

5 Factors Leading to Confederation

1. The Threat of an American Takeover

The Problem

The U.S. had several reasons to be angry with Britain and British North America:

- Britain sided with the South (Confederates) during the American Civil War
- B.N.A. refused to send back the escaped African American slave John Anderson, who was facing trial for the murder of his master.
- B.N.A. also became a safe haven for Confederate (Southern) soldiers during the war.
- The U.S. believed in **Manifest Destiny**, which was the idea that the United States would eventually control all of North America, including B.N.A.

The Solution

A union of the British North American colonies would result in more money, munitions and men to make a stronger, more wide-spread military force. This would help to defend the many vulnerable attack points that existed along the B.N.A. border.

2. Trouble With Trade

The Problem

- Britain ends trade preference with B.N.A. and opens up to competition from other countries with *free trade*. This greatly affects B.N.A.'s trade industries.
- In 1865, the U.S. ended the **Reciprocity Agreement** (*free trade*) with B.N.A.. The colonies were then forced to look inward and increase trade with each other.

The Solution

A union of the colonies would help to eliminate the **tarrifs** (taxes) that existed for trade between the colonies, and promote *free trade* within B.N.A..

3. Fenian Raids

The Problem

- The *Fenians* were a group of Irish-American patriots who hated the British with a passion. To get revenge on Britain, they decided to attack B.N.A.. After several raids along the B.N.A. border, many British North Americans feared for their lives. Something had to be done.
- Politician John A. Macdonald turned the Fenian raids into an argument for a union of the colonies

The Solution

A union of the colonies would again provide the resources for a stronger military to help better defend such attacks.

4. The Need for Rail Links

The Problem

- It was widely agreed that there was a great need for expanding the current rail system in BNA. The goal for the *Grand Trunk Railway* was to span from Sarnia (Canada West) all the way to Halifax. This would help increase trade between the colonies as well as transport people, militia, and resources much quicker and all year round.
- The problem was that expanding a railroad was *very* expensive.

The Solution

A union of the colonies would help to spread out the huge cost and combine resources for such a project.

5. Changing British Attitudes Towards B.N.A.

The Problem

- Britain was beginning to feel that the colonies of B.N.A. were becoming a burden. Britain was constantly having to send money and troops to her colonies, and many British felt the cost was no longer worth the while.
- It was becoming increasingly clear that Britain needed to reduce their responsibilities in B.N.A. and leave them to unite and become their own country.
- This put pressure in the colonies to unite because they would no longer have the backing of Britain's finances or strong military.

The Solution

A union of the colonies would combine financial and military resources and allow them to "fend for themselves".