



Rebellions of 1837

Upper Canada



Tories & Reformers



Definitions

- o A. Conservatives/Tories: friends and supporters of the Family Compact. They wanted to conserve or keep the existing form of government. Tory is an Irish word meaning BANDIT
- o B. Reformers/Moderate Reformers: wanted the system of government changed or reformed so that ordinary people would have more influence. Moderates realize that change takes time.
- o C. Responsible Government: Governor should be responsible for carrying out the wishes of the majority in the Assembly. Colonies wanted to manage their own affairs

William Lyon Mackenzie

- o Reformer in Upper Canada
- o Keen reader and quoted famous authors
- o In York, he set up a newspaper called the **Colonial Advocate**
- o In the Advocate, he attacked the Family Compact and the governor
- o Members of Family compact destroyed his press, but he took them to court and won the case. He bought another press and continued the newspaper.
- o **Elected member of the Assembly**, where he continued his attack on the government.
- o Great orator, who was often expelled from the Assembly but he voted back in each time.
- o **First mayor of Toronto** (Mohawk for Meeting Place) in 1834

Robert Baldwin proposal to alter the system of government in Upper Canada

- o Dr. William Baldwin and his son were among the most influential Reformers in Upper Canada.
- o Although they were wealthy, well educated and members of the Anglican Church, they were not Tories.
- o They believed strongly in reform, though they never had any thought of Upper Canada breaking away from Britain.
- o His Plan for Responsible government for Upper Canada:
 - o The governor would have to pick the council from the largest party of the Assembly and this way he will be carrying out the wishes of the largest number of voters.
- o When MacKenzie started to speak about independence, he lost the support of many moderate reformers like the Baldwins.

Elections in Upper Canada

- o Each political group set up headquarters, usually at a tavern or inn, and they would build platforms outside for the speakers.
- o On the morning of the election, crowds would gather around to hear the speeches.
- o There was no such thing as a secret ballot.
- o They used to vote in front of everybody. When it was time to vote, each person climbed up onto the platform and announced who they were voting for and a clerk would write it down.
- o Often fights would break out, employers would fire employees if they did not like the way the employee voted.
- o Elections could last days.

