jan. 1843, 6 Jan. 1846,
11 June 1846, 13 Nov. 1853, 11 Dec. 1853, 16 May 1854.

43. Ibid., Ms. sermon on the text "I pray not that thou shouldest
take them out of the world but that thou shouldst keep them from
evil" John 17:15. 8 May 1825, 25 Sept. 1825, 16 July 1826, 3 Jan.
1827, 22 Sept. 1833, 18 Mar. 1838.

44. Ibid., Ms. sermon on the text "If I have told you earthly things
and ye believe not how shall you believe, if I tell you of heavenly

45. Ibid.

46. Ibid.

47. Ibid.

48. Ms. sermon on the text "And the Gentiles shall come to my light,
and Kings to the Brightness of they rising" Isaiah 60:3, 6 Jan.
1848, 12 Jan. 1851, 4 Jan. 1854.

49. Ibid., Ms. sermon on the text "Most gladly therefore will I rather
glory in my infirmities that the power of Christ may rest upon me"
2nd Corinthians 12:9, 22 Oct. 1825, 20 Nov. 1825, 31 May 1830,
15 Jan. 1837, 14 Sept. 1845.
50. Ibid., Ms. Sermon on the text "Give the King thy judgments O God, and thy righteousness to the King's Son." Psalm 72:1, 9 Sept. 1860 before the Prince Of Wales, pp. 6, 37-38.

51. Ibid., Ms. sermon on the text "According to the grace of God which is given unto me a wise Master builder I have laid the foundation and another buildeth thereon—but let every man take heed For another foundation can no man lay than that is laid which is Jesus Christ." 1st Corinthians 3:11, 4 Nov. 1827, 11 Jan. 1829, 31 Jan. 1836, 11 Aug. 1844, 31 Oct. 1858.

52. Ibid.

53. Ibid.

54. Ibid., Ms. sermon on the text "To this end was I born and to this end am I come into the world, that I might bear witness to the truth." John 18:37, 24 Dec. 1865.

55. Ibid.

56. Ibid., Ms. sermon on the text "And this Gospel of the Kingdom shall be preached in all the World, for a witness unto all nations and then shall the end come." Matthew 24:14, summer 1852, 15 Nov. 1857, 6 Jan. 1859, 1 July 1866.

57. Ibid., Ms. sermon on the text "Doubtless then art our Father though Abraham be ignorant of us and Israel acknowledge us not—Thou O Lord art our Father our Redeemer thy name is for everlasting." Isaiah 63:16, 6 Jan. 1844, 10 June 1846, 11 June 1846, 21 July 1847, 6 Jan. 1851, 6 Jan. 1855.

58. Ibid., Ms. sermon on the text "And this Gospel of the Kingdom shall be preached in all the World, for a witness unto all nations and then shall the end come." Matthew 24:14, summer 1852, 15 Nov. 1857, 6 Jan. 1859, 1 July 1866.


60. Ibid., Ms. sermon on the text "And he said unto him, if thy hear not Moses and the Prophets, neither will they be persuaded ho' one rose from the dead." Luke 16:31, 29 Aug. 1819, 9 June 1822, 5 June 1825, 21 June 1829.

61. Ibid., Ms. sermon on the text "And the word of the Lord came to Elijah saying—Arise get thee to Tarepranth which be longeth to Tidow & dwell there. Behold I have commanded a Widow Woman there to sustain thee." 1st Kings 17:8 & 9, n.d.
62. Ibid., Ms. sermon on the text "So we being many are one Body in Christ, and every one Members one of another" Romans 12:5, written 1 Oct. 1848; preached 22 Oct. 1848.

63. Ibid., Ms. sermon on the text, "And behold the veil of the temple was rent in twain from the top to the bottom" Matthew 27:51, 29 Mar. 1839, 6 Aug. 1843, 13 Aug. 1843.

64. Ibid., Ms. sermon on the text "Doubtless then art our Father though Abraham be ignorant of us and Israel acknowledge us not—Thou O Lord art our Father, our Redeemer thy name is for everlasting" Isaiah 63:16, 6 Jan. 1844, 10 June 1846, 11 June 1846, 21 July 1847, 6 Jan. 1851, 6 Jan. 1855.

65. Ibid., Ms. sermon on the text, "Enlarge the place of thy Tent" Isaiah 54:22, 21 Aug. 1864.


67. Ibid., Ms. sermon on the text, "Lo I am with you always even to the end of the World" Matthew 28:20, 10 Oct. 1838.

68. Ibid., Ms. sermon on the text, "What profit is there of circumcision? much Every way" Romans 3:1, 1 Jan. 1846, 1 Jan. 1852.

69. Ibid.

70. Ibid., Ms. sermon on the text "And Jesus came and spake unto them saying all power is given unto me in heaven and in earth Go ye therefore and teach all nations baptising them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Ghost Teaching them to observe all things whatsoever I have commanded you and lo I am with you always even unto the end of the world" Mark 28:18–20; "Go ye unto all the world and preach the gospel to every creature" Mark 16:15, 20 April 1841, 3 July 1842.

71. Ibid., Ms. sermon on the text "And the Lord said unto him this is the Land which I swore unto Abraham, unto Isaac, and unto Jacob saying I will give it unto thy seed; I have caused thee to see it with thine eyes, but thou shall not go over thither—" Deuteronomy 34:4, 5 Jan. 1823, 3 Jan. 1830, 27 April 1834, 1 Jan. 1837.

72. Ibid., Ms. sermon on the text "And the Shepards returned glorifying & praising God for all the things that they had heard and seen as it was told unto them—" Luke 2:20, 25 Dec. 1857, 27 Dec. 1857, 17 April 1840, 9 Dec. 1860, 16 Dec. 1860, 16 June 1861.
73. Ibid., Ms. sermon on the text "And I will pray to my Father and he shall give you another comforter that he may abide with you forever— It is expedient that I go away, for if I go not away the Comforter will not come unto you." John 16, n.d.

74. Ibid., Ms. sermon on the text "And he said unto him, if the Lord were pleased to kill us, he would not have received, a burnt offering and a meat offering at our hands neither would he have shewed us all these things nor would at this time have told us such things as these—" Judges 13:23, 10 May 1844, 15 July 1845, 26 July 1845, 3 Sept. 1854, 21 June 1854; later copies and preached 14 Dec. 1856. See also Ms. sermon on the text "Another parable spake he unto them: The Kingdom of Heaven is like unto leaven which a woman took and hid in three measures of meal, till the whole was leavened" St. Matthew 13:33. 1 Feb. 1835, 14 Jan. 1838, 6 Jan. 1843, 6 Jan. 1846, 11 June 1846, 13 Nov. 1853, 11 Dec. 1853, 16 May 1854.

75. Ibid., Ms. sermon on the text "One Lord, One Faith, One Baptism" Ephesians 4:5, 2 April 1843, 11 June 1843, 25 June 1843, 8 Aug. 1843, 17 Sept. 1843, 19 Sept. 1843.

76. Ibid., Lecture 3d Cornwall 8 July 1804, York; also 7 July 1816.

77. Ibid., Ms. sermon on the text "Except the Lord build the House their labour is but lost that build it" Psalm 127:1, 7 June 1832, 13 Oct. 1835, 18 Aug. 1841, 11 June 1844, 15 June 1844, 11 July 1846, 22 July 1846, 31 Aug. 1846.

78. Ibid., Ms. sermon on the text "And without controversy great is the mystery of Godliness, God was manifest in the flesh, justified in the spirit, seen of Angels, preached unto the Gentiles—believed on in the world, received up into Glory. 1st Timothy 3:16, 4 Mar. 1832, 16 Sept. 1837, 2 Sept. 1843, 9 June 1848, 4 July 1848.

79. Ibid., Ms. sermon on the text "So the last shall be first and the first last; for many be called but few chosen—" Matthew 20:16, 15 Dec. 1804, 23 Dec. 1804, 6 Feb. 1820.

80. Ibid., Ms. sermon on the text "Except the Lord build the House their labour is but lost that build it" Psalm 127:1, 7 June 1832, 13 Oct. 1835, 18 Aug. 1841, 11 June 1844, 15 June 1844, 11 July 1846, 22 July 1846, 31 Aug. 1846.

81. Ibid., Ms. sermon on the text "I will be glad and rejoice in thy mercy— for thou has considered my troubles Thou hast known my soul in adversities—" Psalms 31:7, "Sermon for 9 Jan. 1850 being a Thanksgiving day for the departure of the Cholera."
82. Ibid.


84. Ibid. Ms. sermon on the text: "Another parable spake he unto them: The kingdom of Heaven is like unto leaven which a woman took and hid in three measures of meal, till the whole was leavened" St. Matthew 13:33, 1 Feb. 1835, 14 Jan. 1838, 6 Jan. 1843, 6 Jan. 1846, 11 June 1846, 13 Nov. 1853, 11 Dec. 1853, 16 May 1854.

85. Ibid., Ms. sermon on the text "I will be glad and rejoice in thy mercy - for thou hast considered my troubles Thou hast known my soul in adversities -" Psalms 31:7, "Sermon for 9 Jan. 1850 being a Thanksgiving day for the departure of the Cholera." See also Ms. sermon on the text "While the Earth remaineth see time and harvest and cold and heat and Summer and winter and day and night shall not cease -" Genesis 8:22, 3 Nov. 1859, "being a day of Thanksgiving appointed by the Provincial Government for the late Bountiful Harvest."

86. Ibid.

87. Ibid. See also Ms. sermon on the text "Righteous art thou O Lord and upright are thy Judgments" Psalms 119:137, 27 Nov. 1857, "a fast day on the occasion of the Indian Mutiny."


89. Ibid., Ms. sermon on the text "Most gladly therefore will I rather glory in my infirmities that the power of Christ may rest upon me," 2 Corinthians 12:9, 22 Oct. 1825, 11 Jan. 1863. See also fn 81:

90. Ibid., Ms. sermon on the text "Now no chastening for the present seemeth to be joyous but grievous: Nevertheless afterwards it yieldeth the peaceable fruit of righteousness, unto them that are exercised thereby -" Hebrews 12:11, "composed 14 & 15 March and delivered on the 16th 1804 being appointed for a day of humiliation and prayer on account of the war against Buonaparte." See also "Missionary sermon preached 21 Aug. 1860", pp. 2-3.

91. Wise, "God's . . .", 58.

92. Strachan Papers, Ms. sermon on the text "Now no chastening for the present seemeth to be joyous but grievous. . . ."
93. Ibid., Ms. sermon on the text "Righteous art thou O Lord and upright are thy judgments..."

94. Ibid., Ms. sermon on the text "And that knowing the time that now it is high time to awake out of sleep: for now is our Salvation nearer than when we believed The night is far spent the day is at hand let us therefore cast off the works of darkness and let us put on the armour of light." Romans 13:11 & 12. "Sunday Morning after the Death of Peter Robinson" 15 July 1838.

95. Ibid., Ms. sermon on the text "And the Gentiles shall come to my light, and Kings to the Brightness of thy rising." Isaiah 60:3, 6 Jan. 1848, 12 Jan. 1851, 4 Jan. 1854.

96. Ibid., Ms. sermon on the text "And that knowing the time that..."

97. George Grant, Time as History (Toronto, 1969), 7.


100. Strachan Papers, Ms. sermon on the text "Be content with such things as ye have—" Hebrews 13:5; "But Godliness is profitable unto all things—" 1 Timothy 4:8; "For I have learned in whatsoever state I am therewith to be content—" Philippians 4:11; "Godliness with Contentment is great gain for we brought nothing into this world and it is certain we can carry nothing out—" 1 Timothy 6:6 & 7, written at sea 24 Sept. 1824, 24 April 1825, 28 Dec. 1827, 23 Dec. 1829, 13 Nov. 1836. "Read this Sermon on 12 March 1858 and found it very inferior to what I expected."

101. Ibid.

102. Ibid., Ms. sermon on the text "For God so loved the World that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believed in him should not Perish but have everlasting life." John 3:16, December 1860.

103. Ibid., Ms. sermon on the text "For the mountains shall depart and the hills be removed, but my kindness shall not depart from Thee neither shall the covenant of my peace be removed saith the Lord that hath mercy on Thee." Isaiah 54:8, "Sermon on the war & Pestilence Preached 13 Aug. 1854 at the Cathedral in the morning."
104. Derby Public Library, Catton Papers, Remarks of Mr. Robinson upon the Papers submitted to the Agricultural Committee, pp. 2-5.

105. See chapters V and VI.

106. Kingston Gazette, 7 May 1811.

107. Ibid., 28 June 1818, John Macaulay to the editor.

108. Ibid., 7 July 1818.


111. The address delivered by John Macaulay, Esq. to the public meeting convened in Kingston 2 Dec. 1834, pp. 4-7.


113. SLB, Strachan to Sir George Murray, York, pp. 93-94.

114. Ibid., p. 97.


118. Robinson Papers, Charge to the grand jury, Perth, 24 Aug. 1831.


120. Ibid., Charge to the grand jury, Cornwall, 25 Sept. 1837.

121. Ibid., Charge to the grand jury, Prince Edward District, 16 Sept. 1834; see also Charge to the grand jury, Home District Assizes, 5 April 1830; Charge to the grand jury, Western District Assizes, 4 Aug. 1830; Charge to the grand jury, Perth, 24 Aug. 1831.
122. *JHA*, Address of congratulation and condolence to His Majesty from the Legislative Council, 10 March 1831, (1st session, 11th parliament), p. 91; see also *Joint Address of the Legislative Council and House of Assembly of Upper Canada to His Majesty. 22 Dec. 1821*, p. 40.


124. *Canada and the Canada Bill*, 20.


127. Catton Papers, "Remarks of Mr. Robinson upon the Papers submitted to the Agricultural Committee," p. 16.

128. *Canada and the Canada Bill*, 40.


130. *Ibid.*, See also *Charge of the Honorable John B. Robinson, Chief Justice of Upper Canada, to the grand jury, at Toronto (Thursday, 8th March, 1838,) on opening the court appointed by Special Commission to try prisoners in custody on charges of treason (Toronto, 1838)*, p. 20.


CHAPTER III

DEPRESSION AND THE PROMISE OF EDEN—AGRICULTURE,
MARKETS, AND TARIFFS

... the produce of the soil remaining on the hands of
the cultivator, without a market; and the extension of
Commerce restricted by the shackles of a colonial
system, the child of a darker age... John Strachan

(1)

In 1818 only John Macaulay among the gentry counted economic
development among his foremost interests. By 1816 the War of 1812
had honed Robinson's concern for economic prosperity as one of the
most effective means of ensuring an orderly and a tranquil polity.
Two years later discontent was again rife throughout the province;
grievances concerning militia claims, war losses, restriction of
American emigration to the province, and land granting abuses were
foremost. And some of these concerns had been voiced in the assembly
in 1817 by critics as diverse as Robert Nichol and James Durand.
Robert Gourlay was able to exploit these causes during his 1818
agitation and it is worth noting that it was in response to
Gourlayites that Macaulay first brought together providential bounty
and Upper Canadian geography to form his own image of a modern day
Eden. The gentry always made the British constitution the political
counterpart of the Edenic garden as the basis for happiness and even
then never forgot that if man did not walk with God, happiness might
still elude his unsure grasp. As yet there had been little

104
discussion at least since Lieutenant Governor John Graves Simcoe, of a provincial strategy for economic development. But the coming together of geography and providence left little to man except the duty to reap his sure bounty. The Edenic myth had directed or rather shaped the economy in an agrarian cast. A mere five years later the province had established its first bank, and a uniform currency, accepted agriculture as the permanent basis of the provincial economy, and settled upon the internal improvement of navigation as the focus of development. By 1821 the state and nature of the economy as well as its improvement had become one of the chief concerns of the provincial legislature and one of the favourite topics of the nascent committee structure.

The spur to gentry economic policy was the depression of 1819 to 1821. The funds of civil government were drying up because the major source - custom revenue from the port of Quebec - had been withheld after the lapse of the custom-sharing agreement with Lower Canada in 1819. The export market for Canadian wheat in Great Britain was virtually closed by the combination of good harvests in Britain and British tariff policies. The effect was dramatic. The depression generated discussions from which emerged the focus for economic strategy and economic development. The crux of the discussion of the gentry's priorities in economic development hinges upon many of the decisions taken during the depression and its aftermath. By 1826 economic priorities had been set for the province
which would last a generation. These decisions reveal the limits of an economy to be geared to primary agricultural production and the restrictions of a political commitment to the necessity of maintaining the British economic and political ties.

The gentry understanding of provincial resources and economy was for the most part pre-capitalist. Both the colonial experience of a high proportion of land against labour and gentry agrarianism precluded capitalist economic formations. Marx understood this point clearly:

One of the prerequisites of wage labour and one of the historic conditions for capital is free labour and the exchange of free labour against money, in order to reproduce money and to convert it into values, in order to be consumed by money, not as use value for enjoyment, but as use value for money. Another prerequisite is the separation of free labour from the objective conditions of its realisation—from the means and material of labour. This means above all that the worker must be separated from the land.  

This surely is the crucial point. The gentry could not conceive of a society in political, economic, or social terms that was not rooted in the land.

Recent literature has used the structure of the nineteenth century economy to explain the genesis of the problems plaguing the Canadian economy since the early 1960s. Often the historical review has been secondary to a partisan concern for a new industrial strategy. Of particular interest is the debate between the commercial stagnationist school and its critics. For the most part this literature has focussed on the question of development strategy, making a division between commercial and industrial strategies. For instance J. K. Johnson has argued that "a common commitment to" what may be called
"developmental" policies, based on the desirability of economic expansion "on the part of the Family Compact" and the business elite qualifies the prevalent notion that "quasi-aristocrats" such as Strachan and Robinson shunned business. As evidence he cites their participation in banks, trading companies, and railways, and social intercourse with the local nobles of trade and business. But the point is not that the gentry favoured development—they did, but rather whether the development they favoured was capitalist or pre-capitalist. Possibly the radical agrarian alternative which emerged in the late 1820s and early 1830s surrounding William Lyon Mackenzie and the small parliamentary rump which supported him has exaggerated the differences between them and obscured their common ground. The key difference was hierarchy in society versus an egalitarian society. Both favoured primary commodity production but differed on the amount of commerce and the presence of monopoly commercial establishments. The real opposition to the agrarian society came not from commerce but from the men such as William Allan and Francis Hincks who saw prosperity in the coming together of free labour and capital. Hincks worked towards the establishment of middle class institutions during the 1840s and Allan argued for an emigration and land policy which would ensure that most people would be separated from the land. The gentry espoused commerce and development not as ends in themselves but simply as the logical adjuncts for a prosperous economy based on agricultural production.
The gentry aims in this regard were rather limited. Nature had ensured a generous bounty. Thus they had only to adopt sensible policies to reap the harvest: greater access to British markets, reciprocal trade with the West Indies, harmonious commercial policies with Lower Canada, the diversion of the trade of the American west through the St. Lawrence, the importation of American foodstuffs not available locally, or at a prohibitive price, and finally a just proportion of the custom revenue of Québec.

(i1)

The combination of economic woes which gripped the province between 1819 and 1821 had a marked effect upon the legislature at York. The committee structure of the House of Assembly was still in a fledgling state during the seventh parliament (1817-1820) but became an important aspect of parliamentary life during the eighth (1821-1824) and ninth (1825-1828) parliaments. During the first session of the eighth William Warren Baldwin moved the formation of a house committee to examine the agricultural depression and collapse of British markets as they affected the provincial economy. The motion was approved on 5 Feb. 1821; the report was tabled on 31 March; 500 copies were ordered printed and distributed on 4 April. The Select Committee on the Internal Resources of Upper Canada was dominated by members with commercial interests, but the report itself was probably the production of the able and mercurial chairman, Robert Nichol.
The committee analysed the nature of the economy clearly expressing a bias in favour of an agrarian strategy for Upper Canada. The report provided a generally acceptable framework for economic development geared to the needs of agriculture. The focus of the report was access to sure and stable markets and the improvement of water transportation links with the Atlantic Ocean. Unable to find satisfactory statistical information which might provide a sound basis for a critical examination of the economy, the committee fell back on impressions for the want of anything better. During the course of the eighth and ninth parliaments other committees and commissions shaped into policy and legislation the general aims of the report. The critical difference of the later committees was their utter disregard for Nichol's appreciation of the limited potentiality of Upper Canada. Unfettered by effective opposition, unchallenged, temporarily at least, by rival economic strategies, the gentry dominated these committees pursuing their economic goals with an ardour untempered by "common sense" or the pursuit of profit.

The committee's task was to define the natural resources, to determine the quantities exported, their value, the effect of the depression, the effect on the staples trade of Lower Canada, the United States, and Great Britain. They hoped to make recommendations to increase the value of staples, to facilitate their export, to devise a permanent system for "safe, easy and expeditious exportation . . . to the ports and markets to which we have access," and finally, to determine whether there should be government encouragement
of the domestic manufacture of salt and iron for local consumption. 8

The staple resources were almost self-evident: lumber, pot and pearl ashes, agricultural produce, and furs and peltries. Precise information on each was difficult to obtain. Lumber exports: masts, spars, pine and oak timber, and staves seemed "considerable," but flour in comparison seemed "comparatively [sic] small." For the rest, accounts were unsatisfactory although the committee noted that furs and peltries had "greatly [sic] declined." 9 The fluctuations in trade which periodically rocked wheat and timber exports were beyond provincial control. War, trade restriction, crop disease, variation in habits of domestic consumption were not subject to local legis-

lative enactment. But of greater and more immediate concern because it fell within Upper Canada's purview was the inferiority of the manufacturing and packaging of flour rendering it uncompetitive with the American's. The committee had no doubts that the province was gripped by depression; the unit price of exports had dropped as much as half since 1812. 10

Curiously, in spite of the recognition of timber's importance, the report concentrated on wheat as the most important staple; "Upper Canada is not a manufacturing country, but depends almost exclusively on its agricultural productions." 11 Secure in the primacy of wheat, the committee formed a commercial strategy which disregarded timber. They recommended securing the wheat staple with protecting duties in the only sure market, Lower Canada, and duty free access to British and West Indian markets. Their willingness to advocate
improvements in the manufacture of flour was limited. With little fuss they opted for exporting wheat, for "although in exporting the raw material we lose the advantage of manufacturing it in our own mills, still as it is more saleable and less perishable than flour . . .", it seemed a reasonable tack. Their predominant concern was to establish an unlimited market within Britain where the Corn Laws militated against competition to domestic producers.

The major impediment to a commercial strategy for the export of wheat was the inherent defect in the empire of the St. Lawrence - rapids and the falls at Niagara. This situation seriously impaired and "so severely limited the cheap export of wheat and flour as to render it almost impossible to export it at all." The area of the province most effected was the fertile Western District which was distinguished by its soil and mild climate as the bread-basket of Upper Canada.

Hesitant about the efficacy of temporary measures, the committee favoured "permanent measures" for the relief of the economy. The goal was "for securing the safe, easy, expeditious, and economical exportation of our staple articles to the markets to which we have access." Yet they cautioned about the almost insuperable problem of "the limited power and deficiency of pecuniary means of the Provincial Legislature, [which] almost preclude the possibility of legislating on the subject." In view of the limits the committee recommended revision of the inspection laws to ensure quality exports: protection by the imperial parliament from any Lower Canadian statutes which
might hinder or jeopardize Upper Canadian exports; modification of the British Corn Laws to permit unlimited entry to a market large and stable enough to absorb surplus provincial production; and similar reductions on West Indian rum to stimulate a reciprocal trade between the two colonies. Finally, they urged upon the assembly "the improvement of our inland navigation . . . on an extensive scale, a scale commensurate with the increasing power and rapidly accumulating commercial resources of the Province." With the aid of Great Britain, the province would undertake to provide an unobstructed navigation from the agricultural heartland west of York and north of Lake Erie to the ocean. American efforts on the Erie Canal in New York State had already demonstrated the practicability of such an enterprise. Moreover the completion of the canal and the necessity of a similar project for Upper Canadá, in spite of its size, left them undaunted by the "magnitude of the undertaking". To set priorities and suggest policies the committee suggested the assembly set up a commission on the internal improvement of navigation. The several reports of this commission, written over a period of several years, were finally submitted and printed in 1826; these reports set Upper Canadian development priorities for a decade.  

Almost as an afterthought, the committee urged some consideration of domestic manufacture "provided it can be done without making too great a sacrifice of other objects." Manufacturing made sense because it retained capital within the province which would otherwise
pay for imports but the provincial revenue, particularly in its current state, could not support domestic manufacture by government bounty. 15Almost simultaneously in the assembly Robinson's committee examining the best means of liquidating the militia pensions arrearages was laying the foundation for a provincial debt. The method devised became the means for financing the costly projects of navigational improvement — selling debentures secured on the duties to be received eventually upon the settlement of the custom dispute with Lower Canada. 16 The precedent set by the use of debentures became the primary means of financing public works and economic development. The gentry willingly mortgaged the economy, sanguine that a cultivated Eden with sure markets would reap immediate benefits and usher in untold prosperity.

Only during the late 1830s did any of the gentry consider the problem of interest upon an ever-expanding debt and the limited revenues which supported interest payments. Even then only Macaulay thought the situation serious enough to urge the suspension of improvements. But in 1821 Hagerman was "happy to state that Mr. Nichols observations relative to the Bankruptcy of the Province will be completely exploded: we are far from being in the deplorable state he has constantly asserted." 17 Their sure belief in providential bounty blinded them to less than enthusiastic economic forecasting. Robinson pronounced Nichol's report "comprehensive but [it] will have little or no practical result as it struck me on hearing it hastily read, for I had no hand in it." But Robinson was pleased that the assembly had taken up a question of such provincial importance.
He urged Macaulay to use the columns of the *Kingston Chronicle* "to speak of the report as now in the house in terms of commendation. It is not by any means political in the narrow sense of the word . . . and is in no sense offensive." In the early 1820s matters of economic development were not political as matters of law such as intestate bills were. Usually grievances pertained to single issues. Not until the late 1820s and early 1830s was there any sustained critique of the nature of development. But the critique of radical agrarianism could not challenge the broad hold which these issues had throughout the province. Indeed it might be argued that stripped of its pre-1840 limitations development became the political culture of Upper Canada from 1840 to the present. Throughout the first session of the eighth parliament (1821), Robinson was busy with practical economic matters: steering the commercial intercourse bill with the United States through the assembly, providing for the deficit financing of militia pension arrearages, and establishing legislation for a uniform currency. Above all else, the ease with which in 1825 the gentry transferred deficit finance to the area of economic development testifies to their enthusiastic faith in the necessity of development and the dormant potentiality of the Upper Canadian economy.

As Robinson, Hagerman, and Macaulay noted, the general principles and aims of the report were acceptable. Commerce was the necessary adjunct of a prosperous-agricultural economy dominated by the wheat staple. Economic development was essentially limited to providing or facilitating cheap and easy transport to markets. In agreement
with the main premise of the report, Robinson blithely stated that Upper Canada "must ever depend mainly upon agriculture." Unlike the other British North American colonies with the sole exception of Prince Edward Island, Upper Canada was blessed by a soil almost without exception fertile. Adulatory language extolling the soil and climate highlighted gentry descriptions of the province and underlined their belief in the potential agricultural Elysium which spawned a heedless development policy which quickly overreached the resources of the colony.

The neglect of timber is dramatic proof of the agrarian bias which prevailed in the committee and in the province. Agriculture was the pervading preoccupation. This was demonstrated again and again in the concern with agricultural improvement, trade, and markets. That this preference was shared by the community is reflected in the frequent petitions with avowed agrarian concerns made to the assembly, to the governor, and to the king. In comparison references to timber are few. In 1819 John Strachan acknowledged timber but only in passing in conjunction with a plea for West Indian markets for Upper-Canadian grain. More often than not the casual or passing reference was timber's usual treatment. As one of the two staples it rarely received serious analysis. As might be expected in 1821 it was John Macaulay who considered the reduction on the protecting tariff on timber ominous. As one of the "chief articles of export" Upper Canada would lose an important stimulus to cash supply and flow. To be specific, the community would lose a means
of paying for imports which combined with the collapse of wheat and pork markets and the decreased demand for potash would reduce the province to a rough-hewn self-sufficiency, by virtue of insolvency.25

During the crucial talks in London in 1822 to hammer out new commercial policies for the colony in Great Britain, timber received scant attention from Commissioner Robinson. He used the example of the Lower Canadian duty on scows and rafts to demonstrate how the "principal exports" flour and lumber were rendered uncompetitive by lower Canadian policies "in the present period of low profits, and uncertain markets." Coupled with the restrictive tariff of 1821 and the consequent competition from the Baltic countries, the additional cost on a crib or raft of timber was "a consideration of very serious moment."26

The state of the timber trade prior to the 1840s is partially explained by its secondary status which stemmed from the unrepentant agrarianism of the legislature and the province at large.27

(iii)

The only commercial jurisdiction within the scope of the legislative powers of the Upper Canadian Parliament was trade with the United States. The more important markets of Great Britain and Lower Canada could only be affected by suasion, arbitration, or appeal. American trade was a non-political issue until the 1830s when outraged agriculturists demanded protecting tariffs against American competition within the domestic market.

The question of colonial jurisdiction in matters of trade came to the fore in 1818 when the seventh parliament passed an act
regulating American trade and inland navigation, replacing the expired act of 1816. The province had enacted legislation in this area as early as 1797 and had continued to do so infrequently until the act of 1816. But in April 1818, the administrator of the province, Samuel Smith, expressed uncertainty as to the legality of the trade act in a letter to Lord Bathurst. Later that year, the new governor, Sir Peregrine Maitland, reiterated Smith's concern to Bathurst. The governor was more forthright and less concerned about maintaining legal niceties than Smith. He wanted official recognition of established colonial practice: "the Legislature has long assumed and exercised the right of making Laws for the regulation of this same Trade: which laws appear not to have been disallowed in England, and to have been acted upon without question." Maitland made a strong case that the colony now had established a prescriptive right to ignore the legislative restrictions imposed upon it by the Constitutional Act and to legislate in the field of American trade.

In another area touching upon colonial practice and imperial law, Maitland reversed his arguments. He noted disapprovingly that the province had not applied the Navigational Acts to inland waters and that within the last two years there had only been one or two seizures of American vessels by collectors of customs at Upper Canadian ports of entry. It seems likely that Maitland had chosen to echo concerns expressed the month previous by Robinson to the governor's secretary, Major George Hillier. One of Robinson's routine
duties as the recently appointed attorney general was to report to
the governor upon the legality of all acts of the provincial legislature.
Of the 1818 trade bill Robinson wrote "I apprehend the legislature
exceeded their proper functions in enacting in violation of the 46th
section of 31st Geo. III." He was fulfilling his duty by pointing
to the possibility of imperial disallowance but added that similar
acts had been "acquiesced in since 1797" and thus had a long-established
precedence in spite of questionable legality. But it was possible
that imperial legislative provisions had been modified since
1791 which "may put the right of our Legislature to interfere in
this matter beyond question." Robinson called Maitland's attention
to a clause imposing a tonnage duty on all American shipping
declaring in approbation that this stipulation accorded with the
express intention of the Navigation Acts amounting to a virtual
exclusion of foreign shipping from Upper Canadian ports.33

The first concerted attempt to enforce the acts occurred in
1815 or 1816.34 By 1818 the legal weight of the attorney general
and the opinion of the governor could be mustered in support of this
new initiative. The move was popular with the gentry on several
points. It was a step towards eliminating foreign interference
and control within the province particularly by Americans. It
increased the size and experience of the lakes' merchant fleet
which could be effectively utilized in time of war. Finally it
afforded jobs and expertise in shipbuilding and an expanded field
for the Great Lakes-St. Lawrence carrying trade. After the passage
of the trade bill of 1818 and a subsequent amendment the following year, Macaulay commented: "Some little encouragement . . . might have been given to the Canadian river craft, and this might easily have been effected by a provision, requiring that American produce should be brought to Montreal in Canadian bottoms." Again in 1819 Maitland appealed to the colonial office for clarification of the legality of customs' seizures. A marginal note on his letter expressed "doubts . . . as to the applicability of the Navigation Laws to Trade carried on in the Inland Lakes."36

For several years the matter lay unresolved but reared up in 1820 when the Upper Canadian owners of American-built vessels petitioned for relief from seizures.37 The Executive Council turned for advice to Attorney General Robinson who had consistently upheld the authority of the acts. In his report he stressed two positive benefits from the application of the laws: "the protection of native Capital and industry against foreign interferences" and "the experience of the last American War . . . that the application of the Navigation Laws to the Lakes of Canada . . . would be a consideration of policy not unworthy of National attention."38 Although popular sentiment and a jury trial had supported the plaintiff of the 1815/1816 seizure in rejecting the application of the acts, a subsequent decision of the Court of Kings Bench overturned the jury verdict and unanimously upheld the imperial law and provincial acts. Yet in spite of the court ruling many collectors of customs persisted in their refusal to enforce the acts.39
The colonial trade act of 1822 complicated the issue by providing for the relaxation of trade restrictions and allowing a limited intercourse in American bottoms for specific items. To Robinson's mind this provision buttressed his legal opinion because "The special enactment of such a relaxation is a declaration of the sense of Parliament that the restriction created by the Navigation Laws extended to the internal intercourse in question..." The statutes of 1822 "had at least the effect of rendering that known and certain which was before the occasion of great perplexity, & must put an end to the doubts & contradictions which have hitherto prevailed." 40

Robinson anticipated "great good" to come to the province from the operation of the laws, particularly the protection of native capital and increased military security on the vulnerable and crucial lakes. Macaulay had urged protection to stimulate the Canadian coasting trade. As early as 1818 when the issue arose Maitland foresaw benefits in both the aforementioned areas:

There are, at present, eighty Schooners employed in navigating Lake Erie, Vessels, capable of carrying in the event of War, either one or two Guns of the largest [indecipherable] of these, not more than ten, belong to or are navigated by subjects of His Majesty. 41

In 1822 Robinson made it clear he interpreted any relaxation of the Navigation Laws as an aid to the American navy:

Without the experience we have had it would be obvious and that the trade with the U.S. will soon be almost exclusively conducted in American ships, & how far this is good policy is on several accounts very questionable. Besides one dislikes the appearance of truckling to these Yankeys... 42
Maitland urged clarification of the laws once again in 1824 citing the obvious benefits to the provincial coasting trade and added the importance of providing jobs for local builders, their employees, and Canadian seamen. By reversing their arguments in the field of the Navigation Laws the gentry hoped to stimulate shipbuilding, enhance military preparedness, and bring the benefits of the carrying trade exclusively to native shipbuilders, owners, and merchants. The incident shows how in the hands of the astute Robinson a matter of routine administration could have important ramifications.

(iv)

Perhaps the greatest success of the gentry in forming a broad consensus for their policies was their economic aims. These, of course, also encountered bitter opposition in the 1830s but not so virulent as their policies in support of the Church of England, education, or the maintenance of non-democratic institutions of government. In 1847 Lord Elgin described Canadians as "a pushing enterprising people unencumbered by an aristocracy and dwelling in the immediate vicinity of the United States." For the most part agreement about prosperity and development cut across the religious, political, and social divisions of the province. In their reaction to the depression of 1819 to 1821 the gentry tried to shape through their policies a concept of the general or public interest. They believed that the public interest could only be served by gentlemen but their attempt to come to grips with the
elusive public interest is most evident in their policies on American trade. The columns of Macaulay's *Kingston Chronicle* and later Robert Stanton's *U. E. Loyalist* became the public forum for defining, in trade matters, the public interest.⁴⁵

Macaulay, as Lord Sydenham later appreciated, was a merchant. He had offered Lisbon salt in exchange for wheat as early as 1813.⁴⁶ Moreover he was a close friend and relative of some of the major figures in the Kingston carrying trade such as his uncle, John Kirby, Thomas Markland, and the Macpherson family. It might be expected and has often been assumed that with ties such as these, the gentry merely pandered to the merchant interest.⁴⁷ But the gentry had refused to bow to the favourite merchant panacea for the general woes of Upper Canada — legislative union with Lower Canada. There is no reason to suppose their commercial policy was any different. In an 1819 editorial on the amendments to the 1818 trade bill, Macaulay outlined the informing principle for trade legislation with the Americans. It was a position from which the gentry did not deviate and reflects their concern to balance the legitimate claims of contending interests in the community, satisfying only the general interest which was more than the sum of individual interests.⁴⁸

Macaulay pointedly disregarded the competing private claims of commerce and agriculture urging that legislation be framed with regard to the "general interests of the community":

By an act of our own Parliament, duties were imposed not only on all manufactured articles, but in a modified form on almost every article of provision, when consumed in the country. Here, by the bye, we have a question to put to the
members of our own House of Assembly: we ask, do they in their Legislative capacity deliberate for their own individual benefit, or for the benefit of the people at large? If they answer, for the people at large, we further ask, how they could have thought, that it would conduce to such purpose to impose heavy duties at this time on the necessaries of life—when they knew, or at any rate ought to have known, that some parts of the Province would have starved but for the supplies from the U. States. Most undoubtedly fair legislative encouragement ought to be given, as well to the farmer as to the manufacturer. But in either case, and especially in that of the former, ought these encouragements to be made entirely at the expense of the other members of the community. To tax an article of any kind which your own people either cannot, or will not supply, is no more or less than a direct tax on the consumer of that article, and if this article should happen to be a necessity of life, such as are beef and mutton, the tax becomes most oppressive. Even the Corn laws in England, which cease to operate the moment that wheat has reached a certain fixed price, have not been viewed with a very favourable eye—whilst here, whether our farmers will or will not supply our markets, we must, without any limit, pay so much per cent for whatever quantity of American beef, and mutton, &c. that may be consumed amongst us. Upon the whole it is to be hoped that in their future deliberations, on commercial measures, the Parliament of the Lower Province will adopt a steady line of conduct, that that of the Upper will legislate on the subject with more attention to the general interests of the community: and that both will frame such laws on the subject as may not be quite at variance with each other.

The pursuit of private interest in the public realm threatened the harmony of society. Such interest was held to be antithetical to the gentry's concept of the rule of gentlemen, who in their legislative capacity, were to protect the interests of those unable to forward claims in the public realm and who relied on paternal legislators to protect their interests. As recently as the crop failures of 1815 and 1816 segments of Upper Canadian society had been threatened with imminent starvation and were forced to rely upon government relief. Macaulay urged low duties on beef and pork because these staples could not be produced in sufficient quantities.
by local producers to meet domestic needs. He hoped, however, that farmers would respond to the obvious demand because American prices were too high.  

In 1820 Macaulay levelled his editorial guns at the trade act currently before the assembly. Again he reiterated his past concerns:

We have no objections to see a duty imposed on American flour, and other produce of the soil, so as to give our farmers an advantage in our own markets, when such articles are raised in great abundance in the Province, or suffer a temporary depreciation in consequence of this superabundance. But though we are anxious to see the farmer protected, we cannot approve of any measure tending to leave the rest of the community at their mercy with regard to the price of the necessaries of life.

The duty on fresh beef was "unnecessary, as well as unjust and oppressive on particular classes," because of the inability of local producers to cope with the demand. Under certain circumstances a protecting duty would be advantageous but only if "our own country abounded with it [beef]." But at present, dependent upon New York beef, the duty became a "virtual tax on government through its military provisioning, "besides bearing hard on the poorer classes in town."  

In 1821 the gentry got their own chance at remedying the deficiencies of previous trade acts. Hagerman and Robinson steered a bill through the assembly to repeal the trade act of 1820 and further regulate American trade. Robinson admitted borrowing some ideas from Macaulay. Robinson had little use for debate on trade matters because "it is the one of all others that can not be well
treated in battle." He echoed his 1818 opinion about the legality of colonial legislation in trade but did not "pretend . . . to be wise. All in truth that I know about it is that we have, no right to legislate at all concerning them — however that trifling circumstance seems by general account to be overlooked."\textsuperscript{52} and he went ahead with his legislation.

