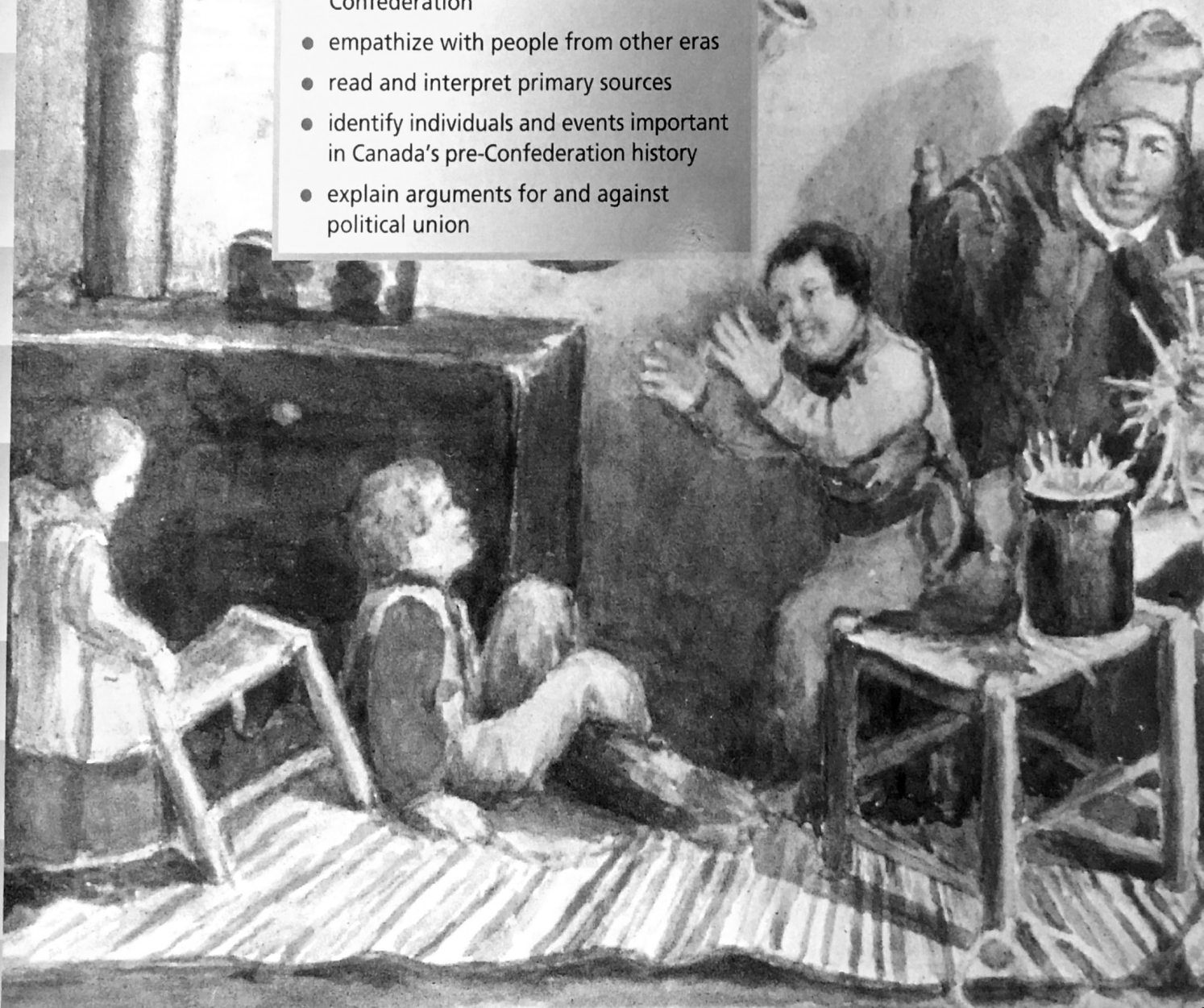


# 2 BUILDING A NATION 1840-1867

## CHAPTER OUTCOMES

In this chapter, you will continue to examine the social and political life of the Canadas and how the colonies came to be united in Confederation. By the end of the chapter, you will

