

Archbishop Thomas L. Connolly Godfather of Confederation

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Thomas D'Arcy McGee ranked Archbishop Thomas Connolly as one of the foremost fathers of Confederation because of his unceasing efforts on behalf of the Confederation movement.¹ Franklin J. Wilson, in a paper read before a meeting of the Canadian Catholic Historical Association in 1943, suggested that by virtue of Connolly's ecclesiastical office his role might better be described as that of a "godfather" of Confederation.² Extensive research into Connolly's public life only confirms the opinions of Messrs. McGee and Wilson. In an effort to assess his contribution to the Confederation movement, this paper will examine Connolly's ideas on union and trace his role in the events leading up to its final achievement.

Nova Scotia's entry into Confederation was fraught with difficulties. Of the four original provinces it was there that anti-union sentiment was strongest. Beginning with the publication of the Quebec Resolutions in November, 1864, opposition grew steadily, culminating in an overwhelming victory for the anti-Confederates in both the federal and provincial elections of September, 1867. The main argument used by the anti-Confederates was that Nova Scotia had nothing to gain, but much to lose, from union. The anti-Confederate victory resulted in a powerful movement for repeal of the British North America Act as it affected Nova Scotia. While the defection of Joseph Howe and other anti-Confederates to the Conservatives weakened this movement, elements of anti-Confederate feeling were still in evidence during the federal election campaign of 1872.³

The period prior to Confederation had been one of relative economic prosperity for the province. The Reciprocity Treaty of 1854 combined with the general loosening of world trade had provided markets for the province's commodities in the United States, Britain and the West Indies.⁴ The era of "wood, wind and sail" was at its zenith, providing the Nova Scotia shipbuilding industry with one of its most flourishing periods. Ships built in Nova Scotia and manned

¹ Isobel Skelton, *Thomas D'Arcy McGee* (Gardenvale: Gorden Press, 1925), 321.

² F. J. Wilson, "The Most Reverend Thomas L. Connolly," *Canadian Catholic Historical Association Report* (1943-1944), 55.

³ J. Murray Beck, *Pendulum of Power* (Scarborough: Prentice-Hall of Canada, Ltd., 1968), 17.

⁴ D. A. Muise, "The Federal Election in Nova Scotia, 1867: An Economic Interpretation," *Nova Scotia Historical Society Collection*, XXXVI (1967), 349.

by Nova Scotians competed for the world's carrying trade.⁵

The anti-Confederate movement, dominated by thriving merchants, considered that the change in trade patterns that union would necessitate would be disastrous.

Although each province had built railways of their own, in 1864 the long-wished-for and talked-of Intercolonial was still a dream. The antis were not at all convinced by the Canadian promise that such a railway would be constructed if union was achieved. They remembered too well the numerous unsuccessful negotiations which had been taking place since the 1850's.⁶

Fear of taxation and high tariffs also contributed to the anti-Confederate position.⁷ They were unwilling to see their province's autonomy sacrificed as a panacea for Canadian economic and political troubles.

The supporters of Confederation led by Charles Tupper and Adams Archibald did not dwell on the greatness of Nova Scotia's past. Times were changing. By the late 1850's the Maritime provinces were being affected by what has been called "the pull and counter-pull between the old maritime ties and those of the new continental attraction of Canada."⁸ While the former was weakening, the latter was growing stronger. The antis threw in their lot with the old tried and true Maritime economy while the Unionists stressed the continental pull. Tupper and his followers claimed that the days of "wood, wind and sail" were fast drawing to a close. The Americans refused to renew the Reciprocity Treaty in 1866. The difficulty in obtaining capital to finance exploitation of provincial resources and build railways influenced many in favour of Confederation. Union would, they felt, furnish new and more stable markets for Nova Scotian products and also provide a sound climate for British capital investment.⁹

Archbishop Connolly, who had been in the Maritimes since 1842,¹⁰ was a

⁵ *Ibid.*

⁶ P. B. Waite, "A Chapter in the History of the Intercolonial Railway." *Canadian Historical Review*, XXXIII (4 December 1951), pp. 356-369.

⁷ "Letter to the People of Nova Scotia" by Joseph Howe, *Morning Chronicle*, 19 April 1866, q.i. J. Murray Beck, *Joseph Howe: Voice of Nova Scotia*, 178.

⁸ W. L. Morton, *The Critical Years, 1857-1873* (Toronto: McClelland and Stewart Ltd., 1964), 58.

⁹ Muise, *loc. cit.*, p. 338.

¹⁰ A member of the Capuchin Order, he was born and raised in Cork where at an early age he came under the influence of Father Theobald Mathieu, the well-known "Apostle of Temperance." Mathieu supervised his education to the extent of sending him to Rome to study at the Capuchin College. Ordained at Lyon in 1838 he returned to Ireland for four years where he worked at the Capuchin Mission House and later at the Grange Gorman Lane Penitentiary in Dublin. In October 1842, he accompanied William Walsh, a fellow Capuchin and newly appointed Bishop of Maximopolis and Coadjutor Bishop of Nova Scotia, to Halifax, as his personal secretary.

keen unionist. He was born in Ireland in the same year as Adams Archibald and was seven years the senior of Tupper. After serving as Vicar-General of the Diocese of Halifax he was appointed Bishop of Saint John, a post which he gave up after seven years to become Archbishop of Halifax in 1859.

The four years preceding Connolly's appointment as Archbishop had been plagued by religious unrest. Since 1855 the Liberal Government of William Young had constantly incurred the displeasure of the Roman Catholic population of the province.¹¹ Joseph Howe's role in the Crimean enlistment controversy, the abortive education bill of 1856 and the government's over-reaction to the "Gourlay Shanty Riot" of June, 1856, led to the defection to the Conservatives of eight Catholic Liberal assemblymen plus two Protestants who represented Catholic constituencies.¹² The Government was forced to resign and was replaced by a Conservative administration under J.W. Johnston. Connolly had been given prior notification of the planned defection and had given it his wholehearted approval.¹³

The religious unrest continued for the next two years with both parties taking political advantage of the Catholic-Protestant split. In March, 1857, Howe lashed out at the power of the Catholics and called for the formation of a Protestant Alliance.¹⁴ A further furor arose when a servant at Government House lowered the flag to half mast on the day of Archbishop Walsh's funeral – to such a state had conditions deteriorated.¹⁵ The election of 1859 saw a distinct voting split along religious lines with nearly all the Catholic constituencies electing Conservatives.¹⁶ The Liberals, however, won 29 of the 55 seats and formed a new government.

