

The rise and fall of empires is marked clearly throughout history. The British Empire, to name one, has one of the most well known histories, especially to countries under its rule. Canada is one of these countries. The mid 1800s saw Canada under British rule as five separate colonies. In an attempt to make the colonies less dependent, Britain suggested the colonies unite. After much debate rife with controversy, the colonies took Britain's advice and formed as the Dominion of Canada in 1867. The newly united Canada proved valuable to the British Empire as not only did it open the doors to safe, loyal immigration for British, it provided additional human resources to fight for Britain, and no longer required British legislation.

One dilemma was that of British emigration. Largely advertised guarantees of free farmland turned the heads of even businessmen who, upon arriving, would soon find themselves with an inoperable farm going to seed through their lack of knowledge. This so-called "Canadian" land happened to be taken from the Natives small detail that went unmentioned. And as with the withdrawal of government, there came the fear that the immigrants would grow detached from Britain and so start the faint stirrings of rebellion. Yet Canada stayed loyal; why? It was abundant with British! History gives us cold, hard facts in support of this.

It was the year after Confederation that the Free Grant and Homestead Act was initiated "by which... every head of a family can receive 200 acres of land; and any person over 18 years of age can receive 100 acres."<sup>1</sup> There were almost ten thousand more immigrants in 1868, sixty-eight percent of them British that year, and the next fifty years saw a fifty-eight percent increase in population. This meant that Britain could increase the

size and prosperity of its colony, which would in turn end up meaning more profit for them, which was needed to maintain its stronghold on its empire. In reference to the above, immigration after Confederation was beneficial for Britain and can hardly be contested.

At the time, there were many Canadians opposed to the British withdrawal of its troops. They would have to go through the tedious and costly process of establishing their own army, one that would turn its attention towards fighting for Britain. But the advantages to Britain of having them do this were insurmountable in comparison. Examples of this are easily attested to Canada, for most of its history, has been protected by foreign troops. In 1838 Britain had over thirteen thousand men stationed there, but with its high expense the numbers dropped to three thousand in less than twenty years. It was then, in 1855, that Britain initiated the Militia Act, enlisting up to five thousand volunteering soldiers annually. With this they saved thousands of dollars, the last British militia withdrawing in 1871. The Canadian Corps, as the army was known, was kept busy combating the Northwest Rebellion in 1885, the Boer War from 1899-1902, and the first World War from 1914-18 (two of these British wars). The Boer War, had Canada not been under British rule, would have been an unprovoked attack on their part as it was between Dutch settlers in Africa and Britain. World War One, as well, was only a calling of the Canadian loyalty, and it was there that Canadians established themselves as a country and not just a colony in the eyes of the world. As can be seen, only the most dubious of arguments could be made against the Canadian armies helping the British.

A select group of Canadians felt that having to form their own government would be more trouble than it was worth. Most of the country being rural at the time, they claimed that farmers, a group that included themselves, had no expertise in the field of politics. After the recall of the British government, Canada was without a full-fledged government, one that would have to be installed in only a short period of time with little effort and resources. Britain was also debating this move, worried that this detachment might, like in the case of America, drive the two countries apart to the point of defection. Evidently, there was no need to worry as it soon became clear that this move merely bolstered Canada's dependency. There are credible sources to support this.

The newly formed Canadian government was still kept a democracy, the political system reworked to give more power to the voters and the people they chose, the

Legislative Assembly. Though the Legislative Assembly had been overshadowed by the Legislative and Executive Councils assigned by the Governor, Britain's grateful withdrawal of many governors, prompted by Confederation, served to make the Legislative Assembly more influential. This meant that a system thought capable by Canadians could govern their needs, an advantage for French Canadians. British monarchy still held large authority in Canada until the 1980s, but this was a more limited power only extended to the current ruler and Governor General. This saved Britain many costly dollars keeping numerous governors stationed on another continent as well as helping appease rebels opposed to the British rule. In light of such data, we can indubitably attribute Britain's success in some small part to the Canadian army.

After taking this into consideration, the gain Britain got out of Confederation can easily eclipse some of its more negative aspects. This paper has in its entirety mentioned several demands for Confederation, all of which has had a big influence on the Canada we know today. But Confederation's greater goods were far too many to be covered. Though what would otherwise be without it? Was Confederation an inevitable path for the young colony to take? Or, with one stroke of a pen, did Queen Victoria violate the rights of the people who were so vehemently opposed to it? If Britain's prompting of Confederation was an act of gently disengaging itself from the draining grasp of its colony, sheer luck and chance events were what led Canada to where it is today.

