

Canadian Participation and National Representation at the 1851 London Great Exhibition and the 1855 Paris *Exposition Universelle*

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Canada's participation at the first two great international exhibitions of the nineteenth century, the Great Exhibition at London's Crystal Palace in 1851 and the Paris Exposition Universelle in 1855, brought together issues and concerns that spanned the full range of the colony's developing modernity. Both exhibitions, but especially that in London, fostered a focus on objects, whether raw materials taken straight from the ground or manufactured articles, as representing all that was positive about human and cultural endeavour. The exhibitions and the steps that led up to Canada's participation — the governmental discussion, the method of selecting exhibits, the very idea of representation — highlighted key moments at a point in Canadian history when the natural logic of the imperial tie was being rethought in light of a growing awareness of a sense of national community. While this process can be found across the range of political, social, and cultural activities in the 1850s and 1860s, the exhibits and the manner in which they were chosen and displayed offer a particular vision on the transformation of Canada from colony to nation.

La participation du Canada aux deux premières grandes expositions universelles du XIX^e siècle, la Great Exhibition tenue au Crystal Palace de Londres en 1851 et l'Exposition universelle de Paris de 1855, s'est déroulée à l'enseigne de questions et préoccupations couvrant le canevas tout entier de la modernité naissante de la colonie. Les deux expositions, mais surtout celle de Londres, mettaient l'accent sur les objets — tout autant les matières brutes tirées directement du sol que les articles manufacturés — incarnant tout ce qu'il y avait de positif de l'entreprise humaine et culturelle. Les objets exposés et les étapes qui menèrent à la participation du Ca-

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nada — la discussion gouvernementale, la méthode de sélection des objets exposés, l'idée même de la représentation — mirent en relief des moments clés de l'histoire canadienne à une époque où l'on repensait la logique naturelle du lien impérial à la lumière d'une prise de conscience croissante d'un sentiment d'appartenance nationale. Si ce processus anime en filigrane l'éventail des activités politiques, sociales et culturelles des années 1850 et 1860, les objets exposés et leur mode de sélection et de mise en montre offrent une vision particulière du passage du Canada de l'état de colonie à celui de nation.

CANADA'S PARTICIPATION at the first two great international exhibitions of the nineteenth century, the Great Exhibition at London's Crystal Palace in 1851 and the Paris *Exposition Universelle* in 1855, brought together a set of issues and concerns that spanned the full range of the colony's developing modernity. The colonial relationship with Britain, the growing sense of national consciousness, the relationship between French and British Canada, the conceptualization of agricultural and early industrial society, the changing relationship with the United States and Canada's sense of place in a wider world, the idea of objects and traits that could be seen to be distinctly "Canadian": all were in play around the carefully selected objects — ores and woods, grains and foodstuffs, paintings and metalwork — that stood on show in the two most important cities in Europe. Both exhibitions, but especially that in London, were a hymn to the excitement of mid-century modernity. Objects, they asserted, whether raw materials taken straight from the ground or finished manufactured articles, could represent all that was positive about human and cultural endeavour. Ostensibly the 1851 London gathering was a peace conference, a meeting of the league of nations. Yet it was more this sense of the object, the thing of current life, that was the real theme of the event.

Canadian participation in the exhibitions naturally meant that Canadian things could now be displayed and, importantly, be seen to be of and from Canada in a way that made vital points about the representation of the colony in the period between the granting of responsible government and Confederation. The exhibitions themselves and all the processes that led up to them — the governmental discussion of Canadian participation, the method of selecting exhibits, the very idea of representation — highlighted a series of key moments at a point in Canadian history when the natural logic of the imperial tie was necessarily being rethought in light of a growing awareness of a sense of national community. This is, of course, not simply a process found in the two exhibitions in question. It can be found across the range of political, social, and cultural activities in the 1850s and 1860s. But the focus on objects that both exhibitions fostered, the idea of the thing functioning in terms of collective representation and especially (given the manner in which the exhibitions were organized) the idea of *national* representation, offers a peculiar singular vision on the transformation of Canada from colony to nation.

Canadian participation at the exhibitions chose to focus on land and its uses, and thereby further articulated one of the most pressing of all Canadian

narratives, that of land, settlement, and the creation of a civil society in the new colony. Thus I view the exhibitions in particular in light of the development of agrarian ideology through the 1840s and into the 1850s, showing how notions of land use looked to the ways in which land had been so vital both in the consolidation of an idea of British social and cultural order, especially from the late eighteenth century onwards, and to the American revolutionaries in the 1770s and 1780s. Many key figures of Canadian political and civic life in the immediate pre-Confederation era played a part in the development of these ideas and indeed in the planning of the London and Paris participation. William McDougall, Joseph Hincks, William Logan, and Joseph-Charles Taché were all involved in the discussion or preparation of the Canadian exhibits. Logan and Taché in particular were vital to the success of Canadian participation, and the writings of Taché, more than any other set of documents, outlined how the Canadian place at the international fairs of London and Paris connected to a growingly complex nature of local identity. As we shall see, Taché's vision of Canada in the mid-1850s held ideas of English and French Canada, as well as the notion of a Confederated Canada, in a set of layered arguments. "Canada", as an idea that could now be identified with objects that developed old notions of place and created new ones, as the exhibitions proved, was at times a unified concept. Yet it could also still hold linguistic, cultural, and religious differences, and their varying political manifestations, very much apart even within the same label.

An Agrarian Ideology

The central conundrum inherent within the mid-nineteenth-century representation of Canada was the tension and ambivalence created by the overlapping of a nascent national formation onto the existing structure of colonial relations. While this tension should not always be read as antithetical, for neither the growth of national institutions nor the changes in sentiments and allegiances before Confederation denoted a divide that placed "national" and "colonial" in strict opposition, the ways in which Canadians chose to depict their society at this time carried clear notes of conflict in the nature of the colonial relationship. The Canadian pieces at the exhibitions, displaying local difference even as they pointed to the grand nature of Empire, enshrined this conflict. This point about representation is clearly also bound up with the political changes Canada experienced just prior to 1850. The 1841 legislative Union of Upper and Lower Canada, a product of the Durham report that sought to assimilate French Canada within an English-speaking, British model of government and behaviour, led in fact to the development of an increasingly federal model when it became clear that French Canada would successfully resist cultural eradication.¹ The very mechanism that ensured English-speaking domination in the new assembly,

¹ William Ormsby, *The Emergence of the Federal Concept in Canada, 1839–1845* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1968).