Prior to 1857 Connolly's political sympathies had lain with the Liberals, both in Nova Scotia and New Brunswick.¹⁷ However, shortly after the 1859

¹¹ A detailed account of this religious unrest is found in H. W. McPhee, *The Administration of the Earl of Mulgrave in Nova Scotia, 1858-1863* (unpublished M.A. Thesis, Dalhousie University, 1949).

¹² J. Murray Beck, *The Government of Nova Scotia* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1957), 110.

¹³ Alpin Grant to Charles Tupper, Halifax, 13 January 1857. Public Archives of Canada (PAC), Manuscript Group (MG) 26, F, *Tupper Papers*, Vol. I, pp. 172-174.

¹⁴ *The Novascotian*, 29 March 1857.

¹⁵ *The Novascotian*, 23 August 1858.

¹⁶ McPhee, *loc. cit.*; Beck, *loc. cit.*

¹⁷ During the 1840's Connolly had actively supported the Nova Scotia Reformers. (Connolly to Editor, 31 August 1872, *British Colonist*, 31 August 1872.) He supported the Liberals during the New Brunswick election of 1854 and, in 1856, Charles Fisher sought his support during his election campaign. (Connolly to Howe, St. John, 10 June 1854, PAC, MG 24, B29, *Howe Papers*, Vol. I, pp. 269-272. Also Charles Fisher to Howe, Fredericton, 23 May 1856, *Howe Papers*, Vol. II, pp. 735-742.)

election, he wrote to Bishop Sweeney of Saint John:

The liberals here are triumphant on all sides. I am disgusted more and more with politics.¹⁸

This disenchantment with the Liberals was clearly a result of the seemingly anti-Catholic attitudes expressed by Howe and his followers since 1856.¹⁹

Connolly's first reference to a proposed union of the British North American colonies was made in a letter to Joseph Howe written in June, 1854. Commenting on a speech given by Howe favouring a union scheme based on colonial representation in the British Parliament, Connolly observed:

I have carefully read over your speech on the Union of the Colonies and it would be bad taste to say to you what I thought of it.²⁰

Although he does not elaborate on the reasons for his disagreement, his Irish background probably led him to distrust the idea of the destiny of the British provinces being placed in the hands of British Parliamentarians who were not attuned to the specific needs of each of the colonies.

Ten years later, Connolly expressed his wholehearted support of the idea of a union of the British North American colonies. During the summer of 1864, Thomas D'Arcy McGee, the well-known Irish statesman from Canada East, led over one hundred Canadian legislators, journalists and businessmen on a tour of the Maritimes. Connolly urged Bishop Sweeney to "make a favourable impression" on the Canadians while they were visiting Saint John. He then outlined his reasons for supporting a union that would embrace not only the lower provinces, but "a still grander scheme" of British North American unity:

... I am deeply convinced that instead of being split up and isolated and nameless and miserable as we are, the sooner we are united in all these Provinces the better. If we remain in *status quo* our very weakness will tempt our Yankee friends to pay us a visit We may have to pay more taxes but we shall have more trade and more development of our resources and more self respect, a bigger position in the eyes of the world and a name to go abroad with.²¹

¹⁸ Connolly to Sweeney, Halifax, 1 May 1860. Archives of the Diocese of St. John, *Bishop James Sweeney Papers*.

¹⁹ Howe's attitude toward Catholics during this period and his subsequent opposition to Confederation brought an end to any friendship which may have existed between he and Connolly. Ten years later Connolly wrote to Macdonald: "If he [Howe] were in the pay of the Americans I could understand him all. If not he is unquestionably the most eccentric and unintelligent body I ever met." Connolly to Macdonald, Halifax, 15 January 1868. *Macdonald Papers*, Vol. CXVI, pp. 47061-47064.

²⁰ Connolly to Howe, St. John, 10 June 1854. *Howe Papers*, Vol. II, pp. 269-272.

²¹ Connolly to Sweeney, Halifax, 30 July 1864. *Sweeney Papers*.

This fear of American power emerged as Connolly's principal argument in favour of union. A total victory for the North over the Confederacy would pose a distinct military threat to British North America. Numerous visits to New England convinced him of the seriousness of the annexationist sentiment in the North, which was fostered to a great extent by the radical Irish elements, the forerunners of the Fenian movement.

It is not surprising, therefore, that Connolly was an avid supporter of the Confederate States during the Civil War. He believed that they were justified in wanting their independence. Also, an independent Confederacy combined with a united British North America would tend to discourage any expansionist posturing by the North. His home in Halifax was often visited by Confederate agents sent to British North America in an attempt to foster British sympathy for the Confederacy. One such agent, Clement Claiborne Clay, described Connolly as one of the "foremost" supporters of the Confederacy in the British Provinces.²² According to Clay, Connolly is supposed to have offered "to traverse the United States as an advocate of peace, or to do anything to promote that end that was compatible with his duty to his church and Queen."²³ On two occasions Connolly gave letters of reference to Confederate agents travelling to Montreal and Rome urging all or any Catholics with whom they might come in contact to give them all possible aid, they being "... engaged in a cause that commands the respect and sympathy of the world."²⁴

In order to effectively check American power it was necessary that the British North American provinces unite as soon as possible. To this end Connolly planned a meeting of his Suffragan Bishops to be held at Halifax on 17 September 1864, to "... talk quietly over Confederation in all its aspects." Although he did not favour the idea of a Legislative Union which had originally been discussed in the Maritime legislatures in the spring of 1864, he was willing to accept just about any type of union to "... avoid being gobbled up by Yankees."²⁵ There is no record of this meeting ever being held. If indeed it was, it certainly did not result in a vast outpouring of sentiment in support of union by the Suffragan Bishops.