- use pictures as a source of information about other periods in history
- use period newspapers as sources of information on social history
- describe the process which led to Confederation
- empathize with people from other eras
- read and interpret primary sources
- identify individuals and events important in Canada's pre-Confederation history
- explain arguments for and against political union





# A Trip Across Canada

## Selections from the Journal of Walter Cheadle

*Walter Cheadle and his friend, Lord Milton, left England in 1862 with the intention of crossing Canada to the Pacific. Unlike other Europeans of the period, however, they had no purpose for their trip other than to see the country. As a result, they have been called the first "Trans-Canadian tourists."*

*After arriving in Quebec in July, they travelled to Toronto and Niagara Falls, crossed the northern United States by train and steamboat, and then canoed up the Red River to Fort Garry. From Fort Garry, an Assiniboin family guided the two tourists across the prairies to Fort Edmonton. At Fort Edmonton, they were joined by Mr. O. B., an "egotistical, arrogant, and ungrateful" Irish teacher, according to Cheadle. Here and elsewhere, Cheadle's descriptions of events and activities on the trip—and his frequent complaints—are hilarious. The party then travelled across the Rockies to Victoria, on to the goldfields of British Columbia, and then back to Victoria. They sailed for home in December 1863, and Cheadle's account of the journey became a bestseller in Britain.*

*Later, Cheadle devoted his life to children's medicine and, incidentally, supported the cause of women's right to practise medicine. This selection begins in Fort Edmonton, where Cheadle and Lord Milton meet up with Mr. O. B.*

*Friday, May 22*

Mr. O. B. returned from the Lake to worry us about taking him across with us. As I have omitted to mention him, I will give his history and our acquaintance with him here. He introduced himself to Milton on Sunday evening and talked at him furiously, and shortly after, at me. From his own account it appeared he was a graduate of **Cambridge** ... he crammed birth and aristocracy down my throat in nauseating doses ... He is a great talker and I fancy a great **humbug** and