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the division of the members into blocs representing the new Canada West and Canada East, only served to perpetuate the inherent dualism in the political process, the opposite of what was intended. Within less than ten years, it became apparent that the imperial logic for Union had offered little more than short-term responses to the crises of the late 1830s. The new government, based first in Kingston and initially under the autocratic eye of Lord Sydenham, increasingly had to pursue a legislative policy that dealt with the two regions separately. The achieving of responsible government in 1848 and the subsequent move to Confederation developed more as an extension of these practices than a burning desire for a decolonizing self-representation.² The coalition of moderate anglophone and francophone Reformers which emerged around the central figures of Baldwin and Lafontaine forced Sydenham's successors, Sir Charles Bagot and Sir Charles Metcalfe, to abandon the idea of assimilation that had prompted Durham's call for Union. The political threat of French Canada, seemingly so dangerous in 1840, had by 1844 become part of the political reality in the democratic balance of power that affected both halves of the province. As far as the imperial Parliament in London was concerned, the continuing contribution of Canada as a colony to the well-being of the Empire was now necessarily a process of greater negotiation with a province growing increasingly capable of judgement and articulation.³

For members of the new Canadian legislature, the future development of the colony revolved around a renewed understanding and stimulation of immigration and settlement. Canadian Union had meant the restructuring of the crippling Upper Canadian debt, allowing for completion of the canal construction programme in the 1840s and development of the railway network in the 1850s. As has been observed, this was vital for the creation of an industrial labour pool and the beginning of large-scale capitalist industry, an increasingly mechanized society also prompting the further organization of a colonial bourgeoisie.⁴ Land, settlement, and agricultural use still dominated both the provincial economy and its self-image, however.⁵ There is some

2 See Suzanne Zeller, *Inventing Canada: Early Victorian Science and the Idea of a Transcontinental Nation* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1987). In her conclusion, Zeller advances the notion that, by the 1860s, those involved in discussing the issues of Confederation were aware of their "involvement in a process of organic change over time" in contradistinction to the more radical claims of natural, unalienable rights that were key to the earlier formation of the Constitution of the United States.

3 J. M. S. Careless, *The Union of the Canadas: The Growth of Canadian Institutions, 1841–1857* (London and Toronto: Oxford University Press and McClelland & Stewart, 1968). For a greater emphasis on social and cultural issues during the period, see the essays in Allan Greer and Ian Radforth, eds., *Colonial Leviathan: State Formation in Mid-Nineteenth-Century Canada* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1992).

4 Greer and Radforth, *Colonial Leviathan*, introduction.

5 Douglas McCalla, *Planting the Province: The Economic History of Upper Canada, 1784–1870* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1993); Robert Leslie Jones, *History of Agriculture in Ontario* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1946); Maurice Séguin, *La nation « canadienne » et l'agriculture, 1760–1850* (Trois-Rivières: Boréal Express, 1970); Allan Greer, *Peasant, Lord and Merchant: Rural Society in Three Quebec Parishes, 1740–1840* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1985).

current dispute as to the availability of land between 1830 and 1850 in both Upper and Lower Canada, but certainly the first real wave of immigrants from the British Isles, arriving in the 1830s, and the increasing movement of many Canadians and Maritimers south to the United States produced a settlement pattern in serious flux.⁶ Conscious of the continual problem of settlers who moved through Canada to settle finally south of the border, the Canadian legislature throughout the 1840s and 1850s juggled different methods of granting land to immigrants. Credit, free grants, cash purchase or settlement duties, and quantity restrictions were all tried as inducements, but none served to function as a truly workable system. One result of this, as John McCallum has pointed out, was a drastic inequality in agricultural production levels from the two provinces within the Union. In the mid-1830s, both Upper and Lower Canada had been hit by the collapse in the wheat market, but whereas Upper Canada recovered to produce spectacular growth figures for production in the 1840s (net exports rose some 500 per cent), the wheat and flour surplus in Lower Canada went into a sharp decline following the early 1830s, a decline that was never reversed.⁷ There were multiple reasons for these inequalities — soil exhaustion due to farming methods, changes in transportation and technology, reactions to the growth of the American market and changes in the Imperial Corn Laws, and variations in population patterns among them — and recent research has attempted to establish that Lower Canada saw the growth of a strong and distinct *local* market economy during this period, but the fundamental instability of settlement provided no firm context for the development of agriculture.⁸ In 1851

6 McCalla claims that in Upper Canada “land was in a sense still unlimited in supply in 1851” (*Planting the Province*, p. 68). Greer and Radforth point to the problems settlers had in finding good agricultural land in Lower Canada in the 1830s and 1840s, and in Upper Canada in the 1850s (*Colonial Leviathan*, p. 5). This is a point taken, in part, from Fernand Ouellet. See his *Economic and Social History of Quebec, 1760–1850: Structures and Conjunctures* (Ottawa: Gage/Carleton Library, 1980). Lillian F. Gates also claims that, in Upper Canada, “land fit for permanent agricultural settlement ... was gone before 1860.” See her *Land Policies of Upper Canada* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1968), p. 302. See also David Gagan, *Hopeful Travellers: Families, Land and Social Change in Mid-Victorian Peel County, Canada West* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1981). For the argument that farming continued to expand as a key occupation until the late nineteenth century, see Gordon Darroch and Michael Ornstein, “Ethnicity and Class: Transitions over a Decade, Ontario 1861–1871”, *Historical Papers* (1984), pp. 111–137, and “Family and Household in Nineteenth-Century Canada: Regional Patterns and Regional Economies”, *Journal of Family History*, vol. 9, no. 2 (Summer 1984), pp. 158–177.

7 John McCallum, *Unequal Beginnings: Agricultural and Economic Development in Quebec and Ontario Until 1870* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1980), pp. 3–53.

8 R. W. Sandwell, “Rural Reconstruction: Towards a New Synthesis in Canadian History”, *Histoire sociale/ Social History*, vol. 27, no. 53 (1994), pp. 1–32. It is beyond the scope of this article to address in full detail the growing debate over the decline in agricultural production in Lower Canada, especially between 1830 and 1860, and the increasingly contested centrality of the wheat staple to both halves of United Canada. Sandwell’s article is an excellent commentary on this and the tendency of much Canadian historical writing to view nineteenth-century agricultural history only as a platform for the growth of urban industrialism.

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(the first year for which such figures exist) the farming population of Upper Canada amounted to two-thirds of the total, with only 14 per cent living in communities of more than 1,000 people. Yet, as late as 1860, the average farm in the province produced only enough to feed those who lived on it and two equivalent households.⁹

Such figures are crucial because land and land use were the building blocks of Canadian notions of a democratic and stable society. The farm unit provided the grounding for the family economy, which, while it might involve non-agricultural work, saw land cultivation as its primary focus.¹⁰ In turn, this relationship between family and agriculture was projected towards a notion of a specifically colonial community by the many agricultural societies and journals that began to develop in the 1840s. “We are perfectly convinced”, wrote editor William Evans in the first edition of *The Canadian Agricultural Journal* in January 1844, “that the English practice of agriculture may, with very little variation, be successfully introduced here.... We take it upon us to say, that the more closely we adopt the English system of cultivating crops, the more certainly will we be able to produce good crops.”¹¹ Evans had been appointed secretary of the Agricultural Society of the District of Montreal in the early 1830s and would go on to perform the same duties in the Agricultural Society of Lower Canada following its foundation in 1847, becoming secretary-treasurer to the Board of Agriculture of Lower Canada in 1852. His farm at Côte-Saint-Paul, where he had settled on arrival from Ireland in 1819, was renowned as a model farm where the latest techniques and theories were put into operation. Evans’s own entry into writing and journalism (he started contributing to the *Montreal Gazette* and the *Montreal Courier* in the 1830s) signalled his clear desire to disseminate his knowledge of agricultural development for the wider benefit of society.