Connolly's first public pronouncement on Confederation was prompted by an editorial in the *Morning Chronicle* on 11 January 1865, which claimed that Roman Catholic churches in Canada were being used for Fenian activities. Two days later, on Friday the 13th, Connolly wrote to the editor of the *Chronicle* denying the allegations and asserting the loyalty of the Irish Roman Catholics of British North America. He agreed with the *Chronicle* that there was a threat from the Fenians in the United States and, indeed, this was more a justification for

²² Clement Claiborne Clay to Judah P. Benjamin, Montreal, 14 June 1864 Duke University Library (Durham, North Carolina), *Clement Claiborne Clay Papers*.

²³ *Ibid.*

²⁴ Open letter, 20 May 1864. *Clay Papers*. Also: Connolly to Barnabo, Halifax, 20 May 1864. Vatican Archives, *Scritture Riferite nei Congressi (America Settentrionale, Canada)*, Vol. 8, p. 986.

²⁵ Connolly to Sweeney, Halifax, 29 August 1864. *Sweeney Papers*.

union. The threat of American power dominated all other arguments – the commercial and financial considerations were:

...completely beyond and beside the question I feel it a duty to declare myself unequivocally in favour of Confederation as cheaply and as honourably obtained as possible, but Confederation at all hazards and at all reasonable sacrifices.²⁶

Editorial comment on Connolly's letter was mixed – depending on whether the newspaper was pro- or anti-union. Timothy Anglin of the *St. John Morning Freeman* strongly attacked Connolly's reasoning that union would improve the defensive capabilities of the provinces.²⁷ The *Charlottetown Examiner*, on the other hand, was zealous in its praise of Connolly and his views.²⁸

At the Quebec Conference in October, 1864, the delegates had agreed that the 72 Resolutions should be presented to each of the local legislatures for approval. In New Brunswick, mounting opposition to the union scheme convinced Tilley that the Resolutions would be rejected, and he refused to introduce them in the Legislature. In the resulting altercation with Lieutenant-Governor Gordon, Tilley was forced to resign and Albert Smith and the Tories were asked to form a Government. Since they did not have a majority in the Assembly an election was called, which resulted in the defeat of Tilley and the Reformers by a majority of three to one. Albert Smith and his mixed bag of followers who had campaigned in opposition to the Quebec Resolutions came to power. During the campaign the Irish Catholics, led by Timothy Anglin and Bishop Sweeney, had been most vociferous in their opposition to the union scheme.²⁹ Sweeney feared that union would frustrate his plan to colonize New Brunswick with Irish emigrants since many potential settlers would be attracted to Canada West.³⁰

Soon after the election Sweeney received a rebuke from his brother bishop. Connolly criticized him for the alleged reports of clerical intervention on the hustings and warned against giving any cause of alarm to Protestants in New Brunswick. He concluded:

It is my conviction that Confederation is thoroughly sound in almost every point of view and will agitate I think all these provinces to their very centre until it is carried if the Yankees will only give us time; but that is the difficulty. If they won't have us as our Antis avow I for one am happy in the *status quo* that I never wish for a change and I will be only too thankful for your tremendous victory against Confederation.³¹

²⁶ *Evening Express* (Halifax), Friday, 13 January 1865.

²⁷ *Morning Freeman* (St. John), 17 January 1865.

²⁸ *Evening Express*, 3 February 1865.

²⁹ Donald Creighton, *The Road to Confederation* (Toronto: Macmillan of Canada, 1864), 251.

³⁰ Tilley to Galt, March 1865. PAC, MG 26, A, *Macdonald Papers*, Vol. LI, pp. 1995-2012.

³¹ Connolly to Sweeney, Halifax, 15 March 1865. *Sweeney Papers*

Connolly was disturbed by the voting in New Brunswick. In a letter to John Lynch, Bishop of Toronto, he expressed his concern that “... nearly the whole Catholic population needlessly flung themselves on the side of Anticonfederation.”³² When Lieutenant-Governor Arthur Gordon of New Brunswick made a public speech defending the Catholics of that province from Protestant accusations of disloyalty and of sympathy with Fenianism, Connolly wrote a public letter to Gordon reaffirming the loyalty of the Irish Roman Catholics of the lower provinces. Emphasizing the numerous advantages enjoyed by Catholics under British rule as opposed to those in the United States, he stressed that the Irish of the lower provinces had nothing to gain by supporting the Fenians, “that pitiable knot of knaves and fools,” except “bloodshed, rapine and anarchy.” He felt confident, therefore, that both Catholic and Protestant alike would “assuredly accord to the Fenians ... the warm reception they so richly deserve ... with knife in hand.”³³

Bishop Lynch, in a private letter to Connolly, took issue with his assertion that Irish Catholics in British North America were in a superior position to those in the United States.³⁴ Connolly agreed that conditions were not ideal; however, he felt that they were far worse in the United States:

In New Brunswick as in Toronto the Orangemen are bad enough but in my mind not one whit worse than they are all over New England I have not in my whole life seen more bigotry and more contempt of anything Irish than I have seen in the U. States and especially in N. England from the days of No Nothingism to the present movement.³⁵

He also defended his public utterances concerning Fenianism:

...irrespective of all Irish Politics the time has come when the true feelings and position of Catholics in B. America must be defined and understood in such a manner as to need no further explanation To be silent or to be indifferent now would place us in such a false position as we could never recede from A broad suspicion of our loyalty would be absolutely disastrous and in truth I could not blame the Protestant people for anything that may occur.³⁶

The public debate on Confederation continued in the lower provinces throughout 1866. In Nova Scotia, Tupper introduced a resolution on Maritime Union in an attempt to delay consideration of the Quebec Resolutions. The Smith

³² Connolly to Bishop John Lynch, Halifax, 12 March 1866. Archives of the Archdiocese of Toronto (AAT), *Lynch Papers*, Box I, Folder H, Doc. 4.