During the debate on the bill Hagerman followed Macaulay's arguments of 1819. The aim was to "put on a more permanent footing than heretofore" the intercourse with the United States. Agriculturists had a partial but not exclusive right to protection:

The agricultural class . . . were entitled to consideration; but were not entitled to exclusive consideration. He would not have a Law that would enable the people of the States to undersell our people, yet would not impose such a duty as would prevent produce from coming into this Province. There were many poor people in this Province, who had not the means of supplying themselves and their families; they should be careful, therefore, not to impose such restrictions, as would raise the price of provisions on these people.

He was willing to impose duties on luxuries such as beer and would admit goods bound for Lower Canada such as flour, pork, potash and staves free of duty to ensure "the carrying trade into the hands of the Canadians." Thus the general interest would be protected; no one class would bear the brunt of policy or reap the benefit of it. The St. Lawrence shipping route would be kept competitive with the Erie-Albany-New York route and the benefits of the trade would be derived in the customs duties at Quebec.\textsuperscript{53}

This vulnerability — dependence upon American supply — Macaulay regarded as less than cheering:
... our intercourse with our neighbours is profitable to them only, and very injurious to us, but the evil cannot be remedied until we shall supply ourselves, as we soon might, with the great portion of the articles from the United States. We indeed shall never feel satisfied with the commercial situation of the country while our markets are supplied with American beef and mutton, American poultry, and American fruit and vegetables—while our shoe-makers use only American leather, our cabinet makers import the wood ready prepared for our chairs and tables; and while our farmers are not only indebted to American artists for their scythes, hoes and axes, but also for so simple a manufacture as a hay rake or a scythe handle; because so long as we continue to be thus dependent on American skill and industry for such articles, the country most assuredly cannot thrive or our farmers become rich and independent.54

American trade was to be admitted only because Upper Canadian potential had not yet been reached. Any attempt to cut the trade prematurely would mean undue and intolerable hardships for a large and relatively poor segment of the population. Until Upper Canada was self-sufficient in foodstuffs American trade would be borne as an unfortunate necessity.

In 1821 Maitland reviewed the legislative efforts of the eighth parliament for the colonial office. Anticipating imperial hesitation, he assured his superiors that duty free importation of products common locally and in the United States would have little effect on Lower Canada because, "They have few articles of their own growth in such abundance as to make a market for their superfluity a matter of uneasiness. "But of course such was not the case in Upper Canada where:

... it is feared the unrestrained admission for home consumption into this Country will render our lands of little value discourage the farmer, deprive us of the money circulation in the Country by the expenditure of public departments, and prevent every thing like fair and regular trade between different parts of the Province.
The transportation costs for certain products were already so prohibitive as to limit markets to local consumption only but if it is thrown open ... there seems to be no encouragement to our farmers to raise more than they require for themselves." Maitland shared Macaulay's opinion that the Americans could not raise these goods more cheaply than they might be raised locally:

... though at present they certainly can from a variety of obvious causes which will gradually cease to operate, but the truth is that the more spirit of enterprise, the desperate efforts of impudent speculators to retrieve their losses, and even the general depression of the times occasion sufficient quantities of American produce to be brought here and sold at an absolute loss to its proprietors to depress the fair trade of this Colony - and this would always be the case to a great degree - We certainly might have boards, shingles, wheat, rye, oats, potatoes, butter, cheese, fruit and provisions of all kinds brought here in abundance when we do not want them, and the money which we do want sent out to pay for them, merely because they are sacrificed at a price which neither the importers nor we can really afford to sell them for. . . .

Yet government could not entertain the possibility of protective duties because of the legitimate needs of the poor, emigrants, and the claims of the commercial class:

In consideration however to the vast number of distressed emigrants which we annually receive into the Province, and to the Commercial class inhabiting the towns, by whom these are almost entirely supported - a very heavy burden, the liberty of imposing duties on any of the necessaries of life ought to be very limited, and regarded with the more jealousy on account of the great preponderance of the agricultural interest.55

Finally, the governor noted that the duty was an important source of government revenue without which the province "would suffer materially."56
Through the 1820s protective duties generated little by way of interest or opposition. But in the 1830s imperial enactments relaxing restrictions upon American trade and the abandonment of enforcement of the Navigation Laws stirred a demand for protection from Upper Canadian agriculturists. The quiet days of the previous decade quickly passed. In 1825 when the expiration of the 1821 trade act was imminent, Jonas Jones simply moved that the assembly consider "what alterations are expedient." Robinson moved consideration of the imperial statutes of that year for regulating colonial trade. Several resolutions emanated from the subsequent debate and a joint committee of the council and the assembly, chaired by Thomas Clark and Robinson, considered the assembly's resolutions.

The committee's report specified certain goods to be admitted duty free: ashes, rawhide, tallow, plants and shrubs, gypsum, paper, and carriages. Without exception the items were useful, necessary, and produced only outside of the province. Particular goods such as ashes were given special status for the benefit of the carrying trade. Salt was protected to encourage native production. Finally, fruits and vegetables were subject to an ad valorem duty because:

... unless some check is given ... the markets in several parts of this Province will be often engrossed by our neighbours ... and thus deprive the grower ... of the chance of obtaining a certain and fair price for productions which cannot, from their nature, be sent to a distant market.
The other reason outlined by Maitland in 1821 was "to contribute to the revenue."\textsuperscript{60} This was the last provincial statute regulating American trade with the exception of an 1830 amendment which continued the protective duty on salt.\textsuperscript{61} It represented a balance of protective/revenue tariffs for the agriculturist and the government while providing the necessaries of life duty free for the labouring classes and the poor. Finally whenever possible it promoted the provincial interest in the carrying trade of the lakes.

This attempt to legislate in terms of the public good rather than group interest lasted so long as the economy was prosperous. As one group or another began to feel the pinch they vociferously demanded alterations in the laws to remedy their particular woes. In his 1841 "General report upon Canada", John Macaulay took a backward glance at the 1830s and commented upon the change in attitudes towards commercial legislation:

Until a recent date, the question of affording protection to the Canadian Agriculturist against the competition of Foreigners, in the domestic market, could hardly be said to have excited a very lively or general feeling in this country.\textsuperscript{62}

By 1830 the commercial and agricultural interests were on a collision course because of competing demands. On 26 October of that year at a meeting of the Welland Canal Company directors, John MacDonald, Henry John Boulton, W. H. Merritt, and Robert Randall, approved a petition to the governor urging removal of restrictions "which may now exist in landing American produce & property for the purpose of passing from one Lake to the other on the Welland Canal & being
again reshipped to an American port." Their concern and that of merchants generally was to ensure that the produce of the American mid West was diverted through the St. Lawrence rather than New York. The merchants were supported by an address of the Legislative Council (signed by Robinson) advocating the maintenance of privileges accorded the province; not allowing the Americans to gain access to the St. Lawrence: "the mercantile body generally in these provinces, and men of extended views deprecate the concessions desired by our Neighbours as an impolitic transfer of a carrying trade to the Citizens of the United States." The council's address differed from the merchants and canal directors. The council was echoing the position on maintaining the Navigation Laws defined by Robinson, Macaulay, and Maitland between 1818 and 1824. Their concern was not limited to the profits of trans-shippers. They wanted American produce — but they wanted it carried in Canadian bottoms. The issue was foreign interference and military security, not simply how best to guarantee profits to merchants. The sense of the council's position was reiterated by the assembly in its resolutions on West Indian trade and the navigation of the St. Lawrence. In 1834 Hagerman caught the spirit of the council arguments in a letter to the permanent under-secretary of state for the colonies, R. W. Hay, venting the usually unexpressed, but nonetheless essential belief, that reciprocity in trade "tends to a community and union of interests so intimate that the acquisition of the territory itself is almost certain of being the consequence." He objected to giving
the Americans further trade advantages and suggested that duty free goods for transhipment would ultimately find their way into the domestic market and undercut the merchants and by implication, the farmers. 66 A former collector of customs for Kingston, a major port of entry, he was in a position to know. The gentry did not separate economy from society nor did they think that society should revolve on economic considerations, particularly those of profit. Profit was a speculative and private interest which had no place among men deciding upon public affairs. The choice between markets was always for Upper Canadians a political choice and one that had to go hand-in-glove with decisions about politics and society. One could not have an economic union with the United States and a political union with Great Britain.

The clash between agrarian and commercial trade interests focussed on the election of 1834 and climaxed in the twelfth parliament (1835-36). This parliament had a strong representation of radical agrarians. Led by Mackenzie the rump included: Peter Shaver, Alexander Chisholm, William B. Wells, Dennis Woolverton, Gilbert McMicking, Robert Alway, Samuel Lount, and Jacob Rymal. William Benjamin Robinson had characterized the election issues of 1834 in his riding as "YANKEE BEEF and PORK, the WELLAND CANAL, and the EVERLASTING SALARY BILL, were the principal things brought against me by the Radicals."67 This agrarian critique combined a natural egalitarian distrust of monopoly, a critique of inefficiency and mismanagement to say nothing of malfeasance, and a suspicion of commercial enterprise on a large scale. In the area of trade their
outcry had been precipitated by the ninth section of an imperial act passed on 28 Aug. 1833 which provided for the duty free importation into the Canadas of American wheat, flour, beef and pork. The effect was to bring American produce into direct competition with local producers in both the Lower Canadian and domestic markets.68 Petitions poured into the assembly from the agricultural districts complaining of the glut occasioned by American produce and the consequent distress of Upper Canadian agriculturists. Specie was being drained out of the province and agriculture depressed. The radical agrarian solution was a two-pronged attack—against monopoly and free trade.69 Special interests, such as the timber trade, provided the few exceptions to the general tenor of agrarian concern. The Bathurst and Ottawa districts demanded a duty to "protect all the other classes of Society against exorbitant demands for the necessaries of life... the imposition of any duty upon the importation of Pork or Bread stuffs from the United States of America, as detrimental to the interests of the labouring, commercial, and agricultural interests of the Province."70

In response to the agrarian plight Mackenzie chaired a committee "to enquire into the state of the Trade and Commerce of this Province with other parts of the world..." and to consider necessary improvements.71 On 22 Jan. 1835 the assembly adopted a resolution by a vote of 33 to 22:

that no one step of the Legislature can more tend to afford encouragement to the industrious and enterprising agriculturists of the Province, (who must always be considered the most important
class in the Colony,) than the imposition of a suitable and proper protecting duty on various articles coming from the United States of America, which now are admitted duty free.

Among the 22 in opposition were Hagerman and W. B. Robinson. 72 Matters came quickly to a head. Robert Stanton wrote to Macaulay that the scale of duties proposed in the legislation would entail a "prohibition" of trade. Moreover he added, "If the visionary schemes . . . should meet with any countenance, we should be placed completely at the mercy of the Farmers." 73 Stanton also feared that the "effect of such a measure if it became a Law would be to turn from our waters all the carrying trade, & be destructive to the Welland Canal - it would find its way to Montreal by another route, & still meet us in the foreign market." 74 Yet the radical cause was not assured a victory; cracks were appearing amongst its various adherents over the bill and Peter Perry was attempting to kill the bill by attaching an amendment providing for duties on imports bound for transhipment. 75 In spite of Perry's manoeuvre the bill passed the assembly only to be rejected by the Legislative Council. On 18 April 1836 a committee of the council chaired by William Allan and composed of Peter Adamson, James Crooks, William Morris, and John-Macaulay replied to the assembly's address of 15 April 1835 concerning council rejections of assembly legislation. The committee with the exception of Macaulay was dominated by men with strong commercial interests. It established two criteria for rejection: first, that the legislature had a responsibility to emigrants:
and other classes . . . such as mechanics and labourers, to the necessity of paying an enhanced price for the absolute necessaries of life, in order to give a higher remuneration to the agriculturalist than he would otherwise obtain might perhaps be justifiable under some circumstances; but the reasons that would justify it here, seem not very evident.

Secondly, the provision to subject goods bound for transhipment to a duty would contravene existing law and destroy the carrying trade on the lakes. The two great interests had locked horns over the matter of protection. In the mouths of the commercial interest the concern for the poor and the labourers rings hollow.

During the second session of the twelfth parliament the agrarians led by Mackenzie pulled off a stunning reversal of position. The impact of this stratagem is lessened only by the merchant unrest and uncertainty which culminated in a petition calling for reciprocity with the United States. In the assembly Mackenzie argued that Upper Canada was held in bondage to the commerce and shipping of Great Britain which had depressed agriculture. Thus the logical remedy was to remove all restrictions:

. . . to direct the labour of our hands to the industry of our choice, to employ the cheapest and most convenient means of transport, and to carry the products of that industry to those markets in which they could be disposed of to the best advantage, our means of purchasing British goods would be thereby increased [sic], and our capital and labour employed beneficially in diffusing wealth and enjoyment through the colony.

If adopted this policy would abruptly jettison the St. Lawrence route to the ocean (to which they were presently restricted) for the Erie-Albany-New York route. A negotiated reciprocity would guarantee markets for the agricultural staples, wheat and flour. Within the
next month emerged one of the most unusual political alignments in Canadian history. The Board of Trade, merchants, and others of Toronto petitioned the select committee of the assembly on trade and commerce composed of David Thorburn, Gilbert McMicking, Charles Duncome, and Mackenzie. Most notable among the signatories were William Allan, Francis Hincks, and Robert Baldwin Sullivan — in itself an unlikely association. The petitioners called for a "general system of reciprocity" giving both farmer and manufacturer a new, large market, and the removal of the legislative restrictions of imperial enactment and the physical impediments of the St. Lawrence River. The new trade route to the ocean would follow the Erie Canal to the port of New York. The possibility of all-weather transport — the railroad — was quickly rendering obsolete the concern for east-west transport linkages via the St. Lawrence. Merchants could accommodate themselves to different constitutions and different boundaries in prosperous times. But when threatened, they scurried quickly in search of the nearest economic solution or shelter irrespective of other attachments. For good reason the gentry distrusted speculative interests within the public realm.

The committee surprisingly supported the recommendations of the merchants adding to the unusual alliance some of the foremost radical agrarians within the twelfth parliament. On 4 Feb. 1836 Mackenzie moved an amendment to the resolution on trade, calling for reciprocity and termination of "subservience to the interest of the commerce and shipping of the United Kingdom" and the abandonment of the St.
Lawrence route for year-round access to the ocean via New York rather than Montreal. 78 This dramatic realignment illustrates the powerful wrenching effect of economic distress and insecurity upon traditional policies. It was a harbinger of the powerful impact which the provincial debt would have in forcing acceptance of legislative union with Lower Canada upon a recalcitrant thirteenth parliament (1837-40) 79

The persistent dilemma of ensuring prosperity and development would prove to be the downfall of gentry politics. This was particularly evident during the debate over the proposed union in the late 1830s. This was as much as any thing else a debate over the direction society should take and the gentry (in spite of the eventual support by Hagerman and Macaulay) refused to subordinate their political beliefs for the sake of relieving the debt and securing development. In 1836 John Macaulay's arbitrator's report reaffirmed the naturalness of the St. Lawrence as the outlet for the emporium of the Great Lakes. 80 The gentry's position was a combination of beliefs which inexorably linked commercial policy, agriculture, and the imperial connection to the political viability of British North America and especially Upper Canada. Their often espoused regard for the general interest steered them to a policy which weighed protection and reciprocity against the priorities of the public realm. The former policy beggared the merchants by destroying the carrying trade and making basic foodstuffs too expensive for the urban poor, labourers, and recent emigrants; the latter promoted a powerful community of interest with the United States which it was assumed
would eventually lead to annexation in substance if not in form. Reciprocity was as objectionable in 1830, 1834, or 1836 as it would be in 1846. The lack of protection was likewise as objectionable in 1821 as it would be in 1846. But the provincial community emerging in the late 1830s preferred, as Sydenham so astutely observed, improvements over discussions of political principles. The economic disruptions of the late 1830s were exacerbated by entrenched anxiety about the provincial debt and suspension of public works which shattered the fragile hold of gentry politics. Even the religious opposition of the Methodists and particularly the Presbyterians to Church of England pretensions did not have as powerful an effect upon society. Competing claims among the various churches, often reinforced by national bonds, forced the secularization of the clergy reserves. The common desire to grasp prosperity transformed the state.

The weak link of the gentry's faith was the imperial tie. It was the foundation of their political and economic beliefs which could not be sustained if the imperial relationship was severed. The War of 1812 brought the point home. In 1840 Robinson thought it had taught both Upper Canada and Great Britain "to appreciate their position more correctly." In the foreseeable future independence was impossible for the colony. To withstand any threat from the south the province would have to rely upon British aid. The alternatives were clear:
... to become members of the American confederacy, or to continue what they are — the favoured colonies of Great Britain, protected by her fleets and armies, participating freely in her trade, aided by her capital, and confirmed, by her example and her power, in the possession of a constitution and laws better calculated than those of any other country to secure the best interests and promote the happiness of the human race. 85

The gentry did not oppose trade with the United States but as long as they rejected the American policy, Upper Canada would be tied to Britain for their major market. The economic link would buttress the British constitution and laws.

Although imperative, the relationship was not always an easy one. The gentry's insistence upon an agricultural resource base necessitated secure and stable markets. But the favoured relationship which Upper Canada needed precluded reciprocity with the United States. Content with British political institutions, the gentry were also content with trading wheat and flour in return for British manufactures. Between 28 January and 21 July 1820 in a series of 14 letters printed in the *Kingston Chronicle*, Strachan took elaborate pains to disprove the American journalist, Robert Walsh's argument that Great Britain was jealous of her colonies. Drawing on his acquaintance with "the science of political economy" derived from "Hume's political essays," "Mr. Smith, in his Wealth of Nations," and "Mr. Malthus" on population, 86 Strachan attempted to outline the mutual benefit to Britain and her colonies of colonial trade. 87

But the following year Macaulay was forced to lament the British decision to add to Upper Canadian economic woes by increasing duties
on colonial wheat and timber. The scenario was bleak. The unit prices of wheat and pork had fallen and now Upper Canada would be cut off from markets - "our commercial prospects are far from cheering," Macaulay wrote. The reduction in markets would diminish the circulation of currency. The grim prospect was that colonists would be reduced to subsistence, unable to afford British manufactures. Macaulay was compelled to urge a petitioning campaign "against the virtual exclusion of our grain from the British market." Upper Canadian trade was "fettered by the colonial system" which ignored colonial commerce in favour of imperial interests. In 1825 Strachan reviewed the devastating effects of British policy in 1821:

> the produce of the soil remaining on the hands of the cultivator, without a market; and the extension of Commerce restricted by the shackles of a colonial system, the child of a darker age.

The response from Whitehall to an assembly petition of 26 May 1821 entreating a redress of the new duties must have dimmed the most ardent hopes. Any alteration was uncertain because of parliamentary pressure of "so delicate a nature as that which relates to the Corn Trade of this Country." Of the changes in timber duties the Lords of the Privy Council were reassuring - "... will not be attended with any real injury to the interests of the British North American Possessions."

Upper Canadian anxiety concerning restrictive British duties did not abate until their removal in 1825. Even then the Upper Canadian parliament was not satisfied. In January 1826 during the
first session of the ninth parliament the Joint Committee on Colonial Trade, co-chaired by the Niagara merchant, Thomas Clark and Robinson, called for the removal of restrictions on flour as well as wheat. Indeed the committee was hopeful that the recent trade relaxation be made permanent:

It must in truth very much depend upon our being able to find a steady market for this staple article of production, whether we can or can not supply ourselves with the manufactures of Great Britain, in proportion to our wants. 93

Two years later Robert Stanton's U. E. Loyalist trumpeted the benefits. Prices had risen again, depression was passing, "and the prospect before us is animating." Although the 1825 measure expired in 1828 Stanton was confident that "our interests will not be forgotten, and that it is more than probable, these advantages will be continued to us, on a more permanent footing." 94 Sure of the British market the province could divert its attention to improving the quality of its flour exports. Stanton's hope was justified. In 1828 the 1825 regulations were made permanent. No new wrinkles appeared in tariff policy until the Colonial Trade Act of 1831 which allowed American goods to enter British North America free of duty. 95

But the gains of 1825 were short-lived. The imperial framework of the political and economic opinions of the gentry was perhaps a fatal weakness. They assumed a Britain unchanging in its adherence to an eighteenth century constitution and seventeenth century economic policy. In doing so, they were vulnerable to the wrenching of institutions occasioned by liberal lords in the political realm and by Sir Robert Peel in the economic. In 1842 Peel introduced the Canada Corn Act which fixed the rate on Canadian wheat at one shilling.
per quarter but cut the rate on timber from 55 to 30 shillings. For the wheat trade the reprieve was only temporary. In 1846 Peel's government adopted free trade. British North America was left reeling. The scurry for a new market began until in 1854 they secured reciprocity with the United States.

For the gentry the imperial relationship was more than a mere economic relationship of mutual advantage. But it was also less than the sentimental attachment to empire which later drew off young Canadians to wars in the Crimea, South Africa, and France. Culturally the gentry understood the differences between Upper Canadians and Englishmen. Their visits to England shattered any illusions they may have held in that regard. The attachment was rather to English institutions, laws, language, and customs.

Unfortunately for the gentry the particular England they cherished was fixed in time and its passing was marked by free trade. It is not surprising that in the 1840s the gentry English political connections were the "ultras" -- men such as the Duke of Wellington, Sir Robert Harry Inglis, and the Bishop of Exeter, Henry Philpotts, -- who had been relegated to the fringe of political life.

Free trade was one of many shocks which the gentry absorbed between 1840 and 1854. Like the others its passage marked the end of the gentry's world, not simply a change in imperial economic policy. In the 1840s the gentry were in eclipse. The Union removed most from active politics. Strachan and Robinson continued the battles for the clergy reserves and the university but it was
left to Robert Stanton to sum up the reaction to the events of 1846:

"Free Trade" will lead to 'free' opinions—new channels of commerce, will lead to new interests—and where interest lies, inclination will soon follow—and then farewell to "Ships, Colonies, & Commerce"—no protection—no feeling of binding allegiance—: the best market—the best friends:, and when the apple is ripe, it will fall of itself into the hands of our neighbors.96
FOOTNOTES


3. See chapters V and VI.

4. The literature is growing. The focus of this debate has been the work of R. T. Naylor. For a review and survey, see L. R. MacDonald, "Merchants against industry: an idea and its origins," *CHR*, LVI (1975), and Leo Johnson, "The contradiction between independent commodity production and capitalist production in Upper Canada 1820-1850," (Unpublished paper, Canadian Historical Association, spring, 1978).


7. PAO Report (1915), 272-73, 422-35, 443. The committee was chaired by Robert Nichol and composed of: Charles Jones (Leeds), Peter Robinson (York & Simcoe), James Crooks (Halton), Francis Baby (Essex), William Morris (Carleton), William Warren Baldwin (York & Simcoe). With the exception of Baldwin all were businessmen, or former businessmen. With the exception of Baby all represented ridings east of Halton County.

8. PAO Report (1913), 428.

9. Ibid., 429.

10. Ibid.

11. Ibid., 430.

12. Ibid., 431.

13. Ibid., 432.


15. Ibid., 435.

17. Macaulay Papers, Hagerman to Robinson, York, 7 March 1821.

18. Ibid., Robinson to Macaulay, York, 1 April 1821.

19. PAO Report (1913), passim: Macaulay Papers, Robinson to Macaulay, York, 1 April 1821.


21. Ibid., p. 4.

22. This pastoral imagery is described in chapter II.


24. Kingston Chronicle, 5, 12, 19, 26 March 1819. For the evidence that the author is Strachan see S. F. Wise, "John Macaulay . . ."

25. Ibid., 13 April 1821.


30. RG 5, A1, 18153-62, (copy) Smith to Bathurst, York, 6 April 1818.

31. PRO, CO 42/361, Maitland to Bathurst, York, 8 Dec. 1818.

32. Ibid.

33. RG 5, A1, 19551-5, Robinson to Hillier, 18 Nov. 1818. Robinson had expressed the same opinion to Inspector General James Baby, Ibid., 18377-79, 5 May 1818. On 10 July 1819 he stated similar reservations about the supplementary U.S. trade bill of the fourth session, seventh parliament (PAO Report (1913), 201) that the navigation acts, if they applied to the province, prohibited the admittance of American shipping, Ibid., 21525-28, Robinson to Maitland, 10 July 1819.
34. PAC, RG 1, E1, 51, pp. 281-82, 31 July 1823.


36. CO 42/362, Maitland to Bathurst, York, 19 July 1819.

37. CO 42/372, Maitland to Bathurst, Queenston, 14 April 1824.

38. RG 1, E1, 51, pp. 281-87, 31 July 1823, report of 25 July.


40. Ibid., 32392-99, Robinson to Hillier, 25 July 1823.

41. CO 42/361, Maitland to Bathurst, York, 8 Dec. 1818; 42/366, maitland to Bathurst, York, 14 May 1821.

42. RG 5, A1, 56, Robinson to Hillier, London, 9 April 1822.

43. CO 42/372, Maitland to Bathurst, Queenston, 14 April 1824. This matter had been raised in a "Petition of the shipwrights of Kingston," 1 June 1819 (RG 5, A1, 21235-37).

44. Elgin-Grey Papers (Doughty) I, 29, Elgin to Grey, 26 April 1847.

45. S. F. Wise, "John Macaulay . . ."


47. Easterbrook and Aitken, 281-86.


49. Ibid., 14 May 1819. For those living on subsistence agriculture the importance of cheap food was particularly crucial. The crop failures of 1815/1816 reduced Glengarry County to starvation. RG 5, A1, 14509-14, Memorial of the inhabitants of the County of Glengarry, 15 Feb. 1817; 14810-12, Neil McLean to D. Cameron, Cornwall, 21 March 1817.

50. Ibid., 17 Sept. 1819.

51. Ibid., 17 March 1820.


54. Ibid., 2 Nov. 1821.

55. CO 42/366, Maitland to Bathurst, 14 May 1821.

56. Ibid. The point is elaborated in 42/381, Maitland to Huskisson, 15 Dec. 1827.

57. JHA, 1st, 9th, 28 Jan. 1825, p. 31.

58. JHA, 2nd, 9th, 24 Nov. 1823, p. 18.


62. Ibid.

63. PAC, RG 43, B4(c), 303, p. 133, 26 Oct. 1830.

64. CO 42/391, Address of the Legislative Council of Upper Canada, 5 March 1830, in Colborne to Murray, 24 March 1830.

65. JHA, 2nd, 10th, 20 Jan. 1830, p. 18.


67. Appendix, JHA, II, 1836, no. 90. Third report from the select committee appointed to examine and enquire into the management of the Welland Canal, p. 31 (copy), W. B. Robinson to W. H. Merritt, Newmarket, 14 Oct. 1834.

68. Appendix, JHA, I, 1835. First report on trade and commerce, ii. For the argument that the difficulties of the wheat staple during this period were more apparent than real, see Douglas McCalla, "The wheat staple and Upper Canadian development," (Unpublished paper, Canadian Historical Association, spring, 1978).

69. JHA, 15 Feb. 1835, 145-46. The petition of James Hunter and 361 others, of the Township of Whitby . . .; The petition of William Curtis and 91 others, inhabitants of Dumfries . . .; The petition of John Poore and 480 others . . ., 164-65; The petition of David Millar and 25 others of the Township of Waterloo; 175; The petition of John Sellick and 135 others, of the County of Grenville . . ., 176; The petition of Thomas Stinson, and 188 others, 218.
70. JHA, 26 Feb. 1835. Petition of Charles Symmes and 120 others, of the Districts of Bathurst and Ottawa; see also a petition for the protection of manufacturing, 247.

71. JHA, 1st, 12th, 26 Jan. 1835, p. 65.

72. Ibid., 22 Jan. 1835, p. 42.

73. Macaulay Papers, Stanton to Macaulay, Toronto, 12 March 1835.

74. Ibid., Stanton to Macaulay, Toronto, 15 March 1835.

75. Ibid., Stanton to Macaulay, Toronto, 26 March 1835.

76. PAO, RG 18, C-1-18-4-36, Report of a secret committee...


78. Ibid., 4 Feb. 1836, pp. 167-78.

79. See chapter VIII.

80. Appendix, JHA, 1836-37, no. 4, Arbitrator Report, p. 4.


82. For a general discussion of the tentative hold of toryism, see Harris and Warkentin, 164-66.

83. Canada and the Canada Bill, 15.

84. Ibid., 18-22.

85. Ibid., 22-23.


88. Ibid., 13 April 1821.

89. Ibid., 2 Nov. 1821.

90. [John Strachan], Director's report of the Welland Canal Company (Montreal, 1826), 7.
91. RG 5, A1, 26626-29, Thomas Lock to Henry Goulburn, Whitehall, 11 Aug. 1821.

92. CO 42/372, Address of the Legislative Council and Commons of Upper Canada to the king, pp. 16-7, Jan. 1824 "enclosed in Maitland to Bathurst, 5 Feb. 1824; Catton Papers, "Remarks of Mr. Robinson . . ."; CO 42/376, 273-67, G. H. Markland to R. Wilmot Horton, 22 April 1825.


95. Easterbrook and Aitken, 282-83.

96. Macaulay Papers, Stanton to Macaulay, 1 May 1846.
CHAPTER IV

CANALS, DEBT, AND THE MANIA FOR DEVELOPMENT

It is a fact that cannot be disproved ... that no country can be pointed out, either in America or Europe, where so much has been accomplished by so small a population: I mean accomplished upon their own resources and credit. . . .

J. B. Robinson

In the period between the War of 1812 and the Union the main focus of economic improvement in Upper Canada was canal-building. Proposals for canals had been brought forward in the House of Assembly as early as 1799 when three prominent Niagara merchants, Robert Hamilton, Thomas Clark, and George Forsyth urged the province to build a canal between Lake Erie and Queenston. No important initiatives were taken until after the war when Robert Nichol, the most able member of any post-war parliament until the election of Robinson in 1820, made the improvement of navigation one of his foremost legislative priorities.

As early as 1811 the Kingston Gazette had lauded the proposed New York canal connecting Lake Erie with the port of New York but feared "... without corresponding exertions on our part, the prospects of prosperity and grandeur traced out by nature for the inhabitants of the navigable parts of the St. Lawrence, will vanish, perhaps, for ever." Upper Canada offered "the greatest field for improvement" almost without equal—in the world. Yet without the trade of the upper
lakes it would never amount to more than a continuous drain on the British treasury. Nicholas made his first tentative foray into the area of inland navigation in 1816 during the fifth session of the seventh parliament. He introduced an Inland Navigation Bill providing for a survey of Upper Canadian waters which died on the order paper after passing second reading. The Niagara merchant, Thomas Dickson, moved a bill for improving the navigation of the St. Lawrence but it was defeated on first reading.

The following year Lieutenant Governor Francis Gore raised the matter of a water communication between Prescott and Montreal in his opening address to parliament. In response a committee was formed chaired by Peter Robinson to determine what improvements had already been made on the St. Lawrence. On 6 March 1817 the committee reported that only one individual had made improvements. Three days later this enterprising soul petitioned the assembly for a government subsidy. The question of improvement was minor; few were interested in it and nothing further transpired.

The first substantive attempt to bring the province to consider inland navigation occurred almost a year later. On 23 Feb. 1818 Jonas Jones moved the house take "... into consideration the expediency [sic] of improving the Navigation of the River St. Lawrence." This initiative was not unusual for a member of a leading Brockville family with extensive interests in the St. Lawrence carrying trade. It marked the beginning of Jones's longstanding interest in canals and
economic improvement. After the usual parliamentary procedures Jones
was named chairman for the assembly on a joint committee with the
legislative council. Their report was tabled on 26 February deeming
the improvement of St. Lawrence navigation of the "very first importance"
to both Upper and Lower Canada. By 11 March the assembly and council
agreed to a joint address urging the provincial administrator, Samuel
Smith, to raise the matter with the Governor of Lower Canada, Sir
John Coape Sherbrooke. At issue were the disadvantages, difficulty,
and expense to commerce caused by the navigational obstructions in the
river. The Upper Canadians desired "that concurrent means may be
adopted ... for effecting so desirable an object ... essential to
the interests of each Province in a commercial ... view."

On 7 August Smith ordered Thomas Clark and the Dundas merchant,
James Crooks, to Quebec where on 2 September they conferred with the
Lower Canadian commissioners, Joseph Papineau and George Garden,
appointed by the Duke of Richmond, Sherbrooke's successor. Without a
mandate to reach any agreement, the joint committee was content to
reach an accord on six resolutions. As might be expected the terms
of agreement were broad motherhood issues: no work could be more
conducive to the "progress and prosperity of agriculture and commerce",
timing was crucial because of American work on their "grand" New York
Canal, and the necessity of having locks and canals at least equal
in size to the American works. Finally they recommended legislation
to ensure that any construction would meet this minimum standard.
In late October, upon receipt of this information, Jones successfully brought the matter to the attention of another joint committee. James Durand chaired the assembly committee and on 3 November brought forward its resolutions that "the present state of the pecuniary resources . . . [are] wholly inadequate to accomplish this important object without recourse to other means than are within the control of the Legislature." To this end they suggested crown approval for the sale by auction of 100,000 acres of waste lands and the appointment of a civil engineer to make plans and estimate costs. On 19 November a joint address was presented to the governor for transmission to the prince regent seeking approval of the auction of land. Later an act was passed granting a sum of money for the proposed survey of the St. Lawrence and Ottawa rivers. 7

Nothing came of these tentative measures at improving inland navigation. What prompted them is a matter of conjecture. Certainly Lower Canada had appointed a commission in 1815 to supervise construction of a canal at the Lachine Rapids. Then there was the great example of canal-building in New York State. Moreover the 1817 reports of the American commissioners, including DeWitt Clinton, had gained an audience in Upper Canada. These reports made an eloquent case for the beneficial effects of canals from ancient times to the present. The point which Upper Canadian readers could not miss was the assertion that the proposed canal would capture the trade of the lakes, which hitherto had been reaped by the Canadian provinces. 8 Finally
the Courlayite agitation of 1818 had prompted Macaulay to rebuke.
the notion that Upper Canadians had genuine grievances. In doing so
he brought together the British constitution with the Edenic myth.
It was as clear to this man as any in the province that the best
means to secure the Upper Canadian garden was the improvement of
navigation. The early suggestions for improving navigation had
floundered on widespread apathy, the inability to sustain cooperation
with Lower Canada, and most important, the apparently insuperable
problem of funding with inadequate resources.

Between 1819 and 1821 the province was spurred to consider a
general plan for the improvement of navigation as the most certain
means of achieving a prosperous economy. The burden of this impetus
fell on the depression of markets. But a more noticeable change in
the public sphere was the rise of eloquent spokesmen for the virtues
of improvement, specifically of canals. The organ of economic
improvement was the Kingston Chronicle under the editorship of John
Macaulay and Alexander Pringle. Joined in print by Robinson and
Strachan, Macaulay's editorials brought this issue to the fore as
never before. In these columns emerge the practical thrust of the
agrarian development strategy of the gentry. The main aspect was
simple, to link the productive agricultural regions on Lakes Erie
and Ontario to sure and stable markets in Britain. This strategy
required harnessing the resources of the province to canals along the St. Lawrence connecting Prescott to Montreal and to a canal between the lakes. Within this framework harbour and river improvement and canals such as the Burlington Bay or Desjardins carried forward the business of linking hitherto inaccessible areas to markets. The assumptions underlying this strategy were equally straightforward. The economy was basically agricultural and geared to independent commodity production. It was neither desirable nor thought possible that Upper Canada could be otherwise. In fact the richness of the national bounty cast the young colony in the image of Eden. Canals following the route traced by nature would merely bring the surplus productions to their markets in Britain.

Not all aspects of American life were repugnant to the gentry. Haliburton's Sam Slick novels represent the classic dilemma of a British North American tory trying to combine the British constitution and American technology. Even the Scottish-born Strachan who made frequent references to European examples in canal-building was awed by American achievements. The gentry readily adopted such Yankee notions as boards of commissions and, especially in the 1830s, sought American advice on the technical and administrative detail of canal-building. Macaulay praised DeWitt Clinton, governor of New York, for his remarks on the "grand internal improvements" of his state. Macaulay hoped the lesson to be learned would induce the Upper Canadian parliament "...to make some efforts towards accomplishing the projected
improvements on the navigation of the St. Lawrence." He urged Lower Canada to complete the Lachine Canal without delay "the want of which is so much felt by every person whose produce descends to the Montreal market from the Banks of the Saint Lawrence and the shores of the Lakes." 10

Two months later in March 1819 Strachan began to beat the drums for improved navigation in a lengthy and detailed series of letters to the editor of the Chronicle. 11 Strachan suggested an innovative role for the press in the province. Rather than serving as vehicles for grievance or discontent he urged the general promotion of improvement as a more worthwhile pursuit. Noting that general education, road improvement, and "the improvement of the navigation of the Lakes and rivers . . ." have become "objects of anxious consideration," Strachan proposed channeling the anxiety! Many were disturbed by the progress of the canal project in New York. Strachan however rejoiced at "the energies of our enterprising and active neighbours." Upon completion it would remove the old bone of contention over free American navigation on the St. Lawrence. More importantly the canal would induce Upper Canadians to insist upon a similar canal to keep open the old route to the ocean.

Strachan was not lacking in proposals. He recommended bold action on the St. Lawrence:

... made by the public, and the whole expense defrayed by the Provincial Treasuries ... [the] great object is to render the communication more easy and expeditious, and at a very reduced price. Now this is inconsistent with private monopoly. The dimension of canals, especially the Lachine, should be considered as leading to the greatest emporium of North America.
The advantages offered by the Canadas over other countries and particularly over European canals were cheap land and an abundant water supply. Because such a project was of general public interest he dismissed "the usual objection that Government never does any work of this sort well, it is trite. . . ." He cited the examples of court houses and jails built as cheaply by government commissions as by private companies. American rivals were supported by the "public purse" so it was as sensible that the same course should be followed in Upper Canada. At stake was a canal which upon completion would result in "the destruction of our commerce."

The enthusiasm which for a decade and a half at least would characterize the improvement aspirations of the gentry was unmistakably evident. The Canadas would cooperate with the imperial government in the sale of 100,000 acres of the waste lands of the crown. Then with the proceeds improvements would be made to the St. Lawrence and also a canal would be built linking Lakes Erie and Ontario by the Grand and Chippawa rivers completing "the main line of internal navigation. . . ."

Strachan's lack of experience was telling. He envisaged setting "vigorously to work" and completing the project two years before the New York canal. For some years the gentry would justify canals only secondarily as maintaining the St. Lawrence hold on American trade. At this juncture in time Strachan was confident in the fertility of Upper Canada. The country was growing "and her productions will, in a short time, be immense." Even without American use the canals were
justified. Improvement was simply a matter "to preserve and extend our commerce by the Saint Lawrence" and "to render the progress [of goods] upwards easy..."12

Towards the autumn of 1819 Robinson used the Chronicle's columns for a discursive essay on the "happy art of anticipation carried to a perfection that is truly admirable."13 This characteristic was best exhibited by the Americans who "obscure the perception of present evil by anticipating the good which futurity appears to have in store for them..." Tied to this trait was the:

... other peculiarity of character which induces the Americans to regulate all their schemes and plans, not according to what is, but to what they hope and suppose will be... It makes them forget the laws that regulate the progress of improvement, disregard the actual state of things around them, and conduct every thing on a scale which could perhaps be premature several centuries hence.