Evans founded *The Canadian Agricultural Journal* following the demise of the earlier *British American Cultivator*, which he had begun to edit in 1842. The latter journal only ran until June 1845, but its two volumes are full of exhortations, both to individual settlers and governing institutions, to develop Canadian agriculture within the strict paradigm of a British colonial relationship. “No colony has it in its power to derive so much advantage from its connection with England, as British North America,” he wrote in the

9 McCallum, *Unequal Beginnings*, p. 10; McCalla, *Planting the Province*, p. 9.

10 For the relationship between family economy, rural life, and educational patterns in the nineteenth century, see Chad Gaffield, “Children, Schooling and Family Reproduction in Nineteenth-Century Ontario”, *Canadian Historical Review*, vol. 72, no. 2 (1991), pp. 157–191.

11 William Evans, “Address to Agriculturalists and the friends to the Improvement and Prosperity of Agriculturalists in Canada”, *The Canadian Agricultural Journal* (Montreal: Lovell & Gibson), vol. 1, no. 1 (January 1844), p. 1. Evans had published *A treatise on the theory and practice of agriculture* in Montreal in 1835, in which he called for the continuing use of systematic experimentation in developing farming. In 1856 he would collect a series of the pieces he had written for the *Montreal Gazette* as the *Review of the agriculture of Lower Canada, with suggestions for its amelioration*, with similar aims and intentions.

editorial to the same edition, noting that, should there be a failure of investment in Canadian agriculture, the colony would slip further behind developments in the United States, weakening the commercial power of Britain in North America.¹² Evans, in his conception of the emerging community of the Canadas, frequently advocated the use of British models (especially with regard to the funding of farmers) in sustaining Canadian development, both in terms of agriculture and in the wider social sense. He was also, as were so many others, concerned with the development of Canada in the mid-century, mindful of the republican characteristics of the 1837 rebellions. Affiliation to the mother country was frequently balanced with disparaging, yet envious, references to the Republic to the south.¹³ In trying to establish agricultural settlement as the linchpin of the colonial relationship, Evans was conscious that agrarian republicanism had been a vital ideology in the constitution of both the American and French revolutions.¹⁴ If republicanism could assert that good farmers could make good citizens, then many Canadians wanted to counter that land cultivation could also make good colonial subjects. The tension of such a position was just one symptom of the ambivalence surrounding Canadian self-representation during the period.

The Canadian Agricultural Journal was forced to cease publication because of a lack of support, and Evans's editorials frequently turned to rants against the apathy of farmers and the failure of the Canadian legislature to provide adequate tariff protection. Yet Evans's form of agrarian ideology, promoting local complexity to ensure colonial status, was widespread. The 1840s saw the quite rapid development of an agricultural press, reflecting, in particular, the growing strength of agriculture in Canada West. *The Agricultural and Canadian Journal*, an amalgamation of the *British American Cultivator* and *The Canada Farmer*, was launched in January 1848, edited by William McDougall. In January 1849 it became *The Canadian Agriculturalist*, edited jointly by McDougall and George Buckland, the new Professor of Agriculture at the University of Toronto. The publication was at the forefront of promoting Canadian land use and discussing the relationship of

¹² Evans, "Address to Agriculturalists", p. 1.

¹³ For the development of relations between Canada and the United States from the late eighteenth to the mid-nineteenth century, see Jane Errington, *The Lion, the Eagle and Upper Canada: A Developing Colonial Ideology* (Montreal and Kingston: McGill-Queen's University Press, 1987); John Herd Thompson and Stephen J. Randall, *Canada and the United States: Ambivalent Allies* (Athens: University of Georgia Press, 1994), pp. 9–40; Allan Smith, *Canada — An American Nation? Essays on Continentalism, Identity and the Canadian Frame of Mind* (Montreal and Kingston: McGill-Queen's University Press, 1994). Smith's argument on pp. 253–280 that post-1867 Canadian nationalism was largely an Upper Canadian project, developed from the 1830s onwards, is consistent with the growing articulation of an agrarian ideology between 1840 and 1867.

¹⁴ For the relationship between agriculture and the development of Jeffersonian republicanism in the United States, see Drew McCoy, *The Elusive Republic: Political Economy in Jeffersonian America* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1982). For the importance of agrarian ideology to the French Revolution, see James Livesey, "Agrarian Ideology and Commercial Republicanism in the French Revolution", *Past and Present*, no. 157 (November 1997), pp. 94–121.

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farming to the development of Canadian society. Its pages carried news of scientific and technological developments outlined in British agricultural journals and contained “literary” and “domestic” sections which gave it the broader audience consistent with developing nineteenth-century colonial journalism. “We are an Agricultural people,” McDougall wrote in the first editorial of *The Agriculturalist and Canadian Journal*, “and the question of our becoming also a Manufacturing people, is one of times and means.”¹⁵ Such a statement, especially with its accompanying description of urban vice and rural virtue, could have come straight from Thomas Jefferson himself. Jefferson’s *Notes on the State of Virginia* (1785) is full of such sentiments, which became a received wisdom in the republicanism espoused by Jeffersonian followers in the first two decades of the nineteenth century. Yet, like many Canadians, McDougall felt that the increasing American industrialization during the middle of the nineteenth century displayed the inherent corruption of republican ideology and American civic planning, resulting in unemployment, urban unrest, and poverty. Of course, these were the exact sentiments American republicans had expressed with regard to the Europe of the late eighteenth century. McDougall’s own political position, as one of the leaders of the Clear Grit faction of the Reform party, is clearly pertinent here. He founded the *North American*, a Toronto paper that was very much a mouthpiece for his political aims, only two years after this editorial, and the key crisis in Reform party unity that followed Baldwin’s resignation from the cabinet in June 1851, in which McDougall helped secure Clear Grit representation in government, occurred just one year later. McDougall’s notion of the proper extent of responsible government was clearly radical given the contextual politics of the time, but that radical idea of community was still lodged in terms of a continuing bond to Empire that was genuinely felt even as the Reformers held it up for question.¹⁶ As we shall see, this kind of twin allegiance was to be a noticeable feature of the Canadian participation at the 1851 and 1855 exhibitions as well.

In thinking of their own notion of civil society, Canadians were, in mid-century, faced with the seemingly contradictory position of having to develop national institutions and methods to organize and direct the growing society within the assumed norm of the colonial relationship. It is vital to stress that this was not a process understood to be contradictory, and there was a very real sense that a commitment to “Canada” meant, for some, an extension of the imperial ideal. Carl Berger’s argument with regard to the proponents of post-Confederation imperial unity, that the imperial sentiment was itself a form of Canadian nationalism, applies in part here. For some

15 W. M. McDougall, *The Agriculturalist and Canadian Journal* (Toronto: Brewer McPhail & Co.), vol. 1, no. 1 (January 1848), p. 5.