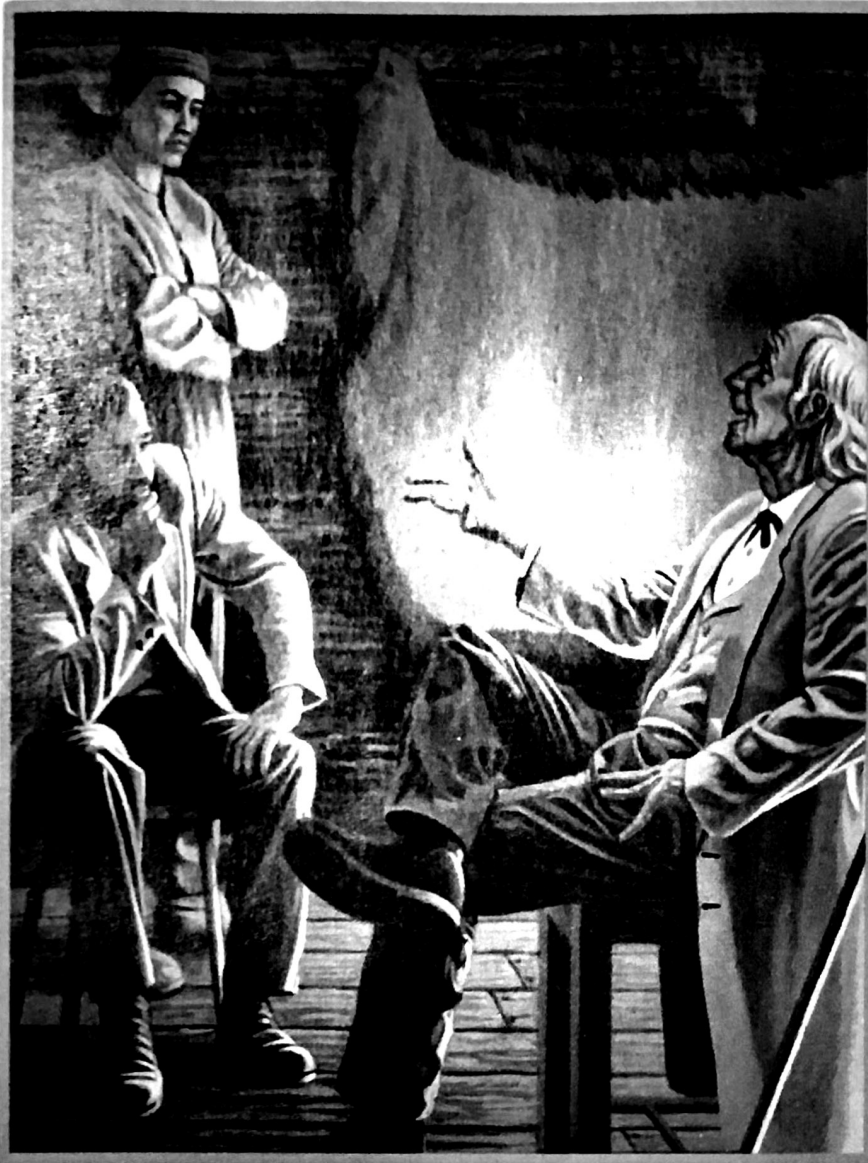
ne'er do well who has been a dead weight on his friends throughout. Seems a well-informed fellow, however, and nearly knocked my head off with Latin quotations. Horribly afraid of bears and even wolves, [so the other] men amuse themselves by **exciting** false alarms of bears being seen in the neighbourhood ... [H]e is a man of 60, clothed in long coat and walking with a stick. He wishes to go with us, and intimates it will be in our interest to take him, which we don't see, as he is the most helpless fellow in the world ...

*Tuesday, June 2*

Yesterday we made Mr. O. B. very happy by consenting to take him with us; he made a most pathetic appeal to me as a Cambridge man, and although we knew it was foolish to burden ourselves with an extra mouth, yet we could not find the heart to refuse him. Resolve to set out tomorrow.

*Wednesday, June 3*

[T]he men of the fort ... commenced a subscription [to buy] Mr. O. B. a horse ... O. B. did not seem very grateful. Wanted



O.B. was a great talker, though horribly afraid of bears.

me to send a man over to the guard and take another Company's horse on my own responsibility which I, of course, refused and felt rather disgusted at his suggesting it.

#### *Friday, June 5*

O. B.'s horse is very satisfactory now. A trouble arranging all the packs ... but fortunately all the horses prove quiet except O. B.'s, which is the fastest runner we have. Weather continues fine and hot. No incident occurred

after departure; reached fine and **copsed** country, pines and aspens, and camped near a pretty wooded river. O. B.'s assistance is nil; he is the most helpless fellow I ever saw; frightened of a horse and shows very little disposition to help in anything without I ask it. Asks the men, or rather tells them, to do little things for him, as if they were his servants and he an emperor. Does not even attempt to pack his own horse ... He is the greatest coward I ever saw, and I can

hardly help laughing at his continual questions at the chance of meeting grisly bears. The Assiniboin today stopped in the bush to light his pipe. O. B. ... passed him without seeing him and when he had just got by, the Assiniboin set up a most fearful growling. O. B. took to his heels and ran for it immediately.

#### *Friday, June 12*

All through the day, bad swampy ground, often covered with heavy timber, and very heavy work for the horses; in the morning heard a rustling in the bushes, probably a wolf, which horrified O. B., who was sure it was a grisly bear. Weather sunny and breezy.