In spite of this gentle twitting of Yankee excess Robinson stood in awe of its source: "It is to an anticipating spirit, that even outruns futurity, that the Americans are indebted [to] for most, of the improvements and institutions they boast of as shewing their rapid advances..." Their attitude had its shortcomings but many vast designs" collapsed "when the means and energies of their supporters are exhausted..."14 Robinson lamented the absence of this spirit in British North America. The failure to encourage "great designs and brilliant specifications" was attributable to the ill-favour with which they were regarded by the mass of people. Here was a lesson for both the populace and government of the province. Without this spirit a government could never be shown either its duties or the capabilities
of the country:

Therefore, let the inhabitants of this colony, shew, by exertions towards its improvement, what a splendid return it can be made to yield for all that is expended upon it, and the supreme government will feel willing, and conceive themselves authorized, to support and assist them in all their endeavors. This Province certainly affords fair scope for anticipation, and as there is no danger of its people over-rating their strength, or expecting too much in the compass of a short time, those who venture to shew a little public spirit and rational enterprise, will assuredly not be disappointed in the result of what they undertake.  

In the midst of the depression Macaulay took comfort from Clinton's speech of 4 Jan. 1820 to the New York legislature. Deeming this "luminous and comprehensive Speech" seminal to the problems at hand, he reprinted a lengthy excerpt prefaced by a long introduction. Briefly summarizing Clinton's analysis of the depression Macaulay turned to the governor's hopeful projection for a quick recovery. The crisis was temporary and would be "surmounted by the enterprising spirit of the country." The good omens were the state of New York's treasury and a credit capable of supporting the state's great programme of internal improvements. With a touch of envy Macaulay commented: "These are magnificent projects, and if carried into execution could not fail to raise the State of New York to the highest pinnacle of prosperity." New York's example under Clinton was worthy emulating. The measure of Clinton and New York's influence on Upper Canadians may be taken from the reprinting of another of his speeches later that year in the government Upper Canada Gazette. The paper singled out for particular emphasis Clinton's remarks upon schools and canals "in a great degree interesting to the people of this Province, as shewing the rapidly
increasing strength of a powerful neighbour."\textsuperscript{16}

By 1822 Strachan's forecasts of 1819 had been shattered by the official opening of the Champlain Canal. But his earnest hopes had not gone for naught. The economic difficulties of the post war period and in particular the dislocation suffered by the collapse of markets between 1819 and 1821 had spurred the first examination by the assembly of the province's resources.\textsuperscript{17} The major recommendation of the Nichol Committee to remedy the colony's economic woes was to ensure the safe, easy and expeditious exportation of staples to market by "the improvement of our Inland Navigation." This measure was urged upon the assembly for its "earliest and most profound attention."\textsuperscript{18} Hagerman considered Nichol's analysis of the province's impending bankruptcy exaggerated\textsuperscript{19} but Nichol was certain enough of the province's "increasing power and rapidly accumulating commercial resources" to advocate a grand scheme of canals linking the Great Lakes to Montreal as "perfectly practicable." Nichol's only doubts were the province's ability to fund a work of even "the most moderate scale." It was therefore necessary to secure the aid of Great Britain but he enjoined, "... we must evince a disposition to contribute to it to the extent of our means, and even if it were possible, to go beyond them...."

The report deliberately neglected any consideration of dimension or cost. Rather its stated aim was solely to indicate to parliament the military and commercial importance of a canal system between the lakes and the ocean. Following the example of New York State the committee
recommended appointing a board of commissioners to fix priorities, to choose the most suitable sites, to estimate costs, and to recommend the most efficacious means of implementation. 20

On 10 April 1821 Robert Randal reported to the assembly the resolutions of the committee considering the Nichol Report. The committee’s final resolution legislating a commission of internal navigation was lifted from the report and on 12 April Nichol introduced the Inland Navigation or Canal Commissioners Bill. By this point the gentry had decided that the provincial scope of the Nichol Report merited their support. 21 On 13 April Nichol seconded by Robinson introduced the bill for its third reading. The bill passed through the assembly and council and received royal assent. Robinson had urged the importance to the province’s prosperity of appropriating the "anticipating spirit" of Yankee society. Nichol had stressed the necessity of contributing to improvement even if it meant going beyond provincial means. The era of gentry development began on 13 April. In the sets of societies which made up the colonies of British North America no other group could match the gentry’s anticipating spirit. In his closing address to the assembly Maitland captured the importance of what had transpired, calling the bill "the commencement of an important undertaking eminently calculated to advance the prosperity and greatness of Upper Canada." 22

In 1822 in the last issue of the Kingston Chronicle under Macaulay’s editorship he reviewed favourably "the manifest improvement
effected in the internal condition of Provincial affairs with the last four years." But in other fields such as his comparison of the province with New York there was little cause for celebration:

The State of New York merits great praise for the enterprise and ability displayed in completing in so short a time the magnificent scheme of uniting the waters of the Saint Lawrence and the Hudson. What a stimulus should this example be to Canadian enterprise! This great work, (to leave the Erie Canal out of view) has been completed in four years at an expense of about £200,000. The Lachine canal 9 miles long, and the only work of the kind in Canada, has been two years in hand, and is not yet, we believe, more than half completed. We find no pleasure in dwelling on the comparison.

Yet a mere three years later Macaulay marvelled at the change in public attitudes towards improvement over the past seven or eight years. The province now considered what:

... had not previously engaged their serious attention, viz. the means and practicability of improving the natural facilities for navigation presented by the magnificent lakes and mighty rivers, but they have actually commenced on an extensive scale the construction of canals and harbours, the mere mention of which would within a very few years have been ridiculed as the wildest of dreams, and for the accomplishment of which the probable resources and energies of the colony a century hence would have been then conceived unequal. Within this short period, then, (and it assuredly comprehends a most memorable epoch) is to be dated the happy nativity of that spirit of public enterprise, which by stimulating commerce and agriculture, and holding forth the brightest rewards to well directed industry, is destined to guide and quicken our march in the highway of prosperity.23

What had changed, or more exactly what was changing, were expectations and priorities. Several years of depression brought navigational improvement from the back-burner of provincial politics. The Nichol Report and the efforts of Nichol himself had brought improvement to
the consideration of a parliament (the eighth) eager to set the province upon a surer foundation for prosperity. In 1821 Robinson alone had drafted and steered through the assembly a uniform currency bill, a new act amending the 1820 commercial intercourse bill, the Bank Act incorporating the Bank of Upper Canada, and aided Nichol in passing the Internal Navigation Bill. Robinson had written the report of the Joint Committee on the customs dispute with Lower Canada which he had co-chaired with William Dickson. The other members of the committee were Strachan, Markland, Jonas Jones, Mahlon Burwell, Archibald McLean, Robert Hamilton, and Alexander McDonell. Written by Robinson the importance of this report was to break the psychological barrier of the limits imposed by meagre financial resources. The following year a combination of Robinson's talent, the esteem in which his report was held, and the strong backing of Major George Hillier, Maitland's secretary, and Strachan gained him the appointment as commissioner of the customs dispute with Lower Canada.

The gentry's campaign for improvement began in the Kingston Chronicle in 1818. By late 1820 they were in positions capable of not only influencing political opinion but of implementing or initiating changes which were dependent upon the public purse. Strachan was a member of both executive and legislative councils and had supplanted Chief Justice William Dummer Powell as the first adviser to the governor, exclusive of Hillier. Robinson was attorney general and after his election to the assembly for the riding of York in 1820 served brilliantly as
government spokesman. Both Jones and Hagerman were in the assembly and George Markland had become a legislative councillor. It would be fifteen years before John Macaulay reluctantly entered office and politics at York (Toronto) but until that time he performed a critical role on various government commissions and his newspaper work had earned him a reputation as "the leading advocate of canal-building, improvements in lake navigation and in internal communications." In 1821 he was appointed to the Commission for the Improvement of Internal Navigation which in a few years would earn him Hillier's recommendation to Colonel John By as one of its "leading Member['s]. . . ." A year later he was the personal choice of Strachan and Hillier to act as the 'eminence grise' as Inspector General James Baby's secretary for the customs arbitration in Quebec. In short the difference between 1818 and 1820 was not just an economic depression but the presence of powerfully-placed advocates of a particular type of economic improvement.

Perhaps most important to the coming of the canal age was the anticipation which the gentry brought to their advocacy of canals. So sure were they of the glorious untapped bounty of providence's dispensation that they could project, as Strachan did in 1819, quick completion of the public works and instant prosperity. It is impossible to under-estimate the impact of the first debenture bill in providing the jumping-off point for improvement. Robinson had drafted and steered the Bank Act through the eighth parliament (1821) but the bank had neither the inclination nor the large sums needed to fund such
costly projects. In 1830 William Allan, president of the Bank of Upper Canada, and a director of the Welland Canal Company, informed William Hamilton Merritt that a loan to the company would not be forthcoming: "... I dare say a little money now is of the utmost consequence now in (the progress of the Canal) - but it is not a little that does for your wants - it is large sums - that will only do for you." The limited purposes of the bank were to facilitate commerce by issuing notes and discounting the promissory notes of merchants.

As Strachan had urged in 1819 the capitalization of public works would have to come from the government. The method devised by Robinson in 1821 for covering the pensions arrears was the first debenture issued by the province to borrow money. Robinson's Debenture Bill for the sum of £25,000 gave him as he claimed in 1854 "the glory of laying the foundation of our public debt..." Here was the best testimony for the gentry's intractable faith in an economic future of unbounded prosperity - their willingness without second thought to mortgage the province against anticipated future revenues. This attitude gave meaning to Robinson's exhortations on the "anticipating" or "enterprising" spirit. In 1821 the government had backed into debenture financing. In the circumstances they had simply run out of alternatives. Once adopted debentures were used almost exclusively to the advantage of public works, particularly canals and navigation improvement. By the union 38 debentures had been issued. In the mid-1830s the use of debentures was so extensive that the interest on the debt was often the largest single expense in a given fiscal year. As of February 1838
the debt was £1,083,218.17.8, the result of 35 debenture bills.

between 1821 and 1838. With the exception of £56,780 for war losses the entire amount went to public works, including the two largest debentures: one to cancel the public debt (£200,000) and the other to cancel the debt and finance certain public works (£400,000). The financial crisis beginning in 1837 made the thirteenth parliament duly cautious. After the suspension of public works in 1838, only three more debentures were issued for a piddling total amount of approximately £7,000. The militia pension debenture of 1821 was followed by two small debentures: one for the Burlington Canal, the other for public service. But the fourth and sixth debentures raised during the first session of the ninth parliament (1825) marked an enormous infusion of public money into public works, in this case the Welland Canal. Robinson passed bills raising sums of £25,000 and then £50,000 for the company.

The choice of major canal routes was mainly a matter of common-sense: the St. Lawrence rapids between Prescott and Montreal, Niagara Falls, and a link between the Ottawa River and Kingston. The power to affect decisions about these routes was limited. The incorporation of the Welland Canal Company in 1823 limited provincial initiative connecting Lakes Erie and Ontario. Imperial wishes and a willingness to advance money gave the Ottawa River-Kingston route a priority it
would not have otherwise enjoyed, and the question of St. Lawrence canals was complicated by the necessity of Lower Canadian cooperation.

The Commission on Internal Navigation chaired by John Macaulay after Nichol's death in 1824 was predominantly concerned with the proposed Rideau canal and the St. Lawrence. The various reports of the commission (the first was published in 1823) were submitted to a Joint Committee on Internal Navigation in 1825 and the reports published the following year.

In the Internal Navigation Bill of 1821 it had been intended that the commission on internal navigation explore routes for canals and locks between Lake Erie and the eastern boundary of the province. In spite of original intentions the main thrust of the commission's reports was limited to the "two great lines of navigable communication, Lake Erie and Lake Ontario and the Rideau and Ottawa Rivers." Indeed after selecting the former route the commission's efforts were made redundant after the private Welland Canal Company surveyed a route and began work, a project "gratifying to every friend of public improvement." The St. Lawrence canals became entangled in an 1823 understanding between the Canadas providing for shared costs of surveys. Unable to reach an accord with Lower Canada the province and the Macaulay Commission were unable to consider this important route until the completion in 1826 of a survey funded by the upper province alone.

In 1821 Strachan wrote Macaulay of his preference for a canal from the Ottawa River to Kingston over a St. Lawrence canal because
the latter was too vulnerable in time of war and hence the British
government would support only the former. A year later Strachan
wrote of his concern to make Quebec the "outlet of all produce raised
in the St. Lawrence." It is difficult to state what had occasioned
Strachan's change of mind. But a reasonable guess would be the
completion of the Champlain Canal and a lessened anxiety about imminent
war with the United States. Moreover the effect of the depression
must have had a telling impact increasing the concern for commerce
over security. By 1824 he considered the Rideau route useless except
commercially to the local district and in time of war. Of the two
great canal projects only the Welland held out any general commercial
advantage.

Strachan's change of opinion was a harbinger of the demise of
military survival as a significant aspect to the pros and cons of
canal-building. In 1825 one of Macaulay's correspondents expressed
the prevailing view when he doubted that "the improved Route by the
Ottawa would supersede the use of the St. Lawrence upwards in time of
peace." Unfortunately the first report of the commissioners had
recommended that the "security and commerce" of the province would
benefit from a canal between the Rideau River and Lake Ontario. They
estimated the cost at $70,000 and on 1 April 1824 Maitland, on behalf
of the legislature, wrote the Earl Bathurst to "devise some means not
unfairly burdensome to the mother country, of affording countenance &
support to exertions so disproportionate to the present resources
of the Province." Bathurst replied on 8 October offering to advance a loan for £70,000:

... provided that the Legislature of Upper Canada will give ample security for the payment of an adequate interest and for the progressive liquidation of the principal, charged on specific taxes to be imposed for that special purpose, and pledged inalienably for the accomplishment of this object.

Bathurst did not reject the Welland project but selected the Rideau "as that which is in every sense the most important..." He was even willing to recommend the Welland the following year if "upon reconsideration" the assembly desired to undertake both projects simultaneously. 50 The reports of the Macaulay Commission were considered by a Joint Committee on Internal Navigation co-chaired by Robinson and Strachan. In December 1825 the assembly voted on the committee's resolutions praising Great Britain for the generous offer of a loan without opposition. A resolution asserting the commercial benefits to lands contiguous to the proposed canal passed 28 to 5 and a resolution extolling the canal as "the most effectual means of defence in the event of war with the United States" passed by the wide margin of 29 to 4.

The resolutions met increased opposition on matters of finance. A resolution calling for a joint effort with Lower Canada to handle the loan and increase duties to liquidate the principal passed 21 to 12 but the resolution that it was expedient to accept the loan for the improvement of the province was defeated 15 to 18. 51

Robinson was one of the members chosen to a committee to prepare an address based on the resolutions which called for taking up the loan only if Upper Canada shared the burden. On 4 Jan. 1826 the house
narrowly accepted the address after the vote of the speaker broke a 16 to 16 vote. Six days later the joint address to Maitland passed by a margin of 20 to 11.\textsuperscript{53} Because of the loan and the strong recommendation from Bathurst, who was willing to proceed although in 1824 the survey had not yet been completed, the gentry undertook to implement the necessary resolutions both in the commission report and the joint committee. It is clear however from Strachan's pronouncements that the dominant motive must have been loyalty. The government stance on the decision of the assembly was taken in Robert Stanton's editorial in his \textit{U. E. Loyalist}:

It was their [Upper Canadian government's] desire that we might have been the toll gatherers— we must now content ourselves to become the toll payers, and some few years hence, it may be viewed as matter of regret; that the zeal and interest exhibited by the Government, for the improvement of the Country, in this important respect, was not seconded in the manner that might have been expected.\textsuperscript{54}

The imperial government for military reasons decided to build the canal with or without Upper Canadian participation. When construction commenced Stanton sneered at the critics who had "endeavoured to create a suspicion, that Government... was actuated by a desire to have the whole Province mortgaged, for the purpose of cutting, what they were pleased to term a military Canal..."\textsuperscript{55} Even the Macaulay Commission's reference to the beneficial effects of the canal on some 10,000 nearby inhabitants was unable to guarantee Upper Canadian support.\textsuperscript{56} As early as 1824 after the publication of the first commission report Strachan had been unconvinced by the security argument.
Most of the legislature agreed. The matter was not pressed. In 1831 Merritt made the obvious case that the Rideau (then nearing completion) could not best effect an uninterrupted access to the ocean. Only the St. Lawrence canals could make that claim.

In spite of the rejection of the Rideau the publication of the commission reports and the promise of government action on them was seizing some important Upper Canadian imaginations. Robinson, who more than any other was convinced of Upper Canadian bounty and completely undaunted by considerations of scale or cost was ecstatic when he received the first report in London in 1823 from Macaulay: "One day or other we shall be a great people—That's certain—My boys may live to see it." By 1824 Charles Fothergill the editor of the Upper Canada Gazette and Weekly Register and a keen observer of economic improvement noted approvingly a change in attitude then apparent through British North America. The provinces had proved that there is "certainly no want of inclination . . . to improve their resources. . . ." Lower Canada was proceeding with the Lachine Canal and improving roads; Nova Scotia had appropriated funds to improve internal communications plus expended a sum on the Shubenacadie canal; New Brunswick was improving roads and had provided £1,000 to survey a possible link by canal between the Bay of Fundy and the St. Lawrence River. If scope and cost were standards Upper Canada stood alone. The assembly was then poised to take the extraordinary step
of voting $25,000 for the Welland Canal and accepting an imperial loan of $70,000 for the Rideau.\(^{59}\)

The first session of the ninth parliament (1825–26) was the annus mirabilis of canal-building. All the great projects were considered. The legislature committed itself to the support of the Welland Canal, rejected any participation in the Rideau project without a simultaneous commitment from Lower Canada, and decided to undertake a survey of the St. Lawrence without Lower Canadian cooperation. The gentry played leading roles in each of these developments. After Nichol's death Macaulay was the dominating member of the Commission on Internal Navigation. Robinson took the lead in the assembly chairing the committee reviewing the Welland Canal Company's petition for aid, and co-chairing with Strachan the crucial Joint Committee on Internal Navigation. The great flurry of activity fell in February 1825. On the 10th Robinson moved consideration of the company's petition. After being referred to the committee of which he was chairman Robinson tabled the committee's report six days later. Viewing the petition in conjunction with the improvements then being considered for the St. Lawrence "the completion of such a work . . . [was] an object of very great importance to this Province." It would provide an uninterrupted communication from Amherstburg to Kingston or Prescott and would facilitate military operations in time of war. Moreover the scale contemplated - sloop navigation - would have the added benefit of diverting the western trade of the United States away from the Erie
On 21 March the Perth merchant William Morris with Robinson as seconder introduced a bill that the Welland Canal would "tend greatly to increase the amount of exports from this province by placing the remote Districts on terms more nearly equal with those on the St. Lawrence..." The resolution passed 22 to 10 with such noted reformers as Captain John Matthews, Peter Perry, and John Rolph among the opposition. In spite of the usual end of session absenteeism the bill authorizing the loan passed on 13 April 16 to 11. Twenty-five years later Robinson looked back on his early association with Merritt and the canal. He had first heard of the project when Merritt pushed for incorporation of his company in 1824. He had often been dismissed as a "wild, visionary projector." For a time Robinson suspected that the "project was a wild one." But eventually he became "anxious to give you [Merritt] all the assistance in my power." Robinson was won over by Merritt's willingness to see the company directed by gentlemen thus ensuring that a private company would work in the public interest. Of the first legislative battle Robinson remarked:

How hard a battle was to be fought before a loan of £25,000 could be obtained from the Province upon tolerable security for repayment! If it were proposed now to close the Canal unless the Province would contribute £25,000 a year to keep it open, how would the question be decided?

For Robinson this battle and the many that followed were well worth the effort. The canal was indispensable to the economy. The attractiveness of the project was as he put it in 1833:
The grand object was to overcome a great natural impediment to the prosperity of the better half of our country... As to its being a work that will pay, I never laid stress on that branch of the question.64

It was no exaggeration on the part of the Chief Justice that "I had for some years when the difficulties were greatest ample means of judging of everything connected with the work."65

By the following November Robinson once again found himself bringing before the house a petition from the company.66 A month later resolutions were introduced and passed by overwhelming majorities. Robinson and Charles Jones, brother of Jonas, were the committee to draft and report bills drawn up from the resolutions.67 On 9 Jan. 1826 Robinson, seconded by Jonas Jones, introduced a bill authorizing the government to borrow $50,000 on debenture, to be loaned to the company. The bill carried by a vote of 21 to 12 again with prominent reformers such as Marshall Spring Bidwell, Peter Perry, Robert Randal, and John Rolph among the opposition.68

Opposition to the canal particularly when involving money was consistent but never overwhelming. In this respect Robinson was more successful with his canal legislation than in similar legislation such as his Road Bills1 of 1825 or 1828 and his Assessment Amendment bills of 1824 and 1828. In these cases he encountered the entrenched opposition of private interests - great land speculators such as Thomas Clark and William Dickson.69 Robinson's various attempts to ensure adequate provision for the maintenance of the principal
highways always met with local opposition anxious to keep road funds within their districts. 68

Robinson's greatest success was the Welland Canal. Early projections of cost quickly fell to the wayside and the company was forced to come often to the public trough. The record in the assembly is impressive: £25,000 in the second session of the ninth parliament, £50,000 in the third session of the ninth, £25,000 in the second session of the tenth, £50,000 in the first of the eleventh, £7,500 in the third of the eleventh, £50,000 in the fourth of the eleventh, and £245,000 in the first of the thirteenth. 69 Throughout the company's chequered relations with parliament Robinson was their staunchest backer. The scope of his support ranged from the minutiae of building administration and arrangements for celebrations to crucial parliamentary steering of financial support. 70

Legislative support of the canal restricted the company's operation. The directorship changed markedly. As Robinson wished it, gentlemen, usually government officers, became directors to ensure that the operation would serve the general interest rather than private, speculative interest. Strachan saw canals as matters of public rather than private interest and had insisted that the public bear the cost.

Although government influence increased over the company with each new loan, in spite of efforts in the mid 1830s to make the company publicly-owned, it was not until 1843 that the company ceased to operate as a private concern.
Strachan, who never became a director, nonetheless wrote the Directors' Report for 1825 at their request. The report was a panegyric to canals. Strachan gave a brief history of the company and dealt at length with the example of New York. He was particularly impressed with the resolution of the Erie Canal's American builders and supporters and their willingness to take on the task on their own resources. With such an example before him Strachan was confident that the Welland would reap the great agricultural riches of the west:

In the progress of improvements, and amongst those public works which bestow wealth and power on nations, and which confer permanent distinction on individuals, there are none of equal importance or celebrity with the construction of Canals.

... No work in Europe, or in Asia, antient or modern, will bear a comparison with it in usefulness, to an equal extent of territory; and it will yield only to the Canal which may hereafter unite the Pacific with the Atlantic Ocean, through the Isthmus of Darien.

The following year Robinson and Henry John Boulton were directors and responsible for the report. In the elections of 1827 Joseph Wells and D'Arcy Boulton Jr. were added to the ranks. Gradually the directors changed (Robinson resigned in 1829) but in the 1820s the gentry were firmly in control. In 1833 the directors ordered letters of thanks to be sent to their foremost supporters: Robinson, William Allan, and John Henry Dunn. The letter to Robinson was ebullient in praise of his unstinting support. In his memoirs, Colonel John Clark, also a director, called the canal, an imperishable monument to the Memory of the Hon. W. H. Merritt - Chief Justice Robinson...
Robinson's mention of the "better half" of the country is worth comment. The gentry considered the lands on Lake Erie to be the great fertile bread-basket of Canada. This was the area they were concerned to bring to market and hence the Welland Canal was so important to their plans for agricultural prosperity. Robinson met criticism of the canal with the assertion that "the work was important to the general interests of the Province, and should receive public aid. . . ."

This debate in January 1827 over a £25,000 loan brought criticism from Jonas Jones who was unsure that the resources of the country could sustain such expenditures and from Bidwell and Rolph who attacked the bill as a "misapplication of the public monies" contravening the doctrine "of the control of the House over public monies. . . ." The assembly demand for public shares in the canal suited the tenor of statements made by the gentry since 1819. Stanton defended the principle in 1827 on the grounds that to "acquire works of public utility at private expense, cannot be considered as creditable to any country."

This line of argument was followed through in the 1830s by those including Macaulay, Jonas Jones, and J. H. and W. B. Robinson who wanted to see the company become publicly-owned. In part the canal was carried by the undiminished expectations which the gentry held out for its completion and a growing public concern with development of all sorts.

The gentry brought canal-building out of the political wilderness and outfitted the enthusiasms of William Hamilton Merritt with the
capital resources of the public purse. In spite of opposition to its monopoly position, suggestions of mismanagement and malfeasance, and general hostility to improvement, support for the canal inaugurated the era of development in Upper Canada. After the first loan the province was never the same. And Merritt in spite of his volte-face over the union continued in the gentry's favour because of the grandeur of his vision. 81

It is probable that the gentry held the Welland Canal on a scale equal to, if not higher than, the St. Lawrence canals. The Welland because of private initiative and Robinson's support was their immediate and most successful undertaking. The St. Lawrence was bogged down by inter-provincial politics. Macaulay's Commission on Internal Navigation omitted surveying the river because of cost-sharing arrangements previously agreed to in 1823 during the discussions between the customs arbitrators. 82 In fact in January 1824 this matter became the subject of resolutions by the house. 83 Unable to reach a satisfactory agreement with the lower province based upon the resolutions of 1823 the Upper Canadian legislature ordered the survey of the St. Lawrence at their own expense. 84

Possibly the necessity of St. Lawrence navigation had loomed behind the decision to reject the military canal - the Rideau. Macaulay was sure that Upper Canada might accomplish much even with Lower
Canadian cooperation but if a shared loan was not possible "in the noble cause of improvement" as agreed to by the 1823 arbitrators he warned against too large an undertaking:

... for whatever may be the general impression, with regard to the advantages that might be derived from improvements having in view, a sloop, or steamboat navigation along the whole of the river, projects of this nature, must, perhaps, be deferred until the province shall have arrived at a greater degree of maturity and vigor. 83

The report of the engineers hired to survey the St. Lawrence, Samuel Clowes and George Rykert, demonstrated the importance of canals using examples from European and American experience. Drawing on the Macaulay Commission's report the engineers made an ardent case for the supremacy of the St. Lawrence over the Rideau because of markets, the effect on transportation costs, and the resulting trade advantages. Using Macaulay's estimates of Rideau productivity they could only surmise that a shorter route with less lockage and a greater proportion of transit would naturally yield a greater return. 86

The Robinson-Strachan Joint Committee on Internal Navigation (1825) accepted the reports of the Macaulay Commission "as containing the best, and in truth, the only satisfactory information ..." as the means of improving the internal navigation of the province. The remarks of the parliamentary committee were as such essentially "a general review" of the work of the commission. The Welland Canal was considered the most essential project because of its advantages for trade and commerce "because the more remote that portion of the
Province is from the Ocean, the more ruinous to its commerce, and consequently to its agriculture..." Manufactures become too expensive because of the added costs of transhipment and the disadvantages to exports almost "exclude them from markets." The consequences were disastrous: ". . . a depression of circumstances, a discouragement to exertion, and ultimately, perhaps, even a consequent inferiority in moral character amidst great positive advantages of climate and soil." The defect of the Rideau was that in spite of its obvious military soundness the ". . . benefits which may be expected to accrue to Agriculture and Trade . . . may appear questionable to many."

Whether the time is now arrived when the Province should actually attempt the execution of works, which, but a few years ago, would have been considered altogether visionary, is another point to be determined. So far as the decision should be influenced by the most reasonable expectation, that can be formed as to the return such works would immediately yield, . . .

One thing is clear; in the peculiar circumstances of Upper Canada, a country of great capability, thinly peopled, and requiring, above all things, that capital and population should be attracted to it by every possible means, the same reasons which might be properly urged in other countries, should not apply, to induce us to delay such undertakings, till they are certain to afford profit.

It is greatly the interest of the present generation to submit to some temporary sacrifice in the prospect of a very rapid recompense. The more natural order here, would be, that the improvement should precede, in order to accelerate the population and commerce of the country, rather than to await the arrival of a period, when the existing circumstances of the country would, in a commercial point of view, at once justify the enterprise.

The great impulse which would be given to the country, by the demand for labour; the encouragement it would afford to emigrants of capital, to remove to this Province, and the confidence it would create in the security of the Colony, would amply warrant, in the opinion of the committee, the commencement of the canal at the
present period, although the expectation of the commissioners of an immediate indemnity should appear too sanguine.

The committee ordered first priority to the Rideau because of the concurrence of the imperial government and the connection of the Lakes had already been undertaken by Merritt's company. Regarding:

... only the commercial interests of the Province... the improvement of the River Saint Lawrence would naturally first engage attention, because there can be little doubt that a much less expenditure than would be necessary for effecting an internal communication, would render this direct and natural channel to the ocean more convenient for all purposes of trade.

At any rate the committee urged an immediate survey, made all the more necessary by the recent cessation of Barnhart Island in the St. Lawrence River to the United States. The parliamentary setback to the Rideau was more apparent than real because the imperial government determined to construct the canal with or without the financial participation of Upper or Lower Canada. Smaller canal projects were springing up such as the Burlington Bay Canal and the Desjardins Canal and navigational improvement was undertaken on the Tay River, Kettle Creek, and Grand River. The Welland Canal was proceeding with the massive financial assistance of the province but the St. Lawrence improvements were set back by the joint jurisdiction with Lower Canada. As with finance, so too with improvement; the 1791 order in council separating the provinces was the horn of the dilemma.

The report of the St. Lawrence engineers reached the assembly during the third session of the ninth parliament. On 18 Jan. 1827 the assembly resoundingly supported resolutions "that the improvement of
the navigation of the Saint Lawrence is an object of the first importance to the commercial and agricultural interests of this province", that they should decide whether steamboat and schooner or boat navigation was most suitable, and finally that a joint committee with the council should study the matter. Four days later Robinson, Jonas and Charles Jones, James Gordon, John Clark, Archibald McLean and Duncan Cameron for the assembly and Thomas Clark, George Markland, and Wm. Allan for the council were chosen for the committee. On 26 January the committee reported their findings. They recommended the schooner navigation option at a cost of £176,000 over a boat canal at £92,000 as "a work of such obvious advantage and most conducive to the commercial welfare of the Canadas." They hoped that Lower Canada would concur and, on the basis of the 1823 arbitrators agreement, share the costs:

... this great measure should be engaged in as a public measure, rather than by a private company. The waters of the St. Lawrence form the great navigable high-way through the province, and it would seem incompatable [sic], as well with the public character as the public interests of Upper Canada, that it should be placed under the control of a private association.

The committee was supremely confident that the success of the undertaking "must become speedily and greatly profitable...". Following upon the experience of the Macaulay Commission the committee recommended a commission of three to superintend construction. Hoping to attract Lower Canada into the arrangements and anxious to make improvements at the Long Sault Rapids the committee urged upon
Maitland negotiations with the imperial government to determine whether the offer of the Rideau loan might be used in this instance. A bill to this purpose, likely drafted by Robinson, passed second reading on 9 Feb. 1827 by a close vote of 20 to 15. On third reading Peter Perry seconded by Marshall Spring Bidwell moved an amendment to give the bill the three-month hoist which passed 19 to 18 scuppering the bill. Important as the bill was "Robinson chose to let it go, as they [assembly] insisted upon naming the Commissioners in the Bill which we could not have suffered". Macaulay's name had logically been proposed but dismissed "for a worthless creature who had the ear of the Governor." The measure was temporarily shelved but not given up. It was too important. On 31 Dec. 1827 Maitland wrote the colonial office of the great benefits that the Welland and St. Lawrence canals would bring. The latter he considered an easy accomplishment, and a Survey and estimate have already been made with a view to its being speedily undertaken. The Capital involved in it would become immediately productive from the great trade which at present passes along that channel."

The matter was raised by Colborne in his opening address to the second session of the tenth parliament (1830) drawing to their notice that the improvement of the Welland Canal "must naturally lead your attention to the Saint Lawrence, and to the manifest advantages from perfecting the navigation in that quarter." Charles Fothergill gave notice that he would bring in a bill to this effect and on 20 Jan. 1830 the house passed a resolution expressing concern at giving
to Americans "the free navigation of the Saint Lawrence... a concession that would transfer the carrying trade to the people of that Country..." Ten days later an act was passed funding three commissioners to determine the best mode of improving St. Lawrence navigation. The commission was chaired by Jonas Jones. Their survey estimated $45,167 and $173,152 for a boat and steamboat canal respectively. Jones reported:

"Such is the importance of this great highway... and the necessity which exists for its improvement is so very apparent, that it is perhaps unnecessary to advance a single reason in favor of its being undertaken without further delay; for we are convinced that nothing in the power of the provincial legislature can more largely contribute to the prosperity..."

Again at the opening of the first session of the eleventh parliament in 1831 Colborne stressed the importance of an uninterrupted navigation. It was a heady session. More improvements such as the Tay Navigation Bill and the Kettle Creek Harbour bills were before the assembly. They passed but with significant opposition. Moreover the Welland Canal Company had sought further aid and only narrowly passed by a vote of 25-21. On 7 March 1831 Philip VanKoughnet gave notice of intention to introduce St. Lawrence resolutions. On 11 March five resolutions were carried respecting the proposed improvements. Hagerman and Jonas Jones attempted to change the emphasis of the first resolution that the canal was important to the commercial and agricultural interests to "improvement... for Steamboat navigation between Prescott and Montreal, is an object of the first importance to the agricultural and commercial interests of
this province." Although the same dimensions were covered by VanKoughnet's second resolution Hagerman-Jones desired a clear understanding that nothing less than full-scale dimensions were of primary importance.

During the third session of the house in 1832 measures finally got under way. In his opening speech Colborne boosted the hopes of improvers stating "that the expenditure incurred in thus accelerating the development of your resources, will produce, in every respect, a profitable return. The question was taken up by William Hamilton Merritt's Select Committee on Inland Water Communication. The "first object which engaged the attention . . . was connecting the great chain of Lakes bordering on this Province with the Ocean."

The committee questioned several prominent subjects including Robinson, Strachan, and Thomas Clark about their opinions on St. Lawrence improvement. Robinson, enthusiastic as ever, did "not doubt that the present Commerce of this country, without regard to its rapid increase, would well warrant the undertaking immediately the improvement of the Saint Lawrence, on any scale that has been hitherto proposed." Strachan was unusually laconic and simply answered "Yes." On the crucial question of dimension, Robinson's experience with the Welland Canal seemingly tempered his usual willingness to forgo any prior examinations of cost and probable return. He was sure that a steam-boat navigation was required but wondered if it could be shown "that the money invested . . . would yield a profitable return within a reasonable period." Moreover because of the vast expenditures on the Rideau he
felt it was unfair to solicit funds from the imperial government:

With respect to ourselves, whatever may be the resources of this Province in future times, they would not at present admit of bearing an immense dead weight, with the distant prospect of reimbursement; and as to individuals, they of course would not engage in such a scheme without an assurance of indemnity, or rather of profit.

The doubts were merely cautionary, the result of experience. He estimated the cost at £2,000,000 or possibly £3,000,000. These figures were not beyond the capability of the province—"... the advantages it would confer... are beyond calculation." The only drawback he envisaged, correctly as it turned out, was "that we have not within ourselves the means of procuring the necessary funds." But the importance of the project was beyond exaggeration—"It would bring security to Upper Canada, and wealth beyond all estimate."101

The resolutions of the committee went before the house on 27 Dec. 1832 and were carried by large majorities. Interestingly Hagerman was among the opposition. With William Morris he had introduced an amendment to tie funding to Lower Canadian assistance and the imposition of additional duties on some articles of general consumption imported at Quebec to cover costs. On 15 Jan. 1833 on the third reading of the St. Lawrence Navigation Bill Morris and Hagerman, and Hagerman and George Strange Boulton introduced amendments to restrain the contracting of the loan until it had been ascertained whether additional duties would be levied. It was defeated. The next tack was to make work in Upper Canada dependent upon Lower Canada making provision for improvements within their boundary limits. It too was defeated.
Hagerman's opposition was the first sign among the gentry of apprehension of the staggering costs necessary to build this vital canal link to the ocean. That Robinson felt it necessary to even express possible doubts about securing funding indicates that concern must have existed. Possibly the experience with the Welland Canal and its insatiable appetite for public funds had alerted the solicitor general. It was the first hint that Eden's bloom was fading and came almost simultaneously with Hagerman's call for the annexation of Montreal as a final solution to Upper Canada's perennial financial problems. 103

Following earlier precedents and American example the act named Commissioners for the improvement of the River Saint Lawrence: President Jonas Jones, John Macaulay, George Longley, Hiram Norton, Peter Shaver, and Philip VanKoughnet. The act of 1833 was repealed in 1834 and superseded by a similar bill authorizing raising a loan of £70,000. It was imperial policy to have such acts automatically reserved by governors for referral to England but in this case Colborne approved the bill to secure cooperation with Lower Canada because "the project... affords general satisfaction in the Province." 104

The change in the 1833 act had been precipitated by the tabling of the Report of the Commissioners for the improvement of the River Saint Lawrence on 13 Dec. 1833. The impact of American developments and engineering upon the Commissioners was significant. Six days after the first meeting on 19 Feb. 1833 Jones, Longley, and Norton proceeded to Albany, New York, then travelled on to Pennsylvania because
"... the number of Canals and Railroads in operation and now constructing in Pennsylvania they expected to derive much information" and contacts with civil engineers. On the 18 March they returned to Canada having journeyed through New York, Pennsylvania, and New Jersey conferring with American engineers on matters such as surveys, superintending construction, commission procedures, size and dimension of locks, costs, handling of contracts et cetera. 105

While the other commissioners were on the way to the United States, Macaulay began corresponding with Andrew Stuart "the leading advocate for the improvement of" the St. Lawrence in Upper Canada. Macaulay was conciliatory. He had been trying to work out a suitable arrangement with Lower Canada to improve the St. Lawrence since he was secretary to the arbitrator of customs, James Baby, in 1823. Effective utilization of the river necessitated both provinces using the same dimensions and sharing the financial burden. He feared that the lower province might continue to undertake improvement on a "contracted scale" and would not bring her "superior resources" to bear on a work of mutual interest. Macaulay did his best to be reassuring about Upper Canadian intentions:

"... the great concentration of Capital at Montreal and Quebec must always render those cities the great marts for the timber, ashes, and agricultural productions of this province ... for we see that New-York is the great emporium of the State of the same name, tho' Ships from the Sea may visit many other Towns and Villages on the Hudson. 106

Macaulay reiterated the course he had suggested in 1823 during custom arbitration discussions "that the line of improvements from
Prescott to Montreal might be placed under the direction and
management of a Canadian Board of Commissioners appointed jointly
by the Governors . . . under the sanction of Laws passed by the
respective Legislatures. "Macaulay had advocated the importance of
this work for so long that he could not help observing that the project
was not undertaken years before. In the present circumstances no
time could be lost beginning "works as are now called for by the
rapidly increasing trade of Canada."

Macaulay dismissed the Lower Canadian apprehension of incurring
a public debt:

"... in the accomplishment of works of general benefit
from which an ample return is sure to be made, equal
in a very few years to the reimbursement of principal
as well as interest. Who can venture to form an estimate
of the tonnage annually transported . . . 30 or 50 years
hence? Nature has intended that River as the outlet for
the trade of a boundless region, and it would be
disgraceful to Canada, if the trade were diverted to
other artificial channels without a suitable effort on
our part to prevent it."