16 Jones notes in *History of Agriculture in Ontario*: “Though an element of agrarianism certainly existed in the Clear Grit party, it is exceedingly easy to over-emphasize its importance.” The Clear Grits, Jones states, were popular in rural areas more because of their stand against political corruption than for their support for the economic welfare of farmers. See pp. 349–352.

Canadians in the middle of the nineteenth century, Canada stood as the special example of the whole of the British Empire, and the traits of the Canadian national character were seen to be exemplary of the best aspects of imperialism. As Berger himself notes, however, those who favoured imperial federation found the material and support for their cause mainly in the latter part of the century, when Confederation itself could be held up to scrutiny. In the 1850s it was impossible to articulate such a position, and the national and imperial circled each other more ambiguously. Berger also notes that, even as the idea of imperial unity gathered momentum in the 1890s, it found little support among farmers and the working classes.¹⁷

The word “national” as it increasingly creeps into discussions of Canadian agriculture and land use in the 1840s is rarely used in any terms of aggressive self-promotion, and it does not signal any fully articulated separatist desire. In the same manner that Canadian Union carried within it the model of a federalism that would lead to later Confederation, however, the development of an agrarian ideology during the 1840s forced an increasingly complex adumbration of national production into the more traditional language of manufacturing colonial exports. It is true that local complexity should not always be read as being incompatible with colonial status, and many mid-century Canadians far less radical than McDougall saw the detailed development of the province as a process that strengthened ties with Britain, but the vehicles and languages of national *representation* that the agrarian ideology produced inevitably fostered a sense of national difference. The tension is evident in McDougall and Buckland’s first editorial for *The Canadian Agriculturalist* in January 1849. Talking of the new title, they wrote:

The word “Canadian” ... at once expresses our desire that the work should assume a distinct and *national* character... We shall aim especially to do everything in our power for the agricultural advancement of our country — Canada and Canadian interests, so far as they are comprised within the legitimate and professed objects of our paper, shall have our full consideration.

Such sentiments are immediately followed by their contextualization within the appropriate colonial relationship:

¹⁷ Carl Berger, *The Sense of Power: Studies in the Ideas of Canadian Imperialism, 1867–1914* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1970), p. 5. Berger’s thesis that the Canadian imperialists based their beliefs on a sense of national character and an understanding of Canadian history and mission is the necessary subtle rejoinder to any notion of an imperial/national duality. Such a polarization did not exist. In mid-century Canada it was rather that the emerging forms of national vocabularies and representations in particular pointed to the tensions inherent in this period of historical evolution. Imperialism and loyalism were never static forces in British North America in the late eighteenth and the nineteenth centuries. For an analysis of the complexity of American loyalist thought in the late eighteenth century, see Janice Potter, *The Liberty We Seek: Loyalist Ideology in Colonial New York and Massachusetts* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1983), especially pp. 153–183.

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Feeling as we do an interest in the well being and prosperity of every portion of our wide-spread Empire — in the diffusion of useful knowledge and the inestimable blessings of civil and religious liberty, guaranteed by British Institutions — we cannot but regard with the strongest feelings of interest and attachment that particular portion of the Earth's surface on which we have resolved as the land of our adoption. From the peculiar position of the Mother Country — possessing at the same instant a redundancy both of capital and labour, emigration it would seem must continue to proceed in an increasing ration, Canada contains an ample field for the profitable employment of both: and we shall consider it our duty to lend our humble aid to so desirable and important an object.¹⁸

The mix of national desire and colonial fealty expressed here, centred on the idea of the land and its uses, is a paradigmatic example of the inherent ambivalence in the representation of Canada as the nineteenth century progressed and the province became increasingly socially and commercially stratified. The growing increase in exports during the 1850s (for example, between 1850 and 1856, Canada West's net export of wheat almost doubled in volume and tripled in value) coupled with the continuing rise in population (Canada East averaged an increase of between 2.5 and 3 per cent for the first five decades of the century) served to consolidate the national narrative even as the unified province prospered as a growing commercial colony.¹⁹ As Allan Smith has shown with respect to Canada West, a steady development of educational, scientific, and cultural institutions served to foster a sense of local difference and knowledge, even if such knowledge failed to coalesce completely into an articulate national character.²⁰ The agrarian ideology of the 1840s and 1850s was exactly of a piece with these developments, but the status of agriculture as Canada's founding and formative occupation, and the subsequent imperial relationship that this implied, created a unique set of tensions that those involved with agricultural development found impossible to resolve fully.

Of course this agricultural development was not simply the product of the editorials of trade journals. Vital to an understanding of the increasingly national nature of contextualizing land use was its growing institutional nature. The Bureau of Agriculture was founded in 1852, and its brief expanded until, by 1857, it also held responsibility for issues of immigration and oversaw the Boards of Manufactures and Arts. Thus the key connections between land use, settlement, and manufacturing were centralized.

18 Editorial, *The Canadian Agriculturalist* (Toronto: Brewer McPhail & Co.), vol. 1, no. 1 (January 1849), p. 1.

19 McCallum, *Unequal Beginnings*, pp. 18–19, 31.

20 Smith, *Canada — An American Nation?*, pp. 253–280. For a specific study of literary nationalism, see Mary Lu MacDonald, *Literature and Society in the Canadas, 1817–1850* (Lewiston/Queenston/Lampeter: Edwin Mellen, 1992), pp. 137–158.

In the manner in which the new Bureau consolidated the emerging sense of a mid-century Canadian image with regard to the land it is possible to trace a connection back to the 1793 establishment of the British Board of Agriculture during Pitt's administration. Initially the arguments surrounding agriculture and land use in Britain in this period, in the works of such figures as Arthur Young, John Sinclair, and William Knox, called for the development of local agriculture at the expense of emigration to the colonies. Losses in both the East Indian wars and the American revolt became the occasion for vociferous calls that the more remote areas of Britain should benefit from agricultural labour and that a strong internal and domestic economy should be created to offset any further colonial misadventures. More important than the imperial relationship articulated here, however, is the sense of patriotism created. For the successors of this first generation of agrarian improvers, facing the war of the early nineteenth century, land use as institutionalized by the new Board of Agriculture became central to a new national self-image. In turn, the agrarian patriotism engendered by that self-image began to be seen as a natural imperial policy when extended abroad in the subsequent decades of the nineteenth century. In the words of C. A. Bayly, "a universal application of the ideas of 'agrarian patriotism' rather more than the novel and still contentious doctrines of radical free trade was the essential 'development theory' of Britain's new empire between 1780 and 1830."²¹ It was this sense of patriotism, of land use working to articulate a sense of local character, that the Canadian Bureau of Agriculture inherited, and its establishment was but one example of the proliferation of government agencies that occurred in the 1840s and 1850s. The overall result was a bureaucratization of Canada, a national thickening, that institutionalized the increasing local complexity of the social body.²² The changes in the ideology of land use were mirrored by their regulation within government.