³³ Connolly to Lieutenant-Governor Arthur Gordon, Halifax, 18 December 1865, q.i. *Evening Express*, 10 January 1866.

³⁴ Lynch to Connolly, St. Michael's Palace, Toronto, 1 February 1866. *Lynch Papers*, Box I, Folder H, Doc. 3.

³⁵ Connolly to Lynch, Halifax, 12 March 1866. *Lynch Papers*, Box I, Folder H, Doc. 4.

³⁶ *Ibid.*

Government in New Brunswick tried unsuccessfully to bolster the province's economy by seeking a renewal of Reciprocity and a loan to finish the railways.

By the spring of 1866 British influence was manifesting itself in the growing debate over union in New Brunswick and Nova Scotia. When Lieutenant-Governor Gordon refused to accept Smith's wish that he ignore a resolution passed by the Legislative Council concerning union, Smith resigned. On the same day as the resignation of the Smith Government, Tupper introduced a resolution in the Nova Scotia Assembly calling for the appointment of delegates to attend a conference to discuss "a scheme of union" that would "effectively ensure just provision for the rights and interests of Nova Scotia."³⁷ At Eastport, Maine, a group of Fenians were poised for an invasion of New Brunswick.

Soon after the introduction of his resolution, Tupper wrote to Bishop Colin Mackinnon of Arichat in an attempt to enlist his support for Confederation. Mackinnon, an opponent of the Quebec scheme, felt that under the circumstances he could modify his position. He wrote:

Altho' no admirer of Confederation on the basis of the Quebec Scheme, yet owing to the present great emergency and the necessities of the times, the union of the Colonies, upon a new basis, we receive with pleasure.³⁸

No rousing endorsement but approval nonetheless. Feeling that Confederation was an inevitable necessity Mackinnon published a pastoral letter in which he pointed out that:

... British aid and protection in the hour of danger and emergency can be secured on one condition only – and that condition is the UNION OF THE NORTH AMERICAN BRITISH PROVINCES.³⁹

At 2:30 a.m. on 18 April, after nearly fifteen hours of consecutive debate, the final vote was taken on the Tupper resolution. It passed 31 to 19.⁴⁰ As the debate and voting were taking place, Archbishop Connolly was on MacNab's Island in Halifax Harbour helping administer to the nearly 1,300 passengers of the ship *England* who were quarantined there because of a cholera epidemic.⁴¹

In New Brunswick the election campaign was progressing. Bishop Sweeney's opposition to Confederation was challenged by Bishop James Rogers of Chatham, who tried to rally the Irish Catholics in support of union. In a circular published in the *Morning Freeman* he wholeheartedly endorsed Confederation, stressing that "... this measure is earnestly recommended to us by the British

³⁷ Nova Scotia, Assembly, *Journals*, 1866, 70 (April 17).

³⁸ Mackinnon to Tupper, Arichat, 12 April 1866. *Tupper Papers*, Vol. III, pp. 1027-1030.

³⁹ *Evening Express*, 16 April 1866.

⁴⁰ Nova Scotia, Assembly, *Journals*, 1866, 70 (April 17).

⁴¹ Sister Maura (Mary Power), *The Sisters of Charity in Halifax* (Toronto: Ryerson Press, 1956), 17.

Government ...and by the greatest Statesmen of all Parties⁴² His position was viciously attacked by Timothy Anglin, editor of the *Freeman*, and a running debate between the two over the merits and demerits of Confederation continued throughout the campaign. The election of May-June, 1866, resulted in a landslide victory for Tilley and the Confederates. The Irish Catholic vote had gone strongly in favour of union.⁴³ Roger's challenge to Anglin's leadership and Connolly's letter to Gordon in no small way contributed to this change of attitude. On June 21, the legislature opened and a resolution similar to that presented by Tupper was introduced, and was later carried by a vote of 31 to 8.⁴⁴

While Connolly's chief aim was to see Confederation achieved, the position of the Roman Catholics within such a scheme was equally paramount. At the suggestion of his suffragan Bishops, Connolly decided to go to London in 1866 to attempt to have the lower provinces included in the separate school system as it was to exist in Canada East and West.⁴⁵

The separate schools question had been a major source of conflict between Connolly and Tupper since the latter introduced his "Act for the better encouragement of Education" (Free School Act) in February, 1864. This Act and further legislation in 1865 was the culmination of nearly sixty years of educational legislation leading up to the final establishment of a free school system based on compulsory assessment. In his opposition to the new system, Connolly presented the traditional Catholic view that the education of children was the duty and the right of the parents, not the state. He argued that the parents alone were answerable for "the immortal souls of their children" and that "to interfere with the performance of their duty in this regard is a violation of all law, human and divine."⁴⁶ He claimed this type of education could only be achieved in Catholic schools, with Catholic teachers and a curriculum based on religious principles.

The Free School Act provided the necessary legislation to set up a free school system financed by local assessment and provincial grants.⁴⁷ A Council of Public Instruction, composed of the members of the Executive Council of the province with the Superintendent of Education acting as secretary, was put in charge of the entire administration of the system. County Inspectors, Boards of Commissioners and Examiners were appointed to administer the schools at the local level. A monetary premium was offered to each school founded on the assessment principle

⁴² *Morning Freeman*, 22 May 1866.

⁴³ P. B. Waite, *The Life and Times of Confederation* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1962), 274.

⁴⁴ New Brunswick, Assembly, *Journals*, 1866, 144 (June 26).

⁴⁵ Connolly to Tupper, Halifax, 25 October 1866. *Tupper Papers*, Vol. II, pp. 947-948.

⁴⁶ Pastoral Letter of the Archbishop and Bishops of the Ecclesiastical Province of Halifax, 25 November 1873, q. i. *Evening Express*, Halifax, 12 January 1874.