The unabashed admiration for American engineering feats led
the commission to secure the services of the dean of American
canal-builders, Benjamin Wright of Pennsylvania, as the principal
engineer for the project basing their report upon his survey. The
cost of improvements "safely estimated" at £ 350,000 would provide
a steamboat navigation to Montreal or Quebec. The commissioners
urged borrowing the entire sum even without Lower Canada's cooperation,
confident the "Province . . . could not possibly incur any risk of
financial embarrassment. . . ." With Colborne's consent Jones had
tried to effect the loan of £ 70,000 in the United States but failed.
Thus the commissioners recommended "that Upper Canada should aim at obtaining the funds for prosecuting her great designs for internal improvement in the metropolis of the Empire" with the assistance of the imperial government. The commission also recommended a single joint commission with Lower Canada to superintend improvements. These recommendations led to the repeal of the 1833 act and the passing of a new bill in 1834.\textsuperscript{108}

In mid 1834 Robinson advised Jones and Macaulay, read their reports, discussed projected routes, and was duly impressed by the magnificence of the undertaking.\textsuperscript{109} The country had been so taken by the mania for development and the certainty of an immediate return on costly public works that in the fourth session of the eleventh parliament (1833-34) a debenture was passed authorizing a loan of £200,000 to cancel part of the public debt—a debt caused by an insatiable appetite for public works. The first sessions of the so-called radical twelfth parliament (1835-36) passed a Loan Bill for the enormous sum of £400,000 to refinance the debt and provide for public works, particularly the St. Lawrence canals.\textsuperscript{110} Inspector General George Markland's general estimates for 1835 contained an ominous figure—the largest single expenditure in a budget of £212,818 would be the interest on the public debt—£19,838.\textsuperscript{111}

In spite of the size of the St. Lawrence undertaking as late as 1836 the gentry were yet confident. That year Macaulay in his capacity as arbitrator of customs with Lower Canada reacted to the petition from Toronto merchants subsequently turned into resolutions of the
assembly calling for the abandonment of the St. Lawrence in favour of the Erie-Hudson-New York access to the ocean. Without hesitation he reaffirmed the naturalness of the St. Lawrence route:

... we have before us the St. Lawrence in the whole sweep of its majestic course, the mightiest artery of this vast continent. Chiefly in the possession of England, this fine river, expanding into a succession of inland seas, gives her the power of extending at pleasure and almost without limit the market for her merchandise. Within a very short space of time, the country drained by this river will contain millions of inhabitants; nearly all indeed with a taste for British manufactures and possessing ample means of gratifying that taste. Shall then the trade of counties about to teem with such masses of people be preserved to its natural outlet, or be diverted through artificial channels formed by the labour and enterprise of the States of the American Union, to any others? It is a stirring spectacle that is exhibited by the States of New York, Pennsylvania and Maryland, each with a fine spirit of commercial ambition and invincible enterprise, constructing lines of internal communication for the purpose of attracting the trade of the countries bordering on the great lakes. But the natural emporium of those immense regions is situated at the foot of the rapids of the St. Lawrence—and it intimately concerns both the Canadas, even more than it does England, to emulate the zeal for commercial advancement displayed by our neighbours, and meet them with countervailing energy and spirit.

Macaulay urged that a general board of improvement be established amalgamating the boards of the principal navigation authorities:

Welland Canal Company, Commission for the improvement of the St. Lawrence navigation, military locks at Coteau-du-Lac and the Cascades in Lower Canada, and the Lachine Canal in the hands of Lower Canadian Commissioners. To finance the project he suggested a joint stock company comprised of Great Britain, Upper and Lower Canada. For Macaulay the time "... has arrived, when wider and more decided views should be taken with respect to the navigable communications
between the great Lakes and the tide waters of the St. Lawrence than
a few years ago have been esteemed judicious or prudent." This
confidence was reflected in Receiver General John Henry Dunn's letter
of 4 May 1835 to sundry financial houses in London assuring them that
the "... revenue on which the loan is secured ... is quite ample
to meet the interest and all other demands on it." By 1837 financial crisis was overtaking the grand expectations
for Upper Canadian prosperity. In 1837 Jonas Jones, chairman of the
assembly Committee on Finance reported on the state of the provincial
debt. The total debt was $594,466 composed of the following sums:
St. Lawrence navigation, $253,000; Welland Canal, 209,500; Burlington
Canal, 29,991; Tay Navigation, 1,000; inland waters Newcastle District
(Trent River), 26,000; Desjardins Canal, 12,000; Kettle Creek Harbour,
6,500; Cobourg Harbour, 4,000; York Harbour, 2,000; River Trent
Bridge, 4,625; Brantford-Bridge, 1,500; Dunnville Bridge, 1,500;
Paris Bridge, 1,500; West Gwillimbury Bridges, 500; Roads in the
vicinity of York, 45,000; Bank of Upper Canada, 25,000. Jones shared
the confidence of his friends, sure that these public works would
eventually "pay principal and interest, and be a productive source
of revenue. ..." Jones justified the necessity of the works by
reasons used by Strachan almost 20 years before:

In a new Country like Canada, with a limited revenue,
great public works can only be constructed upon the credit
of the Province, and such credit should be freely extended,
when it can be safely calculated that the proceeds of the
works will shortly pay the interest, and eventually redeem
the principal. Specific ways and means should, however, be
provided to meet the interest when it cannot be borne from
the ordinary revenues.
The current annual interest was £ 30,552, expected to rise to £ 43,420 when the balance of the loan in England was negotiated. 114

Financial matters were reaching the breaking point. The expectations nurtured over a generation could no longer bear up under the reality of the Upper Canadian economy. The gentry had assumed that once canals were completed the natural abundance of the province and the lucrative trade of the American west would allow both the interest and principal on the debt to be almost immediately repaid. In almost every instance their assumptions proved to be miscalculations. Upper Canada may have had the richest arable land in British North America but it was not the American mid west. The trade links to the Erie Canal and New York were simply not matters of transportation convenience but ties cemented by credit. Finally building costs and building deadlines escalated. On 28 Feb. 1837 the assembly addressed the king on their plight. Having "witnessed the loss of a great part of the commerce of the western country" to the Erie Canal they had provided in 1833 £ 350,000 to construct a steam-boat canal on the "St. Lawrence on "a scale commensurate with the magnitude of that noble River." They expected the canal to be ready to Coteau-du-lac by late 1837. The remaining link would require a canal of only 12-14 miles to provide the link to the ocean. Because this last stretch fell within Lower Canada's borders the assembly sought imperial aid to devise measures to enable the upper province to effect "so desirable and important an object . . . to divert the American transit from New York. . . ." 115 An executive council minute of 16 June 1840 drawn
up by Robert Baldwin Sullivan, William Allan, Richard Allan Tucker, and William Draper effectively summarized the Upper Canadian plight in 1837-38:

The State of the province, its internal disturbances and the foreign aggressions under which it suffered, the incomplete state of all the public works, the want of revenue arising there from, the want of provision of means to pay the interest upon the public debt, which it was originally supposed would have been met by the income arising from the public works, the absorption of the whole current revenues of the province in payment of interest, and in the expenses of the administration of Government, and the large sums still required annually for the construction of improvements far exceeding the original estimates, and the crisis in financial and monetary affairs in the United States, which affected the value of all American securities, combined to depreciate and render unsaleable the public debentures of the province.

In 1838 the critical question of the debt and its relation to public works came before the third session of the thirteenth parliament. A bill granting a further appropriation to the St. Lawrence improvement narrowly passed third reading (14 to 13) in spite of an amendment on second reading by Hagerman that "... it is most unwise to increase the public debt ... until provision is made for the continuation of the improvement ... within the limits of Lower Canada, and means are provided for meeting the interest by the imposition of duties for that purpose on imports from Sea." Henry Sherwood's and Merritt's motion to entitle the bill was defeated 14 to 15 with Hagerman in opposition and W. B. Robinson, Merritt, Sherwood, and J. S. Cartwright in favour. At least one member of the gentry was unwilling to tolerate further expenditures unless some firm guarantees were given. Here Hagerman echoed his concern of five years
earlier when the St. Lawrence Bill met its first test in the assembly. He did not doubt the wisdom or necessity of the project but realized what Durham would later state in his Report that: "the greatest error committed was the undertaking the works in Upper, without ensuring their continuation in Lower Canada." A late observer of the scene such as Durham caught the irony of the St. Lawrence project. The grandiose design, laudable as it was, was beyond the means of the province:

The design was, perhaps, too vast, at least for the first effort of a State at that time comparatively so small and poor; but the boldness with which the people undertook it, and the immense sacrifices which they made in order to achieve it, are gratifying indications of a spirit which bids fair hereafter to render Upper Canada as thriving a country as any State of the American Union.

This fatal error was directly attributable to the gentry's belief in national bounty. By 1838 it was too late to remedy it. Canals, as both Macaulay and Rolph had observed 13 years before, had seized the public mind. The province was virtually awash with schemes great, small, and sometimes even preposterous to build canals of one sort or another. The measure of public fascination was the inability of the unvaried opposition by men such as Mackenzie or Bidwell to defeat canal legislation.

The economic crisis forced the suspension of public works. The Cornwall Canal which the assembly had confidently expected to be completed in 1837 was not resumed until 1842 and completed the following year. By May 1837 Head had successfully convinced Jones not to resign
as president of the commission but to continue in his efforts to protect the public interest and afford some relief to the contractors. Simultaneously Receiver General Dunn found it necessary to urge Head to consider "reducing the scale of operation ... into as limited an extent as may be found practicable during the present financial difficulties." Work continued over the severe winter of 1837-38 to provide some relief for the labourers. Although the commissioners had managed to keep work going an executive council minute of 27 June 1838 provided money for putting the canal "in a state of suspension ... till a more favorable period." The horrified commissioners (Jones had resigned in January 1838) sent a memorial to Lord Durham, Governor General of the Canadas, seeking sufficient funds from Lower Canadian resources to complete the canal.121 In their report of 31 Dec. 1838 the commissioners acknowledged their fate but added bitterly it was a "... measure fraught with such ruinous consequences to individual interests, and, what is of paramount importance to the interest of the Province and its trade." Emigrant labour was leaving for work in the United States and the trade of the west had all but been given up to the port of New York. A letter from the canal contractors to the commission captured the grim plight which had ironically overtaken the province: "And how must we go? - our means exhausted in the necessary preparations for a work, the magnitude of which will now prove our greatest evil."122
The fascination with canal-building was by no means confined to Upper Canada. Europeans had a long experience with canals and the Americans won British North American admiration for their wondrous feats. It was the experience of depression, provincial discontent, and the fear of American initiatives in New York State which made canals so attractive to the gentry. To them canals were synonymous with economic development. Linking the Great Lakes to the Atlantic Ocean was all that was required to guarantee immediate prosperity for the agricultural productions of the province. The gentry's attraction to canals was no fleeting affair. From their first infatuation between 1818 and 1822 through the hard experience of committees, commissions, and interminable debates and parliamentary battles, they pursued canals with dogged tenacity. Their foremost concerns were the great projects: the Welland Canal and the St. Lawrence canals, but the assembly and council journals record their support for the innumerable improvement bills and schemes which required some measure of parliamentary support. They always assumed that the great projects were properly the sphere of the state. The obvious reason was that no other institution or individuals could even begin to provide the funds necessary for these undertakings. Perhaps the more important reason was their distrust of private interests meddling with works of public interest. They were willing to accept Merritt's project because it was already there. More important he was willing to
accept gentlemen to direct the company's affairs.

The canal system undertaken at public expense in 1825 collapsed by 1838 under the financial burden generated by the rapturous enthusiasm for developing the national bounty. None had worried about scale, dimension, or payment of interest on debt. Prosperity seemed so sure, so close to grasping that these considerations were not central to works of such obvious public benefit. The gentry were unable to see their dream through to its conclusion. The canal system was not resumed with earnest until the early days of the railway age. In 1842 the united provinces used a large imperial loan to complete the necessary improvements. The works were built or rebuilt to uniform dimensions, supervised by a Board of Works, and completed in 1848. The irony was that if the debt of the 1830s was not completely the gentry's making it was surely the product of their initiation. The great public works programme was by no means entirely the product of their imagination but it was unthinkable without their support and was fuelled by their enthusiasm. In the end it was the very size of their dreams which contained the germ of their own destruction. Perhaps more than anything else the seemingly insoluble problem of debt and finance and the pressure to complete the public works drove Upper Canada into legislative union with Lower Canada.

The gentry's enthusiasm was shaped by their fervent belief in the providentially endowed, national bounty of Upper Canada. This fertile, lush, pastoral image dominated their political, social, and
economic beliefs. One may wonder at this and obviously at least some contemporaries did. As early as 1818 Barnabas Bidwell had scorned Macaulay's Edenic metaphor as lacking in common sense. Yet the hold of "Eden in her summer dress" was an almost intractable tenet of the gentry's faith and Upper Canada continued to be a land revered in glowing praise for its noble rivers, fertile soil, and genial climate. 123

Perhaps the most lasting contribution of the gentry's efforts was their success in winning a province to the support of canals—a change in attitude noted by the gentry and their opponents alike. In 1828 the anonymous author of an American pamphlet defending the importance of banking and monied institutions to New York State contrasted the "enterprize, energy, and industry" of the United States with "the lassitude, torpidity, and indolence which prevail" in the British provinces. However the author tempered his judgement in a brief note pointing to the recent spate of canal bills, the Canada Company, and the tax on wild lands (Robinson's Assessment Amendment Bill of 1828) as evidence of a major change in the direction of provincial society. 124 This was the change noted by Macaulay and characterized by John Rolph in 1825 as the "mania for the improvement of navigation." 125 That same year William Lyon Mackenzie could readily dismiss Robinson's "ancient politics," yet profess admiration for his road bill, his assessment bill, and his support of the Welland Canal project. 126 In 1828 Robinson told Macaulay of his most pressing concerns within the assembly."... Chancery, roads—assessments—
aliens Canals ... and the Church of England. Three of the six
issues concerned development or improvement and this is likely an
accurate reflection of how much time the attorney general devoted to
these efforts. Obviously the province had changed a great deal from
the days between 1816 and 1819 when the question of development
occasioned little more than apathy. The gentry brought development to
the fore of provincial politics, a place it has not relinquished to
this day. Anticipating the first parliament of the United Canadas
Governor General Charles Poulett Thomson did not expect trouble from
people who would prefer economic improvement to idle discussions of
political principle. A political community was emerging in the 1840s
and the broad basis of consensus was forged on the identification of
unlimited economic improvement with progress. The legacy of the
gentry was unrestrained development at the centre of provincial
affairs.
FOOTNOTES

1. **Bill to improve and amend the communication between the Lakes Erie and Ontario, by land and water** (Niagara, 1799).


3. **FAO Report** (1913), 258.

4. **Ibid.**, 331-34, 354, 359-60.


8. The official reports of the canal commissioners of the State of New York, and the acts of the legislature respecting navigable communication between the great western and northern lakes and the Atlantic Ocean: with perspicuous maps and profiles (Newburg, N.Y., 1817), pp. 59-61.

9. See chapter II, part iv.


12. **Ibid.**


17. See chapter III.


19. See chapter III.


21. See chapter III.
22. PAO Report (1913), 490, 492, 512.


25. PAO Report (1913), passim.


27. RG 5, A1, 27770, Robinson to Maitland, 14 Jan. 1822.

28. PAO, Jarvis-Powell Papers, II, #1045, "Notes for memoir of the service of WPD in Canada, intended to serve for History," pp. 31-32.

29. Robinson Papers, Address to the Law Society, 14 March 1862; Catton Papers, Robinson to Horton, 27 Feb. 1823 "Note on services since 1812."


32. Ibid., Hillier to Col. John By, York, 4 Oct. 1826.


35. PAC, MG 24 El (Merritt Papers), 2, Allan to Merritt, 29 April 1830.

36. CO 42/393, Report of the President of the Bank of Upper Canada, on the Constitution, Capital, Regulations and Resources of that Institution.


38. York Weekly Post, 12 April 1821, debates of 2 April 1821.

39. Robinson Papers, Memoranda, Robinson to Seaton, 13 June 1854.

41. Ibid., 3rd, 13th parliament, p. 104.
42. These figures are based on the tables found in footnote 40.
43. Appendix, JHA, 1st, 13th parliament, 193.
44. Ibid., p. 193; JHA, 1st, 9th parliament (1825-26), pp. 37, 40-41, 68; JHA, 2nd, 9th parliament, pp. 37, 61.
45. PAQ Report (1914), 366.
49. Macaulay Papers, Queenston, 20 March 1825.
50. JHA, 1st, 9th (1825), p. 13.
51. Ibid., p. 46.
52. Ibid., p. 50.
53. Ibid., pp. 60, 64.
54. U.E. Loyalist, editorial 10 June 1826.
55. Ibid., editorial, 16 Sept. 1826; editorial, 11 Nov. 1826.
56. Reports ... Internal Navigation, 79-85.
59. Weekly Register, supplement, 21 April 1825.
60. JHA, 1st, 9th (1825-26), pp. 37, 40-41.
61. Ibid., pp. 68, 100.
62. MG 24, El (Merritt Papers), 24, pp. 4033-40, Robinson to Merritt, 6 June 1850.


71. CO 42/380, p. 378, Strachan to Horton, 29 April 1826; *Director's Report of the Welland Canal Company* (Montreal, 1826).

72. **PAC**, RG 43, B4(c), 253, pp. 19, 37; 303, pp. 9, 13.


74. **RG 43, B4(c)**, 303, p. 239.


78. Ibid., 13 Jan. 1827, debates of 5 Jan. and 10 Jan.

79. Ibid., editorial, 3 Feb. 1827. See also Gatton Papers, Robinson to Horton, Perth, 27 Aug. 1827.


81. SLB (1844–49), p. 97, Strachan to Merritt 7 May 1845, Strachan called it "one of the most useful undertakings of modern times"; MG 24, El (Merritt Papers), 24, pp. 4033–40, Robinson to Merritt, 6 June 1850; pp. 3326–29, 7 Dec. 1848.


84. Appendix, JHA (1826–27), appendix 0.


86. Appendix, JHA (1826–27), appendix 0.

87. Appendix, JHA (1825), Report of the Joint Committee on Internal Navigation, 6 April 1825. The members were John Strachan, Angus Macintosh, J. B. Robinson, William Morris, and James Gordon.

88. JHA, 3rd, 9th, (1827), pp. 55, 60.

89. Appendix, JHA, 3rd, 9th (1827) Appendix 0, Report of the Joint Committee of the two houses on the immediate improvement of the St. Lawrence.

90. JHA, 3rd, 9th (1827), pp. 82–83.


93. JHA, 2nd, 10th (1830), pp. 1–2, 18.


95. JHA, 1st, 11th (1831), p. 1.
96. Ibid., pp. 34, 80, 88-90. The bill narrowly passed 27 to 17.

97. Ibid., pp. 20, 78.

98. Ibid., p. 81.

99. Ibid., pp. 92-93.

100. JHA, 3rd, 11th (1832-33), pp. 10-11.

101. Appendix, JHA (1832), pp. 90-100.

102. JHA, 3rd, 11th (1832-33), pp. 68-86.

103. See chapter VIII.

104. CO 42/418, Colborne to Stanley, 8 March 1834; JHA, 4th, 11th (1834), pp. 104-05.

105. RG 43, B4(C), 94, pp. 2-17, 41-46, 238-40.

106. RG 43, B4(b), 91, pp. 3-4.

107. Ibid., pp. 14-16.


109. MG 24, El (Merritt: Papers), 8, pp. 1005-08, Robinson to Merritt, Toronto, 22 July 1834; Macaulay Papers, Robinson to Macaulay, 5 July 1834.

110. Appendix, JHA, 5th, 13th (1839-40), I, p. 188; JHA, 1st, 12th (1835), p. 371. See also Appendix, JHA (1836), no. 7, p. 2, 4 May 1835.


114. JHA, 1st, 13th (1837), pp. 310-11.

115. JHA, 1st, 13th (1837), pp. 582-83.

117. JHA, 3rd, 13th (1838), pp. 414, 419.


119. Ibid.

120. Appendix, JHA (1836), II, p. 31 (Copy) W. B. Robinson to Merritt, Newmarket, 2 Dec. 1834 in no. 90. Third report from the select committee appointed to examine and enquire into the management of the Welland Canal.

121. RG 43, B4(b), 92, pp. 171-74, 221-23, 245, 261.


CHAPTER V

THE GENTRY AND SOCIETY - HIERARCHY, GRADATION, AND SOCIAL STRUCTURE

One is formed to rule, another to obey
John Strachan

In a post Marxian and post Freudian age it is impossible for the historian to ignore the self-interest, economic of psychological, of men. But the historian dismisses the words and thoughts of another age at his peril. It may be assumed that the gentry possessed their fair share of arrogance, hypocrisy, and cupidity. The purpose of this chapter is to provide the framework for the social aspirations of the gentry. Here there is much to be done. Whole aspects of the gentle code are left untouched: attitudes to religion, education, family and courtship, duelling, and conspicuous consumption. Instead the emphasis will fall upon the stated assumptions of the gentry about the order of the universe, the nature of political society, and the role of gentlemen within it.

The commonplace characteristics of the Christian universe of the gentry derived from the great chain of being—order, gradation, subordination, and stability. Harmony was sustained by each man accepting his place and role within the human and cosmic order. In spite of the occasional jacquerie or peasants' revolt, this justificatory theory had
supported the traditional hierarchical polity since the Middle Ages. However by the seventeenth century this image of man had been challenged in England and no doubt would have waned altogether by the end of the eighteenth had it not been for the impact of the French revolution. Although under increasing pains to show its essential correctness to a dubious audience, this traditional language survived in the gentry's thoughts and aspirations until permanently displaced in the 1840s.

By the early nineteenth century the old language of hierarchy and subordination had been severely shaken by the challenge from the American and French revolutions. The context of these assumptions was now formed by the opposition to democratic, republican society. The audacity of the gentry was the attempt to forge the substance of the social structure of pre-industrial society upon the pockets of settlement in the uncleared wilderness of Upper Canada. Since the social, economic, and cultural ambiance of eighteenth century Britain could not be organically appropriated to the rudimentary, or non-existent social structure of a distant colony, the gentry were faced with a major contradiction in their self-image – the absence of landed estates to support the traditional political language of their assumed rank.

This irony tied their defence of hierarchy to the preservation of monarchical privilege and a non-elective legislative council.

The constitutional framework of gentry society was the Constitutional Act of 1791. Historians have rightly noted the counter-revolutionary intentions behind the framing of the act but the assumptions which underlay it were as old as Aristotle's Politics. In an undated
manuscript Strachan rejected Alex de Tocqueville's belief in the inevitable triumph of democracy over aristocratic states as the fanciful "Theory that there is an irresistible tendency among mankind to Democracy & equality of condition." He likened democracy to a monster—mis-shapen and wrought of incongruous elements. Equality was possible only as the spiritual state of men before their Maker, realized in heaven but not on earth:

True religion undoubtedly tends to produce a perfect equality in all the rights and privileges that are compatible with the happiness of Society but not an equality of ability state or condition since variety of rank appears as necessary for an extensive cultivation of virtue and enjoyment of felicity as a variety of tastes and dispositions—The doctrine of primitive equality in the sense of Wat Tyler and modern radicals never did nor ever can exist for the distinctions of Society when contemplated in their true light are essential portions of the dispensations of Providence. Inequality was an invariant condition of human nature and providential design. The injustices of human society were the attendant evils of human imperfection. The solution to the burdens of life was accepting one's station, doing one's duty, and seeking solace in the eternal life after death:

... the wicked are often exalted in dignity & made formidable in power—merit is often depressed and vice elevated & under the best regulations that human wisdom can devise wicked men will acquire the power as they have the inclination to oppress the mild & the good and this even with impunity—But such inequality in the distribution of the goods and evils of this world is too obvious to be dwelt upon hence we shall employ ourselves to better purpose by inquiring briefly how in this inequal state of things we shall best preserve and increase our confidence in God—And here we would observe that most of the miseries to which we are exposed in the present life arise from our fallen state—nor is it possible to give any consistent account of them without referring as the holy Scriptures uniformly do to our original defection
from innocence and departure from God . . . Without Christ who is the light of revelation the world is a chaos of miseries & perplexities to which we can perceive no solution.  

Strachan was not merely describing the human state as he saw it but rather attempting to reconcile men to their lot by reminding them of the measure of earthly happiness which was their lot. In spite of the gradations attendant upon all nature "happiness is the great end of our Being" and a commodious life was promoted by providence:  

It aims to moderate but not to extirpate our desires—without inspiring a contempt for worldly things it teaches their true use and by recommending the frequent contemplation of spiritual objects it refines the passions and elevates the Soul.  

Inequality was part of the order and gradation of the cosmos descending from God through the angels to man, and beyond man to nature. It was apparent comparing man to nature that the condition of the latter applied with equal validity to the former: "There is a subordination in the Natural World—We may extend the analogy and suppose that it is the intention of nature that the like subordination should prevail in the Moral World." Subordination did not imply servitude or slavery. Each manner of gradation had its privileges and duties. All were part of an organic whole each contributing in its own way to harmony. Subordination did not militate against community rather it was its essential support. Thus men should accept their rank and station:  

One is formed to rule another to obey. It is of little importance to determine, were it possible, whether this difference of character arises from the original constitution of individuals— a variety of organisation— different degrees
of delicacy in the sense— or from the particular circumstances of the situation in which they happen to be placed[]. Perhaps in original temperament all mankind are nearly on a level and the extreme diversities in character depend chiefly on causes foreign to the Individual— But be this as it may subordination in the Moral World is manifest and this appearance of nature indicates the intention of its Author— The beauty and advantages of this arrangement are obvious and universally acknowledged— Man Solitary and independent of his fellow Creatures must be a wretched Being— His wants and the social principles of his nature attach him to his species— The various relations of individuals and Societies require a mutual exchange of good offices— The happiness of one is subservient to that of his Neighbour— Private Interest is inseparably connected with the interest of the community and the union and happiness of the whole acquire a degree of strength and a security which the unnatural disjointed systems of solitude and selfishness could never attain. Hence it would appear that they who labour in the inferior departments of life are not on that account the slaves of their Superiors— The Magistrate requires the aid of his people— the Master of his servant— they are all dependent upon one another, as they subsist by an exchange of good Offices— And all are independent as far as one is entitled to the countenance and protection of another— The Lowest order enjoys its peculiar comforts and privileges, and contributes equally with the highest to the Support and dignity of Society[].

In this regard the folly of human discontent was opposition to "the order of nature." 8

Strachan believed that God's dispensations were distributed unequally. Yet whatever talent man possessed it was God's gift and "it is seldom given fully to explain it." 9 Men would find lasting happiness and felicity in "the Spirit of the Lord," the source of true "liberty." 10 The Holy Spirit worked for liberty and order, "a little heaven upon earth." His notion of liberty was the limited sense of pre-modern natural law. Man accepts the world as God's creation and seeks liberty within that law:
... But the liberty in the text consists in the restraining of our appetites and passions—seeking happiness not so much in outward as in inward perfection—in willing nothing but what God wills, and in doing nothing but what is in conformity to the divine will[]. Such is the liberty which the Apostle tells us attends the spirit of the Lord & which daily brings us nearer to the mark of our high vocation[.] When in 1840 Robinson wrote in Canada and the Canada Bill that the "most pressing subject of all" was religion, "the only secure basis on which civil authority can rest"12 he was articulating a basic but often unstated assumption. That is, the order of human society derived from the order of the heavens. Mediating between the order of the cosmos and the order of human society was religion, bringing men to a personal sense of their duties towards their Maker:

... we must call in aid of religion, which is the only firm and lasting foundation upon which the tranquillity and security of a people can be strengthened & established[]. The experience of all nations teaches us, that neither the unassisted dictates of reason nor the active principle of public spirit, nor the punishment of the civil magistrate are effectual checks upon men's appetites and passions if we leave out a belief of a God & a Providence or cease to cultivate these affections of the heart which that belief tends naturally to produce[]. The fear of God must always be considered as the surest foundation of freedom— it forms & fixes every virtue of the heart, gives life and motion to every good principle of the mind, directs the hopes and fears of men to their proper objects & supplies the unavoidable defects of human laws... 13

The Christian teleology of the great chain of being14 provided both the horizons and the framework of the gentry mind. The essential attribute of the cosmos and human society was order. Gradation worked towards that order. The human institutions which maintained hierarchical social structure ensured order. This reasoning is not as airy-fairy as it may seem. Between May and June 1832, "Phospher"
wrote a series of lengthy letters on conservatism, starting from a quote of Samuel Taylor Coleridge's which tied the order of the heavens to earthly order as supported by the Book of Common Prayer, episcopacy, aristocracy, and conservatism.  

This order of the universe was a recurrent theme of Robinson's grand jury charges:

There is a meaning in the moral world no less visible than in the great works of Nature—Order, stability, peace security the great blessings of social existence, while, those which constitute the felicity of private life, can be reaped only as the rewards of a religious adherence to what is right & true— and even long before Christianity had shed its' light upon mankind, it had been discovered & acknowledged by the wise & good, that the foundations of a peoples welfare must be laid in public virtue.

Fortunately society was not faced with a clear-cut choice between the acceptance or rejection of the cosmic order. It was understood that at times man's corrupt nature would require the force of the law to deter or restrain it, in spite of early religious or moral instruction. Later as society increased in population and complexity more drastic forms of social control such as police forces might be required to ensure order.

But there was a crucial middle ground of custom, habit, and tradition which inculcated order through the emulation of good habits and manners. This was the example and leadership of social superiors. At this point love of order became synonymous with the rule of gentlemen—those qualified by education, wealth, station, and rank to pursue the good of all ranks in the political realm. Again Robinson expressed this unique relationship between order and the social and political power of gentlemen:
... A love of Order is not only essential to the tranquillity but to the very being of any State. It becomes the foundation of mutual faith, confidence and security. When we behold an indifference to the observance of the Laws and a restless diligence to evade them—a want of reverence to Magistrates & Superiors—a disrespect to stations, offices, ranks, and orders of persons—a contempt for the experience of the wise grow upon the minds of the generality of men and appear through all their actions when we perceive an absolute independance in public and private conduct affected and encouraged; a general forwardness, self-sufficiency, presumption and licentiousness cultivated commenced and propagated through the different classes of the people we may consider these as symptoms fatal to the true liberty of that country. In such cases every little disappointment—every imaginary grievance—every wanton desire of change produces a ferment and threatens the public peace. Everyone carves out his own method of redress, and prosecutes his designs by the dictates of his own corrupt will. To prevent these evils a love of Order becomes necessary by which we are induced to conform to the laws and to promote the welfare of the community.

Since the order of society required the maintenance of a graded social structure, then the harmony of that community rested upon the quality of its leaders to exercise their responsibility as a trust for the benefit of all grades. To some extent then the private interest of this group must cohere with the general interest and/or be of such a nature as to make possible unselfish politics.

The notion of balance was pivotal to the gentry image of politics, social structure, and the cosmos. It informed their deepest beliefs about the functioning of the constitution, the preservation of liberty, and social harmony. The social and political leadership of gentlemen was the fulcrum crucial to this balance. Who then were these gentlemen? It was clear from the British experience and from the western political tradition that this was the lot of the aristocracy and the gentry. Yet the anomaly of the
Upper Canadian situation was not only the lack of an aristocracy but of any social structure. The Constitutional Act had established the political institutions for an aristocracy in the legislative council and made due provision for hereditary titles. But in England the House of Lords represented the social and economic reality of the aristocracy. What then did the council represent? John Graves Simcoe had hoped his experiment with lieutenants of counties would combine constitutional authority with "that legal Aristocracy which the Experience of Ages has proved necessary to the Ballance and Permanency of . . . Government." But if the need for aristocracy was the experience of ages then the social structure which gave rise to it was the product of ages.

By the 1830s and probably much earlier Robinson had realized the social gulf between the aspirations of 1791 and the structure of Upper Canada. If a harmonious society depended upon aristocratic leadership then in Upper Canada social leadership devolved upon those who most nearly approximated the attributes of the aristocracy. These were the few who possessed the advantages of education, superior natural intelligence, respectable station, and property:

Among the most powerful securities for the maintenance of order in a Community, is the good conduct of those to whom the great body of the people naturally look up, for advice and example—Whatever may be the form of Gov't. in a Country: & whatever the nature of its civil institutions it will always be found that a very considerable influence attaches itself to those who possess the advantages of education, and of superior natural intelligence, and of wealth, and of respectable stations in society, whether arising from public employment, or from the exercise of the liberal professions."
Robinson's definition of gentlemen were those "possessed of that
degree of intelligence, respectability, & property which naturally
confers upon them a salutary influence in Society . . . the less
reasonable & respecting will be improved by their example."

In Upper Canada homogeneous social groups did not exist.
Differences in religion, education, nationality, region, and
distance militated against common social bonds. Few, if any,
gentlemen lived on landed estates and occupations were as varied
as the other attributes. In short the possibility of rule by a
self-sustaining social group was hobbled, not by the settlement
process but rather by what it indicated - a heterogeneous immigrant
society of warring political concepts, religions, nationalities, and
cultures. When the short-lived dreams of a native aristocracy
dissipated what was left to distinguish men as suitable for an
aristocratic substitute was their political beliefs and their
property. The focus of the gentry's political action became the
independence of the legislative council and the protection of property.
What is of interest is the assumed relationship between the two.

The council was at once the best and last hope for the gentry.
The application of the elective principle to the council would destroy
the possibility of an harmonious polity by allowing popular control
to put power into the hands of a Robert Thorpe, Joseph Willcocks, or
William Lyon Mackenzie. Without gentlemen in the council Upper
Canada would become a society wholly lacking in countervailing
institutions to the democratic spirit. Robinson made his point by
analyzing the social structures of Great Britain and Upper Canada, and finding the latter wanting:

It would be very clear, I imagine, that with all the help of the vast patronage of Government in this great Empire—with all the influence of ancient and venerable institutions, and the traditional respect for rank and family—with all the substantial power of wealth, and the control of numerous landlords over a grateful tenantry; that with all these advantages no good result [of the election of 200 Chartists] could be insured, and that neither the present nor any other ministry could long conduct with effect the business of the empire. It is even more clear that without such sources of influence as I have spoken of no administration in this country, appointed by the Sovereign, could stand for a moment. But Upper Canada has none of these counteracting checks.25

As he put it in a comment on Lord Durham's report:

It is to be remembered that there is in Canada no counteracting influence of an ancient Aristocracy, of a great landed interest or even of a wealthy agricultural class; there is little in short but the presumed good sense, and good feeling of an uneducated multitude, (which may be too much tempted) to stand between almost universal suffrage and those institutions, which proudly and happily distinguish Britons from the subjects of other monarchies, and no less so, from the Citizens of that Great Republic. . . . 26

In his 1838 charge to the treason trial Robinson echoed the ancient wisdom proven by the events of the recent revolutionary era that the ineluctable tendency of republicanism was "Democracy, Anarchy, and Despotism."27 The political role of gentlemen deriving from their social-economic position was to prevent the degeneration of the constitution to either monarchical tyranny or democratic anarchy.28

The threat to the constitution and to harmony came from the elective principle which would "disable the Crown from appointing a gentleman of high character, of large property, and of superior information"
to the council. Without the royal prerogative to choose councillors retained intact, "the most worthy, intelligent, loyal, and opulent inhabitant of the province, because his modesty or his honour unfitted him for the warfare" of popular politics would be excluded.

The irony of the gentry's position was the conflict between their self-image and social-economic reality - the lack of landed estates. Robinson's anxiety was not over the absence of wealth but rather of landed wealth. Here the social-political aspirations come to the fore because it was the possession of landed wealth which imparted independence - not the independence which was the legacy of any honest yeoman but the greater independence which fitted a man for politics and a concern for the general interest. Had the gentry's aspirations been realized with the mere possession of wealth then commercial enterprise would have proved the most rewarding.

The paradox of the gentry's position was to seek independence within the offices of colonial administration. In the Anglo-American political tradition the language of independence had been coterminus with the landed estate. One of the most frequently used symbols of the threats to independence was the courtier or placeman. Yet the attractiveness of these offices was the possibility of independence. Between 1828 and 1831 Macaulay pulled out all stops and was deeply wounded when his friends Robinson and Strachan did not deliver Hagerman's recently vacated collectorship of customs at Kingston:
The place in question peculiarly comports with my situation & views—With that & the P.O. I can live in a snug way discharge my present social duties, & make myself on all occasion[s] useful in supporting good government & combating the unceasing efforts of our democrats to injure [destroy crossed out] the tone of public feeling.

There is no reason to suspect that Macaulay's merchant enterprises were not sufficient to satisfy his material wants, rather he had been "fore some time desirous of retiring wholly from mercantile business," but the emoluments of the Collectorship added to those of the post office would form an income sufficient to enable me to realize my wishes." Although by 1818 the attorney and solicitor generals had begun to act as government spokesmen in the assembly other offices lacked the same political prominence. By and large officers operated independent of crown supervision, assembly control, and each other. Some, but not all, sat in the councils but since there were not ministries the importance of this arrangement was defused. Departments, such as they were, varied with their administrators, who were usually chosen for reasons other than expertise.

The folly of this strategy was that it assumed a static society. It did not foresee the advent of new political arrangements under Governor General Charles Poulett Thomson who forced Hagerman to accept the government's policy on the union bill and insisted that Macaulay either take a seat in the assembly or resign the inspector generalship. The desperation of the gentry's position was summed up by Thomas Allen Stayner, a friend of Macaulay's and the deputy
postmaster general at Quebec: "... Happy are those who can live independently of Govt. patronage!" But the gentry courted disaster because they had no alternative. Samuel Cunard once remarked that government office was an inadequate outlet for ambition or wealth. Possibly then ambition and wealth are unsuitable standards for Upper Canada where public office provided a sufficient economic status compatible with public duty and a life not aimed at the pursuit of wealth.

Gentlemen were linked to the political realm by their duty to exercise their talents as a stewardship for the benefit of society. In 1824 Robinson urged Macaulay to take up the cudgels against fomenters of discontent - "You are one of the regularly bred, and you owe the State some service." The term gentleman became a synonym for disinterested conduct, respectability, and honour and denoted high praise. A few examples should make the point.

In 1821 Strachan opposed the Kingston Bank Bill because of "the want of respectability in the Members," among other reasons. The following year he lauded an editorial by Macaulay evincing "much good sense ... and gentlemanly feeling" while dismissing a Home District petition in support of the proposed union because "there is not ... a respectable name appended to it." The mere presence of non-gentleman in the political realm caused Robinson to consider resigning his seat in the assembly because Barnabas Bidwell, Robert Randall, and David Pattie had been elected:
they are there to represent the rascals of the Province— I feel as squishy [sic]. I assure you, as you could about the prospect of sitting in such Company, but that it wd. be quite correct & proper to withdraw & leave the field entirely to such scum I am not altogether clear— In the mean time that ______ who pretend to be honourable Gentlemen are in a situation not to be envied you can well conceive.  

In 1829 Robert Stanton sneered at Marshall Spring Bidwell's use of Esquire to refer to Francis Collins and Thomas Dalton because it was descriptive neither of their station nor character. 46 As the years progressed the judgements became more vituperative. In 1836 Robinson bristled at Mackenzie's chairmanship of the assembly committee examining Welland Canal Company accounts:

No harm— but some good probably will arise from the very infamous course pursued by that mean little creature who among honorable men and in an honorable age, would be spurned as a thing whose touch must calumniate. 47

The same year Robinson was aghast at Lieutenant Governor Head's publication of government correspondence after the resignation of the executive council "for everybody knows every thing— and all the shoemakers & tailors in town— are discussing the _____ of this 'Cabinet pudding'." 48 During Thomson's governorship Robinson was incredulous at the governor's personal spite towards him as unbecoming to "a Gentleman and a man." 49 The natural qualities of a gentleman for politics was caught by Robinson's remark upon learning of Sir Charles Bagot's appointment to succeed Thomson:

One feels at least a comfortable assurance that a British General Officer must be a Gentleman of a high sense of honor, necessarily above paltry conduct, and possessing no little experience of mankind. 50
What marked the ethos of a gentleman from that of a merchant or businessman was honour, rectitude, and public spiritedness. Profit, speculation, and private interest were scorned as unworthy of men engaged in politics. This did not automatically preclude merchants or businessmen from politics but it indicated the narrowness of their interests. In 1823 Merritt caught Robinson's attention with his scheme to link Lakes Erie and Ontario. Robinson was particularly taken not by the obvious public benefit of a canal but by Merritt's good sense to realize that public projects should be directed by those who have no private interest in them—gentlemen:

... good judgment and right-feeling to desire from the first, that all money-transactions & accounts connected with the work should be in the charge of Gentlemen— with whom you had no connection over whom you could have no control, and whose integrity was free from all question—and in the most place, that it seemed your earnest wish to have the direction of the Company committed to Gentlemen, whom you could not hope to bend to anything unworthy. 51

This was the code of society lamented by Macaulay in a lengthy elegy for "Toryism" written in February 1850. It is an eloquent evocation of the wrenching of the structure of society which the gentry saw taking place during the 1840s: "The most alarming symptom which I observe in the Country is the decay of old fashioned loyalty, and a general want of respect for authority and station which once prevailed among us." He yearned wistfully for the days of yore, "when whatever were the failings of the much abused "family compact", we had a Government of Gentlemen. 52
FOOTNOTES

1. Strachan Papers, package #1, no. 10, "Prospects of the United States."

2. Ibid.

3. Ibid., Ms. sermon on the text, "For the mountains shall depart and the hills be removed, but my kindness shall not depart from Thee neither shall the covenant of my peace be removed saith the Lord that hath mercy on Thee--" "Sermon on the war & Pestilence preached 13 Aug. 1854 at the Cathedral in the morning." Isaiah 54:8.