Fundamentally, mid-century Canadian agrarian patriotism found in the unit of the family farm a desired dominant mode of civil society, and crucially, in the context of the continent as a whole, one that appeared to portray a more authentic notion of human life and activity than the individualism enshrined in the republican egalitarianism of the United States to the south. In effect, the creation of such a model involved an attempted inoculation of republicanism by the appropriation of one of the mainstays of that ideology, the independent farmer. In the Canadian context, the farmer stood within not just the family, but the expanded colonial social order, com-

21 C. A. Bayly, *Imperial Meridian: The British Empire and the World, 1780–1830* (London and New York: Longman, 1989), pp. 121–126.

22 The classic work on this issue has been done by Bruce Curtis. See his *Building the Educational State: Canada West, 1836–1871* (London, Ont.: Althouse Press, 1988) and *True Government by Choice Men? Inspection, Education and State Formation in Canada West* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1992).

plete with hierarchies of gentry, and an imperial political order. At the same time, however, the growing complexity of agriculture, and especially the emerging links with an evolving capitalism and industrial development, meant that the family farm was part of the increasing network of an improving market-related agricultural business. Changes in the handling of the Crown Lands, the question of the clergy estates, and the various projects designed to improve transport infrastructure in Canada all set the pastoral vision of the Canadian farmer in the context of capitalist change. The Canadian participation at the 1851 and 1855 exhibitions undoubtedly stemmed, in part, from these concerns as well as those of the colonial relationship and the establishment of an appropriate sense of civility. Like all the others in London and Paris, the Canadian exhibits on display were objects that spoke of manufactured articles and potential markets. The strong official support from within government for proper representation made it clear that these commercial concerns were understood to be one of the major benefits of any involvement.

As this last point makes clear, land use was about more than just agriculture or its place in arguments of national subjecthood or citizenry. It included scientific and economic ideas about timber and mineral wealth in particular, and created from these an extended image of community. On one level, Canadian involvement in the exhibitions functioned as an attempt to link the independence of the land worker and user to the political order that floated above him, and hence to justify and validate both the political and social order in terms of the managers of the local and their mediating relationship between Canada and the imperial metropolis. This is, of course, a role that the political language of republicanism could fulfil effectively, but in a Canadian context growing in complexity as the nineteenth century progressed, the colonial relationship had to be re-made regularly to avoid becoming anachronistic. On another level, the Canadian exhibits pointed to a capitalist complexity that had already been attained and were evidence (literally) of the diversity of markets and methods in place in Canada in the 1850s. Seen in this way, the Canadian presence in London and Paris was a continuation of the development of a greater industrialized and urban *local* environment that would reach full fruition later in the century. A consequence of these two facts was that the processes creating a colonial subjecthood often co-existed with and even underpinned the adumbration of a national citizenry, with many Canadians driven to produce forms of representation of a new national space despite, rather than because of, any conception of a collective based on independence. The exhibitions stood at the juncture of abstract notions of political selfhood and the demotic details of local markets.

Canadian Presence in London and Paris

The Canadian representation at the Great Exhibition in London in 1851 and at the *Exposition Universelle* in Paris in 1855 stressed the literal advertising

of the province within a context that was both colonial and commercial, as well as selective and metaphorical.²³ The articles on display in London and Paris, ranging from raw minerals to industrial and craft products, were specific showcase items designed to stimulate investment and immigration even as they functioned, necessarily, to point to the specific nature of Canadian difference from other nations. Of the two exhibitions, despite the imperial tie and although the initial impact of the London Exhibition was profound, that in Paris in 1855 was the more significant in terms of its status within the developing language of national imagining. This was in part due to a greater period of preparation and discussion, and in part to the individuals involved in organizing Canadian participation. Following 1855, a complex articulation of Canada's global position, incorporating ideas about the domestic market and the colonial exchange, existed in a fashion that would have been unthinkable a decade before.

Canada was asked to participate in the London Exhibition, to be held at the Crystal Palace, following a communication from the Secretary of State for the Colonies, Earl Grey, to Governor General Lord Elgin in May 1850. Initial Canadian interest was centred in Montreal, where both the business and scientific communities formed local committees to encourage interest in the project. At the same time in the House of Assembly, a 14-man commission was set up to organize Canadian representation, chaired by Francis Hincks, with Fred Cumberland as Secretary and including Étienne-Paschal Taché. As would be the case for Paris four years later, the commission sought to devolve the organization of participation, appointing local commissioners in every municipality and working through agricultural and scientific societies in Montreal and Toronto. The model of this organization created a specific pyramidal hierarchy, from the local activist to the governing authority, that reflected the implicit national nature of the exhibition. This was mirrored in the language used by those involved in disseminating information concerning the selection procedures for exhibits. Hincks's commission decided upon a single exhibition, to be held in Montreal, to select the material that would be forwarded to London. The committee of the Montreal District Industrial Fair, in a general address "to the Public of Canada" before the exhibition, held on October 17, 1850, urged that entrants reflect upon a sense of national utilitarianism in choosing what to show:

In preparing specimens for the Exhibition, the Committee suggests that preference should be given to those that the Province can produce *advantageously* and to improvements of a practical nature, which may, by becoming better

23 In both 1851 and 1855 Canada's representation was alongside similar, but smaller, displays from Nova Scotia, Newfoundland, and New Brunswick.

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known, be of value to the producer and open up new sources of commerce, industry and wealth to the country at large.²⁴

As the Bureau of Agriculture report on the initial Montreal exhibition noted, “the advantages that might arise from a fair representation *among ourselves* of the national resources of Canada” were particularly to be welcomed. The report invited the especial cooperation of the Province’s “Agriculturalists, Mechanics and Manufacturers” in assembling the Canadian exhibit.²⁵

In London, the Exhibition was divided into four main areas of classification: Raw Materials, Manufactures, Machinery, and Fine Arts. In turn these were subdivided, resulting in a final total of 30 classes, ranging from minerals to arts and craft items and including agricultural and industrial products in between. The structure of the classes implemented a linear progression, from raw materials to careful utilization of those materials, for all the nations on show. In terms of the spatial arrangement and quantification of the exhibits themselves, the exhibition was a classic example of a utilitarian worlding of a globe divided into its (supposedly) natural parts. The Canadian exhibits spanned all 30 of the classes, but were concentrated in the first three, those devoted to minerals, timber products, and agricultural products. Of some 220 total exhibitors, 150 were showing specimens in these classes. Noting this concentration, the authors of the official illustrated catalogue to the exhibition chose to see the Canadian material in the light of imperial investment: “The efforts which have been made by the Government at home to develop the mineral wealth of this colony have been amply rewarded by the success which has attended the exhibitors, and the results which in some measure are brought to notice in the Exhibition.” The Agricultural products, the catalogue noted, were “without general interest” and the examples of manufactures inferior to their European counterparts. Explaining this, the catalogue echoed the notion of linear growth evidenced in the agricultural journals: “In a comparatively new country like Canada, the manufacturing arts are still in an early stage of their development.... Whilst the development of her great national resources is the first aim of her inhabitants, it is not to be expected that much attention can be given to arts that are yet in their infancy.”²⁶ In the family of nations, British coverage of the exhibition stressed, Canada was still a child requiring parental support.