#### *Thursday, June 18*

Nothing of consequence; made short journeys to rest the horses, and stopping early; in pretty good feeding grounds to make up for yesterday. Along the banks of river all day in the thick pines. At noon Milton found very good "colours" of gold in this river ... we fix to move on to the river, and fish and hunt for one day.

#### *Friday, June 19*

[Our Assiniboin guide] and I off at sunrise after moose; the others move camp to fishing place. After a hard day's work we cannot find fresh moose tracks ... we saw nothing; very hot. O. B. set fire to the country ... Baptiste and Milton quarrel over the site of the lodge ...





"Mr. O'Byrne, what on earth are you doing?"

### Monday, June 22

Can't get up as early as I wish ... and Milton's laziness is a great drawback. About noon we begin to suspect that we have taken the wrong track ... The path we were following is merely a hunting road. It led us through a bog and to the top of a high bank ... The matter was now getting serious, and we therefore unpacked horses, although there was nothing for them to eat ... In the meantime we had dinner, and very nearly set the forest on fire ... and I thought we could not save it. I seized an axe and cut down the nearest trees. [T]he black horse got frightened and rolled in the fire and I had to seize a great pole and beat him around the head before he would get out again. I thought

he was done for, but he turned out little injured. Whilst this was going on, the fire had again got [out of control], and I set to work with the axe ... Milton's presence of mind in helping me at once saved us ... Whilst I was energetically cutting trees and crying for water, I observed O. B. sitting down, tugging away at a boot. I shouted at him very angrily:

"Mr. O'Byrne, what on earth are you doing! Why the devil don't you bring water?"

"I can't. I've only got one boot," he said.

"Are you such a fool staying to put on a boot, when the forest will be on fire in a minute and you burnt to a cinder?"

This frightened him, and he jumped up, and limped up with

a pan of water ... we packed off ... going at a great pace, keeping O. B. at a run, for he dared not be left behind for fear of bears and losing the road. Quite exhausted when he came in. Camped for the night in pretty open space where the road forks.

*Next the party crossed the Rockies, following the Athabaska River to Jasper House, then on to Tête Jaune Cache, a trying and difficult journey of more than 1000 kilometres. Mr. O. B. described the trip from Jasper past Moose Lake toward Tête Jaune as the worst journey of his life. Cheadle records that much of the pemmican was bad and that they "starved utterly" for five days. They reached the Fraser River, and the route to Kamloops.*

### Tuesday, July 14

We started early, and in an hour arrived at the Grand Fork of the Fraser; here we unpacked the horses to feed a little, whilst the guide went to explore the passage of many streams ... In about half an hour, we again started and crossed five or six streams, very rapid and swollen, but not more than up to the horses' bellies. O. B. in a great funk. One of the horses took it into his head to swim down the main Fraser and soak our **pemmican** again. I thought he might be drowned, but he came safely under the bank; we hauled him out with a rope. Another [horse] carrying flour walked into a deep place out of



the road and soaked that also. We had an awful bother with them and were very glad to be past all the water. The Grand Fork is the original *Tête Jaune Cache* and is certainly the finest scene I have ever viewed. To the right, Robson's Peak, a magnificent mountain, high and rugged, covered with deep snow, the top now clearly seen, although generally covered with clouds. Ranges of other mountains along the Fraser on each side, and in the blue haze were quite fairy-like ...

*Monday, July 27*

Milton's birthday, but a day of work, putting the raft together and crossing. Mosquitoes and sand flies fearful at night. No rest today as provisions are running short ... I assist our guide to cut logs for raft, very hot

work ... O. B. gave vent to usual groans and sighs whilst staggering under a small tree ...

*Wednesday, August 5*

Late start owing to necessary repair of moccasins ... Killed two partridges ... Papillon [the dog] killed a skunk for supper ... Vast woods still before us ... Mosquitoes murderous.