4. The commodious life became the aim of modern political philosophy in the works of Francis Bacon and Thomas Hobbes.

5. Strachan Papers, Ms. sermon on the text, "Be content with such things as ye have--" Hebrews 13:5; 24 Sept. 1824, 24 April 1825, 28 Dec. 1827, 23 Dec. 1829, 13 Nov. 1836. "Read this Sermon on 12 Mar. 1858 and found it very inferior to what I expected." This sermon Professor Wise has rightly singled out as illustrative of Strachan's understanding of inequality (S. F. Wise, "Sermon literature . . . ", 15-17). First written at sea in 1824 it catches the young Strachan at his eloquent best. He varied his choice of appropriate texts for the sermon but the message imparted was consistent. Each text enjoined man to be content with his lot in life: 1 Timothy 4:8, "But Godliness is profitable unto all things"; 1 Timothy 6:6 & 7, "Godliness with Contentment is great gain For we brought nothing into this world and it is certain we can carry nothing out"; and Philippians 4:11, "For I have learned in whatsoever state I am therewith to be content."

6. Ibid., package #1, no. 10, "Prospects . . . ."

7. Ibid., Ms. sermon on the text, "Be content with such things as ye have." Hebrews 13:5 . . .

8. Ibid.

9. Ibid., Ms. sermon on the text, "Doubtless then art our Father though Abraham be ignorant of us and Israel acknowledge us not--Thou O Lord art our Father our Redeemer thy name is for everlasting--" 6 Jan. 1844, 10 June 1846, 11 June 1846, 21 July 1847, 6 Jan. 1851, 6 Jan. 1855.
10. Ibid., Ms. sermon on the text, "Now the Lord is that Spirit and Where the Spirit of the Lord is there liberty" 2 Corinthians 3:17, 4-Feb. 1821, 29 March 1829, 5 Feb. 1837.

11. Ibid., p. 7.

12. Canada and the Canada Bill, 42-43.

13. Strachan Papers, Ms. sermon on the text, "Now the Lord is that Spirit ..." p. 9.

14. Arthur O. Lovejoy, The Great Chain of Being a study of the history of an idea (New York, 1960). Strachan Papers, Ms. sermon on the text, "And Elisha prayed and said Lord I pray thee open his eyes that he may see. And the Lord opened the eyes of the young man and he saw and behold the Mountain was full of horses and Chariots of fire round about Elisha." 2 Kings 6:17, 29 Sept. 1847.

15. Brockville Gazette, April to May 1832 especially the letter of 3 May.

16. Robinson Papers, Charge to the grand jury, Kingston, 20 Sept. 1841. In its political connotations, this assumption is close to the core or the origins of modern political philosophy in Machiavelli and Hobbes, in its emphasis on the shift from moral character to institutions necessary to preserve order. (Leo Strauss, What is political philosophy? 9-55). Suffice it to say that the gentry were not latterday Hobbesians, but merely nineteenth century Christian gentlemen. The complex of honour, duty, and virtue originated in Christian morality.

17. Ibid., Charge to the grand jury, Picton, 28 Sept. 1835.

18. Ibid., Charge to the grand jury, London District, 12 Aug. 1830.

19. Canada and the Canada Bill, 25., 146.

20. Robinson Papers, Charge to the grand jury, Western District, 1836.

21. The correspondence of Lieut. Governor John Graves Simcoe ... (Cruikshank), I, 245.

22. Robinson Papers, Charge to the grand jury, Western District, 1836.

23. Ibid., Charge to the grand jury, Picton, 28 Sept. 1835; see also Canada and the Canada Bill, 34.


27. PRO, CO 42/454, Address to Her Majesty on the State of the Province. Legislative Council, 28 Feb. 1838, signed by J. B. Robinson.

28. Within the framework of classical political philosophy, the rule of gentlemen guarded against the degeneration of its constituent elements into either tyranny or anarchy. Monarchy and democracy fulfilled a parallel function checking the tendency of aristocraticy to degenerate into oligarchy. See J. M. Ward, Colonial self-government the British experience 1759-1836 (Toronto and Buffalo, 1976), 1-20; John Ehrman, The Younger Pitt (New York, 1969), 360-71.

29. Canada and the Canada Bill, 141.

30. Ibid., 145.

31. The Niagara commercial compact which developed under the aegis of Robert Hamilton was a likely example as were the men who followed in his stead: Thomas Clark, William Dickson, and Samuel Street. See Bruce G. Wilson, "The enterprises of Robert Hamilton," (Unpublished Ph.D. thesis, University of Toronto, 1978).

32. For the influence and persistence of this language in Upper Canada, see Patterson, "Studies ..." 429-30 and "Whiggery ..." The republican animus of this critique is echoed by W. L. Mackenzie and the small coterie of radical agrarians in the assembly during the 1830s. For an analysis of the republican tradition, see J. G. A. Pocock, The Machiavellian moment Florentine political thought and the Atlantic Republican tradition ([Princeton and London, 1975]): Politics, language and time: essays in political thought and history (New York, 1971); Caroline Robbins, The eighteenth century commonwealthman (New York, 1968); Bernard Bailyn, The ideological origins of the American revolution (Cambridge, 1971).

34. Ibid., Macaulay to Hillier, Kingston, 4 July 1828; Commission appointing John Macaulay deputy post master of Kingston, 5 July 1828 at & 130 per annum.

35. JHA, 1839-40, II, "Report of the Royal Commission set up to investigate business, conduct and organization of various public departments of Upper Canada."

36. See chapter VIII.


38. Ibid., T. A. Stayner to Macaulay, Quebec, 13 Jan. 1843. For the problems see PAO, Cartwright Papers, Hagerman to J. S. Cartwright, Toronto, 29 Jan. 1842; Col. Wright to J. S. Cartwright, Chatham, 16 March 1841.


40. Although speculation lacked an exact definition in an age in which public and private interest had not been strictly defined. This sort of confusion, rather than malfeasance, probably explains the state of Peter Robinson's accounts at his death in 1836 (see PAO, RG 22, 6-1, will of Peter Robinson) and George Markland's deficit with district school funds (R. J. Burns, "G. H. Markland," DCB, IX, 535). Macaulay for one found that his duties as surveyor general accorded with the legislative councillorship, insofar as the former allowed him the leisure to pursue the concerns of the latter (Macaulay Papers, Macaulay to Ann Macaulay, Toronto, 2 Feb. 1837).

41. This was a frequent topic of Strachan's sermons.

42. Macaulay Papers, Robinson to Macaulay, 12 June 1824.

43. Ibid., Strachan to Macaulay, York, 5 July 1821.

44. Ibid., Strachan to Macaulay, York, 13 Nov. 1822.

45. Ibid., Robinson to Macaulay, York, 18 Nov. 1821.

46. Ibid., Stanton to Macaulay, York, 10 Jan. 1829.

47. Ibid., Robinson to Macaulay, Toronto, 22 Jan. 1836.

50. Ibid., III, 458-64, Robinson to [Arthur], 28 Sept. 1841.
51. PAC, MG 24, El (Merritt Papers), 24, pp. 4035-36, Robinson to Merritt, 6 June 1850.
CHAPTER VI

AGRARIANISM, HIERARCHY, AND PROPERTY

... Grand Jurors should be taken from the number of persons of the greatest figure and standing in the country... such are more likely to be obtained when you take the Jurors from among those persons possessed of the greater amount of property...

-Christopher Hagerman

Landless men will have no mercy on other folks' acres.

- John Macaulay

The gentry's political language was unaffected by the absence of landed estates. They continued to equate political virtue with independence and the possession of property. By property they meant landed property. This definition cast society in the mould of a pre-capitalist society because of the limited uses of property in land as opposed to capital. Even the use of land in the form of crown or clergy reserves was a right to a revenue rather than an exclusive right to the land itself. For a time at least the use of the revenue was exclusively appropriated by the crown and the Church of England.

A cursory examination of the language of the gentry indicates the pre-eminent place accorded independence. Used in praise of gentlemen it meant the capacity to put the public weal before private interest. The notion of a public interest in the English political tradition arose in the seventeenth century. The gentry following this tradition assumed that a gentleman's property (his estate)
connected him to the public realm in a manner unlike small property-holders or the landless. That is, the man of large property had nothing to gain by his participation in politics. His fortune was secure, whereas, the others had a fortune to make and would use political ends to secure their private and selfish interests. On the basis of these assumptions Thomas Chandler Haliburton ridiculed the idea of responsible government of "a majority without property", and the aims of American abolitionists as "unshackled by paltry considerations of property. . . . "

Only gentlemen possessed the sort of independence which allowed them to steer clear of popular measures. In 1816 Robinson noted Strachan's suitability for a seat on the executive council in the following terms:

"... it was justly due him for his uniform public spirit & exertions, & because his independence & sterling integrity are a security to the Province agt. any improper, arbitrary or submissive conduct in an assembly of which he is a member." 

In 1821 Strachan bestowed high praise on the deceased legislative councillor Thomas Fraser as one of "the most independent and sensible Members that has ever been in the house." The same year Robinson echoed Strachan's language in praise of Hagerman: "his conduct is manly, correct & sensible & shews in every thing that kind of independence most rarely met with which determines him to follow the right side of a question tho' it may appear unpopular." In 1832 Hagerman equated lack of private interest with gentlemen chiding Lieutenant Governor Sir John Colborne for "acting with apparent
coolness" to the "most deserving young men in the Province"—
Strachan's pupils—noting that "the only thing which had kept
down their indignation was that they were men of principle and
gentlemen—and not easily led to do anything that was wrong to
gratify personal pique." 8

In a bittersweet observance in 1843 Robinson mourned the
passing of the quality which gentlemen had imparted to the political
life of the province, "how completely all scruples seem to have
vanished in the conduct of public affairs these days." Not surprisingly
he attributed this decline to the change of political institutions
which had transformed the fundamental characteristics of political
life:

This change is a sure sign I think of the democratic
spirit, gaining the ascendancy—It was truly said by
Sir Francis Head that the principle of a Monarchy is
honor—the principle of democracy is mere unmitigated
selfishness—anything may be done that will serve the
purpose of the day—claims & merit go for nothing—In
the strife of parties, the difficulties of maintaining
one's position seem to leave room but for one train
of thought in mind—all considerations of what is
just & becoming seem to be disregarded— or rather it
seems to be felt that there is no chance of keeping
one's head above water with such dead weights about
the neck... It is time indeed that the Legr. Cl. is,
as it seems, about to be destroyed rendered utterly
useless as a constitutional check, & unworthy of the
confidence of any body—Every step the Govt. takes
is down hill—What kind of a slough will they find at
the bottom? 9

The nature of democratic regimes was tumultuous and despotic.

Robinson commented:
It is in the nature of popular institutions occasionally to engender tumults & while every well wisher to this Country will do his utmost to prevent and to repress them, we must yet all feel that the condition of things which produces these evils would be ill exchanged for the sickness of despotism.  

Such regimes and their institutions attracted imprudent men. In 1838 Robinson spoke of the rebels being animated by "irregular desires and unreasonable expectations of ill constituted minds." An examination of his choice of words indicates that this description would apply generally to all radicals and rebels. At best government opponents were "deluded partisans." The English radicals of the 1810s were dismissed as "demagogue orators." The Upper Canadian malcontents of the 1820s fell under the rubric of "noisy declaimers," "restless spirits," "busy levelers," or "babblers and bawlers." They were "restless agitators," "selfish and unprincipled," and "unhappy men" motivated by "intemperate passions." In fact their public ill-humour mirrored the evil passions endemic to human nature.

The gentry were naturally suspicious of change. Their presumption in favour of the constitution and the rule of gentlemen was a presumption in favour of a constitution which had come down to the present from time immemorial, or "time out of mind," to use Edmund Burke's phrase. Of English law Robinson could proudly say "with truth that never more just or rational has yet been produced by the wisdom of mankind become venerable from antiquity, having received the sanction & approbation of ages." As a further example
of this language Robinson asserted the claims of the Church of
England as secured by "the plainest principles of the Constitution
& the truth of history."18 In short the present was sanctioned by
the past.

Thus the gentry derided the plans of radicals as "the wildest
visions" or "the most proposterous ambition" which "had profited by
opportunities of experience not beyond the memory of the present
generation."19 The politics of intemperate men tended to be rash,
intemperate, speculative, and visionary. The constitutional proposals
intended for the Canadas in the Union Bill were denounced in the
following phrases: "novel principles in government,"20 "new invention
in government,"21 or "altogether experimental, and unsanctioned by any
precedent within the British dominions."22 More often than not the
thrust of the criticism was against the "extension of the democratic
principle..."23 One of Robinson's earliest political comments
came in 1809. He informed his friend Macaulay that the assembly
"appears nearly equally divided between Blackguards and Gentlemen."24

The great virtue of the constitution was the restriction of blackguards
to the assembly providing for their restraint by the legislative
council, the governor and ultimately the imperial power to disallow
colonial legislation. The great virtue of the constitution was
its adaptiveness. Because it was prescriptive it was able to secure
new blessings without endangering the old. Robinson was definitive
in his praise of it:
That statute was framed in a wise spirit of adherence to the well established principles of British government. It discovers no distrust of the sufficiency of British institutions for protecting the liberties and promoting the happiness of the people. I know not what deviation from it is likely to be found an improvement. 25

The genius of the prescriptive traditionalism of the constitution was the identification of political liberty with the preservation of property. Liberty and property were the hallmarks of a constitution guaranteed to secure happiness for all but the literally unbalanced the restless, unhappy agitators whose actions derived from intemperate passions and not any fault in the constitution. Property enshrined liberty providing a sure foundation for resisting tyranny and anarchy. Strachan exalted this feature of the British constitution which distinguished it from all others:

Does any person doubt whether the British be the freest nation on earth, let him tell me where property and its rights are so well protected. This is the life and soul of liberty. What shall oppression seize when property is secure? Even a tyrant will not be wicked for nothing; but the motives and objects are removed, and the seed of oppression destroyed, when property is safe. By this, life and liberty are rendered sacred. 26

In this assumption is the thought which linked the gentry's politics to an agrarian society and underlay their hostility to democracy. The British constitution was the best constitution because it combined the three classical political elements, monarchy, aristocracy, and democracy, each acting as a check or a balance on the others. Thus the mixed or balanced constitution prevented the natural tendency of political regimes to degenerate into tyranny, oligarchy, or anarchy.
The aristocracy were the fulcrum preserving the essential balance by virtue of their capacity for and exercise of an independence derived from an unequal possession of landed property. Since property secured their independence and their independence secured the balance of the constitution, it was in the general interest to safeguard property. Gentlemen were unassailable because of their large amounts of property and hence independent. Their independence ensured that property would remain inviolate as the heart and soul of liberty and the constitution. Within the political language of the gentry landed property and inheritance (primogeniture) were the essential ingredients for an orderly, harmonious, and virtuous society. This image was sustained by, and realized in an unequal amount of property - inheritable, sanctified and protected by law.

It is within this structure of thought that the gentry's use of public or general and private interest derived its context. The latter was a synonym for selfishness - covetousness of the have not's. Macaulay's outright hostility to the proposal for district councils in the Union Bill articulated these assumptions which were at the root of gentry hostility to democracy:

The District Councils will be established beyond a doubt with power to tax to an immense extent. Landless men will have no mercy on other folks' acres.27

Head's recommendations for legislative councillors had been based on this sort of thinking. In 1837 he wrote Charles Grant, 1st Lord Glenelg:
The persons I have selected are generally speaking men who have considerable property to lose, and who on that account form I think the best barrier to the members of the House of Assembly, whose constituents generally speaking have their fortunes to make.  

The gentry were paternalistic and charitable as both their belief in stewardship and religion enjoined but they were also intractable in defending the unequal distribution of property.  

The House of Assembly as an institution based on an almost universal manhood suffrage allowed any one who could make a successful appeal to the limited capacities of a large electorate to sit as a member without regard to qualification. Robinson's 1809 comment indicated that at best the gentry were wary of the characters of most assemblymen. In an 1819 editorial Macaulay blasted Gourlay's statement "that a man may be a very profound political economist, although his ignorance on all other subjects is quite conspicuous, and his general dullness no less manifest." Macaulay was utterly contemptuous of the notion that superior fortune and station were not requisites to the art of law-making. He wondered if the political world was:  

... easy and obvious, level to the meanest capacity, and most unlettered education; to the apprehension of the peasant who drives the plough, the artisan who plies the loom, the carman who guides his horse, and of all the labouring classes whose daily toil is devoted to providing for the necessities of each passing day. Nay, even the common street beggar thinks himself qualified to give gratuitous opinions, on the science of legislation, though his abilities and judgment have been totally inadequate to the task of devising "ways and means" for keeping himself from rags and starvation. ... But shall an ignorant artisan, even one of the lowest of
people, shall he presume to step over the threshold to give his opinion upon momentous subjects about which he knows nothing? 30

To ensure that the opinions of ignorant artisans were minimized, Macaulay proposed higher property qualifications attached to the franchise. In 1822, he objected to a proviso of the proposed Union bill to abridge:

... our present undefined right to fix the property qualification of a Provincial Statute and to modify it at pleasure ... according to the state of prices ... and I would prefer £500 estate really valued according to prices to the present law - I take it as an axiom that no man in this country who is worth less than £500, is fit, to make laws, or to be trusted with a power of meddling with the Laws fixing the rights of property. 31

The Constitutional Act did not include a property qualification for members. 32 Macaulay intended to limit the irregularity of assembly interests by a qualification excluding men of no or little property. 33

In his address to the meeting of the Kingston Friends of Union on 30 Oct. 1822 he outlined his objections to the £500 qualification as excessive and the provincial £90 as too low. He supported the thrust of the qualification but preferred to strike a balance between the two sums:

At any rate I agree with them who think that the property qualification ought in any future Bill to be lowered, in order that men of moderate fortune, yet worth and independence, and sound judgment, may not be excluded from the great Council of the country. 34

The inheritability of land was of no small consequence to maintaining the rule of gentleman. Through the 1820s and 1830s
various intestate bills were introduced in the assembly which represented a direct attack on primogeniture. During the 1821 debates in the eighth parliament on Marshall Spring Bidwell's and David McGregor Rogers's Intestate Bill, Robinson and Hagerman fell in behind William-Warren Baldwin's eloquent and compelling defence of primogeniture. Robinson "agreed with every word that had fallen from the hon. gentleman . . ." Baldwin's statement therefore can be taken as representative of the gentry's position:

... there never was a bill brought before the house which went so far to change the most salutary regulations of the British Constitution than the present; it aimed at a total Révolution in the laws, and weakened the power by which England became a great, a powerful and an exalted Nation. It was altogether a visionary scheme, and would be found ineffectual, it might do in a republican State, but not in a free government . . . The statute of distribution was very poorly confined to personal property, and not to Real Estate, and why should they step aside from the fundamental principles of the British Constitution and look for novel enactments. The subdivision of land had too much of the Agrarian system in it, by it society would be confused, and Aristocracy, upon which the happy, happy Constitution of Great Britain rested, would be destroyed. He would wish to see the principles of Aristocracy supported in this Colony to preserve the constitution conferred upon us by the British Government, and not turn into a scheme of Democracy by establishing new fangled laws. . . . 35

Hagerman agreed. To extend equal distribution from personal property and effects to real estate would undermine the constitution:

... if they passed the present bill, they would be departing from everything venerable, noble, and honorable; he should be sorry that a bill of so dangerous a tendency would pass. Democracy was, like a serpent, twisting round us by degrees, it should be crushed in the first instance, for if that bill passed, it would not leave them the British Constitution but a mere shadow. . . . 36
Five years later Robinson picked up the same arguments to use them against a similar bill proposed in the ninth parliament (1825-28). If passed the legislation would put "... agriculture in a miserable state from the many subdivisions of property."37 Years after Robinson would pronounce "rank a farce" in a colony but in the hopeful years of the 1820s he believed primogeniture essential to "all hopes of ever attaining to the same state of Society as existed in England..."38 During the debate on the Jury Bill of the twelfth parliament in 1835 Hagerman argued the necessity of choosing gentlemen of property for grand juries:

"It is laid down by a most learned writer on this subject, [Blackstone] that Grand Jurors should be taken from the number of persons of the greatest figure and standing in the country... The object is to get men of intelligence as well as honesty, and such are more likely to be obtained when you take the Jurors from among those persons possessed of the greater amount of property..."39

Thus democratic striving and agitation would only unshackle the political order from its moorings and liberate selfishness from all restraint.

The clash between private and public interest had come over political issues such as American immigration and settlement in Upper Canada, the alien question of the 1820s, and such measures as Robinson's Road Bill of 1825, and his Assessment Amendment Bill of 1824.40 In the case of both the road bill and the assessment bill the most significant opposition came from speculators such as Thomas Clark and William Dickson. During the debate on the road
bill Robinson answered his critics unfavourably: ". . . it will affect private interest; but if it did, private interest is not to be protected; against the general interest of the country."  

The gentry subordinated private interest to the public interest. In Canada and the Canada Bill Robinson inveighed against opinions ". . . based only on ideas of profit and loss, and uninfluenced by a sense of public honor, humanity, or duty. . . ." When materialism was society's major goal it could too readily find that 

"we have purchased even wealth at too high a price." The best example is perhaps Robinson's sponsorship of the Welland Canal:

The grand object was to overcome a great impediment to the prosperity of the better half of our country. As to its being a work that will pay, I never laid stress on that branch of the question.

It is worth noting that Robinson's thinking on the relationship of property and political order included thoughts on the rising force of socialism within British and European politics. Robinson, like Strachan, was a correspondent of Henry Phillpotts, Bishop of Exeter (1831-69), renowned as a "belligerent, ultra-High Church prelate." In a long career distinguished by notoriety his contribution to the contemporary debate on socialism has received special attention. On 4 Feb. 1840 he gave a famous speech in the House of Lords, subsequently published under the title Socialism. From 27 Sept. 1838 until 1 June 1840 Robinson was either en route to, or in England. While there Phillpotts sought Robinson's advice on several matters. On 31 Jan. 1840 he wrote, "Accept my best thanks for your very
valuable suggestions on the Socialists Question.\textsuperscript{47} The extent of Robinson's contribution is unknown but the consultation itself signifies the degree to which the gentry shared the mentalité of the ultras.

The gentry then were agrarians. Their political language was limited to a society of independent agricultural producers divided by rank, station, intelligence. The common denominator of these qualities was the possession of a great amount of property. Too often agrarianism has been used to distinguish radical agrarians from tory commercialism. One of the contemporary originators of this distinction was Robert Baldwin Sullivan. Sullivan was probably following the standard interpretation of distinctions between parties in the United States.\textsuperscript{48} Macaulay accepted Sullivan's distinctions setting the commercial party against:

\ldots the other opposing "liberal" party, which depends on the rural population—the yeomanry, lords of the soil, whose inclinations from their very condition of life tend to the assertion of independence, and a republican degree of control over the Executive.\ldots\textsuperscript{49}

This was the qualification which W. W. Baldwin had attached to his use of agrarian—egalitarianism.\textsuperscript{50} The gentry could share with the report of the agriculture committee of 1836 the belief that "agriculture is the only true and solid basis on which the permanent prosperity and wealth of most nations must rest.\ldots\textsuperscript{51} Where the gentry would have disagreed with committee members such as Peter Shaver, Samuel Lount, Caleb Hopkins, and Alexander Chisholm was the social structure of an agriculturally-based society—
hierarchical or egalitarian. The one class society of independent yeomanry was not for the gentry.

But in spite of Macaulay's reservations the gentry favoured a society which was overwhelmingly agrarian. There was no shortcutting the necessity of labour. It was the basis of wealth and prosperity. This did not mean a society of honest mechanics and labourers rather a society of private owners seeking to improve their lot by their own exertions. The experience with disaffection during the War of 1812 and its recurrence in 1837 confirmed, for Robinson at least, the necessity of having most of the population at work on their own land. It put happiness for the most part within their grasp:

When men are raised . . . above the danger of want, and above the evils of poverty and dependence their happiness is for the most part in their own power.

Upper Canada with its abundance of land favoured individual initiative to settle and cultivate land.

The happy prospect was for emigrants to acquire property after a short period of residence becoming their "own master[s]." As Macaulay put it there was "... almost a general level among the owners of the soil. Every man almost who cultivates the land, is its Lord." Men without access to land and hence to subsistence threatened the social order. Robinson had no wish to see the "lower degrees of society forced below a level of material life not consistent with human dignity." Without "the want of opportunity for profitable occupation" the consequences for society were vice, disorder, and crime.
Robinson realized that at some point Upper Canada would run out of arable land but happily for the moment that day was long distant and the insoluble problem of scarcity and its attendant evils could be dismissed:

It is happy for us that we may safely congratulate on the assurance that this great cause of evil can not present itself here in our time—It can scarcely arise before the lapse of many generations—We are thus happily relieved from the embarrassment of contending against inconveniences which seem scarcely to admit of a remedy, and we are spared the pain of beholding our Countrymen driven to enrich distant lands by their labor for which they find no opportunity at home—But it becomes us to remember that we do not enjoy this happy immunity from troubles; without incurring at some time a heavy responsibility.50

In the meantime the gentry welcomed all but American emigration. In a land of emigrants paupers would be transformed by the rehabilitative capacity of the possession of their own property.

The acquisition and cultivation of land fixed in man habits beneficial to the individual and society. This was a favourite theme of Robinson's grand jury charges:

We know that Man is the Creator [sic] of habit, & this truth has perhaps been no where more satisfactorily illustrated than in this Province where we have seen that the possession of property, and open field for industrious exertion & the enjoyment of equal rights have had a powerful influence in overcoming habits—injurious to the peace of Society which had been formed under less propitious circumstances. 59

He rarely failed to elaborate that the colony was favoured with both a physical bounty in the rich soil and a political bounty in the British constitution which protected property, laying:

... the foundation for the enjoyment of social happiness & rational freedom [Liberty scratched out] in as abundant a measure as the nature of mankind will permit— and if
they do no more than perpetuate that condition of independence security; & comfort in what you now live, your posterity will have much to be thankful for.

"Under less propitious circumstances", with property insecure and the fruits of labour appropriated, society lost its powerful advantage in overcoming habits injurious to the peace of society." In Upper Canada taxation was negligible, each man was able to reap the fruits of his labours, "undiminished by taxes." Indeed it seemed to Robinson that there were few countries on earth enjoying greater tranquillity or contentment or in the "more perfect possession of every right and liberty which is consistent with human happiness, and apparently enjoying in more entire security the fruits of their labour. . . ." This combination of fortunate circumstances had a ready effect on even the most recent of emigrants such that there was "no disadvantageous difference between their conduct & that of the other inhabitants of Upper Canada." Emigrants, . . . who, deriving from some source a moderate income, upon which in this country they could barely subsist, may enjoy in Upper Canada, upon the same income, a greater abundance of the comforts of life, and may wish prudence and economy be at the same time gradually forming a property which, in case of their death, will secure their families against absolute destitution. The successes of Peter Robinson's settlements testified to the accessibility and the transforming power of its possession. Within the space of two or three years dependent tenantry rose to independent farmers.
You would find the former tenant of a wretched hovel, without object in life, and almost without power to do anything but mischief, become the absolute proprietor of a hundred acres of land, equal in quality of soil to the park that surrounds your residence, and probably, superior, with the advantage in many cases of a living stream of water, and an abundance of wood of the very best description for fuel; and this he enjoys, paying no rent, and it may almost be said with truth, paying no taxes; for one bushel of wheat or at most two will pay the whole amount of his assessment. It is true that to the poor settler the first two or three years are years of hardship; but not perhaps as compared with his former lot, and certainly not in that assistance to be given him which our plan proposes. When these early difficulties are surmounted, and the settler is master of a well-stocked farm, in a great part cleared, in a healthy country, and under a mild and just government, is it not evident that his condition is changed from the most miserable perhaps that existed in a civilized country, to one as happy as human life can offer? For who is happier than an independent farmer, lord of the soil, and reaping the undiminished fruit of his labour?  

During the 1830s one senses in Strachan and Robinson a wariness of the direction society seemed to be taking. With increasing frequency Strachan inveighed against the spread of avarice and materialism. For his part Robinson's anxiety took its bearing from his travels on the circuit as chief justice. Anticipating for Upper Canada the problems of large cities in Great Britain and the United States, he feared the loss of social character moulded by the land. The most noticeable feature of this change in society was an increase in crime:

It is not probable that crime will abound in a district so wholly agricultural as this is, when neither the temptations to vice, nor the opportunity of efficacy are so frequent as they are in large commercial towns, and when the prosperity in which the population are generally engaged, particularly favorable to the support of virtuous principles & the foundation of an upright character.
Convinced that in time "the possession of property" would produce beneficial results for society, Robinson turned once more to the example of the Peter Robinson settlements. Here one had only to compare the emigrant Irish with their brethren "congregated as labourers on canals, or as dependent paupers in the large towns..." Crime was common. There was little to check the indulgence of vice or encourage "honest ambition and pride of character."

It is when they become owners of property, with their families living on their farms, and their days occupied in labouring for their own immediate benefit that the change in their character takes place: ... taken as a whole, the resident Irish agricultural population in Upper Canada are a most valuable class of settlers, and have done credit to the country they came from.

Robinson's comparison of emigrant Irish raises the question of labour in gentry society. There is little that may be said directly, however Strachan's letters to Robert Wilmot-Horton in 1826 indicate a possible answer. Concerned about the large number of original settlers unavailable to answer his questionnaires, Horton sought Strachan's analysis. The answer was simple and clear. The settlers left for temporary employment on public works projects such as canals in either Upper Canada or the United States returning when they had sufficient capital for a yoke of oxen. Recent unpublished work by Wendy Cameron on interpreting land clearing patterns in the Peter Robinson settlements supports Strachan's analysis that settlers carried out a combination of subsistence farming and seasonal employment. Apparently Strachan expected that the need for labourers was temporary and limited and could be adequately served by recent
emigrants' need for cash to make improvements to their farms. Although the evidence is slender there is no evidence of a large, urban labouring class detached from the land.

A surplus supply of labour was essential to the capitalist mode of production. This concern seems to have first been raised by an internal dispute within the executive council in 1839. This debate although not between the principals of this study is worth discussing at some length because it broaches substantial capitalist criticism of the society of independent commodity production which was Upper Canada. Unable to reach agreement on an effective strategy for providing for an expected increase in emigrants the council split. Robert Baldwin and Robert Baldwin Sullivan, and William Allan and Richard Allan Tucker submitted minority reports to Sir George Arthur.

Arguing against the folly of adopting a free-grant system similar to the Americans, Allan-Tucker suggested that:

... A most favorable opportunity seems therefore to present itself of establishing, what we have been taught to consider a great desideratum, viz, a class of labourers, separate and distinct from land owners...

They were convinced that prosperity depended upon the combination of capital with surplus labour which would be permanently inhibited by free land grants:

The greatest drawback to the employment of Capital in this Country at present consists in the high price of wages, and the extreme difficulty of procuring the labor requisite for its profitable employment in any pursuit; and more especially in agricultural ones.
Every thing, therefore, that tends to lessen the quantity of labour in the Market, will also tend to exclude capital from it. But the main cause of the scarcity of hired labor in a new Country is the Cheapness of Land.

Here in a nutshell was the essence of Karl Marx's critique of E. G. Wakefield's colonial plans.

Allan-Tucker's intentions were roundly criticized by Baldwin and Sullivan in the familiar terms of an agrarian society of independent commodity production. Fearing that immigrants "cannot be made permanent inhabitants of a new agricultural country, except in the character of possessors of land" they urged a land policy of free grants, because the "poorer classes" avoided, if possible, the lots of "cotters" or small tenant farmers:

... that if they cannot acquire land they wander in search of employment, and naturally prefer—high wages and ready money given at public works to precarious agricultural employment[]. They in fact live and die without the improvement in their condition which the resources of the Country ought to enable them to attain.

In this condition, the labouring classes congregate in cities and towns in Upper Canada or the United States, engaged in the seasonal work offered by public projects, only to face "suffering cold hunger & pauperism throughout the dreary length of an unemployed winter." The province "has of late retrograded rather than advanced", "vast quantities of land remain an unproductive wilderness", and "the Interior country, often a frightful seclusion from the blessings of civilized Society", all for the want of a resident, agricultural population.
Baldwin and Sullivan used the familiar language of the gentry but were critical of the massive expenditures on public works erroneously based:

... upon, an rapid increase of resources and of population, has incurred a public debt, for the construction of improvements proportioned to the dormant capabilities of an extensive and fertile country, and to the energies of a larger community.

Moreover they charged that development had not recognized that "the wealth of the country is in the forest." But the thrust of their critique was the class division which marked the proposals of Allan-Tucker:

It is not by dividing the whole community into masters and servants that this can be accomplished-in Northern America, small independent landholders will readily work for wages, for their more wealthy neighbours or exchange work with their equals in circumstances- Their labour is not so expensive as that of the mere hireling, they have land of their own upon which the absolute necessities of life are easily procured. ... 75

The language of this debate provides a dramatic backdrop to the development strategies proposed for Upper Canada and their inevitable relationship to political-social structure. Within this framework the gentry and the radical agrarians seem the most remote from the society which Francis Hincks was anticipating in the 1840s. Allan-Tucker understood the exigencies of a developing society better than any other. Capitalist economic formations required a capitalist labour market which was retarded by too easy access to a prevalent supply of arable land. Capital could not be attracted to a labour-scarce
society.

Without the combination of capital with labour the possibility of prosperity and development was remote. Baldwin-Sullivan did not object to temporary wage-earning. It was necessary for free-holders to improve their estates, to secure further comforts, or purchase luxuries. Allan-Tucker countered that under their system within a generation labourers could become "flourishing farmers", whereas grantees of land would "continue almost as poor and wretched, as they were on their first arrival in the Colony."

But the crucial differences between Baldwin-Sullivan and Allan-Tucker, as between the gentry and the radical agrarians concerned political-social structure. The gentry favoured a hierarchical society with an aristocratic flavour. Allan-Tucker advocated a class-divided market society. The radical agrarians and Baldwin-Sullivan rejected the inequality common to both models of society as neither desirable nor necessary. In time radical agrarians such as Alexander Chisholm preferred the so-called "feudal aristocrats" of the 1820s and 1830s to the "monied aristocrats" of the 1840s. The former had the virtue of at least being paternalistic and charitable. In an argument which has run through Canadian political life to the present Baldwin-Sullivan accused Allan-Tucker of desiring institutions and customs which were essentially European and artificial in North America:
This state of Society which the position, climate, and present circumstances of Canada induce is far from being a public evil it belongs to the natural progress of a new agricultural country when almost the only necessary inequality of condition is between the small & the great, the poor & the wealthy land owner. The attempt to produce a greater inequality founded upon reasoning applicable to other countries, appears in theory as it has been found in practice—Chimerical... The attempt to force upon a community like this the universal relation of master & servant: of capitalist and hired labourer must be vain. It may be successful in a new country from whence the poor man cannot escape. The trial is in vain here...

In the end all but Allan-Tucker lost out. The nascent social structure of Upper Canada whether gentry or radical agrarian was too weak to withstand the almost irresistible advent of capitalist production. In men such as Baldwin and Sullivan the tensions between two different societies left them in the odd position of bridging the two worlds. The code of gentlemen and the yeoman society of the agrarians were part of a world that was lost.
FOOTNOTES


4. T. C. Haliburton, The letter bag of the Great Western; or life in a steamer (Toronto and Buffalo, 1973), 90, 99.


8. Ibid., Hagerman to Macaulay, 17 April 1832.


11. PAC, MG II, Q 412/2, p. 508.


13. Christopher Robinson Papers, J. B. Robinson diary 1815-17, pp. 8, 35, 48 (mfm. at PAO).


15. Ibid., Charge to the grand jury, Cornwall, 25 Sept. 1837; see also Proposed speech for the opening of Parliament in 1838 by J. B. Robinson "Sir F. Head declined this & gave instead that for which he has been so much censured."

16. MG II, Q 412/2, p. 486.

17. Robinson Papers, Charge to the grand jury, Brockville, 20 Aug. 1834. Gentry political language derived from the counter-revolutionary attack on natural right (Leo Strauss, Natural right and history (Chicago and London, 1968), 294-323), but took its specific form from the British attack led by Edmund Burke on the French revolution (J. C. A. Pocock, Politics, language and time essays on political thought and history (New York; 1971), 202-32).
18. Arthur Papers, I, p. 120, Robinson to Arthur, 16 May 1838.

19. MG 11, Q 56, p. 28761.

20. Canada and the Canada Bill, 89.

21. Ibid., 41.

22. Ibid., 148; see also Robinson Papers, Robinson to Horton, copy, 24 Dec. 1828, p. 21; PAC, MC 24, A40 (Colborne Papers), 22, pp. 669-73, Robinson to Colborne, London, 11 June 1839; Canada and the Canada Bill, ix.

23. Canada and the Canada Bill, 149; see also Robinson Papers, Charge to the grand jury, Toronto, 1 April 1834; Canada and the Canada Bill, 159; Robinson Papers, Note December 1838 on Copy of a memorandum on the revenues of Upper-Canada, 1830 or 1831; Arthur Papers, III, p. 445, Macaulay to Arthur, Kingston, 9 Aug. 1841.


25. Canada and the Canada Bill, 156.

26. John Strachan, A discourse on the character of King George III addressed to the inhabitants of North America (Montreal, 1810), 21; see also Pocock, Politics, language and time, 212.


29. See for instance Robinson's opinions on squatters, Macaulay Papers, Robinson to Macaulay, Toronto, 20 July 1852.


33. It is interesting to note that in 1803 Strachan wrote his mentor Dr. Brown in Scotland, "There is a most lamentable want of what we call independent or respectable people- Plenty of them have now acquired property, but in point of information they are brutes." Strachan Papers, Strachan to Brown, Cornwall, 27 Oct. 1803.

34. Kingston Chronicle, 1 Nov. 1822.

36. Ibid.

37. Ibid., 1 Jan. 1827, assembly debates on Intestate bill, 27 Dec. 1826; see also U. E. Loyalist, editorial, 13 Jan. 1827. Apropos of the bill Robert Stanton expressed his opinion on the law of real property which stressed the connections between the soil and the necessity of primogeniture for the independence of an aristocracy.

38. Ibid.


42. Canada and the Canada Bill, 40.

43. Ibid., 111.

44. Robinson to Merritt, 13 Dec. 1833 quoted in St. Catharines's Journal, 25 Feb. 1836. Robinson advised Jonas Jones and John Macaulay that expense was not a consideration in the choice of routes or canals for St. Lawrence navigation (PAC, MG 24, El (Merritt Papers), 8, pp. 1005-08, Robinson to Merritt, 22 July 1834).