Nevertheless, the Canadian exhibits gathered a combined total of 67 medals and honourable mentions, with some 60 per cent of the success coming in

24 National Archives (hereafter NA), RG17, A 11 5, vol. 2320, p. 31 (London report). This volume contains all the Bureau of Agriculture reports concerning the exhibitions in both London and Paris. Even though the Bureau was founded in 1852, the material relating to the London exhibition in 1851 is classified as a Bureau of Agriculture report. It is likely that some documents relating to the earlier Board of Agriculture were incorporated into these files at a later time.

25 NA, RG17, A 11 5, vol. 2320, p. 31 (London report).

26 Quoted in NA, RG17, A 11 5, vol. 2320, pp. 35, 37 (London report).

the first three classes. The display of minerals, organized by the Provincial Geologist William Logan, was judged by the Official Juries' report to be "superior, as far as the Mineral Kingdom is concerned, to all countries that have forwarded their products to the exhibition".²⁷ Despite the later grumbling of *The Canadian Agriculturalist* that the exhibition had been "a sort of matter of course display ... attracting but little notice from the press or people of Great Britain", many felt that the imperial spotlight would prove a strong boost to colonial trade.²⁸ The Bureau of Agriculture report noted that the Canadian exhibit was the first visited by Queen Victoria and that this event "appeared, indeed, to have been to many a revelation of the very existence of Canada, and led to a strong desire being expressed by mercantile men in Great Britain as the trade, natural and manufactured productions, of the Province, until then entirely disregarded".²⁹ The hyperbole of this comment is best seen as an example of commercial propaganda that combines colonial recognition with national, or local, pride.

Within the Crystal Palace itself, the Canadian exhibit was located on the Ground Floor, close to the crystal fountain and statue of Victoria. It took its place with other British colonies, being surrounded by exhibits from Africa, India, and the Caribbean, all contained within the western half of the huge building devoted to Britain and her Empire, while the eastern half accommodated the displays of other nations. In Paris the logic of the exhibition was changed, with national displays broken up to ensure a focus on the exhibits themselves. However, those in charge of the Canadian participation argued successfully that, because of the functional and unostentatious nature of Canada's manufactured articles (as opposed to the flamboyance of many of the manufactured goods on display), the whole exhibit should be kept together and shown not in the main building, but rather in the annex that housed the primary products. In the case of both exhibitions, then, but especially in London, Canadian representation expressed itself in terms of a coherent and legitimate geographical entity. In the Crystal Palace, despite Canada's location as a colony and therefore theoretically part of the British exhibit, this coherence was strengthened by the inevitable comparisons made because of the juxtaposition with other colonies and nations. Much was made in the Canadian press, for example, of the superiority of the Canadian exhibit to that of the United States, with the conclusion that this would diminish the political threat posed to Canada by any Americans who still harboured dreams of annexation.³⁰

As many commentators have shown, the 1851 Great Exhibition was a

²⁷ Quoted in *The Canadian Journal*, vol. 1, no. 4 (November 1852), p. 90. The remark is also contained in the Bureau of Agriculture report. Logan's notebook from his trip to London is in NA, RG45, vol. 159, file 1995.

²⁸ *The Canadian Agriculturalist*, vol. 7, no. 11 (November 1855), p. 18.

²⁹ NA, RG17, A 11 S, vol. 2320, p. 33 (London report).

³⁰ See Zeller, *Inventing Canada*, p. 81.

showcase that drew together issues of nation, empire, industrialization, capitalism, and commodity reification in a manner that was wholly original. It was, in the words of Thomas Richards, “perhaps the most influential representative body of the nineteenth century”.³¹ The Crystal Palace, itself a piece of engineering that attained the status of a work of art, housed a collection that seemed to express the undeniable bounty of the new industrial age. The exhibition, in all its chaotic diversity, elevated the commodity to the status of the icon of developing modernity and suggested a teeming surplus of goods of all kinds. In a moment of classic utilitarianism, so many examples of production ushered in the age of consumption, and the spatial locations of exhibits within the Crystal Palace reinforced, for the English public who visited it, a vision of Englishness that revolved around dreams of capitalist dominance, social engineering and behaviour, and imperial largesse.

Crucially, within this new outlining of the worship of the commodity (even the aisles and galleries in the exhibition were termed “naves” and “transepts”), the Canadian exhibit signified potential rather than actual worth. The clear superiority of primary products over manufactures made the Canadian achievement in London slightly anomalous to the effect of the exhibition as a whole. Yet, at the same time, excitement over future Canadian wealth and development fitted one vital aspect of the exhibition’s impact, namely a sense of conviction that commodity production and industrial innovation paved the way for future social prosperity and happiness. In this regard, Canada was swept along with the tide of euphoria that greeted the London showcase. The world was to be a better place, and Canada was working with ideas and methods that would allow participation in this great process.

The success of the London exhibition in 1851 brought about a proposal to hold such an event every year, but it was impossible to recapture the initial enthusiasm and the range of effects that the Crystal Palace had created. Instead, the significant outcome was the clamouring of other nations to host a spectacle that could in some way match the London achievement. In 1853 Industrial Exhibitions were held in Dublin and New York, with Canada participating at both (the Canadian presence at the New York exhibition aided the negotiations that led to the crucial 1854 Reciprocity Treaty between Canada and the United States). It was the Parisian 1855 *Exposition Universelle*, however, that, because of French status as both a major European and colonial power, was the next major manifestation of all the literal and imaginary process of European utilitarian colonial practice and Canadian self-conscious

31 Thomas Richards, *The Commodity Culture of Victorian England: Advertising and Spectacle, 1851–1914* (London and New York: Verso, 1991), p. 17. See pp. 17–72 in particular. For analysis of the role of the World’s Fairs in the political, social, and cultural development of the nineteenth century, see also Paul Greenhalgh, *Ephemeral Vistas: The Expositions Universelles, Great Exhibitions and World’s Fairs, 1851–1939* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1988); Robert W. Rydell and Nancy E. Gwinn, eds., *Fair Representations: World’s Fairs and the Modern World* (Amsterdam: VU University Press, 1994).

representation. As Paul Greenhalgh has noted in his discussion of the exhibitions of 1851 and 1855, “as cultural manifestations, they revealed an expansive West in its most flamboyant and expansive state.”³² In London in 1851 Algiers was the only colony on show that was not British. By 1855 every nation with colonial possessions wanted to display both the economic potential and the exotic difference of their Empires. In part, this clearly aimed to reveal the benefits of imperial tenure, validating and legitimizing the colonial process, but it was also a process in which the colonies themselves were more than happy to take part. Canada was typical of those colonies which saw the European showcase as an event of national empowerment.