⁴⁷ C. Bruce Fergusson, "The Inauguration of the Free School System in Nova Scotia," *Bulletin of the Public Archives of Nova Scotia*, XXI (1964), 28.

and declared free. The Education Act of 1865 made this assessment compulsory.⁴⁸

In an effort to allay Connolly's fears that Catholics would be deprived of their rights, Tupper explained that the composition of the Council of Public Instruction would be guarantee of justice for Catholics in the field of education. Since Catholics made up a substantial portion of the province's population they would always have an adequate voice in any Executive Council.⁴⁹ Faced with Tupper's firm opposition to separate schools Connolly accepted this guarantee and gave his reluctant support.⁵⁰

The introduction of the 1865 legislation caused him to be concerned that the power of the Council of Public Instruction might be weakened. Connolly reminded Tupper that the guarantee of Catholic representation on a strong Council had been the "salutory and all saving provision."⁵¹ He denounced the public school system as being purely American and "... the source of nearly all the wholesale apostasy of that godless people"⁵² His opposition to compulsory taxation was not based on any religious grounds but on the general attitude of the people of Nova Scotia:

For reasons I cannot easily explain it is a well known fact that there is not a people in the whole world more unreasonably opposed to direct taxation of any kind whatever ... it is the greatest bugbear that has scared them into opposition to Confederation. This is *au fond* the cause of the whole outcry against the present school bill.⁵³

As an alternative to direct taxation Connolly proposed "a penny a pound on tea and coffee or a small school duty on a few other commodities."⁵⁴

The Bill passed, taxation and all, despite the opposition of Catholic Assemblymen. An amendment was included which gave the Halifax school board the authority to make special arrangements with "any city school ... so that the benefits of such schools may be as general as circumstances will permit."⁵⁵ This amendment, coupled with the subsequent negotiations between the Roman Catholic and Protestant members of the Halifax Board of School Commissioners, led to the establishment of separate Catholic schools controlled and operated by a secular school board.

The agreement between Connolly and Tupper concerning the guarantee of Catholic representation on the Council was not protected by legislation of any

⁴⁸ *Ibid.*, 31.

⁴⁹ E. M. Saunders, *The Life and Letters of Rt. Hon. Sir Charles Tupper, Bart.* (London: Cassell and Co., 1916), I, pp. 95-96.

⁵⁰ Connolly to Tupper, St. Mary's, Fri. Morning, 1865. *Tupper Papers*, Vol. I, pp. 537-538.

⁵¹ *Ibid.*

⁵² *Ibid.*

⁵³ *Ibid.*

⁵⁴ *Ibid.*

⁵⁵ Nova Scotia Statutes, 28 Victoria, Cap. 29.

kind but existed merely as a gentlemen's agreement. It was Connolly's hope that, by going to London in 1866, he could achieve legal recognition of separate schools for the lower provinces under the terms of union.

Connolly made two trips to London in 1866. He first arrived in June and until September he awaited the arrival of the Canadian delegation. During this visit he consulted with the Colonial Secretary and members of the Maritime delegation in an effort to enlist support for his cause.

He returned to Halifax briefly in September when it was evident that the Canadian delegates were not coming. At this time he seemed optimistic concerning the chances of gaining separate schools for Nova Scotia and New Brunswick. Michael Hannan, Connolly's Vicar General, claimed that he had received:

... the most satisfactory assurances from the late and present Colonial secretaries that they would secure in the new Confederation Constitution separate schools for Catholics. The delegates from Nova Scotia have also promised that they would sustain his grace's view on the subject... Several of the Irish Catholic Members have promised their influence and support to his views.⁵⁶

Connolly assured Tupper that, if this were accomplished, "... there will be not a Catholic in the land ... Scottish, Irish, or French that will not hail Confederation as a blessing."⁵⁷ He also promised that he would personally guarantee that no anti-Confederate would be elected in any Catholic constituency in the lower provinces.⁵⁸

Since there were no Roman Catholics among the Maritime delegation, Connolly sought the assistance of Hector Langevin and William McDougall, two of the Canadian delegates. In late October, Connolly, Rogers and Sweeney met them in Halifax to outline the position of Maritime Catholics regarding the schools question. Connolly wanted no more than had been guaranteed the Catholics in Canada West and the Protestants in Canada East.⁵⁹ Langevin noted that Sweeney seemed embarrassed during the meeting, undoubtedly because of his lukewarm attitude towards Confederation.⁶⁰

Connolly returned to London in November where he met frequently with

⁵⁶ Rev. Michael Hannan to Rogers, Halifax, 20 August 1866. Archives of the Diocese of Bathurst, *Bishop James Rogers Papers*.

⁵⁷ Connolly to Tupper, Halifax, 27 September 1866. *Tupper Papers*, Vol. II, pp. 847-850

⁵⁸ Connolly to Tupper, Halifax, 25 October 1866. *Tupper Papers*, Vol. II, pp. 947-948.

⁵⁹ Hector Langevin à M^{me} Justine Langevin, Londres, 18 novembre 1866. Archives du Québec (APQ), Le Fonds Chapais, *Les Papiers Langevin*, AP-L-12-1.

⁶⁰ *Ibid.*

Langevin to present his views on the schools question.⁶¹ While he sympathized with Connolly, Langevin felt that any initiative on this matter should come from the Maritime delegation. The best he could do was agree to support the plan if it were introduced by the Maritime delegates.⁶² He also refused to support Connolly's idea that education be placed under the jurisdiction of the federal government. Although disappointed, Connolly understood Langevin's position. As a representative of the Roman Catholics of Quebec, he could not possibly agree to any plan that would jeopardize the province's control over its school system.⁶³

Having failed to obtain help from among the conference delegates, Connolly sought the support of the Colonial Secretary, Lord Carnarvon. The latter was Connolly's host during the Christmas season at which time the Archbishop explained the position of the Catholics in the lower provinces regarding the schools question. He warned of the violent consequences which could result from Catholics being taxed for the support of Protestant schools.⁶⁴ Carnarvon, like Langevin, sympathized with Connolly's demands but could offer no help:

...I cannot undertake to bring forward these questions which are local rather than imperial in their character, though I am quite willing to discuss them with the Delegates if they be at issue amongst themselves or if they desire my opinion.⁶⁵

While it seems that a few of the Maritime delegates had led Connolly to believe that they would support his position, Tupper was not one of them. He had made his views on separate schools known to Connolly in 1864 and 1865 and there is no reason to suspect they had changed one iota.