45. R. A. Soloway, Prelates and people ecclesiastical social thought in England 1783-1852 (Fakenham, 1969), 89. Phillpotts was a close friend of Colborne. His younger brother George served as Colborne's aide-de-camp in Canada, see Alan Wilson, "John Colborne, 1st Baron Seaton," DCE, IX, 138.

46. Ibid., 224-28.


49. *Ibid.*, 2, p. 64 [Macaulay to Arthur], c. 15 Sept. 1839. For an analysis see Chapter II, part iv.


52. *Canada and the Canada Bill*, 60; Robinson Papers, Address . . . Lount and Matthews.

53. Robinson Papers, Charge to the grand jury, York, 23 Aug. 1830.


55. *Ibid*.


57. Robinson Papers, Charge to the grand jury, Perth, 24 Aug. 1831.

58. *Ibid*.

59. *Ibid.*, Charge to the grand jury, Cornwall, 25 Sept. 1837; Charge to grand jury, Guelph, 12 May 1841.

60. *Ibid.*, Charge to the grand jury, Prince Edward, 16 Sept. 1834.


63. Charge, of the Honorable John B. Robinson, chief justice of Upper Canada, to the grand jury, at Toronto (Thursday, 8th March, 1838,) on opening the court appointed by special commission to try prisoners in custody on charges of treason (Toronto, 1838), 6.

64. Robinson Papers, Charge to the grand jury, Home District, 17 Oct. 1831.

65. *Canada and the Canada Bill*, 34.

66. Correspondence between the right honourable Sir Robert Wilmot Horton, Bart., and J. B. Robinson, Esq., Chief Justice of Upper Canada, upon the subject of a pamphlet lately published, entitled "Ireland and Canada" (London, 1839), 7-8. Robinson's physical description of the settlers is reasonably accurate but their mental state was not as hopeless as he indicated, see H. M. W. Cameron, "Wilmot Horton's experimental emigrations to Upper Canada; his management of the emigrations and his evaluation of the prospects and progress of his settlers," (Unpublished B.Litt., Oxford, 1971), chapter IV.
67. See Strachan's sermons, especially between the 1830s and the 1850s.

68. Robinson Papers, Charge to the grand jury, Guelph, 12 May 1841.

69. Ibid., Charge to the grand jury, Home District, 17 Oct. 1831.

70. Correspondence between . . . Canada, 7-8. Privately Robinson expressed to Wilmot Horton a desire to see other emigrants used in the colonization experiments because of the reactions to the Catholic settlers of 1823 as evidenced in the Ballygl given Riots at Perth (Catton Papers, Robinson to Wilmot Horton, York, 7 March 1827, p. 22).

71. CO 42/380, pp. 401-02, Strachan to Horton, London, 5 July 1826. This was also mentioned by Colborne in 1831 with the warning that large-scale emigration required government aid for the families of emigrants while clearing their lots. CO 42/395, Colborne to Goderich 16 May 1831.


73. PAC, RG 1, E3, 24, pp. 162, 154, William Allan and R.A. Tucker to Arthur, 5 June 1840. Colborne mentioned this phenomenon of colonial society to Lord Goderich in 1831. Labour was scarce because property was so easily acquired. Mechanics or labourers bought land as soon as they had acquired 40 or 50 $. They in turn hire a few workmen who follow the same “quick transition . . . from a state of poverty to independence.” As long as there was plenty of arable land and emigration continued the price of labour would be high but there would be a permanent temporary pool. CO 42/394, Colborne to Goderich, 24 Nov. 1831.

74. See Chapter III, p. 3.

75. PAC, RG 1, E3, 24, pp. 122-29, Robert Baldwin and Robert Baldwin Sullivan to Arthur, 5 June 1840.


77. PAC, RG 1, E3, 24, pp. 130-32.
CHAPTER VII

UNION AND THE 1820s

... to cure our financial & other difficulties in the Canadas....

John Richardson

Legislative union between the Canadas was the favourite solution of the Montreal merchants and colonial officials in London to the political-economic problems of the two provinces. It dominated the attention of the gentry between 1822 and 1824, rising Phoenix-like again in 1836 and culminating successfully in 1840. More than any other issue it pitted merchant self-interest against the priorities of the gentry. Espoused by merchants to remedy their commercial-financial problems in the lower province, union promised to shatter the supposedly artificial problems which had emerged some years after the separation of the old Province of Quebec and to shatter the anti-commercial grip of the Canadian peasantry on economic improvement. ¹

The established place in Canadian historiography of Laurentian history, dominated by Donald Creighton's elegant masterpiece, The empire of the St. Lawrence, has emphasized the compelling logic of the economic and geographic pull towards the political unity of the St. Lawrence River. ² Creighton and others following his lead credited to this impulse the central force re-establishing the commercial hegemony of the river. Although subsequently revised by

256
others, Creighton's deft handling of Upper Canadian support for union requires close attention. Linking the Montreal merchants to the "family compact" in a common interest of economic improvement and commerce, he marshalled evidence from the early pro-unionist writing of Macaulay, Robinson's analysis of merchant support for union, and Strachan's 1826 exuberant encomium to canal-building, to depict a collective portrait of a group sharing the aims and aspirations of the Montrealers. He dismissed the Upper Canadian opposition to union with the caveat that certain York "job-holders" resisted any incursions upon their local autonomy, describing them as a nameless unimportant lot. 3

Creighton's unqualified analysis retains its cogency despite the more recent disclaimers of G. M. Craig and Wise 4, who have explained opposition in terms of Upper Canadian particularism, regionalism, and political-religious suspicion and mistrust. They interpreted the unhesitating support of the eastern areas of the province for union as stemming from economic ties to the St. Lawrence and the need to maintain its viability by improving transportation. A similar case might also be made for the support of the Niagara merchants, tied by family bonds and economic interest to Kingston, Montreal, and the exigencies of the carrying trade. 5

The initiative for the Union Bill of 1822 came from the Lower Canadian connections of Edward Ellice who had convinced Wilmot-Horton that a bill could successfully pass the House of Commons. Wilmot-Horton pressed the plan upon the Canadian representatives then in London to
settle the customs dispute. The bill failed because of the opposition of Sir James Mackintosh in the commons and the outcry against the bill in the Canadas. By 1825 it was clear—the issue was dead. But within this brief span of years, the question of union occasioned a split within the ranks of the gentry over their various analyses of the problems of the Canadas and the best solutions for resolving them. The division, at first glance, was economic versus political. Hagerman and Macaulay pitted against Robinson, Strachan, Jones, and Markland. But the differences did not mirror differing conceptions of society. Rather they were legitimate disagreements about the political state of Lower Canada and as a corollary, the consequences for Upper Canada of a legislative union.

The background to the debate was set by the order in council fixing the 1791 boundaries of the provinces. Cutting across the St. Lawrence River, it deprived the upper province of an outlet to the ocean. The lack of a seaport was critical to subsequent interprovincial harmony. The reason was simple. The major source of Upper Canadian revenue came from the customs duties of the port of Quebec. Although the total amount of Upper Canada's share varied with imports and new sharing agreements, it remained the single most important source of revenue through the pre-Union period. This fact proved to be the horn of the Upper Canadian dilemma. The early proposals for costly improvements in navigation lacked the "anticipating
spirit”, but, more importantly, failed to imagine how a colony could undertake vast expenditures upon slender financial resources. Until 1825 strategies for improvement fell back on increased duties at Quebec or imperial sale of crown land. It was the gentry’s certainty in the dormant potential of Upper Canada’s Eden-like landscape which spurred the leap of faith into debenture financing.

In 1819 the agreement of 1817, which had awarded Upper Canada one-fifth of the duties exclusive of the expense of collection, expired. The financial wrangles between the Lower Canadian executive and assembly prevented the appointment, of arbitrators to negotiate a new agreement. Upper Canada was left in the lurch. In 1819 and 1820 the province received no revenue from the lower province. The situation, beyond their control, was desperate. According to Robinson:

... this Province ... without revenue from its principal source ... our internal revenue, being altogether inadequate, even to the ordinary and necessary charges for the public service, the Executive Government is embarrassed, the public creditors are delayed, all means of advancing works of general utility withheld; and it has at last become necessary to borrow, on the credit of the Province. ...

As Robinson mentioned the financial crisis was overcome by his Debenture Bill to pay militia pension arrears – the beginning of the provincial debt.

The province was in an unenviable bind. They considered the boundary unnatural in a geographic sense. But the boundary was only contentious because of Upper Canadian dependence in revenue matters and the need for the cooperation of Lower Canada to complete improvements on the St. Lawrence River. The boosters of improvement like
Macaulay looked with envy upon the financial base of the sister province. The problem was serious enough to convince Macaulay, and to a lesser extent Hagerman, that minor political accommodations could be made to resolve the pressing problem of revenue and its importance to improvement. Whether the union was desirable or possible depended on the political state of the lower province. The important question was—did the financial crisis compel a reckoning regardless of political consequences?

Creighton seized on Robinson's analysis of merchant support for union to link the "family compact" to merchant interest and political aims. This interpretation stretches Robinson's analysis which indicated only that the merchants were the foremost supporters of union. In the late 1830s Robinson attributed the origins of the union agitation to the merchants. "Deprived of their persevering advocacy," he doubted whether any British administration would have even considered or adopted the measure. In an 1822 letter to Hillier he commented on the York-Kingston split on union:

...but I must say I am not altogether satisfied at finding that all those opinions I have heard of & who reside at Kingston below it desire it— all at York oppose it— Now that really looks as if mere expectations of more personal convenience, & apprehensions of private loss or disadvantage had too much weight in deciding the judgment [sir].

For the Montreal merchant, John Richardson, union was "wanted to cure our financial & other difficulties in the Canadas..."
Merchants in Kingston and Niagara supported it for like reasons. As the Cornwall "friends of the Re-Union" put it, "that nature having established between them [Upper and Lower Canada] an essential unity of their general interests, it is impolitic to create an artificial separation thereof by two Legislatures acting independently of each other. . . ."¹³ At Niagara Thomas Clark, not surprisingly, cited:

... the loss of revenue, and other injuries which this Province has sustained, and the impossibility of making any useful improvement in the navigation of the St. Lawrence, or to free our Commerce from the shackles which have been imposed upon it, by the anti-commercial policy of our sister Colony, render a Legislative Union highly expedient, and necessary.

A united Canada could apply their efforts to stimulating:

... the commercial and Agricultural enterprise . . . place the trade and agriculture of Canada, in a situation which nature and climate seemed to have intended here for, that which none are now in the world superior, as also relieve this Province from the heavy pressure of accumulated difficulties, under which many of its inhabitants have long suffered.¹⁴

The thrust of Robert Nichol's resolutions to the Niagara meeting was: to remove the barriers to commercial prosperity, to ensure the improvement of the St. Lawrence River, and to alleviate the financial difficulties of the Upper Canadian government. The meeting objected to certain clauses of the proposed bill such as the property qualification and the provision for executive councillors to sit in the assembly, but these were deemed minor compared to the commercial and financial crisis.

At Glengarry a meeting of Presbyterian luminaries including John McGillivray, Alexander McMartin, Duncan Cameron, the Reverend
John McLaurin, and the Reverend John McKenzie supported the union "for all the purposes of legislation, commerce and improvement."\(^{15}\)

It is noteworthy that Bishop Alexander McDonell representing what was possibly the majority opinion claimed, "a great proportion of the population of this County and of the neighbouring one are adverse to the measure, have had meetings and signed petitions to oppose it."\(^{16}\)

McDonell was less concerned about commercial prosperity than the possibility of adding Canadien political discontent to the "Scotch Radicals, Irish rebels and American Republicans" of Upper Canada.\(^{17}\)

The other exception in the east was the Brockville meeting chaired by Livius P. Sherwood. Its concern was the threat to constitutional balance by limiting the prerogatives of the House of Assembly. Many of the proposed clauses "will effect an injurious change in our constitution... and it behoves them [Upper and Lower Canadians] to remonstrate against the adoption of clauses which cannot fail of ultimately destroying the liberties of their country."\(^{18}\)

Prominent among the supporters of the resolutions were Jonas and Charles Jones. Jones had already written Macaulay, "I am as much disposed to support the Govt in what I consider right as you or any other man can be; but I will never consent to yield the privileges of the people and sacrifice all to the Influence of the Crown."\(^{19}\)

The concerns of the Brockville gentlemen were predominantly constitutional. Finance and commerce were all but ignored. The proposed political changes represented a more serious threat than the failure to resolve Upper Canada's revenue problems. Macaulay had
taken great pains to demonstrate his support for the prerogatives of the assembly and its continued independence. But to Jones these changes were fundamental to the bill diminishing the traditional means by which the assembly checked the excesses of the other branches, thus fulfilling its constitutional role. 20 Jones's objections broached the divergent analyses of Robinson-Strachan and Macaulay-Hagerman. Insofar as the former represented the political-administrative capital of York, and the latter the commercial entrepôt of Kingston, their differences might be construed to symbolize a struggle between politics and commerce.

iv

Kingston's support for union in 1822-24 and again in 1838-40 hardly seems unusual. Like Montreal or Niagara it had a vital stake in commercial harmony, improvement, and prosperity. In the former period the gentry split on the consequences of union. Their differences were essentially over the seriousness of the political situation in Lower Canada. This was borne out by a common analysis of events in 1838-40. Then none could doubt the peril involved. Strangely enough it was the latter period which caused such bitterness among them whereas in 1822-24 they were at pains to credit one another's views. Strachan applauded Macaulay's speech as "much the best on the occasion and your resolutions much abler than those of Montreal." 21 Some few days later he extolled his former pupil's "manliness ... in coming lately forward to give your opinion upon a
matter of so much importance." Robinson thought the speech "a fair argument & extremely creditable to him, but he does not look enough at consequences as he will find if the measure carries." In 1822 the Canada Trade Act had ameliorated the revenue problem to the satisfaction of Robinson and Strachan. But Robinson clearly saw that the Kingstonians did not agree. Indeed his observation had been anticipated by a 1822 petition signed by Macaulay, his uncle John Kirby, and other local worthies:

... the Canada Trade Act will not effectually remove the causes of Complaint which exist from the nature of the present State of things. Viz. the want of a Cordial Cooperation between the provinces in improving the Navigation of the St. Lawrence, an object of the first importance to Upper Canada, but which without the concurrence of Lower Canada cannot be accomplished; together with the numerous other obstacles to the better regulation of Trade and Commerce, which the mutual jealousy of two separately existing Legislatures rather tends to increase than to diminish.

For these and other reasons they urged "to further the projected Union in the Imperial Parliament, in such way and under such terms as may be deemed most expedient to our mutual wants and necessities, and most conducive to the happiness and prosperity of both Provinces." In 1822-24 Macaulay and Hagerman but especially the former were the most compelling advocates of union.

In an early editorial in the columns of the Kingston Chronicle Macaulay stated his "prepossession in favour of the proposed measure; and are inclined to doubt whether a re-union could place us in a worse situation, than that in which we now are." He reviewed the effects of the separation of 1791: "our only port is under the control
of another legislature": division had fostered separate interests: commercial policy, particularly the American trade "had been governed by caprice rather than a sound and steady policy"; and there was no agreement on revenues from import duties at the port of Quebec.

Indeed the later situation had so badly deteriorated that it required the intervention of the crown and elicited an appeal from the parliament for redress. Macaulay's "sketch of the objections which may be urged against the existing order of things" derided the framing of the Constitutional Act. "Canada instead of being, to use the phrase applied to the French Republic, one and indivisible, is in reality a divided, and therefore a weak country." 27 He hoped that union would prevent bitter disputes over the apportionment of revenue, "remove the prejudices nurtured by the late differences, and introduce a general feeling that we were in fact one people, united by the strongest bonds of political relationship, and common interest." He cautioned that prudence must guide the re-union, "deliberation & foresight" to overcome the "grand difficulty - to form a new system, without giving birth to new prejudices - and to fix it surely on stable foundations." 28

Macaulay's foremost statement was a public address delivered at the Kingston meeting of the friends of union. The keynote speeches by Macaulay and Hagerman earned them the respect of their close friends and ardent opponents, Robinson and Strachan. Macaulay's speech was an elaboration of his editorial. His great objection to the status quo was the unresolved problem of revenue and commerce. The important
benefits of union were commercial hegemony and the improvement of the St. Lawrence. Union was "the most important subject, which has ever [illegible] our attention." Continued separation entailed "local disadvantages, and fiscal embarrassments, as an inland Country having no access to the Ocean...." William Pitt had hoped to preclude acrimony between the French and non-French in Quebec. But the rise of conflict in Lower Canada and the inability of the two provinces to settle amicably the division of customs revenue had not been foreseen. Moreover the "scene of discord, clamour, prejudice, and distrust" in Lower Canada had scuttled necessary works such as the canalization of the St. Lawrence.

Have we in short seen any comprehensive scheme of public improvement adopted by them, corresponding with the extent of their provincial resources...the administration of public affairs is obstructed, and the progress of improvement retarded by national prejudices, and jarring interests; and though the people of this province might indeed view all these things with indifference and perhaps self gratulation, were they exempt from their effects, the case is materially different, when the dissensions in our sister province exercises a baneful influence on our resources, and prosperity.29

Upper Canada lacked "the same cause for internal dissension" because "we are principally of British origin." "Viewing then the turbulence displayed below, and the tranquility among ourselves, it might be asked, why seek for a change?" Macaulay was satisfied with "the conduct in our own legislature" but unsatisfied with its limited jurisdiction in matters of economic development and improvement.

But they cannot contoul [sic] certain circumstances beyond our provincial boundaries which materially and in a peculiar manner affect our condition - they cannot remove any natural or artificial obstructions in the River Saint Lawrence, or expend,
one shilling in improving the navigation of the river, to the
eastward of the boundary line, without the direct assent of the
legislature of Lower Canada, who naturally feel their interests
are more indirectly affected. Our Parliament has no voice in
imposing the duties at Quebec, though they are allowed a
qualified negative — they cannot provide by means of
increased duties, the amount of revenue which the increased
expenses of public service may at any time suddenly require.
So far indeed were they from possessing this power, that it
depends on the will and pleasure of the legislature of Lower
Canada, whether any further revenue than that raised by
existing duties is ever to be collected. Hence it appears
a fair conclusion that though the Canada trade act provides
every guard which can be devised, during the existence of
the province in separate capacities, our Parliament does
not possess all the powers requisite to render us as
independent as we ought to be of our sister province, in
many important respects, and as a state of dependence on a
body so capricious and overbearing, as the legislature of
Lower Canada [sic] has shown itself to be, cannot be supposed
endurable, a change in our relative condition is become
necessary — which change, it seems to me, must be a union
of the two Legislatures. 30

The cogency of anti-union arguments could be measured by the
attention Macaulay paid them. With only passing reference to the
opposition of the "Gallo-Canadians," he objected to any violation
of their religious rights. But although professing sympathy to their
fears of the language provisions, he opined, "though it may be
unpalatable in the outset, its utility will in the end be generally
acknowledged."31 He expressed dismay at the "many arguments . . . among
ourselves." His pre-eminent opponents were close friends: Robinson,
Strachan, and Jones. Macaulay fixed on two of their most telling
arguments: first, the efficacy of the Canada Trade Act, and second,
the constitutional provisions which would supposedly hobble the
assembly and unbalance the constitution.

Rather than assuaging bitterness and terminating acrimony,
Macaulay envisaged the Canada Trade Act causing "the breach between
the two legislatures continually widening, until a union might at
length become an impacticable measure." Robinson had performed his
task in London admirably, but that would not alter the result:
disputed claims, delays, unnecessary expense, and conflict. Macaulay's
greatest fear was the failure to alter the financial dependence upon
Lower Canada which was vulnerable to market fluctuations which could
diminish the amount of revenue. The transatlantic market was beyond
their control, whereas the revenue could from Lower Canada be
appropriated to the upper province by imperial enactment. The only
alternative was unpopular and thus impracticable - direct taxation.32

To Jones's criticism of the adverse effect on constitutional
balance of introducing executive councillors into the assembly, Macaulay
argued that Jones's fears were misplaced. Stressing the good
intentions of the bill he added, "there could be very little danger
of these persons obtaining any greater share of undue influence over
the decisions of the House by sitting in the House, than they might
secretly obtain by outdoor intrigue." In fact he argued that the change
would give the crown a measure of its "due weight."

It is true we often hear among us a cry against the
influence of the Crown, and much of the slang applied
to this subject in England is used in this country. But
what is in reality the influence of the Crown here? It is
indeed little more than a phantom, and is scarcely sufficient
to preserve the due weight of the Executive and the just
poise of the Constitution. In England the Crown has at its
disposal numerous Commissions in the Army and Navy,
situations in the revenue and in the Colonies, pensions,
and sinecure offices, besides an immense annual expenditure
of money, and with all these and many other indirect
means, its influence is not greater than is necessary
for good Government. In this country, on the other hand
the Executive Department has a very few offices in its
gift, and a mere trifle of money under its management.
Its patronage is inconsiderable, and its influences correspondingly circumscribed. Were there a score of Executive Councillors, therefore, ranged on a bench in the House of Assembly instead of four, I should not consider their presence (however unpleasant it might be to them, and unpopular as well as impolitic in itself,) in any degree alarming, or destructive to the freedom and independence of the House.33

To the objections against the proposed increase in the parliamentary term from four to five years, Macaulay reasoned that such logic, "when pushed to the extreme ends in annual Parliaments and universal suffrage, so strongly deprecated by the sourest writers on Government and Constitutional Law." By analogy to the British constitution, "the model of our own, and the most perfect of all forms of Government" with its septennial Parliaments, he maintained, "that, with our present quadrennial Parliaments, we drink more deeply than they do at the sacred fount of liberty."34

Macaulay shunted aside the remaining criticisms as "minor."

Not wishing to be regarded as "an advocate for all the provisions" of the bill, he urged discussion upon the general rather than the specific terms of the legislation:

It is as a general measure of policy, affecting the general happiness and prosperity of the great Canadian family, as well as our external political relations, that the Legislative union of the Provinces ought to be discussed,—as a measure to be deliberately and dispassionately weighed without jealousy or prejudice, and without setting up the interests of this or that particular place or section of country in opposition to the interest of the whole... In canvassing the objections against it, I have endeavoured to shew [sic] that they are not of such serious importance as ought to induce a total rejection of the Union, for the benefits to be expected so far overbalance any partial evils, that it would surely be a great sacrifice of public interest to adopt such a course.
He cited the union of Scotland and England as an example of universal hatred giving way to mutual benefits. 35

Macaulay emphasized that the benefits were almost exclusively financial or commercial and would be realized immediately. Politically he foresaw few problems. In fact he held out the possibility of some improvement. In a united assembly, "there could be no farther [sic] occasion to oppose the apportionment of revenue" and clashes between the governor and the assembly over the civil list could be avoided. There might be debate over the dispensation of surplus revenue, but Macaulay averred that a mixed legislature would consider a "fair and equal application to local purposes in each Province...." On the great question of public works and economic development the union would prove a boon:

While the country is divided, the improvement of the Saint Lawrence, which is the great channel of communication, remains neglected. In the event of a union, some portion of the noble spirit of improvement evinced by our Parliament would be transferred into the breasts of the Lower Canadián Members, and that the great lines of artificial navigation, which nature points to, as calling for the application of all our enterprise and resources, would not remain much longer unopened. The united energies of the Canadas, if judiciously directed, might soon form a most magnificent and commodious channel of communication with the ocean, which, aided by natural advantages, would quicken the advance of the United Provinces to a proud eminence of commercial prosperity, and deprive foreign states of the many advantages they expect to reap from our present inert condition. 36

In spite of temporary inconvenience, the ultimate advantages of union could not be overlooked. Macaulay saw union as a panacea to eradicate prejudice and jealousy between the provinces, "diffuse the spirit of commerce and improvement", and unite the provinces in loyalty to the constitution and the sovereign, "without at the
same time violating the rights, destroying the securities, or trenching on the independence of any class of Society." The resolutions adopted by the Kingston meeting followed Macaulay's speech: that in 1791 an artificial division of geography had left Upper Canada dependent on the whims of the Lower Canadian legislature and set the stage for the rancour over revenue, such that "the union of the Legislatures... is the only practicable mode of putting an end to the disputes... and securing the equal rights appertaining to both sections of the country."

Macaulay's proposed resolutions were seconded by Christopher Hagerman who forcefully urged re-union:

... which fatally for their past, and perhaps future prosperity, were most unnaturally rent asunder, an act which has laid the foundation of rival jealousy, between people of the same country, subjects of the same great and glorious empire, whose interests nature has made inseparable, and whose strength and improvement depends solely and entirely on their being united by concurrence of habits and sentiments, and a right understanding of their common interest.

Hagerman shifted from Macaulay's emphasis on finance and improvement to the constitution and politics. Prefacing his remarks with a brief constitutional history from 1759 to 1791, when Upper Canada received...

"the very image and transcript" of the English constitution, he wondered why some unionists questioned "its excellencies and its advantages." Rather they did not wish to jeopardize even the smallest advantage of the constitution and hoped to broaden the advantages..."
to add new life and vigor to its growing energies." They sought only "that we should be restored to what nature intended us to be, one people, under one government." 39

Hagerman, with uncommon adroitness stood an anti-unionist argument on its head. He shamed the role of "indifferent observers" who protected the constitution in Upper Canada by maintaining separation from Lower Canadian legislators, who:

... by establishing their own supremacy in disregard to the equal rights of those with whom by law they are appointed to act, a disposition which should it prevail, must inevitably prove destructive to the liberties of the King's subjects, by destroying that balance between absolute monarchy, and democracy, which so beautifully distinguished the British Constitution. 40

He raised the spectre of Upper Canadians being "immolated at the shrine of the anti-constitutionalists" and "entirely losing the constitution under which they live, unless they are permitted to interfere and guard it against the machinations of its enemies." Ironically, Hagerman's concerns were almost identical to Robinson's and Strachan's—a coessential analysis led to dissimilar conclusions.

Establishing his priorities, Hagerman turned "to the consideration of the object next in importance, viz our commercial relations with the sister Province." It was a familiar refrain, to be heard again and again until the Union of 1840. The port of Quebec was the only outlet to the ocean resulting in "restrictions on our exports, as well as our imports... we are in a state of dependence on its will and pleasure for any trade at all." The provisions of the Canada Trade Act were only a "qualified negative" offering imperial redress for any
law indirectly or directly affecting Upper Canada, but dependent upon successfully garnering imperial support. The degrading state could only be ameliorated by imperial interference, or resolved "by obtaining a share in the general representation of the Canadas by a union of its Legislative bodies." He also noted the inability of the upper province to increase its revenue except by duties on imports from the United States, "a source from which we can expect little assistance of that kind but at the expense of our agricultural and manufacturing interests." Certain revenue from the Canada Trade Act would eventually prove insufficient for the ordinary charges of government; Hagerman feared like Macaulay that the only alternative left was the odious, direct taxation. The same problem would be encountered "if we desire a fund for works of public utility, and for the general improvement of the country."

By the union . . . we can alone hope to be relieved from these embarrassments; you will then oppose [sic] to the anti-commercial spirit of the Lower Canadian Legislature, men whose views, (more enlightened) will be directed to the developing and directing the resources and energies of the country; under their fostering care commerce will improve and expand; the intercourse between different parts of the Provinces will be facilitated by Canals, and the general face of the country will quickly be such as to give us the cheering hope, of being soon ranked in value among the very first of England's foreign possessions. 41

As examples of "anti-commercial" feeling in Lower Canada, he cited the tax on goods at Quebec for building jails and court houses, and the charge on every crib or raft of Upper Canadian timber for a fund for the improvement of the St. Lawrence. He also mentioned "an evil most severely felt by the agriculturists of this province" arising from
antagonistic provincial commercial policies relating to American trade.

Hagerman believed his reasoning "quite sufficient to induce every person who reflects on the subject to desire the re-union of the Provinces." Among the advantages would be: greater influence with Great Britain, common interest in advancing resources and public works, increased military security, higher revenue, and greater expenditures on improvements. Objections received short shrift. The limitations on parliamentary rights in the assembly were insignificant compared to the gains, "if by the union we are relieved from the restraints ... so far from losing importance we shall experience a transition from bondage to freedom."\(^\text{42}\)

The accepted judgement on Kingston's support for union in 1822-24 emphasized the primacy of commerce over politics in weighing the financial and political conflicts of the period. Macaulay and Hagerman emerged as the principal spokesmen of the Kingston stalwarts. But their arguments were not identical or reducible to commercial concerns exclusive of other interests. Both took pains to indicate their common fears over specific constitutional proposals; both stressed the financial-commercial advantages of union, and the deficiencies of the Canada Trade Act to remedy the inherent structural weaknesses of Upper Canada. Only Macaulay came close to the merchant position on union—no hidden nationalism but rather the politics of enlightened self-interest. But he was only able to speak out on these matters because the political consequences of the initiative seemed to him minor. Hagerman only echoed Macaulay's exhortations as a postscript to the major issue - the French-Canadian threat to Upper Canadian
enjoyment of the British constitution. As the Kingston member in the eighth parliament (1821-24), Hagerman could have expected to reap the whirlwind had he not supported the major commercial aims of the Kingston merchant community. However, his support on this issue was not sufficient to win re-election in 1824. Hagerman's defeat had little to do with the union. He had become embroiled in a local issue—the affairs of the Kingston Bank—thus damaging his election hopes by dividing the electorate on a contentious topic. His support for the proposed union bill had been an attempt to stem a rapidly deteriorating political situation more than it was a remedy for the woes of merchants.

vi

Robinson and Strachan but particularly Robinson were closer to imperial developments. Robinson was in London representing the province on the customs dispute. He was in frequent and close contact with Robert Wilmot-Horton, Bathurst's under-secretary of state for the colonies, and corresponded directly with Sir Peregrine Maitland, his secretary, Major George Hillier, and Strachan. Robinson and Strachan were the closest colonial advisors to Maitland, possibly because of their access to George Hillier. In the letters and discussions between these four men was hatched effective opposition to union and the counter-proposal of a confederation of British North American colonies.

Robinson and Strachan were no less concerned about the financial problem than Macaulay and Hagerman. They were fervent supporters of
public works and development which would more effectively tie the agricultural produce of the province to secure markets. But they were trenchant in their criticism of union. The differences between the gentry were not major and both sides understood this. 

Macaulay's independent cast of mind at times almost seems to defy explanation. He was a man of business and could be expected to share the reasons of the merchant community for supporting union. Although his experience in business imparted qualities to his character, such as his familiarity with audits, not shared by his friends, Macaulay was never entirely at ease with mercantile business and as early as 1828 yearned to retire from it. It is always difficult to ascribe motivation but Macaulay's reasoning on union seems to stem from traits of character and mind rather than regional or occupational self-interest. When, as in the late 1830s, union was a clear threat to religion and politics he rejected the economic analysis which led the merchants of Montreal to support it. Hagerman on the other hand supported union to remedy the conflicts of the lower province.

Robinson and Strachan simply reversed their friends' arguments. A deteriorating political situation in Lower Canada offered no overriding commercial advantage. In the circumstances the best that could be hoped for was the sort of accommodation won by the Canada Trade Act. In these conditions the obvious attraction of the annexation of Montreal during the 1830s as everyone's favourite solution was that it eliminated the financial-commercial problem without jeopardizing the political-constitutional status quo.
Robinson had neatly captured the essence of the gentry disagreement as one of "consequences." During the course of their discussions, Strachan wrote Macaulay that, "the differences between the Unionists and anti-Unionists in Upper Canada is not very great. For the Friends of the Measure require so many modifications of the projected bill as to reduce it nearly to what the anti-Unionists desire." The divergence of opinion was not a full-scale debate. Lack of communication and the tyranny of distance precluded real familiarity with each other's opinions. Robinson was in London for most of the period and while Strachan commented on the union speeches of Macaulay and Hargrave, Robinson had not even seen Hargrave's. Robinson corresponded but infrequently with his friends during this period, and then with the proviso that he would provide only proper information untainted by rumour, and that Macaulay publish only, "what Major Hillier may think advisable." Although there were occasional letters to Macaulay and Jones, the first information to percolate through the Robinson-Hillier-Maitland-Strachan net resulted from Robert Nichol's initiative in the assembly to request from the governor copies of the Canada Trade Act and Union Bill. Two days later on 22 Jan. 1823, Maitland released copies of both along with Robinson's official communiqués.

In London, Wilmot-Horton invited Robinson to discuss union with Edward Ellice, Charles Marshall and John Caldwell, the latter two the solicitor general and receiver general respectively of Lower Canada.
Sure that he had convinced Wilmot-Horton that the union would be "an inconvenient & rather dangerous expediency", Robinson sought imperial intervention in the customs dispute, "as the only means of rescuing its [Upper Canada's] Government from the immediate disgrace of a public Bankruptcy, and of providing for its future support." 52 Dexterously dismissing the need for constitutional change while simultaneously reducing the vaunted advantages proffered by union advocates to ballyhoo, he admitted the folly of opposition to proposals necessary, "to increase the value of those Colonies to the Mother Country, or to provide in the most effectual manner for their own security and welfare. But he doubted "what manner any of these ends is to be expected to be answered by the proposed union." 53 The customs dispute "would of itself be sufficient reason" to support union "with respect to their [Upper and Lower Canadian] commercial and financial relations" were it not capable of resolution by other means. However he rejected the necessity of union "on this ground", or the ability of a union to redress, "the principal point of disagreement - the claims of Upper Canada for the past." He averred that commercial-financial relations could be settled by an imperial enactment. If union was unnecessary on this point, Robinson wondered, "whether there is anything in the present situation of the two Provinces which calls for a measure so important in its nature..." 54

Reviewing the Lower Canadian conflicts which precipitated the customs dispute, Robinson admitted:
There may no doubt be other points also on which the Assembly of Lower Canada, consisting principally of people of French extraction and Catholics, exhibit at least an indifference to objects which in a British Colony it is desirable to advance, and cherish prejudices which confine them to a narrow line of policy and make them hostile to improvements which would advance the welfare of the Colony, and render it a more important part of the British Dominions.

The hope that the addition of Upper Canadians "would be an over-ruuling influence" was illusory in the short-term and unlikely in the long-term to be "disposed to exert it in changing the internal municipal policy of the other Province, contrary to the wishes of nine-tenths of its inhabitants...." In such circumstances there was little to be gained and much to be lost:

I am doubtful of the prudence of disturbing the present system of things in the prospect of those rather indefinite and distinct advantages, and at the hazard of the inconveniences which have suggested themselves to me, and which I will shortly state.

Legislative union jeopardized political harmony and economic prosperity by linking it to Lower Canadian problems. The French, bent on guarding "their old system of things from innovation", in a joint assembly would hamper Upper Canadian initiatives for "the purposes of public improvement", and render it impossible "to gain sufficient attention to their local interests from an Assembly of whom the greater number [French-Canadian] would be unfriendly to their religion and unacquainted with their laws, and jealous of their influence." Robinson's unhesitating faith in the ability of Upper Canadians to reap their bounty made entanglement with the skein of conflicts in Lower Canada distinctly unpalatable. Departing from
the logic of Macaulay's analysis but sharing his concern, Robinson argued that prosperity and development were only possible with the provinces separate:

... but it is well known that in extent of land capable of cultivation, in the excellence of its soil and climate, and consequent capability of production, the former [Upper Canada] possesses almost unrivalled advantages; and it would be much to be lamented that these should be prevented from developing themselves by being placed under the control of persons little acquainted with our agricultural interests, and even averse to the system of tenures and laws under which the Province has so surprisingly flourished.\(^{57}\)

He touched briefly upon other noteworthy considerations. He echoed the assumptions of a pre-railway era that distance might prove an insurmountable barrier to attracting, "gentlemen who could so completely abandon their own pursuits as to attend an annual legislative session of three months so far from their homes."\(^{58}\) He also noted the folly "of uniting two Colonies now distinct" which would only embroil the politics of both. The St. Lawrence and the self-interest of merchants might insist on geographical-economic unity, but politics, religion, and culture were formidable barriers to the schemes of Montreal merchants and London officialdom.\(^{59}\)

Strachan's opposition was characteristically unqualified. He did not oppose union but rather feared its implementation without the necessary "preliminary steps", noting that "the two Provinces have become more and more changed than they were at the Division."\(^{60}\)
In September 1822 he had gently chided Robinson for admitting "to [sic] many probable advantages" to union. Strachan asserted that the reasons which prompted separation were still in full force and more so.

In Upper Canada:

... British feeling has been cherished - The benefits of the Constitution have been felt and acknowledged - Indeed every thing there is British - therefore on the English and American Settlers the reasons which produced the separation [sic] still remain[].

Because the "two provinces are opposite", he feared that, "in every change we shall be the loser." He catalogued the sorts of legislative enactments that would be lost: road tax, land tax, statute labour, whiskey tax, crown revenue, and the king's right. The spectacle appalled him, "then what a Bable [sic] - half roaring French- half English-" Upper Canada would be dependent, few could afford to attend parliaments in Lower Canada, and distance would be insurmountable.

The whole deplorable prospect was exacerbated by the cultural gap of two provinces, "differing in language manners..." Strachan regarded the consequences "with dread and would if I had the means make silent preparation to move out of the Country for unless the act be repealed or modified we may look at no distant period for a dismal emptiness[?]" He inweighed against the respective representation of the two colonies but admitted that little could be done. Above all else he feared for the two paramount concerns of his life, "The effect of the Union on Religion & Education &c &c will I fear be very bad." Strachan wanted no part of radical, Roman Catholic Lower Canada. Lasting tranquility could only be obtained by their suppression:
... we must go much farther than the proposed Union — such an enactment would without any positive ideas of Commerce. 64

He was astonished that Macaulay could advocate union to redress Lower Canada's dismal record on economic improvement given their "factions, anti commercial" assembly. 65 The Montreal merchants wanted to ensure their profits 66 and subordinated everything to that goal. But for the gentry religion and politics rather than economics were the basis of society. For different reasons they shared the merchants' concern for canals and markets. But they did not think it necessary to jeopardize their language, laws, Protestant ascendancy, or constitution to improve the waterways, secure an adequate revenue, or begin improvement. Macaulay differed with Robinson and Strachan on the seriousness of the political state of Lower Canada believing improvement and revenue could be obtained without any sacrifices in the realm of politics, culture, or religion. Hagerman's foremost anxiety was the political state of Lower Canada. He hoped to overwhelm the Canadiens before it was too late. Strachan and Robinson were sure that any attachment to Lower Canada without built-in guarantees of English-Protestant superiority would be disastrous. Rather than gaining anything, the French would overturn the constitution, threaten Protestantism, and retard commerce and economic improvement.

In fact the union debate confirmed for Strachan and Robinson their suspicions of the role of businessmen in politics. In an acid-etched comment Strachan noted that, "the merchants in Montreal ... write as
it [the union] had been a commercial speculation for the sale of Staves & ashes. It was also aware that agricultural prosperity depended on markets, improving navigation, and developing provincial resources. In an 1824 memorandum he criticized the Lower Canadian record on all these accounts:

The Upper Province has been treated as an alien her exports have been subjected to taxation & even her imports were at one time subject to a higher duty than those of Lower Canada. There is no reason to expect a body so constituted as the Members for Lower Canada are at present will in the United Legislature adopt a more liberal commercial policy[.] The custom of Paris and the Code civil as has been justly remarked would require a notary public at the Merchants Elbow. Now the beauty of the English commercial System which prevails in Upper Canada is that it proceeds chiefly from the judgements of the Courts grounded on approved and established customs for the British Legislature has been at all times sensible of the difficulty & danger of shackling Commerce and therefore Merchants have been left to follow their own customs and to ascertain them in the Courts of Justice in case of dispute. Now the Commerce of Canada must continue to labour under all its present disadvantages while the Legislature is so constituted & there can be no hope of introducing the English Commercial System of Laws into the Lower Province till there be not only a decided English majority but a predominance of English feeling which will be greatly accelerated by changing as already noticed the Elective franchise- The introduction of the English commercial laws by a clause of the proposed bill could indeed give an outrage to the French because the trade & commerce of the Country are principally in the hands of the English- since it is only from its trade that the Province can be useful or of importance to Great Britain it is on that account the more necessary to introduce the Commercial code of the Mother Country[.]