*Thursday, August 6*

Dull morning. Early start for us ...obstructions became greater and greater, and the underwood thick. It was terribly hard work forcing one's way thro' all this, and about 2 o'clock I felt rather weak and doubled up ... some hope of better country. We should be glad to see someone; pemmi-can the size of a fist; flour very

little in bottom of sack! Discussion about killing horses ...

*Thursday, August 13*

Everybody anxious to see what is at the end of the rapid ... All keep spirits up, though it is disheartening work ... we see nothing before us but the continuation of this rapid thro' its narrow gorge ... We have only provision for three days more, and seven or eight charges of powder ... Dried, clean horse meat goes fast.

*Monday, August 17*

Rainy morning; refitting in every way and drying meat [they killed another horse for food]; trousers all torn and in rags ... a sorry turn-out. We shall go into the Fort nearly

The party arrives at the Grand Fork.





O.B., of course, did more justice to the grub than anyone else.

naked ... This horse-killing is most unprofitable work, delays us two days, and after we have dry meat for only five or six more [days] ... Only Milton advocates the raft. He is very irritable and provoking and tries my temper continually. I am terribly bored by being compelled to be at a standstill for two days. I think of home with its comforts, and the eatables and drinkables till we were quite wild with appetite for them ... But I cannot stand this, I must change my thoughts, and resort to gnawing the shoulder blade of a horse ...

*On August 24, the travellers met a family group of Shuswap people. Having finished the last of their dried horse meat, the tourists were desperate.*

*Cheadle was troubled by a boil the size of "two fists" on his knee. Milton and O. B. could barely walk. Without the Assiniboin guide, and his wife and son, the three Europeans would have been lost and starved. The Shuswaps fed the party and guided them to Fort Kamloops.*

#### *Friday, August 28*

[A]t last at twilight we discern a long rambling shanty, and ... to the front found several people seated round a tarpaulin stretched upon the ground eating ... An old man jumped up and in a curious mixture of French, English, and Indian invited us to eat ... [We] sat down to the remains of a repast

consisted of a greasy soup of bacon, cabbages, and peas in a tin dish, beautiful white gallette [probably **bannock**], and tea and sugar. Milton and I did wonders ... O. B. appeared shortly and joined us heartily and coolly, altho' I informed him it was a dollar a head! ... All anxious to know who we were, where from, whether we intended to mine or seek employment, and seemed rather incredulous when informed that we were a mere party of pleasure, our ragged appearance and gaunt looks greatly against us: Milton's trousers literally rags, mine little better; shirts the same, moccasins in holes; our persons dirty, unwashed and unshaven. The Assiniboin and wife in same condition. Horses and dog skeletons.

#### *Saturday, August 29*

[G]oing forward across the South Branch in a canoe ... [saw] two notices fixed up to trees, "Indian Reserve Lands," "Not to be Trespased Upon."—Cox Chief Magistrate. We were landed close to the Fort which consisted of two or three detached wooden buildings, not yet completed ... quarters for us in the house. We then purchased trousers and shirts in the store, towels and soap, and Burgess [the clerk] showed us a good bathing place, we went down to the river and had a regular scrub-down, and swim afterwards; put on our new apparel and felt really

comfortable ... Then, Ah! Then, dinner! ... Mutton chops, potatoes, fresh butter, delicious *galette*, rice pudding! Never shall forget that delightful meal. Strong tea and plenty of sugar. Talk of intellectual enjoyment! Pooh! Pooh! Your stomach is the door of true delight ... O. B. of course coolly entered and sat down without explaining his case to anyone and did more justice to the grub than any of us. We heard a good deal of what was news to us. Taking of Vicksburg by the North; Mexico by the French; marriage of the Prince of Wales and ... 300 Indians carried off by smallpox last winter. Order famously kept in the Cariboo; Governor Douglas very efficient—only two murders this year.