As a result of the impact created in London, Canadian participation in Paris was to be organized on a far greater scale than had been the case in 1851. In late 1854 the Canadian Legislative Assembly passed a resolution asking the Governor General to “take all necessary steps to secure a fitting representation” at the Paris exhibition.³³ A 21-man Executive Committee was established, chaired initially by Hinks, before his departure in mid-1855 to become Governor General of the Windward Islands resulted in his being replaced by Captain William Rhodes. As with the London exhibition, the Executive Committee recommended the establishment of a number of local committees to organize local coordination and channel public enthusiasm. The increased volume and complexity of land use by 1855 meant that two provincial exhibitions were held, in Toronto and Montreal, to select the material that would be forwarded to Paris. Despite the protests of *The Canadian Agriculturalist* that the time frame would make it “quite impracticable to make either so good or extensive a collection as might have been obtained if a longer time had been given for such a purpose”, the various minutes and reports reflect a careful degree of planning in preparation.³⁴

The two Special Commissioners appointed to organize the selection of Canadian materials in Paris and to publicize Canadian participation were William Logan and Joseph-Charles Taché. Logan was an obvious choice following his success in 1851. Taché, the nephew of Étienne-Paschal Taché, was the Secretary to the Executive Committee that oversaw the gathering of exhibits before their departure to France. Following the Paris exhibition, both commissioners submitted reports to the Legislative Assembly. Along with other documents, including catalogues of all the Canadian exhibits, the reports formed the basis for *Canada at the Universal Exhibition of 1855*, a

32 Greenhalgh, *Ephemeral Vistas*, p. 24.

33 Quoted in *Canada at the Universal Exhibition of 1855* (Toronto: John Lovell, 1856), p. 7. The material from the Executive Council minutes relating to the Paris exhibition can be found in the *State Minute Books*, NA, RG1, E1, vols. O, P, and Q.

34 *The Canadian Agriculturalist*, vol. 7, no. 3 (March 1855), pp. 84–86. This issue also contains a review of the selection exhibition held in Toronto, which ran from February 14 to 25. For a cultural study of the place of such exhibitions within later nineteenth-century Canada, see Keith Walden, *Becoming Modern in Toronto: The Industrial Exhibition and the Shaping of a Late Victorian Culture* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1997).

volume printed in Toronto in 1856 by order of the Legislative Assembly. This volume, in addition to discussions of the exhibition in the contemporary journals and official reports from the Paris exhibition itself, forms the basis of an analysis of Canadian participation. In particular, the writings of Taché outlined a notion of Canadian community which combined a developing argument for a national community with a utilitarian awareness of Canada's presence in both an imperial and wider global marketplace. At the same time, however, Taché's advocacy of the concept of a confederated Canada was strategic. Within it, he sought to preserve the integrity of local difference. His representation of Canadian success in Paris produced a model of a laminated nation that characterized Canada in a hybrid relationship of local complexity, colonial allegiance, and global position. His writings are a classic account of the ways in which an idea of nation could emerge, midway between the Union of the Canadas and Confederation, to advertise "Canada" as a unit, yet speak of very real cultural and religious differences within this outlined space.³⁵

Taché was, in 1855, the representative for Rimouski in the Legislative Assembly. A supporter of Lafontaine and a committed *Patriote*, he had been a vehement opponent of Canadian Union and was a passionate supporter of increased settlement, which he regarded as a religious and a patriotic duty. Conscious of the inequalities that Union had forced upon French Canada, he saw settlement as the means of combating the drift of Canadians to the United States, hoping it would provide a stability and continuity that, in turn, would safeguard French-Canadian culture. Like Lafontaine, he rationalized his opposition to Union, preferring a political pragmatism that utilized the power of the Legislative Assembly to protect French-Canadian interests. His involvement in the Paris exhibition displayed no partiality on the issues. Rather, for Taché, the events in Paris confirmed his belief that French-Canadian identity would be best preserved in the confederation of British North America. Such a confederation would achieve the crucial goal of resisting the possibility, advocated by the liberal democratic heirs of Papineau, of an annexation to the United States. Taché used the events in Paris to articulate his philosophy of an agrarian nationalism, promoting the necessity of a Christian morality best achieved by a direct concentration on agricultural settlement. Unlike the views of a figure such as McDougall, Taché's notion of Canadian land use was anti-liberal and anti-capitalist. In the Assembly he opposed the abolition of seigneurial tenure, even though he recognized that

35 The volume consists of a number of documents. It contains the reports and minutes of the Executive Committee, including a discussion of essays submitted to accompany the exhibition. Taché's own report on the exhibition contains, as an appendix, three items he originally published in Paris to accompany the Canadian selection. These were a descriptive catalogue of the Canadian exhibits, a "general sketch" of Canadian settlement, and a general observation on the exhibition as a whole. This last document is a reworking of a number of letters Taché sent back from the exhibition and published in various Lower Canada periodicals. The volume as a whole closes with Logan's own report to the Legislative Assembly.

the system was often open to abuse. Land settlement could and should, he argued, form the basis of an idea of local community that resisted the temptations of urban capitalism and industry. In his later career, as editor of *Le Courrier du Canada*, the newspaper founded in February 1857, and as a co-founder and contributor to *Les soirées canadiennes : recueil de littérature nationale*, which began in Quebec in 1861, Taché became more explicit in his call for a national consciousness, particularly expressed through literature.³⁶ Culturally conservative, Taché understood the tensions evolving between local and colonial identities in the mid-1850s. More than most, he was aware of the competing logics inherent in the development of Canadian agriculture and realized that, as a figure determined to protect the regional interests of French Canada, he was forced to use the possibilities presented by a confederated Canada. His representation of the 1855 Paris exhibition was a subtle series of mechanisms by which he expressed his philosophy of what the nation should become. It is intriguing to see how such a conservative figure in many ways, one resistant to change, became so adroit at the new political language of national representation. For Taché, “national” meant necessary confederation, but it by no means signalled a shared set of values or the anticipation of a standardized market.

At the exhibition itself, Canada was awarded one grand medal of honour, one medal of honour, 13 first-class medals, and 30 second-class medals from the 30 classes of competition. In addition Canada received 43 “honourable mentions” in the various classes. The prize total significantly exceeded the combined total of 67 medals and honourable mentions gathered in London in 1851, a point made gleefully by Taché in his official report. The range of classes duplicated (with slight changes in terminology) those of the earlier exhibition. The single Canadian grand medal of honour was awarded to Logan for the exhibit of minerals, the first class of exhibits, Taché noting in his report that “Canada is the single instance of a colony” to be granted such recognition.³⁷ The medal of honour was awarded to the overall Canadian presentation of woods and grains in the second class, now entitled Forestry, Hunting and Fishing, and the single most successful class for Canada was the third, Agriculture, in which some 17 medals and honourable mentions were gathered. In total, 23 out of the total 93 prizes were won in the first three classes, all categories that denoted national potential in terms of land use or existing agricultural production. As had been the case in London, in those classes which contained manufactured items, Canadian products could not compete against European expertise developed through a longer tradition of technological innovation. Taché, in

³⁶ Taché’s key writings on the issues of nationalism and confederation for *Le Courrier du Canada*, which appeared between July and October 1857, were published in a single volume, *Des provinces de l’Amérique du Nord et d’une union fédérale* (Quebec, 1858). As a civil servant, he was also the chief architect of the 1871 census, a key document in post-Confederation nationalism.