Now to shew that a mere English majority is not sufficient to do this-without a predominance of English feeling it is to be observed that the English Members have been often as bad and sometimes worse than the French as is manifested by their conduct in respect of the La Chine Canal of Montreal- They likewise acquiesced in refusing to connect the roads between the Provinces & in retaining
the money levied for improving the navigation of the St. Lawrence—It is nevertheless hoped that in obtaining the general efforts to those of the members from Upper Canada[.]

Reacting with dread to a legislative union, Robinson and Strachan countered in 1823 and 1824 with proposals for a general union of British North American Colonies. If the status quo as ameliorated by the Canada Trade Act was foredoomed, then as Strachan put it to Macaulay, "the only union which offers us a fair chance of peace and prosperity is a general not a partial one." Apparently several weeks later Macaulay accepted Strachan's analysis, convinced that a general union would "put an end to all local disputes—" and even raise British North America from its comparative "insignificance" compared to the United States.

Professor Wise has attributed to the development strategies of the 1820s and by implication the confederation proposals, "the seeds of a separate nationalism". Hartwell Bowsfield has claimed for the 1820s the nascence of a provincial consciousness with the disparate religious, national, and political stances of a heterogeneous society coalescing around development strategies, which subordinated local to provincial concerns, and private to public interest, such as Robinson's road bill. Their case is probably exaggerated by regarding the 1820s in the light of the 1860s and a predilection for affixing to a given period the gestation of Canadian nationhood. This interpretation echoes the constitutional nationalists differing only in the dates assigned to the genesis of Canadian nationalism. In fact Upper
Canadian particularism was a cardinal faith of Strachan and Robinson and a confederation probably would not have been considered had not the spectre of legislative union seemed imminent.

In a letter to Wilmot-Horton, Robinson expressed the nub of his confederation plan: "... I feel a returning fondness for the grand scheme of a British-American anti-republican confederacy..." He had scant desire to become embroiled "in the same confusion" as Lower Canada. "A bare union will lend nothing[.] It will only constitute a stronger body of representatives who will always unite in keeping the Govt. dependant upon their pleasure by every possible contrivance." However he feared that the political conflicts in Lower Canada would force an imposed solution inadequate to successfully resolve the problem. A general union, at least on paper, had the attraction of solving both:

All this will impose upon the Government a necessity of doing something—any apprehension so that it will, but confirm them in their belief that an union is necessary & will cure all—It will cure nothing. At least an Union of our two Legislatures will not—They have occasions of jealousy & contention in common—They will both join in endeavoring to gain the appropriation of the duties under the Govt & the contest will entail on both Provinces, the confusion it has produced in the one—If they could but adopt my favorite plan of giving an united Legr. to the Colonies & leave the local legislatures for unimportant purposes to each, every end might be obtained.

The confederation schemes did not reflect an incipient political nationalism but rather the constitutional writhing of a threatened order, pulling all stops to avoid thraldom to Lower Canada. Strachan had no objection to the principle of legislative union, but disliked
it, "from the fear the collision of parties will be so great, and so nearly balanced, as to paralyze any effort to promote the prosperity of the provinces." 78 The political and cultural purport of the plan was "to make the French of Lower Canada gradually English, and to give to the English population a just share of political power." 79 The so-called nationalism of the gentry was limited to a cultural recognition, usually after their first trips abroad, that they were not English but Canadian in a social and cultural sense. 80 In their schemes both Strachan and Robinson retained intact the constitutional powers of the crown and councils and provided for sufficient numbers of assemblymen from the other colonies to overwhelm, or at the very least, hold the French Canadians at bay. As Robinson put it:

That some means must be found either to reduce the Assembly of Lower Canada to reason, or to make the tranquillity and very existence of the government depend less absolutely upon their deliberations, is sufficiently clear. 81

The Englishness of the constitution lay in its institutions, commercial regulations, and laws. Robinson-Strachan gave to their proposed general legislature the power over taxation, debt, commercial regulation, revenue, bankruptcy, navigation, public works, imports and exports, courts, and religion, 82 thus effectively restricting Lower Canadian influence to local unimportant matters. Robinson had apprehended a legislative union which would have subordinated Protestantism, retarded improvement, enacted immiscible laws, and opposed British executive government. 83 To him it would be folly to ensconce:
The people who are, from their number, naturally entitled to look for the preponderance in the united legislature, are the people against whose policy, disposition, habits, and institutions, it is thought necessary to guard.  

Politically the legislative union represented a British grasp at an elusive solution to Lower Canadian problems:

To create an Assembly in which the French interest should not be decidedly subordinate, could remedy no evil existing in the one province, and would be uselessly subjecting the other to disadvantages at present unknown in it.

The union proposal of 1822–24 was tailored to the needs of the merchant community and London colonial officialdom. The former supported it because it promised to protect and ensure their economic interest; the latter supported it because it held the promise of remedying the problems in the Canadas attributed to the separation of 1791. Not surprisingly the gentry split on the question. There were few issues on which they were ever in complete agreement. All were concerned about the economic future of the province but only Macaulay saw it effectively hindered without a union. He alone elevated finance and improvement to the dominant criterion in the debates of 1822–24. As Robinson put it there was "no reason for supposing that an union of the Legislatures is required on this ground. . . ."  

Jones, in the language of eighteenth century English-country opposition, reacted to the constitutional innovations of the proposed bill and its threat to the independence of the assembly and the balance of the mixed constitution. Robinson and Strachan, most often associated with their confederation schemes, believed the Canada Trade Act had rectified outstanding Upper Canadian financial grievances. Confederation
was nothing more than a last ditch stand designed to ward off the baneeful effect of an anti-commercial, Roman Catholic, republican axis, sure to emerge in the proposed legislative union.

The differences among the gentry were, as they themselves recognized, more apparent than real. There was no animosity and the little discussion, except for occasional mild twitting, never lacked gentlemanly decorum. They shared a common antipathy to change, a reverence for an essentially eighteenth century constitution, and a desire to improve the water transportation network vital to the marketing of agricultural staples. As an issue among the gentry the union waned after 1822. Improvement no longer seemed an impossibility.

The legislature had acted upon the recommendations of the Committee on Internal Resources. The Committee on Internal Navigation, with Macaulay as one of the commissioners and then chairman, was actively considering this crucial question. As secretary to the customs arbitrators in 1823 Macaulay had witnessed first-hand the difficulty of securing inter-provincial cooperation, even on a matter so obviously equally important to both provinces as St. Lawrence improvement. Finally in 1823 and by 1825 the economy was improving. In 1825 Great Britain reduced the tariffs on Canadian wheat and timber and the province had committed itself to a public works on a large scale with a $25,000 debenture for the Welland Canal. Moreover the province was also proceeding independently with a survey of the St. Lawrence. Spirits were buoyant, enthusiasm rampant, public works underway, and the union issue dead.
FOOTNOTES


2. Creighton, The empire of the St. Lawrence, 214-22.

3. Ibid., 226, 266.


7. Joint address of the Legislative Council and House of Assembly to His Majesty. (1821), v-vi. This report was written by Robinson.


9. Appendix, JHA, 1840, I, 193. See also Arthur Papers, 3, 388, Macaulay, 16 March 1841 for details of the debt.

10. Canada and the Canada Bill, 130.

11. RG 5, Al, 30270-79, Robinson to Hillier, 11 Nov. 1822. See also, Plan for a general . . ., 21-23.

12. Strachan Papers, J. Richardson to Strachan, Montreal; 27 Nov. 1824.


14. Ibid.

15. Ibid., 29 Nov. 1822, Meeting to decide measures for promoting the Union of the Provinces of Upper and Lower Canada. Williamstown, Glengarry.
16. PAC, MG 24, B1 (Papineau-Neilson Collection), 18, McDonell to Papineau, 6 Jan. 1823 cited in J. E. Rea, Bishop Alexander Macdonell and the politics of Upper Canada, 65. The conjecture as to which was the more representative is Rea's.

17. AAK, Macdonell Papers, Macdonell to Sidmouth, 6 Jan. 1823;

18. Kingston Chronicle, 29 Nov. 1822, Meeting of the inhabitants of the County of Leeds for the purpose of taking into consideration the projected Union of the Legislatures of Lower and Upper Canada, 19 Nov. 1822, Brockville.


20. Ibid., Macaulay to Jones, 24 Nov. 1822.

21. Ibid., Strachan to Macaulay, 8 Nov. 1822.

22. Ibid., Strachan to Macaulay, 13 Nov. 1822.


27. Ibid.

28. Ibid.

29. Ibid., 1 Nov. 1822. Meeting of the friends of the Union, 30 Oct. 1822.

30. Ibid.

31. Ibid.

32. Ibid.

33. Ibid., See also Macaulay Papers, Macaulay to Jones, 24 Nov. 1822.
34. Ibid.
35. Ibid.
36. Ibid.
37. Ibid.
38. Ibid.
39. Ibid.
40. Ibid.
41. Ibid.
42. Ibid.
44. RG 5, Al, Robinson to Hillier, 18 Dec. 1822, 30522.
46. Ibid., Strachan to Macaulay, 8 Nov. 1822.
47. RG 5, Al, 30522, Robinson to Hillier, 18 Dec. 1822.
49. PAO Report (1914), 18 Jan. 1823, 212.
50. PAO Report (1914), 244, 249-51. See also RG 5, Al, 56, 28574-78, 28754-67.
51. Ibid., 244.
52. RG 5, Al, 56, 28576, Robinson to Hillier, 22 April 1822.
53. PAO Report (1914), 252-53.
54. Ibid., 253.
55. Ibid., 254.
56. Ibid., 255.
57. Ibid., 255.
58. Ibid., 255.

59. Ibid., 256.

60. Macaulay Papers, Strachan to Macaulay, 3 July 1822.

61. Strachan Papers, Memorandum on the Union, April 1822.


63. Ibid.

64. Strachan Papers, Strachan to Simon McGillivray, York, 1 Nov. 1822.

65. Macaulay Papers, Strachan to Macaulay, York, 8 Nov. 1822.


68. Ibid., Strachan to Wilmot-Horton, London, 5 June 1824.


70. Ibid., Strachan to Macaulay, 15 Dec. 1824.


72. Hartwell Bowsfield, "Upper Canada in the 1820s the development of a political consciousness," (University of Toronto, Ph.D., 1976). This bill in particular barely survived passage through the council because of the entrenched and vigorous opposition of Thomas Clark and William Dickson.


74. Robinson Papers, letterbook 1814-62, pp. 18-19, York, 14 March 1824.

75. Ibid., pp. 23-24, 7 April 1824.

76. Ibid., 14 March 1824.

77. Ibid., pp. 20-22, 20 March 1824.

79. Ibid., 15. See also p. 12.

80. Robinson Papers (in possession of Christopher Robinson). See personal diary while in England and on the continent 1815-17 (mfl. copy at PAC and PAO). This of course excludes the Scottish-born Strachan.


84. Ibid., 20.

85. Ibid., 17.

86. RG 5, A1, 56, pp. 28756–57. This memorandum was printed along with other correspondence in the assembly journals, PAO Report (1914) 252–56.
CHAPTER VIII

UNION AND THE 1830s

... every one believed that it [union] would be for mutual commercial benefit of both Provinces.

J. S. Cartwright

After 1825 some men, such as the Nova Scotian Richard John Uniacke, would continue to press for a general British North American federation but a determined political opposition within the House of Commons terminated the debate. The issue of union was not long dormant. A deteriorating political situation in the Canadas, particularly Lower Canada through the 1830s, vented the rumors again. This change was reflected in the composure of the gentry - increasingly anxious, and almost hysterical at times, as they observed the Lower Canadian scene. Imperial officialdom, rather than Lower Canadian radicals, was their chief worry. Critical of British conciliatory policy since 1828, the gentry fretted lest it give way to an imposed solution in the form of a legislative union.

In 1831 Robert Stanton commented that, "A Union of all the B. N. Colonies may again be suggested." The following year Hagerman was convinced that events were working irrevocably to a definite resolution. "I begin to believe that it is the design of Providence to bring about a great change in the affairs of this world - certainly every thing seems tending to revolution..."
Doubtless Providence comforted him to future prospects. "Our only chance of being saved from the 'Canadian Nation' or the neighboring republic, is in the influx of British Emigrants, and a Union of the Provinces." In these circumstances he foresaw, "... the Lower Canadian influences will be crushed - or at all events neutralized."

The unwillingness of French and English to compromise would lead to impasses which would be politically useful. Such possible conflicts as choosing a speaker of the House of Assembly, or voting on appropriations for roads and improvement, "would disgust Jean Baptiste with us - he would belch - and leave his place in the house while Upper Canadians would stick to theirs. - The establishment of the Seat of Govt. at Kingston would prove an admirable and most judicious stroke of policy and would at once annihilate the French influence."

The circumstances of the early 1830s, tinged by remembrance of the motive which impelled many towards union in the 1820s, gave rise to a proposal faultless in its conception. The answer to the concomitant needs of a secure revenue and a secure polity was to annex Montreal. No other scheme would match the attraction or popularity of this measure to the gentry. In October 1832 some of the York worthies presided over a public meeting to form a committee to circulate a petition through the province calling for the annexation of Montreal. Attorney General Henry John Boulton and William Henry Draper, a former law student of Robinson's and Hagerman's legal partner, both addressed the assembly. Hagerman delivered the most.
notable speech. Robert Stanton wrote ecstatically to Macaulay about the possibilities, if realized:

If the thing can be effected, as in justice to us it ought, what a magnificent Province should we then have— and in a very few years, how far behind us should we have Jean Baptiste, in improvement— wealth— intelligence & every thing that is desirable to the true lover of his country.  

Securing an Upper Canadian port of revenue was essentially a question of a sure—and adequate revenue base. 6 By December 1832 parliament took up the question of an address to the king recommending annexation. 7 As the decade wore on and political and economic crisis dominated affairs, the hope for annexation became more desperate and was trotted out publicly for one last try during the first session of the thirteenth parliament (1836–37) only to flounder amid renewed rumors of union. This debate in November 1836 marked the transformation of the gentry's equanimity about annexation as a panacea for the political and economic woes of the province. 8 The change in the direction of the debate was initiated by the iconoclastic Jonas Jones. He commented that the resolution would express a willingness to consider union: noting wryly that even if Upper Canadians acted with one accord in a united parliament, "still the preponderance would be in favor of the other party." 9 The reporting of the debates indicates that Jones's remark probably caused Hagerman to rethink the proposition. Earlier in the debate Hagerman had addressed the house on the commercial superiority of Upper Canada and the necessity therefore to have a sea port:
... for until we were in possession of a seaport and were enabled to control our own commerce, many of the most valuable improvements would be comparatively useless, and all that money which had been so lavishly expended on the improvement of the St. Lawrence, would be a total loss.

But with Jones's speech Hagerman quickly adopted a different tack, lamenting that Lower Canadian political circumstances must determine the debate on the measure. Annexation would lead to union with the fractious "anti-British and anti-commercial" Lower Canadians. A union would have to await, "that state of society... as would ensure a predominance of British principles in the Legislature, but that could not be expected for many years to come..." and if a union were forced on the Canadas both the British connection and the improvement of the province would be sacrificed.

The next day Hagerman was in full oratorical flight, inveighing against annexation-cum-union. He declared that members not opposed to union were, "blind to the true interests of Upper Canada." It was the province's "bounden duty" to hold firm against the "revolutionary views" of the lower province. Hagerman added a neat twist to his argument, and declared opposition to union would convince colonial officials of the need to grant Upper Canada a sea port. He then launched into a forceful denunciation of the Canadien record on improvement:

... what would become of our public improvements? What would become of our Canals and Rail-roads? Is it likely that such a majority would lay out one farthing of the public money upon improvements in Upper Canada, when they now neglect to grant it for the improvement of their own Province, when they will not make a Railroad from Lachine
to Montreal, although it is themselves that would be benefited [sic] by it? No, it would be their object by stopping every public improvement to force the Upper Canadians to join in their cry to be released from the dominion of the Mother Country.... Look at the farmers of Upper Canada, with every comfort about them, having wealth, industry, and education! And what was the state of the Lower Canadians?—they were mere peasantry compared with the yeomanry of Upper Canada; and why were they not as prosperous as our farmers? Because of their institutions. And why were they not ameliorated? Simply because their leaders were interested in keeping them in their present state of degradation[...].

Laws, political institutions, and prosperity were intimately linked. If in a blind rush for the latter, they foresook the constitution, they would invariably pay a high price. The following day Cartwright outlined the argument that would ultimately, some years hence, carry the day: "The commercial advantages of a union... outweighed the objections on political grounds...." But Jones's perception made Hagerman adamant that until "British principles should prevail," the measure was out of the question. Hagerman was critical of Lower Canada's record on improvement but had come to realize that what was at stake was not simply easing Upper Canada's financial burden but preserving monarchy, Protestant ascendancy, British laws, and political institutions.

The circumstances of the second union debate from 1836 to 1840 differed sharply from the backdrop of the first. The suspension of public works, the rebellions, trouble along the borders, and finally, the prospect of responsible government dramatically altered the hopes shared by Macaulay and Hagerman in the 1820s. When in 1837 Macaulay intimated to his family "some probability of an Union of the Two
Provinces' the eager anticipation of 1822 had turned to dread. It was no longer possible to see in a union anything but political and social disaster. The equanimity of his earlier utterances faded before the spectre of confrontation:

All are anxious to learn what measure Ministers may propose for the settlement of the troubles in Lower Canada: We trust no attempt will be made to unite the Provinces - for that is not desired in Upper Canada.

By late 1837 he bewailed the inability of London "to perceive the crisis, nor the way of dealing with the Canadians." Even the extreme expedient of hanging "half a dozen of the leading traitors" would neither improve the working of the constitution, nor eradicate "the antipathy of the two races." The horror of events was "the ruinous effect" for Upper Canada because the two colonies "resemble Siamese Twins- the St. Lawrence stands for their connecting band." He now clung to annexation of Montreal as the clear and definitive solution to the Canadien problem:

I see no other way for it, than to add Montreal with all the English Townships north of the Ottawa & East & South of the St. Lawrence to Upper Canada & place the Governor chief at Kingston & the Commander of the Forces at Quebec with a Council to make laws & ordinances for the surrounding French while Gaspe was added to New Brunswick. This would cut up the Papineau party root and branch & render Canada quite English at last[.]

By February 1838 the problem of debt, the possibility of bankruptcy, and the suspension of public works exacerbated the political prospects held out by Canadien radicalism:
... nor do I discover how we are to extricate ourselves, [from debt] unless by the annexation of the District of Montreal[]. This would enable us to double the import duties & thus provide for the annual charges until our improvements become productive— I however apprehend great political discontent will result from this heavy debt.¹⁷

But these problems were being faced in London as well. The Earl of Durham's resignation in 1838 edged London closer to intervention, and to resolution of the Canadian problem.¹⁸ This time the debate would be different. The predominant feature was the expectation of finality which added to the fury of the debate. The proliferation of newspapers and better communication, both local and transatlantic, plus more extensive political reporting¹⁹ and the growth of population and a more complex parliamentary structure changed the tenor of the debate from a parlour discussion to a very political and provincial concern.

The years 1838 to 1840 were the ebb of effective influence by the gentry. A combination of the impact of the rebellions and debt, the determined resolve of Viscount Melbourne's government, particularly his Secretary of State for War and the Colonies, Lord John Russell, to resolve the Canadian question, and the effectiveness of Governor General Charles Poulett Thomson negated the initial opposition of the gentry to union. Events unfolded in several stages. Since all measures of any consequence were initiated in London, the gentry with the rest of Upper Canadian society were left to respond as best they could. In February 1838 the Upper Canadian assembly considered the 13 Dec. 1837 petition of the Constitutional Society of Montreal recommending reunion. The subsequent resolutions of the assembly
indicated that a reckoning with Lower Canada now seemed inevitable.
If union seemed inevitable Upper Canadians were confident in the
aftermath of the rebellion that it could be negotiated on their terms.
W. B. Robinson's intractable opposition had become a minority position.
Hagerman accepted it but only with sufficient safeguards to ensure an
English-Protestant supremacy. Others were now willing to accept it
upon any terms. 20

After his resignation from the offices of governor general and
high commissioner in October 1838 the Earl of Durham returned to London
to prepare a report on Canadian affairs. His famous Report was
published in the London press in February 1839 reaching the Canadas in
the spring. Ignored by both the British government and colonial
office officials Durham's recommendations of responsible government and
reunion caused a furor in the Canadas, particularly amongst the gentry.
Meanwhile the following June, Russell's resolutions calling for reunion
and the extension of the suspension of constitutional government in
Lower Canada until 1842 were approved by parliament. The following
September the British cabinet dispatched Thomson to prepare the ground
for a union. He handled his task well. In December 1839 both the
legislative council and the assembly approved the union. By February
1840 the Canadas were ready and the following month Russell introduced
a reunion bill, much of it drafted by Thomson, which passed the
following July.

The initial responses by the gentry to developments in London
were directed at the Durham Report and specifically its major
recomendations: reunion and responsible government. Gradually, the focus shifted to Russell's first Union bill. Now the range of targets broadened to include: legislative union of the Canadas, changes in the legislative council, restriction of monarchical prerogatives including prorogation and summoning of the legislature; the establishment of five district councils with broad powers of administration and taxation, and legislative jurisdiction over the clergy reserves.

In the end the gentry split on the lines of 1822-24: Robinson, Strachan, and Markland opposed; Macaulay and Hagerman for. Only Jonas Jones changed his mind from his earlier position and supported union. But again the simplicity of the division belies a common antipathy to union and obscures the complex reasons which led Macaulay and Hagerman to support it reluctantly. But they did not support it because of the concern for commerce which had led their friend, fellow Kingstonian, entrepreneur, banker, and chairman of the Commission for the Improvement of the River Trent, John Solomon Cartwright, to advocate union. In a speech to the assembly in 1839 Cartwright declared:

the question of an union ought to be considered in three points of view—in a commercial, political, and religious. In respect to the commercial view of the subject, he did not believe there was more than one opinion; every one believed that it would be for the mutual benefit of both Provinces. . . .

Hagerman's qualified support of union during the debate of February 1838 changed when confronted by the Union Bill to frank and unrepentant opposition. As late as September 1839, he declared to Sir George Arthur that "it would be utterly impossible for the
British Crown to retain its authority over them [the colonies]. . . " if the union was carried through. His second objection was that "this measure is . . . republican in its tendency." The weakening of the legislative council by reducing the terms of its councillors from life to eight years vexed Hagerman. He countered with a recommendation to strengthen the "Monarchical principle" by making seats "hereditary."22 The constitutional initiatives embodied in union clearly threatened the political and social order of gentleman. The appointment of councillors "for a term of years, would wholly destroy the influence and usefulness of the body."

The existence of the L. C. should be represented as absolutely indispensable under the British Govt in this Colony—for the same reasons that are to be given for the House of Lords in England—Practically it ensures the advice of the most able and intelligent men in the Colony when Legislating on local affairs.23

Curiously when the assembly voted on the resolution in favour of union on 19 Dec. 1839, Hagerman's vote was recorded with the ayes. The vote was an overwhelming 47 to 6.24 What had happened to Hagerman's brave declarations? In the resolutions of the fourth session of the thirteenth parliament (1839) he had stood with W. B. Robinson in opposition.25 On a resolution that the experience of 1838 "confirms . . . that a United Legislature . . . is indispensable . . . " Hagerman voted with a small minority in opposition.26 Between March and November and in fact between September and November 1839 his harsh vituperation crumbled into a somewhat reticent and demeaning support.

Brave words to the contrary, Hagerman's resolve had wilted under
pressure from Governor General Thomson. Hagerman's flip-flop was a matter of embarrassment for the bumptious and swaggering attorney general. After Thomson's arrival in Toronto, Hagerman had broached the subject of union. After frank discussions, and Thomson's assertion that the government was determined on it, unencumbered by the assembly conditions of 1838, Hagerman let it be known, "that I was opposed to the Union, and upon any question raised approving of the measure, my vote would be found recorded against it." He left the meeting with the impression that "I am not to be called upon to vote against my conscience." At this juncture he was convinced that, "A vote in favour of the Union will be adopted. . ."27 On 12 Dec. 1839 Hagerman denied in the assembly the rumour that government officers would be forced to choose between their principles and their offices if their opposition persisted. But circumstances had changed. His view of the union was unchanged but the measure was before the assembly "by command of the Sovereign" and "if the vote in favor of the Union was persisted in, he would vote for them."28

The month previous, on 24 November, Thomson, Arthur, and Macaulay had discussed Hagerman's position. Thomson "stated his surprise that, in this Country those officers [Law officers] appeared to act as if they regarded not the will of the Government in any matter of public policy-" and alluded to Hagerman.29 But the leading crown officers saw themselves as independent gentlemen-administrators rather than career civil servants and Arthur tried to make this point. He argued
that their opposition began when union was not a government measure and that, "he had always understood that the Crown officers in this Province were left by the Government at liberty to act as they pleased, in their Legislative Capacity."30 Persuaded Thomson that dismissing Hagerman would militate against winning the "constitutionalists" over to the union, Arthur suggested Hagerman could explain his support for union as a government measure without losing "his standing with the public."31 In spite of his earlier hope that he would not be forced to "vote against his conscience", Hagerman took the out provided.32 Macaulay, possibly closer than he had ever been to the making of policy, captured the plight of Hagerman's reversal:

I was provoked to see Hagerman's friends set up a comparison between his conduct & mine upon the Union Question— I would be sorry to set up so high as he did & after all break down.

Macaulay added, "you will soon hear that he has retired from his present office to a Puisne Judgeship."33 Soon was not long in coming. By mid-January 1840 Hagerman had offered himself for the soon-to-be-vacant judgeship.34 On 15 February Hagerman received the appointment.35 At its conclusion the debate of 1838-40 had brought Hagerman and Macaulay together as had that of 1822-24. For both men commerce was a special concern insofar as prosperity would be threatened by a union with the anti-commercial Canadiens, but the commercial nexus and even the severe financial plight was overridden by the political events of the 1830s: radicalism, rebellion, and responsible government. A union which brought the Canadas together under a more democratic
constitution left Upper Canada prey to republicanism and democracy. Responsible government would not tolerate monarchical prerogative or non-democratic legislative councils. It would overthrow the rule of law and threaten the property structure which supported aristocratic politics.

John Macaulay was the closest to the Upper Canadian commercial community. His father Robert had been one of Kingston's earliest merchants and John had carried on in business. His uncle John Kirby was one of the most prominent of the Kingston merchants engaged in the forwarding-carrying trade of the St. Lawrence. His wife Helen Macpherson was linked through her brothers David L. of Montreal and John of Kingston to Macpherson, Crane and Company, until 1854 the largest forwarding firm in the Canadas. Helen's sister, Frances, was married to John Hamilton of Queenston. Macaulay's connection with the development schemes spawned in the late 1810s and early 1820s was long and intimate. In the columns of the Kingston Chronicle he eloquently championed the causes of canals, banking, currency, tariff policies with the United States and within the empire. He served on the Commission for Internal Improvement and was first the secretary to the arbitrator and later the arbitrator for customs negotiations with Lower Canada. More than the others he saw a clear need to come to terms with the lower province to ensure canalization of the St. Lawrence and a revenue supply for public works, and before any of the others he understood what the debt of the mid 1830s entailed politically. First as surveyor general and then as inspector general Macaulay.
recognized the inadequacies of having gentlemen as administrators of the small government departments. No doubt his perceptions during his brief stint as Arthur's civil secretary influenced the governor to direct the assembly to a full-scale investigation of the crown departments. Moreover Macaulay was the man picked by Sydenham (a choice supported by Arthur) to be the union government's inspector general. They considered him the only man of business available for this crucial position and a master of the audits. Interestingly when Macaulay refused because he could not bring himself to sit in the assembly, Francis Hincks became his successor. In spite of these compelling bonds and associations Macaulay rejected the union as constitutional folly. In 1838-40 he parted company with the commercial aims of the merchant class. Although he would support union it would be as a crown servant and a legislative councillor not as the advocate of Laurentian commercial hegemony.

When George Moffatt, John Richardson's heir as the spokesman of Montreal businessmen made a "missionary tour with the design of gaining proselytes to his views" on the union in 1839, Macaulay wondered, "how anything but ruin in the present posture of things can result from adding 50 or 60 fierce Frenchmen to the radical force in our assembly..." If as Moffatt had warned the merchants would not consent to the partition of Lower Canada (the annexation of Montreal), "which is the only measure safe for us", "I see no escape for our difficulties." Macaulay feared that, "some plan must be immediately struck out for the settlement of affairs in Lower Canada..."
and although many favoured union, "that would be a jump from the frying pan into the fire." \(^{41}\) The unionists seemed to be making strides. Already the assembly was pro-union and if the council followed suit, Macaulay feared that "our doom is sealed—They all seem to me to be mad, or else desperate & reckless[.]\(^{52}\) A week later Moffatt's efforts had gained a majority on the council as well, including Macaulay's relations, John Kirby and John Hamilton. Macaulay was flabbergasted, "I had no ideas they were for a complete Union, that would bring 40 or 50 Frenchmen into an assembly— & possibly give a Roman Catholic Majority." \(^{53}\)

The publication of Lord Durham's *Report* in February 1839 completely transformed the debate. The gentry were furious with its recommendations, particularly responsible government and union. The mingling of the two notions was sufficient cause to bury the hope that union would resolve the economic woes of the province. In the repose of the early 1820s it was still possible for Macaulay and Hagerman to regard union with equanimity. But the 1830s and the rebellions squelched the hope for amicability. By early April 1839, Macaulay thought union a foregone conclusion to be settled "without reference to us."

I do not like the measure— We shall never agree with the French. And then Lord Durham has broached doctrines upon Colonial Government of so dangerous a character that I do not see how any Government is to be carried on. \(^{44}\)

This prospect of an imperially-imposed solution clouded the political horizon. "In fact it bids fair to do us great harm, & I fear we shall never return to our former happy state of peace and contentment and security." \(^{45}\) Durham's sanctioning of responsible government seemed
to bestow a blessing on a democratic rearrangement of the constitution:

Indeed Lord Durham having sanctioned the principle of "responsible Government"[. .] I fear the people of the Province will not rest until it has been obtained in all its democratic fulness—the is an ill-fated Country. 46

The report had its greatest impact during the remainder of 1839, particularly when the province learned that Lord John Russell's government projected a legislative union for the Canadas. In these circumstances, Macaulay considered the assembly resolutions of 1839 "folly" contributing to bring "this danger upon us—& no sooner will we find ourselves united to the French, than we shall be as anxious to shake them off, as every dog was to get rid of a tin kettle. . . . Indeed Lord Durham's advocacy of Responsible Government is alone sufficient to ruin us[. .]." 47 Aside from fears of the unchecked dominance of the Canadiens, Macaulay was distressed by the constitutional innovations regarding the legislative council:

It also takes away life legislators & in this respect departs from British analogy, instead, as is boasted of approaching nearer to the model[. .] The charm of the "responsible Government," proposed by Lord Durham has turned every head in the Province; & I do not see where the mischief is to end. 48

Macaulay gave full vent to his scorn for Durham's "mischief" in a long memorandum, likely intended as a draft letter for Arthur. In it Macaulay detailed his opposition to its political and constitutional proposals with an interesting commentary on the relationship of democracy to rural agrarianism, and aristocracy to urban commercialism.

Macaulay thought the outcome of the union "pregnant with political
evil." The "clamour" in the province had been misunderstood. Men wanted "a more complete enjoyment of the Constitution", not its alteration. However the republican wish for responsible government "would destroy the Constitution, and prostrate the rights of the Crown, at the feet of a democratic Majority in the House of Assembly." ^49 His foremost concern was the alteration of the legislative council which except on "a few occasions when the assembly was strongly against the Government invariably acted in concert with the other branch and most usefully for the public." He argued that the present composition be retained and that the crown prerogative be left unrestricted. Implicitly he allowed that past criticism of the council's composition may have had merit, but was no longer justified and that "practical results" should not be sacrificed at the altar of "theoretical improvements". He faulted the council for one grievous error: failing to adhere "to their original views respecting the public debt" and consequently allowing the provincial finances to be "so heavily weighted down" by "the popular cry for loans for public improvements." ^50

Macaulay's defence was rooted in language redolent of the prescriptive justification of established order and institutions, with appropriate adaptation to Upper Canadian circumstances. But the gentry's use of Simcoe's oft-quoted phrase, "the image and transcript of the British constitution", should not mask their realization that the council was not the House of Lords:

In the first place, it is certain, that in no country in the world can materials be found for a Legislative body of corresponding influence with the British House of Peers, for this plain reason chiefly, that that august Body was
not the creation of a day, but the growth of ages, and is
enveloped in historic dignity, and shielded by the
accumulating respect of many generations.

But in a small country which lacked the accretion of an aristocracy,
the only hope for an effective check in political society was the
monarchical prerogative and a prudent council. Indeed the provincial
bounty of arable land necessitated such an arrangement for good
government:

In the next place, you cannot form such a body in this
Colony, because you not only do not find here men of
princely estates, surrounded by their tenantry but see
almost a general level among the owners of the soil. Every
man almost who cultivates land, is its Lord- and for this
reason alone, it is clear that an Upper House, corresponding
to the British in weight and influence, cannot be found in
Upper Canada [.]

Macaulay's analysis evinced a distrust of the egalitarian
independence of men in a society in which almost every man cultivates
and owns land. Never as laudatory of agrarianism as Robinson or
Strachan, Macaulay juxtaposed the radical egalitarian variant against
the commercial interest, which had "always [been] true in their
support of the Govt" and could be "relied on as a Body." The
provision of the Union Bill which deprived all towns in Upper Canada
except Toronto and Kingston from returning members to the assembly
was a political error which ran against the experience of the 1830s:

I must confess I do not like this change- It seems to me
unjust towards that great Commercial party which is adverted
to in the Draft of a despatch, and whose stronghold is in
the Towns [. ] It may be seen that hitherto almost every
Town Representative has been Conservative in his views and
a supporter of the Government- By throwing overboard this
valuable class of Members, the Bill gives incalculable
strength to the other opposing "liberal" party, which
depends on the rural population—the yeomanry, lords of
the soil, whose inclinations from their very condition of
life tend to the assertion of independence, and a republican
control over the Executive—This party will thus gain an
irresistible ascendancy—and enforce a narrow anti-commercial
policy.

It is clear that Macaulay's reasoning derived from the agrarian
rhetoric associated with Mackenzie and his limited number of assembly
supporters. He believed the policy had originated in "MacKenzie [sic]
7th Report upon Grievances, in which the Towns are denounced as
sinks of Tory Corruption—& that, simply because they sent Members, who
were resolute in opposing his pernicious schemes, and in promoting
commercial enterprise and the general improvement of the Country."

Macaulay's concern was the core segments of the community which had
remained loyal during the rebellion. R. B. Sullivan's long memoran-
dum on Upper Canada in 1839 is replete with Macaulay's marginal
notations. Although Sullivan analyzed political conflicts as stemming
from the differences between a liberal party (Macaulay preferred the
term "movement" party) and a commercial party, he was careful to
attribute the support of commerce for the government to self-interest.
He distinguished the loyal supporters of government as a conservative
party or commercial party and noted that, "The whole commercial party .
can only be depended upon as conservative in times of prosperity."
They were men who would willingly switch sides "when they find they
cannot have their own way in the adoption of expedients." It is
not curious that Macaulay did not see fit to object. Like the others
he had no illusions about conservatism and the spirit of commerce.
What then of Macaulay's support for union? By late 1839 he believed that the new governor general was "bent to carry out the Union which itself would be ruin, even without the probable adjuncts of Responsible Government & a new Election." He was sure that it would only be a matter of time before the separation of the crown from the colonies. It "will but add to our political embarrassments & prolong & heighten discontent." His position on the union hinged on his civil office of inspector general. In early November, he was convinced that the union would "be carried without difficulty... but situated as I am I know no other duty than to obey & certainly my heart and hand shall go together in the Queen's service, while she chooses to employ me." Although he considered, "Union under the best aspect is but a choice of evils" yet on 12 Dec. 1839, like Hagerman in the assembly, Macaulay in the legislative council voted with the majority in favour. The day of the independent gentleman-administrator was fast falling before the changing reality which looked towards the 1840s. Of his action, he wrote:

Our House has agreed to the Union of the Provinces, on the conditions proposed by Mr. Thomson—The majority in favour of this course was considerable— I formed one of that majority, although I entertain a great dread of the consequences of Union—But, the measure was one deliberately adopted by the Queen's Ministers... I therefore have felt it to be my duty to give up my own opinions, & do all in my power to forward the views of the Government whose Servant I am— If I could not have done so comfortably to my own mind, I should of course have offered my resignation.

Macaulay's reasoning seems puzzling. No measure of government was more critical to Upper Canada. No measure was more perilous yet he
was comfortable enough not to resign. Perhaps his notion of "duty" is the only explanation. Duty was at the core of a gentleman's conception of himself and it is unlikely Macaulay would have consciously violated this unwritten code. It is worth observing that the same code compelled Robinson to openly oppose the union regardless of the consequences. One other possibility was that in spite of his hostility to the measure, Macaulay saw no practical alternatives. Rather than a futile last ditch stand he chose to make the best of Upper Canada's only choice. A month after the historic vote he wrote:

Necessity is the only justification of the measure, we cannot remain as we are, and the Imperial Government felt a proceeding of some sort unavoidable. We shall incur great hazards— and indeed there was nothing but perils on all sides— I hope all may end for the best.⁶²

Strachan, who had voted against the union in the council, was appalled by Macaulay's reasoning, to the extent that it would damage their friendship:

Such a principle carried out would justify the Servants of Queen Mary in condemning Ridley Latimer Cranmer &c to the stake, and is in my humble opinion totally inconsistent with your Commission and oath as a Legislative Councillor— but I am certain that you would not carry it out so far nor act upon it if you felt it morally wrong.⁶³

As in the debate of 1822-24, Strachan and Robinson were intransigent in their opposition, but unlike the earlier period, the later debate occasioned scant difference in analysis between Hagerman, Macaulay, Strachan, and Robinson. This time however the attitudes which led Macaulay and Hagerman to support the Union caused an open breach in old friendships.
During the 1838-40 debate Robinson was the most trenchant and resolute critic. Politically Strachan's position was weak. The succession of lieutenant governors after Maitland had ignored him. The additions to the legislative council made by Colborne, Head, and Arthur diminished his influence there, and in November 1835 he resigned his seat on the executive council. After 1835 he turned his attention increasingly to church and church-related matters. His political style, particularly his often imprudent and heedless bellicosity had made him an encumbrance. During the Maitland administration Strachan's influence had depended on his accessibility to the governor, or his secretary, Hillier. In the relatively small councils of the 1820s, his talents, and he had many, and force of character enabled him to predominate, although often men such as Thomas Clark and William Dickson could prove formidable and intractable opponents. The changes in British politics in the 1830s also removed many sympathetic ears. The combined effect of these changes was to exclude Strachan from effective participation in the debate. Strachan's influence by the late 1830s and thereafter was mainly limited to religion and education.