### Monday, August 31

[A]sked O. B. what he intended to do. He said that he thought of waiting here until we went forward ... In the evening he called me aside and asked me if I could supply him with a pair of socks, a silk necktie, some tea and sugar, a little bread, and

money enough for the steamer from Yale to Victoria ...

### Tuesday, September 1

Milton kindly wrote O. B.'s letter [of introduction] and supplied him with tea, tobacco and matches for his journey ... He then called me aside and said, "Look here, I've got no money for the road," in the coolest manner, as if it were my duty to supply anything he liked to order ... [They had an argument.] He then bid us good-bye coolly and set out, pack on back, saying we would probably never meet again, and that he bore us no ill will! ...

### Thursday, September 3

... we are now rested and anxious to get to Victoria for letters ...

*After arranging with the chief trader of the Hudson's Bay Company for horses, Milton, Cheadle, and the Assiniboin guides set off for the coast by way of Lillooet and the precipitous Fraser Canyon. They saw the famous, but unfinished, Cariboo Wagon Road,*

*American and Chinese gold miners, and found the decayed body of a murderer. Passing Hell's Gate, they came to Yale, a wild town filled with gold miners and saloons. Yale was a short steamer trip from New Westminster (present-day Burnaby), their next destination. They sailed for Victoria, where 30 000 **gold rushers** lived in tents. Milton and Cheadle went to the theatre, dined with the governor, and generally enjoyed themselves before returning to the mainland to continue their tour of the goldfields.*

**Cambridge:** Cambridge University in Cambridge, England, one of the two prestigious British universities of the day. The other one was Oxford.

**humbug:** a boaster, a liar

**exciting:** stirring up

**packs:** the bags containing all the supplies and gear for a cross-country trek

**coped:** an old-fashioned word used to describe countryside that features mostly small trees

**pemmican:** ground-up meat, lard, and berries

**bannock:** a type of flatbread

**gold rushers:** people who travelled to sites where gold had been discovered. There were a number of gold rushes in North America in the nineteenth century.

## ACTIVITIES

1. Cheadle published a book loosely based on his journal when he returned to England. Later, the journal itself was published. Which would be of the most value to historians? Why?
2. What does Cheadle's expedition reveal about travel and communications in western Canada at the time of Confederation?
3. Read some of the more humorous passages of Cheadle's journal as a radio drama. Imagine the tone of voice and inflection of the real Cheadle, who was educated at Cambridge University. Another person could provide O. B.'s voice or some appropriate background noises, for example, mosquitoes, rushing water, or even the fake bear roars that frightened O. B. Present your radio drama to the class.



## TIME LINE

- 1837 ● REBELLIONS TAKE PLACE IN UPPER AND LOWER CANADA
- 1838 ● LORD DURHAM'S REPORT IS ISSUED
- 1846 ● OREGON TREATY IS SIGNED
- 1846 ● POTATO FAMINE DEVASTATES IRELAND
- 1850 ● CROWN COLONY OF VANCOUVER ISLAND IS CREATED
- 1852 ● JAMES DOUGLAS APPOINTED GOVERNOR OF VANCOUVER ISLAND
- 1854 ● RECIPROCITY TREATY WITH US
- 1851 ● BALDWIN-LAFONTAINE GOVERNMENT FALLS
- 1854 ● CRIMEAN WAR BEGINS
- 1856 ● GRAND TRUNK RAILWAY IS COMPLETED
- 1858 ● COLONY OF BRITISH COLUMBIA IS CREATED
- 1861 ● AMERICAN CIVIL WAR BEGINS
- 1864 ● GREAT COALITION IS FORMED
- 1864 ● CHARLOTTETOWN CONFERENCE TAKES PLACE
- 1864 ● QUEBEC CONFERENCE IS HELD
- 1865 ● AMERICAN CIVIL WAR ENDS
- 1866 ● THE LONDON CONFERENCE IS HELD
- 1867 ● CANADA BECOMES A DOMINION