Galt's Resolution to the British North America Act guaranteed a right of appeal to the central government by religious minorities in the event of the contravention by the provinces of any educational legislation. This applied, however, only to educational legislation which had been passed by the provincial legislatures and did not apply to those rights acquired by custom, usage or

⁶¹ Langevin has left a vivid description of Connolly: "... un homme de 5 pieds 10 pouces... gros et gras, ayant une belle tête, des yeux intelligents, et l'apparence d'un gentilhomme Irlandais qu'il est réellement. Il est instruit, influent, actif, déterminé, ne craignant rien, vivant comme un gentilhomme, prenant ses 3 à 4 verres de vin à son dîner, et son verre de brandy en se couchant..." Hector Langevin à Edmond Langevin, 19 novembre 1866. *Langevin*, AP-L-12-1.

⁶² Hector Langevin à M^{me} Justine Langevin, Londres, 18 novembre 1866. *Langevin*, AP-L-12-1.

⁶³ Rogers to John Costigan, 6 June 1874. PAC, MG 27, D5, *Costigan Papers*.

⁶⁴ Connolly to Carnarvon, 10 St. Charles Street, St. James, 16 January 1867. PAC, MG 27, IA2, *Carnarvon Papers*, Vol. 137, pp. 964-965 (Reel B-2581).

⁶⁵ Carnarvon to Connolly, Colonial Office, 30 January 1867. *Carnarvon Papers*, Vol. 137, pp. 975-976 (Reel B-2581).

“gentlemen's agreements” as in Nova Scotia and New Brunswick.

Although Connolly's main reason for going to London was to deal with the separate schools question, he also sought to do all he could to see “... the whole subject of Confederation ... safely disposed of.”⁶⁶ In January, 1867, he sent a twenty-page letter to Carnarvon refuting Howe's objections to Confederation and placing the burden for the success or failure of union squarely on the shoulders of the British Parliament. He assured Carnarvon that if the delegates were sent back without Parliament's approval, it would mean a certain victory for Howe and all anti-Confederates throughout British North America. This was Connolly's most effective petition concerning Confederation. His arguments ran the gamut from defense and patriotism to commerce. He called Howe's petition false and accused him of duplicity. He concluded with an emotional appeal for the new nation:

...let no effort be spared to make our Union more heartfelt more thorough and more enduring and as that is not to be hoped for without the Confederation of all British North American Provinces as now proposed, let that great measure be carried by all means and it will help to establish a mighty and kindred Nation where friends are most needed, it will materially strengthen if not save the Empire when the crisis comes, it will be an additional fulcrum to that balance of power which is indispensable for the safety of Nations, the peace of the World and the liberties of Mankind.⁶⁷

Connolly remained in England until the British North America Act had been passed by the British Parliament. He had gained the right of appeal but had not been able to obtain legal recognition of separate schools for the Maritimes. He returned to Halifax in March, stubbornly determined to secure separate school legislation. He hoped that the coming election would provide the means.

On 9 April Connolly and Bishop Mackinnon met at Truro to discuss “...the long vexed question of Catholic education.” The decisions reached at this meeting were contained in a letter sent to Tupper on 10 April. With the support of the Catholic Assemblymen, they hoped to have a resolution passed during the current sitting of the Legislature which would give the religious minorities in Nova Scotia rights similar to those accorded the Protestants of Quebec and the Catholics of Ontario. They urged Tupper to support their plan claiming that it would “... make him the strongest man in the whole Province” and would assure for his party the support of the Catholics of Nova Scotia.⁶⁸ In a separate letter to Tupper, Mackinnon, still the reluctant federalist, put it more bluntly:

A denial, we will naturally consider a denial of our rights; while we will regard a concession as entitling those who concede it, to our support and unqualified

⁶⁶ Connolly to Rogers, Halifax, 16 October 1866. *Rogers Papers*.

⁶⁷ Connolly to Carnarvon, 10 St. Charles Street, St. James, 19 January 1867. *Carnarvon Papers*, Vol. 137, pp. 964-965 (Reel B-2581).

⁶⁸ Connolly to Tupper, Halifax, 10 April 1867. *Tupper Papers*, Vol. III, pp. 1020-1021.

gratitude.⁶⁹

Tupper's reply to the petition was polite but firm. He expressed the hope that the resolution they proposed would not be tabled, since he felt that "... nothing could be more disastrous to all concerned." Even if he were moved to support separate schools, such a scheme he felt would surely be defeated by a large majority and religious discord would result.⁷⁰

No doubt Connolly was hard pressed by many of his co-religionists to make Tupper's support of separate schools a prerequisite to his support of Tupper's candidacy in Halifax. He again wrote Tupper urging him to reconsider and warned him that if "... J. Tobin or yourself speak or vote against anything of that kind ... it would certainly be fatal."⁷¹ Connolly's failure to guarantee for Tupper the support of the Catholic population in Halifax led to the withdrawing of his candidacy for that constituency. In doing so he assured Connolly:

...should a proposal for separate schools be made in the present Legislature I will feel bound for reasons already given to oppose it to the best of my ability, and should not shrink from the performance of that duty were I confident that it would terminate my public life.⁷²

To have acceded to Catholic demands would have meant the destruction of the public school system which Tupper had fought so hard to implement. Wishing him well in Cumberland, Connolly offered to make use of his influence with the priests of that county in his favour.⁷³

Despite his failure to achieve recognition of separate schools, Connolly continued to support the cause of Confederation. In May he wrote to Howe pleading with him not to "... Americanize or in other words excite our Catholic people in this Province who are already inflammable enough as you well know."⁷⁴ Two months later he wrote a public letter to Henry J. Clarke in support of McGee's candidacy in Montreal;⁷⁵ and to Peter Mitchell of New Brunswick supporting his

⁶⁹ Mackinnon to Tupper, Antigonish, 12 April 1867. *Tupper Papers*, Vol. III, pp. 1027-1030.