When the legislative council debated the union resolutions in December 1839, Strachan voted with the minority in opposition. He shared with Hagerman and Macaulay an apprehension of the seriousness of the proposals. No doubt his perspective on revolutionary politics in Europe, reform agitation in Britain, and the conflicts in the Canadas honed his fears and observations. He likened the constitutional
proposals of Joseph Hume and Arthur Roebuck to the British politicians who had applauded the American rebels, or those who had condoned the atrocities of the French revolution. Without regard for the capacities of men to govern themselves, constitutions were foisted on colonies such as Newfoundland, resulting in "the wildest commotion" and the possibility of disruption of the natural hierarchy of political society:

In this Island there are only two Classes, the Employers & Employed or Merchants and Fishers and as the suffrage is almost universal the whole power of the Constitution becomes vested in the Employed or Servants. A similar Constitution might with equal wisdom be conferred [sic] on any great manufacturing establishment. The workmen as in Newfoundland would legislate against their Masters refuse to work indulge in idleness and dissipate the Capital by which in their days of industry they had been supported.  

Strachan drew a vitriolic portrait of the United States, a society brought to ruin by reckless visionaries:

... torn to the centre by inveterate faction all law & justice disregarded & rolling forward with an impetus that no possible obstacle can now resist to Anarchy revolution & despotism— Experiments in the wildest Theories have been made in the American States & their results are on record.  

Strachan saw in the proposals for responsible government revolutionary potential. The natural tendency of democratic societies was ruin and disorder:

Universal suffrage which places the wealthy and honest hand afoot at the mercy of the profligate & turbulent— which destroys industry riches & Capital and prostrates all that is noble in principle delicate in sentiment & honourable in conduct & hurries the whole community towards anarchy [sic] and revolution.  

The democratic extension of the constitution would work its insidious ways on the Church of England. The university, and the clergy reserves
would be threatened by the competing claims of the Kirk and along with them the Methodists, Roman Catholics, and Baptists. As usual Strachan could not countenance any accommodation, "As respects the Church she can never be served by compromising her principles or by consenting to what is unjust either directly or indirectly it were far better to lose all." In fact he saw this a distinct possibility after the council's vote on union: "... voted for Popish ascendancy and in all probability the same body will be called upon to vote away the Clergy Reserves."{68}

The affairs of the church were no trifling concern. Like Robinson, Strachan believed the settlement of the interests of the Church of England as the most urgent consideration. Hesitation in securing the legitimate claims of the church imperilled civil harmony which depended on a religious base. In such matters the political stance of men was particularly important. They could alter society. First and foremost the question of union was a question of political principle and "To those indeed who consider these things questions of expediency it becomes a matter of indifference which side they take[.]"{69} By 1841 amid counselling John Solomon Cartwright, regarding Sydenham's blandishments{70} to accept government office, Strachan inveighed against William Henry Draper and Macaulay as men, "employed who have neither character nor principle."{71}

The union debate took on the characteristics of a major battle in a long war and Strachan brandished his words like a claymore.
Responsible government imparted a revolutionary quality to the union. Strachan accepted as axiomatic the classical teaching that it was in the nature of democracy to degenerate first into anarchy, then into despotism. Both the American and the French revolutions had confirmed the ancient wisdom. As such the union would overturn political hierarchy and threaten the church. His slashing remark about Macaulay indicates how crucial Strachan considered the union events. In the changed circumstances of the 1830s, even charity could not bring Strachan to applaud Macaulay's independent cast of mind.

Effective opposition fell to Robinson. Ironically the leading critic during both the debates of 1822–24 and 1838–40 was in England on each occasion. Robinson's antipathy to union had not diminished during the intervening years but the rebellions and their aftermath, and the promise of responsible government in the Durham report and the Union Bill seemed to him an unparalleled threat to the gentry's world. Although a fierce partisan in both the assembly and the legislative council Robinson had made it a point of honour to refrain from public comment on imperial initiatives. But with the union the stakes were too high and the path of honour led him into the public fray in a manner unequalled in his long career. Lacking the close relationship at court with James Stephen that he had had with Robert Wilmot-Horton, Robinson worked behind the scenes organizing opposition. As might have been expected his efforts were most effective with "ultras"
such as the Duke of Wellington, the Bishop of Exeter, and Robert Harry Inglis. Unfortunately for Robinson both their role and the power of the House of Lords had diminished since the 1820s. His final contribution to the opposition was the publication of the most damning and sustained critique of the bill, Canada and the Canada Bill. As uncompromising and intransigent as Strachan, Robinson differed from his mentor in choice of style and tactics. He rarely precipitated events for the sake of invective or unnecessary mock heroics. Robinson usually reserved spleen for private correspondence particularly after he had left the bear pit of the assembly. He preferred the pungent, point by point commentary on his opponents' arguments. The effect was calculated to wither the opposition with lucid and persistent critique.

In July 1838 while Durham was consulting with Upper Canadian figures about his proposed constitutional changes, Robinson hoped that the governor general "could be persuaded to apply his mind to some alternative. . . ." Robinson trotted out the old favourite, "to embrace the Island of Montreal & to govern what would remain of Lower Canada by a Legislative Council. . . ." His marginal notations on Durham's early scheme for federation indicate a continuing concern with upholding the monarchical prerogative especially over council appointments, assembly dissolution, and control of the civil list. All departures from Upper Canadian practice, he derided as democratic and American. By December when everyone had had their say on the
necessary changes, Robinson made the obvious point that he would support a good scheme but oppose a bad one. His only "serious difficulty... was assuring myself that I can discern the true road among so many that lie open to our choice." Whatever his doubts, they remained private. His public actions and private correspondence portray a man convinced of what was right for Upper Canada. During the 1830s the gentry had anxiously awaited a "firm" hand or measure to resolve the Canadian crisis. During his stay in England Robinson discussed with Edward Ellice his plans for ending the problem by a federal union of the provinces. Robinson rejected them out of hand.

Robinson had the good authority of James Stephen for suspecting that Durham's impending report was held in low esteem by the government. When the report was leaked to the Times in February 1839 Robinson was aghast at the peer's proposals:

It is very bad, & quite verifies what I had always expected--Ld Durham is radically unsound--... His report like that of 1828 is calculated to unsettle every thing--After all that he has said to the contrary he recommends the immediate union of the two Provinces as before the pact of 1791 was passed--the disposing of the Clergy Reserves--a Government responsible to the Assembly... On all three counts the report was anathema. To his wife and confidant Emma, he spit out his utter contempt of the document--"That horrid report! Every sentence is a lie--& a most mischievous lie--when I read the 119 folio pages, I hardly found a passage that I did not burn to expose..."
By late February Robinson had begun to actively campaign: first against Durham, secondly against the union. Robinson's plan was twofold: to organize an effective parliamentary opposition and to undermine the political acceptability of union and responsible government. If effective, his strategy would preclude all alternatives but one:

If Upper Canada were to press strenuously for extending her limits to Montreal, & to shew no inclination to a Union, I should expect to find the Government come to that conclusion.  

Robinson feared that the practical effect of the Reform Bill of 1832 "is to make the contest of parties so keen & so doubtful that the British Govt. can no longer rule the Colonies, or maintain any intent with a steady hand." Eight months later Arthur would urge the Chief Justice's solution to Colborne as the only practicable solution.

The tenacity with which Robinson clung to annexation undermines the supposed nationalism attributed to his confederation schemes. They were never more than desperate attempts to stave off the radicalization of the upper province. Annexation was a marvellous innovation. At once it secured the constitution of 1791 and guaranteed the financial resources necessary to support the civil charges of government and public works.

Robinson had determined to use his position in England and his acquaintance with such notables as Wellington, Sir Robert Peel, Lord Stanley, Lord Lyndhurst, Lord Wharncliffe, the Bishop of Exeter, Robert Inglis, and Henry Goulburn to turn the tide against the union.
In his correspondence with them and colonial officials he attacked the important tenets of the union, reiterating gentry arguments almost 20 years old. Opposition to government in the form of party and faction would be increased rather than diminished. Upper Canada would be powerless to act as a check on Lower Canada and the conflicts "that have troubled one Colony would thenceforward afflict both."  

The "new species of responsibility, which in reality would be nothing more or less than a servile and corrupting dependence upon Party-" would in past years have put executive power in the hands of unsettled demagogues of the ilk of Robert Thorpe and Joseph Willcocks. In short, the British population of both provinces would be overwhelmed by the Canadiens and obstructed at every turn.

By the late fall of 1839, Robinson had become less sanguine about Upper Canadian prospects. His letters from this period are etched with the bitter thought that, "Three years _____ may see us all broken up & scattered - Montreal our seat of Government & our future political condition in the hands of French demagogues, combined with the fair proportion of radicals which we can always furnish from among ourselves."  

In November 1839 he wrote, "it is quite certain that I should have made myself no party to the scheme of Union with Lower Canada in any shape." Explicitly denouncing the primacy of commercial-economic considerations in deciding the question, he commented on William Hamilton Merritt's volte-face on union:

Mr. Merritt is shewing now pretty plainly the nature of the game he would have played. He wd. I have no doubt have sought out Ld. Durham, Chs. Buller & persons of that stamp who wd.
have accused him, as Lord Durham did the people of Canada with hopes of a brilliant future so far as railroads, banks, & canals were concerned, & in return they would have received his willing support to all their notions & many of their operations, about responsible Govt. Since their first meeting Robinson had been convinced that Merritt was not actuated by a narrow, selfish interest but rather by public spirit. The revelation that he was a businessman like the others was a profound shock. The willingness of commercial interests to accept responsible government in return for unlimited economic development was extreme folly.

Robinson lamented the apparent erosion from 1838 onwards of union opposition. By 1839 the want of effective policy emanating from the thirteenth parliament was especially disturbing. His presence in England was a glorious opportunity for an official representative of Upper Canadian interests but the initiative was never forthcoming. As it was he was forced by circumstances to act judiciously in his unofficial capacity and possibly lose some of his potential effectiveness with the imperial government. Robinson was particularly anxious about the fate of his preferred solution - the annexation of Montreal. Without strong backing from the thirteenth parliament, the proposal seemed doomed. As an alternative, he suggested a joint legislative body which would convene every two or three years to legislate in matters of trade and "the improvement of the waters common to both, leaving us in all other respects as we are." The advantage of this scheme, like that of annexation, was "on this principle which could gain all we want, & endanger nothing."
During this period in the autumn of 1839, concerned about the disappearance of official opposition, Robinson began work on his critique of the union bill. He planned a clause by clause commentary on the bill to explain "one by one the alterations it would introduce." He had in mind: union, changes in the council, elective district councils, and the new powers of a united legislature. He also decided to highlight the "remarkable omissions in the bill" and add an introductory chapter for "some considerations respecting Canada which are not generally thought of here." He had not yet decided "what use to make of this when I have finished it."  

Meanwhile Robinson offered W. B. Robinson advice on strategy and tactics for the forthcoming session of the assembly. "Finance, Union, Clergy Reserves are the principal matters." With respect to finance, he outlined what was now apparent, "you can go on no longer this year, without taking some new step." The financial imperative doomed anti-union support. By the crucial vote of December it had withered to a rump in the assembly and a minority in the council. The reason is probably to be found in the concern with debt, finance, and the suspension of public works. Sydenham astutely remarked that in 1841 the first union parliament could be put "into very good order" after a short period of time:

... the Members shall choose between idle discussions upon the terms of the Union, or Responsible Govt. and improvements. If they like the first, they shall not have the last, and I think I know pretty well what the People of Upper Canada will prefer, whatever some of their Members may say.
The situation seemed grim. The Upper Canadian opposition was dwindling away and the prospects for effective action in England itself appeared slight. Robinson was convinced that, "We have been saying for these last ten years—this is the year that must decide our fate—but really it seems to have come at last." 97 A visit with the Duke of Wellington in mid-December 1839 brought home the realization that there was little chance of overturning the bill. During the evening after a round of discussions with Wellington, Robinson detailed ten possible choices to resolve the "Canadian question—" and consigned "all schemes on union" to "rank lowest in the scale—" His favourite plan remained the annexation of Montreal. The only other tolerable solutions were the aforementioned joint legislature with jurisdiction only in matters of trade, revenue, and navigational improvement, or a similar proposal but without a common legislature, leaving the crucial common matters of trade and revenue to imperial adjudication. 98

At some point in the waning months of 1839, Robinson became convinced that the possibility of effective opposition had perished 99 and decided to become a public critic of government policy. The decision was a point of honour. He agonized over it but never regretted it. Anxious about the arrogance of the bill, certain that private suasion was futile, and sure that the bill touched the very foundations of social, religious, and political order, he decided to publish Canada and the Canada Bill. He had consulted with no one until the work was completed in December 1839. 100 Only then did he seek Francis Bond
Head's advice about publication. Almost simultaneously he acquainted
Lord John Russell of his intentions. 101 Ironically at the time when
Hagerman and Macaulay were swallowing their convictions because of
their duty as crown servants, Robinson embarked on open opposition
because honour demanded that he not forsake what was right:

My opinions on it shall be known & I will suffer no
apprehension of consequences to myself or friends to
deter me— If I can be convinced that what I am going to
do is either unnecessary or wrong— then I shall forbear—
otherwise I shall send out my observations on the plan &
let the Govt do, what they may — I cannot otherwise
satisfy my own feelings of duty to the Country I belong
to. 102

Previously he had applauded Head's decision to publish the colonial
dispatches which exposed Whig designs for the colonies. 103 Moreover
he was as openly contemptuous of Arthur's unwillingness to uphold
his duty by opposing the bill when "in the full persuasion that the
Union could only lead to the ruin of the Province." 104

The immediate effect of the book was to ensure that Russell heeded
Sydenham's suggestion to pack Robinson off to Canada as quickly as
possible. 105 The book was a parting shot, fired too late to do other
than confirm the suspicions of the anti-unionists (what was left of
them), and raise the ire of pro-union forces. The thrust of the book
was Robinson's conviction that the imperial government was "committed
to the support of theories and opinions not merely visionary, but
pernicious and unsound," and that the "safety, internal peace, and
the religious interests" of the colonies were jeopardized as a
consequence. 106
The book deftly articulated the geotry's position. All their fears and solutions were present: the novelty of the legislation and its lack of a prescriptive foundation, the inability of the loyal English population to withstand the assault of the republican, Roman Catholic Canadien majority, the lack of effective countervailing checks if Upper Canada was deprived of anything less than equal representation, the incompatability of the two cultures, and the introduction of the elective principle which applied to the council would destroy the balance of the constitution. Yet the circumstances of Upper Canada compelled some redress. Debt, finance, and the suspension of public works were vital problems but incapable of resolution by a union. Robinson persisted with his espousal of the annexation of Montreal to eradicate the financial problem and to anglicize the lower province "by degrees" with the introduction of circuit courts, the proliferation of the English language, the colonization of waste lands, the introduction of English commercial and civil laws, and "thus made an English colony, to restore to it the English constitution." Failing that he fell back on the preferred alternatives first mentioned in his memorandum in December 1839 while staying with Wellington.

The book combined with Robinson's political activities to arouse Sydenham's resentment. He was convinced that Robinson was in the "hands of the Tories, Lyndhurst & Co." Sydenham had "a poor opinion of his abilities as a writer" and pronounced the style as "wordy, inelegant,
and very illogical." Arthur, like Macaulay, held that his position as a crown servant obligated him to uphold government policy in spite of his personal reservations. He respected the chief justice and consistently defended him against Sydenham's abuse. But while praising Robinson "for acting conscientiously in the opposition" he assured the governor general that it was all for nought. The weight of pro-union sentiment would bear on even the "Conservative Members" and the book would not "make any impression to impede your measures in any way." Privately he wrote to Colborne:

His Pamphlet unfortunately came out too late—It was too pointedly against the Govt Measure from the Pen of an officer who was, by favor, enjoying a long leave of absence. I wish it had appeared earlier as an answer to Lord Durham's report—However I am very certain no man living intends better or is more honest in all his purposes.

Sydenham detested Robinson and the publication of the book sharpened his dislike:

I look upon him too, beside having been the determined opponent of the Union and of the Clergy Reserves in England, as the concentration and essence of the Family Compact in the Provinces.

Canada and the Canada Bill marked the futility of the gentry's cause. Had their opposition had a chance of success it would not have been published. It was the most sustained and lucid explanation of the gentry's rejection of union. The very fact of its publication indicated the seriousness with which Robinson understood the events unfolding around him. Responsible government threatened the overturning of society to the democratic control of radical, anti-commercial,
Roman Catholic French. The municipal clause with its elective district councils threatened the property base which supported the gentry hierarchy.

The gentry were never entirely happy with the prospect of union even in 1822-24. In those early years before events had taken the disastrous turn of the 1830s it was possible for Macaulay and Hagerman to approve of it for commercial reasons because nothing political was risked. The others disagreed but in 1838-40 the favourite scheme of Montreal and London merchants threatened the Church of England and the constitution of 1791. Impelled to seek an alternative by the exigencies of rebellion and debt, they could neither countenance nor tolerate those who abandoned politics and religion for commerce. Hagerman eventually was bullied into support; Macaulay exempted himself from opposition because of a conception of the role of the crown servant, which in itself marked a departure from the age of the gentlemen-administrators. Neither however expected anything but grief to come from the measure. In 1838-40 both Strachan and Robinson saw in the union a threat to throne and altar. Particularly in their concern for property the gentry misunderstood the nature of the changes overtaking them. Francis Hicks and Edward Ellice understood the middle class nature of union politics; property was not threatened, only "aristocratic" politics. Possibly the agrarian radicals such as Mackenzie and Chisholm understood better that in the middle class world of the 1840s the new elite would be the monied aristocrats and both questioned whether they were preferable.
Constitutionally there was little especially innovative emanating from the Canadas during the 1830s. The 1820s had given rise to bold proposals for British North American federation. The major initiative of the 1830s - the annexation of Montreal - was more limited in scope yet more adroit in conception. Between 1832 and 1836 this plan became the obvious solution to relieve the debt, to remove the major obstacle to Upper Canadian plans for canals on the St. Lawrence, to preserve the constitution of 1791, and to ensure the continued separation from the radical vortex of Canadien politics. Briefly in 1836 the plan fell into disfavour during the assembly's debate on a resolution calling for annexation. The gentry feared that colonial approval might act as a signal to the colonial office that the province would acquiesce to a legislative union.

It was a measure of the gentry's dilemma that even when the feared union was imminent no other solution seemed possible. From 1836 to 1840 annexation was the perennial panacea. The sweep of events was beginning to overtake them. They assaulted both Lord Durham's Report and the Union Bill in the familiar language of the dangers of democratic government, the necessity of monarchy and aristocracy to a balanced constitution, and the rights of the Church of England. They tried in their public utterances to keep pace with such changes in political language as replacing liberty by freedom but the political structure of the eighteenth century and the social structure which supported it were not to be implanted in British North America. The
political language of the gentry and the stable, hierarchical, agrarian society which it evoked were increasingly at odds with the world around them.
FOOTNOTES

1. The Macaulay Papers (PAO) for these years indicate the tone of their comments and the degree to which it was commonly shared.


3. Ibid., Hagerman to Macaulay, 17 April 1832.

4. Ibid., It is worth noting Hagerman's emphasis on British emigration especially by men of wealth as the solution to the problems of the Canadas. Confronted with Canadien or Yankee republicanism, his answer was to buttress the Englishness of the Canadas.

5. Ibid., Stanton to Macaulay, York, 18 Oct. 1832 (Toronto and Buffalo, 1876) 38-81; W. G. Ormsby, The emergence of the federal concept in Canada, 1839-1845 (1969), 6-90.

6. Ibid., Stanton to Macaulay, York, 8 Nov. 1832.

7. JHA, 23 Dec. 1832, p. 66.

8. For the persistence of annexationist thought see Chapter V, part iv. See also Arthur Papers, 2, 232-33, Arthur to Colborne, 10 Sept. 1839. It seems that Robinson's influence was critical both in limiting the effective solution to annexation and convincing successive governors of its efficacy. The stress on annexation was repeated in Arthur's memorandum to Normanby c.15 Sept. 1839 (Arthur Papers, 2, 253). This memorandum was written by the incisive Robert Baldwin Sullivan.


10. Ibid.

11. Ibid.


15. Ibid., Macaulay to Helen Macaulay, Toronto, 7 April 1837.


17. Ibid., Macaulay to John Kirby, Toronto, 6 Feb. 1838.


23. Ibid., 248-49, marginal notes by Hagerman on items 50 and 53 of Arthur's memorandum on union actually written by R. B. Sullivan.


26. Ibid.


29. Macaulay Papers, Private memdm. 24 Nov. 1839 as to interview with governor general.

30. It should be noted that Thomson's assumptions that government officers should have a legislative capacity and moreover that in that capacity they should espouse the government line was a marked departure, as Arthur observed, from what had been the case in the days of gentlemen-administrators.

31. Macaulay Papers, Private memdm. 24 Nov. 1839 as to interview with governor general.


34. Arthur Papers, 276-77, Hagerman to Arthur, 12 Jan. 1840; see also 378-81.

35. Armstrong, 110.

36. Tulchinsky, 40.


38. Arthur Papers, 3, 168, 176, 179, 189-90, Sydenham to Arthur, 1 Nov. 1840; Arthur to Sydenham, 7 Nov. 1840; Sydenham to Arthur, 26 Nov. 1840.


42. Ibid., Macaulay to Ann Macaulay, Toronto, 17 March 1839.

43. Ibid., 25 March 1839.

44. Ibid., 7 April 1839.

45. Ibid., 11 April 1839.

46. Ibid., 15 April 1839.

47. Ibid., Macaulay to John Kirby, 9 June 1839.

48. Ibid., 10 Aug. 1839.


50. Ibid., 262.

51. Ibid., 263.

52. Ibid., 261.

53. Ibid., 264.

55. Arthur Papers, 2, 238-39, (R. B. Sullivan (for Arthur) to (Normanby)), c. 15 Sept. 1839, see especially nos. 31-38, 245-47.


57. Ibid., Macaulay to Kirby, 18 Oct. 1839, Toronto.

58. Ibid., Macaulay to Ann Macaulay, 11 Nov. 1839, Toronto.

59. Ibid., Macaulay to Ann Macaulay, 29 Nov. 1839, Toronto.

60. British Colonist, 18 Dec. 1839.


63. Ibid., Strachan to Macaulay, 28 Dec. 1839.


65. Strachan Papers, Working of the Union, 6 March 1839.

66. Ibid.

67. Ibid.

68. Macaulay Papers, Strachan to Macaulay, 28 Dec. 1839; see also Strachan Letterbook 1839-43, Strachan to Exeter, 22 May 1840, p. 58.


71. Strachan Letterbook 1827-41, Strachan to J. S. Cartwright, 12 April 1841, p. 88.

72. Arthur Papers, 1, 244, Robinson to Arthur, 27 July 1838.

73. Ibid., 245-51 (July ?, 1838).

74. Ibid., 440, Robinson to Arthur, 11 Dec. 1838.


78. Christopher Robinson Papers, Robinson diary 1838-40, p. 5 (mfm. at PAC); Arthur Papers, 2, 72, Robinson to Arthur, 4 Mar. 1839; see also Arthur Papers, 2, 47, Robinson to Arthur, 19 Feb. 1839.


80. Ibid., 79-80, Robinson to Emma Robinson, 22 Feb. 1839; see also Robinson to Emma Robinson, 14 Feb. 1839, 73-74; Robinson to Emma Robinson, 16 Feb. 1839, 75-76.

81. Ibid., 87-88, Robinson to Strachan, 15 March 1839.

82. Ibid.

83. Arthur Papers, 2, 191, Robinson to Arthur, 7 July 1839, "The most important & most pressing matter is the very urgent necessity of something being done to save UC from the discredit & ruin of public bankruptcy"; see also, 200, Robinson to Arthur, 27 July 1839, "Nothing could have been put to the Government in terms plainer or stronger than your dispatches of Novr. and June respecting the revenue - debt &c & they ought to have made it appear to the Government that it was absolutely necessary to do something"; 89, Robinson to Arthur, 19 March 1839. He reiterated to Arthur the content of the plans he had presented to Normanby. He outlined four main objects: the first three concerned military security, restoration of tranquility, and provision for future government which would ensure the former. The fourth concerned the commercial state of Upper Canada: "To extend such assistance to Upper Canada (as) may enable her to bear up agt. the financial pressure occasioned by the sudden suspension of immigration, & by the decline of commerce and revenue consequent upon the disturbed state of LC and upon the unsettled state of Upper Canada, which was immediately produced by it."

84. Ibid., 2, 192, Robinson to Arthur 7 July 1839.

86. Ibid., 62-63.

87. Ibid., 2, 89, Robinson to Arthur, 19 March 1839.

88. Robinson Papers, Letterbook, 1814-62, 111-15, Robinson to Mrs. Sarah Boulton, 30 Oct. 1839. In 1838 Robinson had written Colborne that peace and happiness could no longer be assumed to be the future lot of Canada "... but if you can find any one, Yankee or Frenchman who would give me half as much for my little property as I could have got 2 years ago, pray send him, & he shall have it & moreover whenever you may chance to hear of an employment, a birth of any decent description, out of the reach of American "sympathy", where a middle aged couple with 8 children could reasonably hope to escape starvation command me to the post. For I see in the future but a miserable prospect for myself & those who depend on me-" PAC, MG 24, A40 (Colborne Papers copies), 13, Robinson to Colborne, 13 Jan. 1838, 3624-28; in August 1839 Robinson had written Arthur that if the Union passed in its present form, "I shall begin to think, of emigrating - & turning Shepard at Van Diemens Land-" Arthur Papers, 2, 228, Robinson to Arthur, 31 Aug. 1839.

89. Ibid., 117-21, Robinson to W. B. Robinson, 13 Nov. 1839.

90. Ibid.

91. Ibid.

92. Ibid.

93. Ibid.

94. Ibid.

95. Ibid.


98. Ibid., 130-32, Strathfieldsaye, 16 Dec. 1839.


100. Christopher Robinson Papers, Diary 1838-40, 79, 14 Dec. 1839.

101. Ibid.
102. Ibid., 82, 16 Dec. 1839; see also Canada and the Canada Bill, xi.
103. Colborne Papers, 22, 6691-93, Robinson to Colborne, 11 June 1839, 25.
104. Ibid., 7486-88, Robinson to Colborne, 7 Feb. 1840.
106. Canada and the Canada Bill, x.
107. Ibid., 89.
108. Ibid., 109.
109. Ibid., 122, 152.
110. Ibid., 134
111. Ibid., 143.
112. Ibid., 186.
113. Ibid., 136.
114. Ibid., 71-72.
116. Ibid., 3, 10-11, Arthur to Thomson, 7 April 1840.
117. Ibid., 3, 87, Arthur to Seaton, 27 June 1840.
118. Ibid., 3, 79, Thomson to Arthur, 13 June 1840.
CONCLUSION

Conservatism is itself but a diluted Toryism, & it must submit to a further dilution, if it wishes to gain new influence and preserve a remnant of the old principles. For my part I remain as much a Tory as ever, and I am too old to change—though I perceive the necessity of a new set of political maxims.

John Macaulay

It did not take the gentry long to conclude that the Union had wrought great changes. Initially they were hostile to any attempts to strike a middle ground between "reform" and "toryism." By 1843 their contempt for Thomson, the architect of Union, and the terms of Union itself had been transformed into the realization that honour no longer had any place in the new political world of the Canadas.

Politically the union proved to be the end of the line for the gentry.

Like Macaulay they clung to the image of society evoked by Macaulay's "Government of Gentlemen." The Union marked its passing.

Hagerman and Jones spent the few remaining years of their lives on the bench. Markland, disgraced by alleged homosexuality, resigned office in 1838 and retired to relative obscurity in Kingston. Robinson served on the bench for another 23 years but lost the basis of his political power in the 1830s—the speakership of the legislative council and the ear of the governor. Likewise for the now Bishop Strachan the days on the council came to an end. For both men the only forays on public issues were limited to the clergy reserves and the university question. Only the slightly enigmatic Macaulay...
retained political office. Unwilling to accept Thomson's stipulation that he take a seat in the assembly, Macaulay resigned the inspector generalship in 1842 and was replaced by Francis Hincks. However he held his seat in the legislative council, in spite of his hostility to the post Union period, almost until his death in 1857. Strachan had always been impatient with the peculiar twists of Macaulay's reasoning. On the Union he regarded it as nothing less than an abomination. Yet this intensely independent and highly principled man continued to serve in a period which overturned the political, religious, and social touchstones of his life. Possibly he hoped to retain a shred of continuity with his "old principles."

The gentry's hold on the course of events was always tenuous. The term "family compact" has given an exaggerated sense of their power which fluctuated between the War of 1812 and the Union, varied with individuals, and was limited by opposition within and often between the assembly, the councils, and the governor's office, to say nothing of regional interests, the British military, and the whole widespread range of contending interests too neatly subsumed by the phrase Imperial government. The circumstances which overtook their English correspondents such as the Duke of Wellington, the Bishop of Exeter, and Robert Inglis, also put the gentry into the political wilderness.

Since Thucydides explained in his history of the Peloponnesian War, "what is first for us" [the Athenians] it has been proper for historians to determine what was first for a people in the particulars
of their experience. One of the most powerful explanations for Canadians has been the formative influence of the wilderness.

Northrop Frye declared that "English Canada was first a part of the wilderness." By Confederation, "the mystique of Canadianism" had imbued large draughts of the no-man's land of shield, forest, and river.

Since Voltaire, the European mind has understood Canada as a wilderness.

Harold Innis and Donald Creighton brilliantly interpreted Canadian development within the framework (failed or otherwise) of the commercial exploitation and rationalization of the staples of the Laurentian Shield. The wilderness has figured prominently in both the literature of French and English Canada, recently to absurd extremes. That this wilderness myth can be so compelling for a technological society is ironic and possibly is a measure of modern deprivation. The wilderness belongs to Stone Age people - to pre-modern people of myth. What was primal for British North Americans living in Upper Canada was not the experience of the wilderness, but rather the conquering of it. It may have been possible for isolated individuals to go native, to make the land their own but not for society. Some men, such as the fur traders from Montreal and Hudson's Bay inhabited a world between two cultures. Explorers such as Víðjalmur Stefanson, travellers like William Francis Butler, or novelists such as John Richardson and Sir Charles G. D. Roberts may have come close. Whatever the wilderness was for the early nineteenth century, it was not what it was for the native peoples.
What then does the gentry's experience, particularly in their attitude to development, bring to our understanding of what was first for British North America? They hated the wilderness. The shield was dismissed by Robinson as a northern defensive barrier - "the protection of an impenetrable waste."8 Macaulay eagerly awaited the day when "a lonely forest and dreary wilderness" would give way to "rich and populous districts."9 Forests were "dreary" obstacles to civilization: as Strachan put it "wild and barren regions, far removed from civilised life."10 The sooner the "primeval forest" gave way to furrowed fields and cultivated farms the better.11

The myth which underlay the gentry's world was pastoral. But unlike the radical agrarians it was a pastoral society organized on hierarchical lines with social lines fixed, rank sure, and deference observed. Social gradation, the due subordination of the universe, was tempered by old notions of Christian charity, the stewardship of wealth, the public interest, and duty. The presence of this tradition has been used to explain Canadian differences from American life especially a more orderly and peaceful society.12 Yet the impress of this tradition was slight. There was no continuity reaching back into time immemorial for any tradition in Upper Canada. A heterogeneous society of emigrants did not find the bonds of provincial society in the world of the gentry.

R. Cold Harris has expressed this fact as succinctly as any:

... the landscape of the Middle West reflected a weak sense of time and of community and an emphasis on individual achievement and material progress.13
At best the tradition represented by the gentry was a moderating influence which did not substantially alter what seemed to them by the 1830s an increasingly materialistic society.

The gentry were awed by, and never really at home in, the world of the 1840s symbolized by railways, steam, and telegraph. In his memoirs John Clark thought these changes akin to fairy tales but in truth "stranger than fiction." Strachan's sermons and Robinson's grand jury charges are remarkable documents cataloguing their uneasy anticipation of an urban, materialistic world. Robinson was not sure that the world was worse for the changes. He, after all, applauded the progress initiated into the world by Sir Francis Bacon and Isaac Newton but there was certainly something to be said for the old ways:

... the world is not worse than it was only once we were a little more honest & respectable than the generality of mankind the age of simplicity could not be expected to last long, while steamers & rail roads are flourishing[.] One of Merritt's correspondents, the Reverend Richard Blacow, an English shareholder in the Welland Canal Company, commented astutely that the word "progressing" was a "Yankee phrase." Merritt's father-in-law, Jedidiah Prendergast delighted in what canal-building portended for mankind "... must fill the Mind with astonishment—and prove the unbounded power Man can exert when directed by Genius." This was an anticipating spirit beyond Robinson's comprehension.
Within the gentrý's cosmos man's powers were limited. God, not man, was the only creator. But the gentrý admired the Yankee enterprising and anticipating spirit, their feats of engineering and canal-building. To a lesser degree, they sought, like Thomas Chandler Haliburton, to bring together the British constitution and American technology and failed. They had tried to conservatively appropriate the dynamism at the heart of a technological society to beliefs which had become anachronistic in British North America by the 1830s. An indication of this change was Robinson's perception that "freedom" was more appropriate to the political language of the 1830s than the much different and preferred word - "liberty."

During the 1840s some of the gentrý reluctantly concluded that the idea of an agricultural economy providentially endowed was false. By 1834 Macaulay had realized that Kingston and its back country was not "Eden in her summer dress" which prompted him to consider manufacturing as an alternative basis to agriculture for Kingston's prosperity. By 1850 Macaulay had become a man of "common sense." He described Canada as a "poor agricultural Colony." Two years earlier Strachan had reached a similar conclusion. The great expectations and promise of 1819 lay in tatters. True, Upper Canada suffered in comparison with the United States but "it would be a great error to infer that because we have done less than the United States which possess so many advantages over us and we have done nothing—" Upper Canadians could
look with pride to their canals and "flourishing districts" but the problems were immense: poor emigrants scattered over an immense territory "harrassed by a severe climate", a populace possessing "little or no commercial spirit or ardent desire for improvement", and slender financial resources. Only Robinson remained faithful to the inspirations of his youth. In an 1851 letter written in Hamilton he commented to Strachan on the state of the province. He was sure that the contemporary political and religious conditions were but a temporary trial and "that in God's Good Providence" "a re-construction of the social edifice—more worthy of the human race" would take place. The Church of England would be restored to "an undisputed ascendacy." After "some years of coarse vulgar democracy" government would cease to be "despotic." But as "regards progress in other ways there is a great deal that must gratify us—" Robinson was "astonished" by the trade in timber, "the quantity of wheat sown" and the great improvements in the roads:

I doubt if there is any where a Country which in mere material things is at this moment in a more hopeful way than Canada—certainly California is not—nor Texas. Macaulay saw in the passing of the gentry a measure of irony:

The truth is, I conjecture, that we colonists ape John Bull, & retain too much of the English notions regarding genteel vocations—notions well enough adapted to England, with her army & navy ... but wholly unsuited to a poor agricultural Colony like Canada[]. A few years of hot-bed prosperity, under the influence of the brick flue of protective laws, have forced our educated families into habits and expenses; and ideas of social matters that may entail much unhappiness and evil on their rising members[].
The greater irony may have been that the gentry's advocacy of improvement contained the seed of their own destruction. The legacy of their ardour was an unwieldy debt and unfinished construction. The debt provided Thomson with the whip to lash Upper Canada into acceptance of the Union. The old Nor'wester, Simon McGillivray, had no doubts that the governor general's "strongest hold ... on the Legislature of Upper Canada was their Public Debt, which they could have by means of the Union to spread over the United Provinces. ..." In 1838 Macaulay apprehended "great political discontent will result from this heavy debt." A year and a half later he proclaimed: "Our public debt drives us into the measure. ..." As Inspector General Markland had reported to Durham the "public enterprise in developing resources has led to expenditure far beyond the means of the province." Men as diverse as Robert Baldwin Sullivan, Colborne, and Macaulay understood that there was a difference in the ultimate attachments of the commercial party - "security of property, commercial prosperity, public credit and public improvements" and the conservative party - "British institutions." "The whole commercial party ... can only be depended upon as conservative in times of prosperity." In the 1840s the political language of an agrarian society of independent commodity producers was dying. In time it would be wholly supplanted by a language appropriate to politics in a capitalist society. Within the society that followed the gentry tradition was slight. Prior to the Union economic development was limited by
agrarian political beliefs and economic assumptions, that is, to what was it necessary to ensure a prosperous agricultural society —
canals and markets and the direction of major public works was considered the purview of those capable of considering the general interest —
gentlemen. An institution as fundamental to the structure of the Canadian economy as banks was not considered part of the development strategy of the gentry. They limited the purposes of the Bank of Upper Canada to providing a circulating medium and discounting merchants’ notes. They were wary of the explosion of banking in the 1830s and only tolerated it because politically they had no choice.

Thomson had calculated correctly that the emergent consensus of the late 1830s placed material prosperity over political principle. Although the market did not play so central a force in the Canadian experience as the American and varied in its homogenizing power from region to region it was the primal Canadian experience. In time it was almost forgotten why men would desire other than a materialist society based on capitalist production.
FOOTNOTES


3. Ibid.


5. The novel *Surfacing* by Margaret Atwood and *Bear* by Marion Engel are the most recent examples.


7. Ibid., 17.

8. *Canada and the Canada Bill*, 18.


11. Strachan Papers, Ms. sermon on the text, "Now no chastening for the present seemeth to be joyous but grievous; Nevertheless afterwards it yieldeth the peaceable fruit of righteousness unto them that are exercised thereby." Hebrews 12:11, composed on 14 & 15 March and delivered on the 16th 1804 being appointed for a day of humiliation and prayer on account of the war against Buonaparte.


13. Harris and Warkentin, 165.

14. Strachan Papers. The sermons have been recently arranged in chronological sequence. A sample of sermons from the early 1830s to the late 1850s would give some flavour to his remarks. This is also true of Robinson's charges from 1829 to 1841 which are contained in a single transfer case in the Robinson Papers.


17. PAC, MG 24, El (Merritt Papers), 8, 996-99, Blacow to Merritt, Liverpool, 10 July 1834.

18. Ibid., 8, 994-95, Prendergast to Merritt, Mayville, 4 July 1834.

19. The address delivered by John Macaulay.


25. Macaulay Papers, Macaulay to Kirby, 6 Feb. 1838.

26. Ibid., Macaulay to Ann Macaulay, 29 Nov. 1839.

27. PAC, MG 24, A27 (Durham Papers), 6, pp. 721-40, Markland to Durham, n.d.

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1: Brock, Sir Isaac
2: Ellice, Edward
25: Head, Sir Francis Bond
27: Durham, John George Lambton, 1st Earl of
40: Colborne, Sir John, 1st Baron Seaton.

B: North American political figures and events

8: Morris, William
18: Mackenzie, William Lyon
24: Rolph, John
68: Hincks, Francis
154: Jones family.

D: Industry, commerce, and finance

24: Bethune, Donald.

E: Transportation

1: Merritt, William Hamilton.

I: Immigration, land, and settlement

26: Hamilton, Alexander.
K: Education and cultural development
2: Coventry, George

RG 1: Executive Council, Canada, 1746-1867

E: State records
1: Minute books
3: Upper Canada state papers
13: Blue books
14: Correspondence, Upper Canada
16: Petitions and addresses.

RG 5: Civil and provincial secretaries' offices, Upper Canada and Canada West
A: Civil secretary's office, 1791-1840
1: Upper Canada sundries, 1766-1840

B: Miscellaneous records
30: Records of the commission of inquiry into the state of the public departments, 1839-40

C: Provincial secretary's correspondence, 1827-67
1: Numbered correspondence files, 1821-67.

RG 7: Governor general's office

G1: Dispatches from the Colonial Office, 1784-1909
G14: Lieutenant Governor's correspondence, Upper Canada
G16: Letterbooks, Upper Canada, 1793-1841
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B: Correspondence with the British Treasury, 1793-1834
C: Civil secretary's letterbooks, 1799-1840.

RG 8: British military and naval records
I: C series (British military records).

RG 16: Department of National Revenue
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RG 19: Department of Finance
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