*[Those who support Confederation] are ... a few ambitious individuals, who feel our legislature too small for their capacity ... who feel anxious to strut in embroidered court suits ... and enjoy fat salaries far away from the provinces whose best interests are to be shamefully voted away in return for a fortnight's feasting ...*

**-EDITORIAL, THE HALIFAX CITIZEN, 1864**

Have you ever felt as though you were being swayed from your better judgement in "return for a fortnight's feasting"? A fortnight is two weeks, but hastily made decisions often haunt people for years. What does this statement say about anti-Confederation sentiment?

# INTRODUCTION

The Rebellions of 1837 temporarily slowed the rush to settle Upper Canada. Soon, however, emigrants began to arrive by the thousands, and the population of English-speaking Canada surpassed that of French Canada. Concerned that their language and culture were under attack by the British government, politicians in French Canada formed political parties to defend their interests. After all, in his report, Lord Durham had recommended that English culture and values should prevail, and that the colonies should be joined in a union. If such a union were extended to include the Maritime colonies of Nova Scotia, Prince Edward Island, New Brunswick and Newfoundland—or even, after 1852,

British Columbia—French Canada would be forever under siege.

Canada West (formerly Upper Canada) grew rapidly after the rebellions. Toronto became a city with substantial buildings, businesses, banks, and busy thoroughfares. New roads linked bigger towns to the hinterland. Many new towns were incorporated, each with a row of brick or **clapboard** houses for the doctor, the dentist, and the leading merchants. As business grew, so did the challenges of getting goods to market and to the consumer. Canada West was an exciting place to be—a place of growth and opportunity.

As the British government became less interested in its colonies, it amended or cancelled