³⁷ *Canada at the Universal Exhibition of 1855*, p. 59.

his general observations on the exhibition, incorporated this lack of balance into a proposed hierarchy of Canadian production that reflected the utilitarian nature of the Paris event. Canadian success, he noted, “plainly points to the cultivation of the soil and the natural advantages as the source of our future prosperity”. He then continued:

... that in manufacturing, it is in our interest to fabricate articles of which our metallurgical, woodland and agricultural labors furnish the materials; that in other branches of manufactures, we cannot hope for a long time to produce more than what is necessary for ordinary consumption and daily domestic service; that for articles of taste, or perfection in art and luxury we must resort to Europe to satisfy the wants created by advanced civilization; that we are to remain convinced that perfection is the work of time and the result of circumstances which cannot exist in a new country, a very growing population partly composed of emigrants.³⁸

Such a comment has multiple resonances as a model for national development. It underlines the construction of Canada as a space associated with rural production and rural virtue, though here the notion of virtue is considerably more conservative than that espoused by Evans or McDougall. Nevertheless, and though the protection of French-Canadian interests was always in his mind, in seeking to maintain industry at a domestic level, Taché was perpetuating a more widely held opinion that related national productivity to the social body, preferring to advocate the farm unit as the keystone of a decent civil society. That such a civil society was necessarily limited and bounded by an inability to produce complex cultural goods serves to stress the norm of the colonial relationship, Europe (as ever) being seen as the centre of industrial sophistication and cultural excellence. Yet, for Taché, the full meaning of Canada’s participation in Paris lay in the future benefits to be accrued by increased settlement. While Canada could clearly supply European markets with products derived from its mineral, wood, and agricultural wealth (and Taché saw development of this as a matter of course), the potential to be realized within the province itself was the chief benefit of the Paris success:

These remarks will, I trust, be not altogether unprofitable. They are but hints, but they may serve to guide reflecting minds in the consideration of subjects which are highly important to all. From this Exhibition of 1855 will be derived a collection of facts, affording food for years of reflection and leading to conclusions, the bearing of which on the national prosperity of nations, and on the progress of the arts, can be as yet but little appreciated.³⁹

³⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 295.

³⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 289.

Such musings were, for Taché, on the future of Canada, as is made clear by a comment in his official report to the Legislative Assembly: “There is, moreover, no doubt that the success of our exhibition will be the means of attracting to our shores an emigration from the continent of Europe.”⁴⁰

Taché’s nationalism, as reflected in his writings surrounding the events in Paris, was a heady mix of political acumen and materialist pride. As an agent of the Confederalist argument, his role has been underplayed because it was not concerned with the overt politics of the 1850s and 1860s. His belief that a single, confederated, agriculturally based province would be the best safeguard for the French-Canadian culture he wished to aid and protect was a nuanced position, achieved through a mediation of the new political and cultural languages that were inevitably a part of evolving Canadian modernity. Part of this understanding was the crucial deployment of a set of Canadian representations and national metaphors that achieved a power that, like all the goods in the Crystal Palace in 1851, actually transcended much of the contemporary debate about worth (colonial or otherwise) to create a new powerful realm of commodity codification. To European eyes, Canada had, of course, always been seen in terms of one form of potential or another, but this mid-nineteenth-century manifestation, combining colonial utilitarianism with the new reification of production, allied its power with a developing set of arguments within Canada about the appropriate organization of the province.

National Consciousness and Representation in a Colonial Context

Logan and Taché were both made Chevaliers of the Legion of Honor by Napoleon III following the Paris exhibition, and Logan was later awarded a knighthood for his services to Canadian geological study, an award prompted to a great degree by his part in the 1851 and 1855 exhibitions. Newspapers both in Canada and in London enthused about the colony’s prospects, both in economic terms as a supplier of raw materials to Britain and as an example of the establishment of civility over the threat posed by a malevolent landscape. When in September 1855 the London *Times* marvelled at the Paris *Exposition’s* showcase of Canadian ability to “hew out wealth and independence for themselves from primeval wilds”, the model of progression invoked was that of Canada’s success in national competition: “how they subjugate nature with a rapidity and completeness unknown in any past age of the world, and, self-governed and self-relying, tread with confidence, in the face of the nations, the path of greatness to which their destiny manifestly calls them!” Such success, and that of Logan in particular, created a renewed sense of Canadian national space, as in March 1856 the Legislative Assembly passed measures designed to fund the extension of his geological survey of British North America. This literal mapping reinforced the messages received in both London and Paris, namely that future

⁴⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 58.

Canadian economy and society should be based on a sound knowledge of the potential and use of land. Canada was becoming, in an ideological sense of self-conception, a practising nation.⁴¹

In terms of the specifics of *exhibiting* Canadian goods and products, London and Paris became the models for local exhibitions following 1855. Logan successfully argued that all unsold materials in Paris should be returned to Canada and housed in a new, purpose-built Crystal Palace and that a permanent Canadian exhibition should be kept there based upon the Paris exhibit. In visual terms, however, the original London Crystal Palace became the icon for the showing of goods. All the host cities for the Ontario Provincial Exhibitions in the late nineteenth century built glass and iron structures to mimic the 1851 original, and the 1858 Toronto hosting of that exhibition saw the construction of a building that would later be expanded and developed to become the Palace of Industry, home of the Toronto Industrial Exhibition from 1879 onwards.⁴² As the Toronto Exhibition helped to shape the cultural landscape of the new Canada, its very look signalled a glance back to the original success of Canadian participation in 1851.

Undoubtedly, those involved with the Canadian presence in London and Paris in 1851 and 1855 shared an initial reaction that placed participation within a colonial context. The mid-century was still close enough to the rebellions of 1838 and the 1841 Union to stress the colonial relationship with London as the dominant factor in the evolution of Canada as a society and as a settler colony based on land use. Any invitation to display the progress made within Canada since 1841 was naturally to be seized, offering as it did the opportunity to compete for imperial patronage, but the exhibitions themselves coincided with significant upheavals in both the attitudes towards Canadian land use and the institutional organization of its regulation and exploitation. However much the Canadian exhibits in London and Paris spoke to their audiences of the sound nature of European colonial investment, they also clearly signified new adumbrations of local complexity and were the product of a sensibility that should be seen as decidedly national, with all the complexities this word carried by 1855. That this sense of the national was not necessarily willed, but arrived at and agreed upon, should not diminish its status as a key ideology in the years before Confederation. That such an ideology was deeply bound up in issues of representation, of national metaphor, indicates the development of a key new set of languages in Canadian nineteenth-century consciousness.

41 Zeller, *Inventing Canada*, pp. 90–93.

42 NA, RG1, E1, vol. Q, March 22, 1856, p. 209; Walden, *Becoming Modern in Toronto*, p. 219.