⁷⁰ Tupper to Connolly, Halifax, 15 April 1867. *Tupper Papers*, Vol. III, pp. 1181-1184.

⁷¹ Connolly to Tupper, St. Mary's, 20 April 1867. *Tupper Papers*, Vol. III, pp. 1067-1068.

⁷² Tupper to Connolly, 20 April 1867. Q. I. Saunders, *loc. cit.*, Vol. I, pp. 151-152.

⁷³ Connolly to Tupper, St. Mary's, 20 April 1867. *Tupper Papers*, Vol. III, pp. 1067-1068.

⁷⁴ Connolly to Howe, Halifax, 22 May 1867. *Howe Papers*, Vol. 17, p. 179.

⁷⁵ *Letter of Thomas L. Connolly, Archbishop of Halifax.. to Henry J. C. Clarke... on the Claims of Thomas D'Arcy McGee...* (Halifax: Compton & Co., 1867).

position on Confederation and lashing out at Timothy Anglin, whom he described as a “Priest Hunter and a reviler of the Catholic Clergy.”⁷⁶

Two days prior to the September 18 election in Nova Scotia he wrote an open letter to the “Roman Catholic Inhabitants of the City and County of Halifax” in which he upheld his right as a citizen and priest to take part in politics and urged them to vote for Steven Shannon and John Tobin, the latter being the “... nominee of the Catholic people of Halifax.” He outlined the blessings to be accrued from union and urged Catholics to overwhelmingly endorse Confederation:

...I will feel it a sacred duty of conscience, to vote on next Wednesday for the Whole Union Ticket—the Whole Five and Nothing But The Five; and in honour of me, and still more for their own benefit, I ask my whole Catholic people to follow my example.⁷⁷

The election results were disappointing. Tupper was the only Union candidate elected to the Commons and only two union candidates were victorious on the provincial scene. While Halifax City with its large Catholic population voted for the union candidates by nearly two to one, the county where Catholics were less numerous gave the antis an overwhelming majority, and the overall victory.⁷⁸ According to Connolly’s calculations about 800 Roman Catholics in Halifax city and county voted for union, 250 voted against, while another 800 abstained rather than vote against it. He attributed the anti-victory in Halifax to “... the one-sided vote of a few bigoted Presbyterians ...”⁷⁹ Throughout the rest of the province he attributed the victory of the antis to

The cuckoo cry of having sold the country, the dread of increased taxation and

⁷⁶ Connolly to Hon. Peter Mitchell, Halifax, 19 August 1867. *Morning Chronicle* (Halifax), 19 September 1867.

Connolly and Anglin had been close friends when the former was Bishop of St. John. In a farewell address in 1858 Connolly said: “You may easily get another Bishop, but you will never get another Anglin.” (*Morning Chronicle*, 19 September 1867.) Ten years later the Confederation issue had divided the two: “If I come to St. John ... I should on no account be brought in contact with Anglin whose company I would look on as a personal insult and a degradation to my Episcopal position.” (Connolly to Rogers, Halifax, 16 September 1868, *Rogers Papers*.)

⁷⁷ *Letter of His Grace the Archbishop of Halifax, to the Roman Catholic Inhabitants of the City and County of Halifax. Evening Express*, Monday, 16 September 1867.

| | Shannon | Tobin | Jones | Power |
|--------|---------|-------|-------|-------|
| City | 1,233 | 1,226 | 832 | 820 |
| County | 921 | 932 | 1,549 | 1,447 |
| Totals | 2,154 | 2,158 | 2,381 | 2,267 |

Federal Election Returns, 1867 (Ottawa: 1868), pp. 66-67.

⁷⁹ Connolly to Macdonald, Halifax, 25 September 1867. *Macdonald Papers*, Vol. CXVI, pp. 46982-46989.

conscripted for wars to be fought toward the end of the next century, bribery on an unexampled scale, mammoth lying and misrepresentation, the unaccountable inertia and bungling of the ins and the “Up guards and at them” of the hungry outsiders with Howe at their head and last and perhaps most disastrous of all not allowing the people a choice on Confederation are the causes of our overwhelming defeat.⁸⁰

Rather than being deterred by the victory of the antis, Connolly redoubled his efforts on behalf of Confederation. For the next five years he controlled “the Key of the patronage of the city and county of Halifax.”⁸¹ During this period he kept Macdonald informed of the political climate within the province and bombarded him with numerous requests for favours.⁸²

Being somewhat of a gourmet Connolly frequently entertained at dinner parties to which he invited men from both sides of the political arena. A sumptuous repast of good food and wine capped by a few glasses of brandy was the quickest way to reduce partisan political differences to a more affable level. From these get-togethers Connolly was able to keep attuned to the changing attitudes of key members of the anti-Confederate movement. He never missed an opportunity to suggest to Macdonald methods which could prove useful in helping to mollify these recalcitrants.⁸³

Shortly after the 1867 election he wrote to Macdonald offering his “humble

⁸⁰ *Ibid.*

⁸¹ Connolly to Tupper, St. Mary’s, 2 September 1872. *Tupper Papers*, Vol. IV, pp. 1846-1847.

⁸² There seems to have been very little correspondence between Connolly and Tupper during this period. This was, no doubt, a result of the hard feelings which had been created as a consequence of the debate over separate schools. According to Rev. Michael Hannan, Connolly’s Vicar General and his successor as Archbishop (*supra*, fn. 56), some of the Maritime delegates to the London Conference had agreed in September 1866, to support Connolly’s position on the schools question. This support seemed to have disappeared by December, most likely as a result of Tupper’s opposition. Although deeply disappointed Connolly continued to support union. During the period prior to Howe’s defection to the cause of union, Macdonald and Tupper needed all the local support they could muster. Connolly’s position as head of the Maritime Catholics made his support of Confederation crucial.