**clapboard:** horizontal boards, the outer “skin” of a house

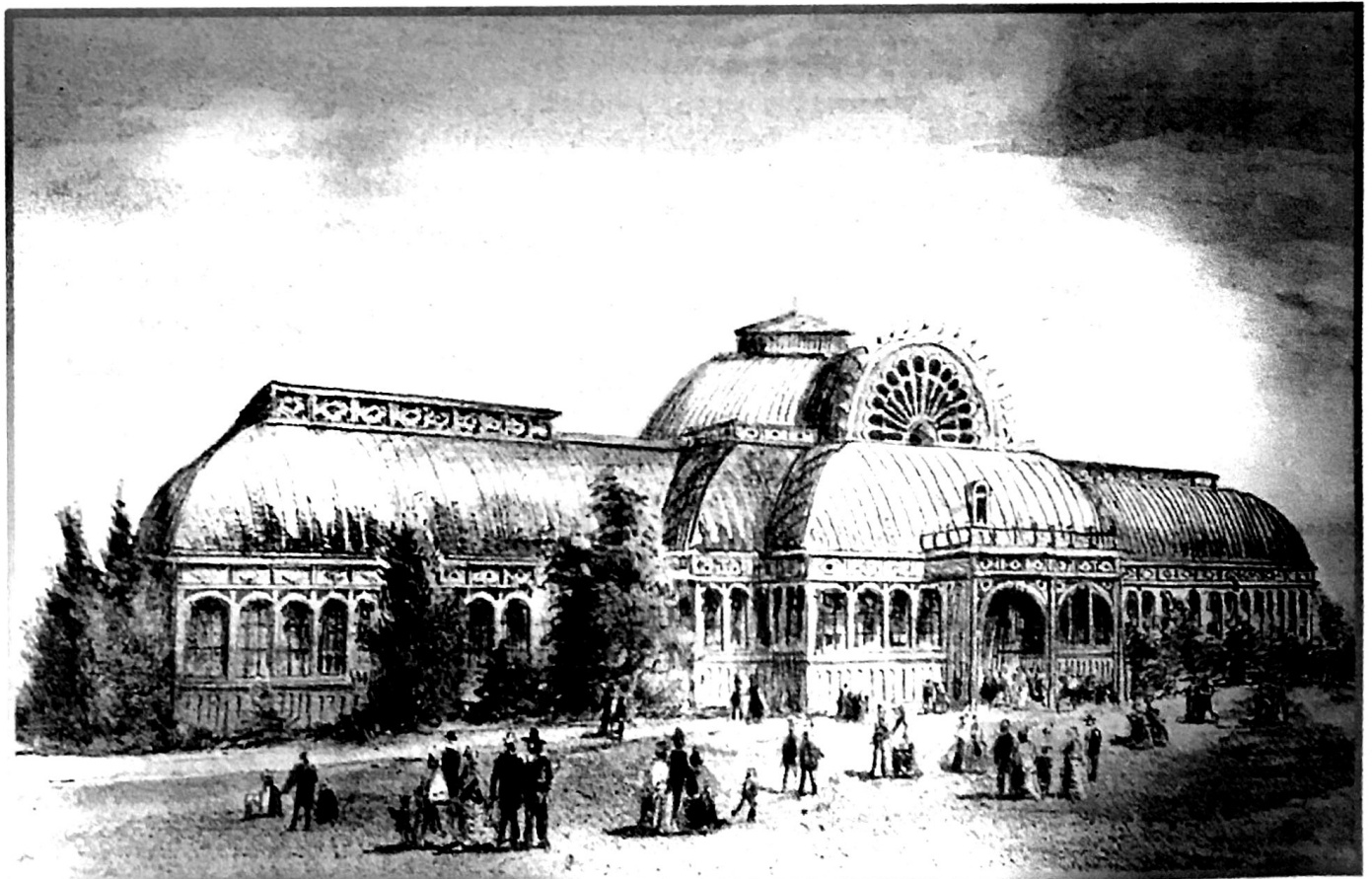


Figure 2-1 Toronto's Crystal Palace was fashioned after a similar building in London, England.

laws which had given them special benefits. Britain refused to finance new projects. Now colonial governments and private developers were responsible for raising cash to build new ships, canals, and railways. Some projects, such as an intercolonial railway, seemed to make more economic sense if the colonies were joined together. Many people believed that the union of all the colonies would make each stronger and richer. Not everyone agreed. The emergence of political leaders who powerfully articulated the advantages of union marked a turning point in the debate—as did the American Civil War, which posed a serious external threat.

This chapter is about the building of Confederation. In other words,

it is about the building of Canada. You will learn much about the politics and government of the era, but these are only one part of the story. You will also learn about the people of the time. Who were the men and women in those early photographs and paintings? They are long dead, but once they talked and ate and laughed and schemed and took holidays. They loved, grumbled, gossiped, listened to music, played games, cried, and feared disease and death. Try to see these people as they were—in many ways just like you, but also different. That is really what history is all about. When you come to understand that you too are living in history, not simply studying it, you will have built a bridge between the past and your present.

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## THE REIGN OF QUEEN VICTORIA

### Immigrants, Rich and Poor

In the mid-nineteenth century, life in Canada could be luxurious or burdensome, depending on your social class. With money, education, and social standing, life was very good indeed. It was possible to make a vast amount of money and to keep most of it, since there was no income tax. The very rich, who lived lavishly in splendid houses with many servants, grew even richer after Confederation. On the other hand, many people had to struggle to make a living. Thousands and thousands of people lived below

the poverty line in tiny one- or two-room cottages. Workers, in general, were not paid well and worked long hours for little reward. There was no employment insurance, no universal health care, no government assistance as we know it today. If a person could not find work or became ill, he or she depended solely on relatives or the church.

Many of the new immigrants to Canada came from Ireland and Scotland. Most of these people were desperately poor and had little education. Some went to Toronto or to growing towns, where they could find work as manual labourers. Others rented land in return for part of the harvest. Rocky land with thin