⁸³ Connolly had a low opinion of the men elected from Nova Scotia in 1867: “... they are with rare exceptions far inferior to the men we have been accustomed to and this (if it is to continue) is I confess one of the darkest features of Confederation. Briefless lawyers and brawlers, and penniless and noisy demagogues... ignorant or half-educated, and rabid men who have little or nothing to lose from three fourths of the whole.” Connolly to Macdonald, Halifax, 19 February 1868. *Macdonald Papers*, Vol. CXVI, pp. 47093-47102.

services to the cause of the Dominion in Nova Scotia.⁸⁴ He also took the opportunity to outline his views on the “bearing of the antis in the House of Commons.” The degree of commitment among the antis ranged from Stewart Campbell, whom he described as being “an out and out Unionist,” to Patrick Power, who was “death itself on Confederation.”⁸⁵

In his petitions for patronage to Macdonald and other members of his government he was always seeking favours for others; the only prerequisite being that each were “a most sterling friend to the cause of Union.”⁸⁶ A Lieutenant-Governorship for Adams Archibald, a Bench appointment for James McKeaghney, a government printing contract for William Compton, and a civil service position for James Tobin were but a few of his requests.⁸⁷ While in a few instances it may not have been Connolly’s recommendation alone that led to the appointments, Macdonald could not risk incurring the displeasure of the Archbishop by refusing too many of his requests.

Connolly’s last venture into the political arena ended in a shower of controversy. Prior to the federal election of August, 1872, he wrote a letter to Tupper giving his unqualified support to the policies of the Macdonald government over the previous five years.⁸⁸ The publication of this letter (at Connolly’s request) and the alleged use of it on election day to influence the Catholic voters at a poll in Halifax County led to a virulent attack upon Connolly by the Halifax *Morning Chronicle*.⁸⁹ In answering the *Chronicles*’s charge that he had compromised his ecclesiastical office by writing the letter to Tupper, he defended his rights as a citizen and accused them of duplicity claiming that, when as a priest during the 1840’s he had taken a more active role in politics on the same side as the *Chronicle*, there had been “... not a word of fatherly advice in

⁸⁴ Connolly to Macdonald, Halifax, 26 October 1867. *Macdonald Papers*, Vol. CXVI, pp. 47003-47010

⁸⁵ *Ibid.*

⁸⁶ Connolly to Macdonald, Halifax, 28 May 1868. *Macdonald Papers*, Vol. CXVI, pp. 47178-47184.

⁸⁷ Connolly to Hector Langevin, Halifax, 27 October 1867. *Langevin*, AP-L-12-9.

Connolly to Macdonald, St. Catherine’s, 30 May 1872. *Tupper Papers*, Vol. IV, pp. 1784-1785.

Connolly to Macdonald, Halifax, 18 July 1867. *Macdonald Papers*, Vol. CXVI, pp. 46961-46964.

Connolly to Macdonald, Halifax, 17 June 1867. *Macdonald Papers*, Vol. CXVI, pp. 46955-46958.

⁸⁸ Connolly to Tupper, Annapolis, 7 August 1872. *Tupper Papers*, Vol. IV, pp. 1818-1819.

⁸⁹ *Morning Chronicle*, 22, 26, 30 and 31 August, 2 and 18 September 1872. *Evening Express*, nearly every issue between 22 August and 18 September 1872.

reprobation of so hideous a fault in a Cleric.”⁹⁰ Connolly’s position was also defended by the *Evening Express* and the debate with the *Chronicle* continued for nearly a month. With the election of the two Conservative candidates in Halifax, Connolly turned over his control of the patronage to them.⁹¹ He never again ventured into the public political sphere, although he continued to support those who had brought Nova Scotia into Confederation.

The successful achievement and acceptance of Confederation in Nova Scotia, and throughout British North America, was the prime motivation behind Connolly’s involvement in politics. Not content with making his views known through the local Catholic politicians, he spoke directly to those with power and influence. Premiers, Prime Ministers, Governor-Generals, Lieutenant-Governors and Colonial Secretaries, all were the objects of his numerous petitions in favour of union. While he had hoped to secure for the Roman Catholics of the lower provinces educational rights which he believed were their just due, there is no reason to suspect that he used the granting of such as a condition for his continued support of union. Even after Tupper’s final refusal to introduce separate school legislation in 1867, Connolly’s espousal of Confederation did not wane.

Like any good politician the emphasis in his addresses varied with the audience. To those who feared American annexation he stressed the defensive benefits to be accrued from union; to the Catholics he outlined the advantages of British North American society over that of the United States as regards religious tolerance; he pointed out to Nova Scotians the industrial and economic advances which could be achieved through union and stressed that it would give Nova Scotia a stronger voice in world affairs. In his petition to Lord Carnarvon he emphasized the contribution to Imperial unity that Confederation would bring about.

Thomas Connolly was above all an Irishman, and as such he took a keen interest in the affairs of his fellow countrymen both in Ireland and in British North America. He believed that British North America offered Irish immigrants an opportunity to create a better way of life than they had known in the old country.

Connolly took it upon himself to assure the population of British North America that the loyalty of the Irish in those provinces was beyond question.

His commitment and zeal coupled with the total utilization of his limited political influence make his contribution to the Confederation movement significant. Rev. George Grant, a close friend of Connolly’s, wrote of him:

He was a man of peace- ever seeking to build bridges rather than dig ditches between men of different creeds.⁹²

He was a worthy “godfather” of Confederation.

⁹⁰ *British Colonist* (Halifax), 31 August 1872.

⁹¹ Connolly to Tupper, St. Mary’s, 2 September 1872. *Tupper Papers*, Vol. IV, pp. 1846-1847.

⁹² *Acadian Recorder* (Halifax), 28 July 1876.