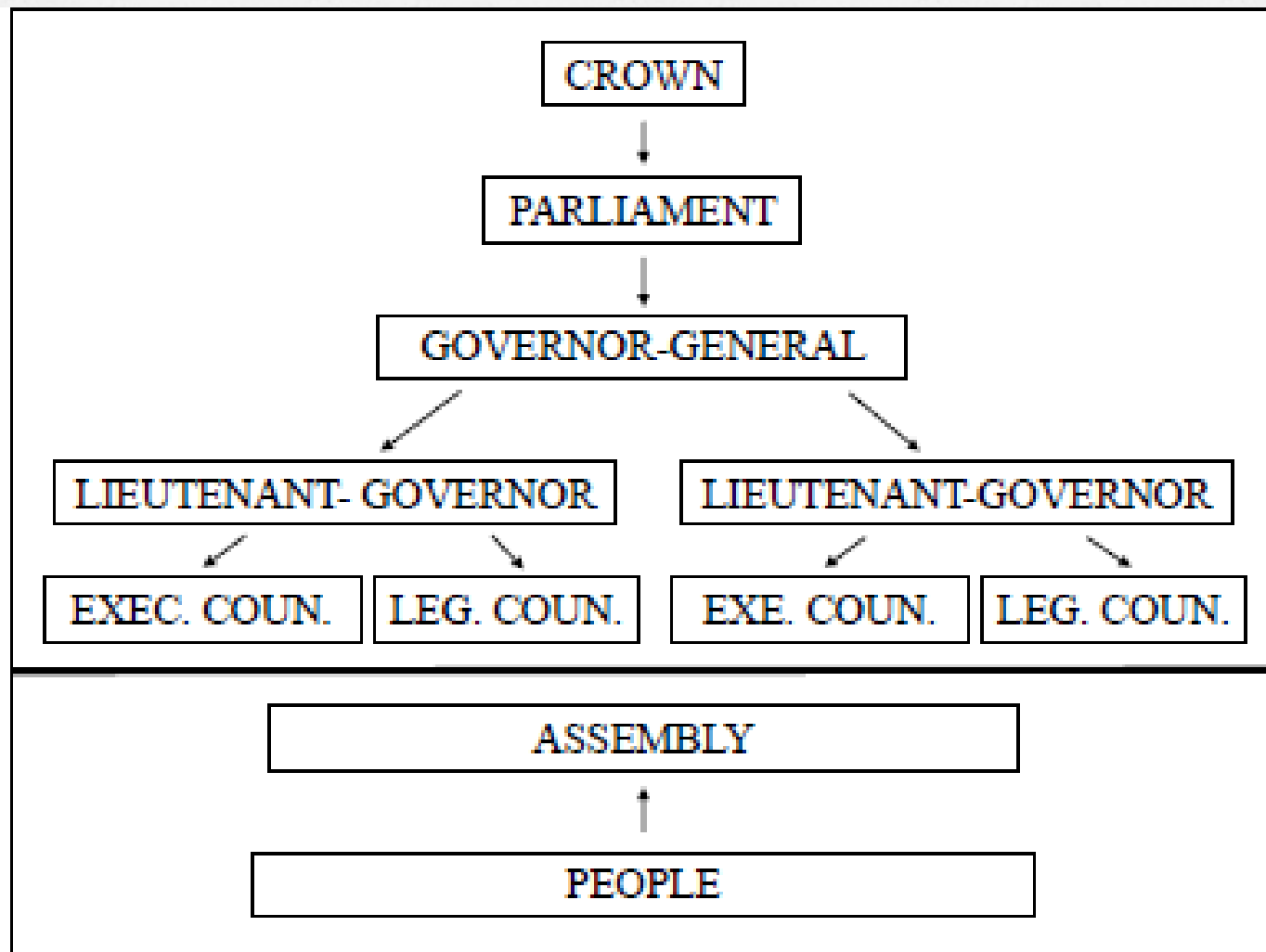
Governor Sir Francis Bond Head

- o He arrived in 1836 and knew nothing about Canada and politics.
- o He considered all Reformers disloyal traitors to Britain.
- o During the election of 1836, he went around the colony urging people to vote for the Tories. "A vote for a Reformer is a vote against Britain."
- o The Tories won and MacKenzie and other Reformers lost their seats.
- o MacKenzie published a bold call for independence from Britain.

Reasons for Discontent

Lack of say in government

- o Assembly was elected colonists who proposed bills
- o Executive & Legislative Councils were appointed by the governor and they approved/rejected bills
- o Real power was in the hands of the governor and councils



Reasons for Discontent

No access to influential positions

- o Governor was from Britain
- o He chose the councillors from the wealthy and influential people who were mainly Loyalists (**Family Compact**)
- o **Family Compact** = People who were loyal to Britain (United Empire Loyalists) that were upper class individuals. They believed that they could govern the colony more effectively than the ordinary people.
- o Governor appointed all officials

Reasons for Discontent

Unfair distribution of land grants

- o Best land given to members of Family Compact
- o Less than 1/10th of land was producing crops
- o Clergy Reserves = 1/7th of all surveyed land was given to the Anglican Church, which were mostly left uncleared.

Reasons for Discontent

No money to improve farming conditions

- o Roads were terrible for transporting farm goods to markets
- o Money was spent on canals that benefitted the merchants



Corduroy Road



The rights and privileges held by the members of the Family Compact

- Appointed members of councils and appointed officials
- Best land grants
- Tax money went to building canals which benefitted merchants

Why did the governor rely so heavily on the Family Compact for advice?

- o He was from Britain and was there for a short stay.
- o He was unfamiliar with the people and how the colony was run.

Why did the elected Assembly in the colonies have little real power?

- Executive & Legislative Councils were appointed by the governor and they approved bills and rejected bills

Upper Canada

- o Rebellion = an armed uprising against the established government
- o Dec. 1837, a rebellion raged in Upper Canada
- o Toronto was under attack by a force of between 500 and 1000 armed colonists.
- o The rebels marched on the city to overthrow the government and bring about changes.

Time-line for the Battle of Toronto, 1837

The plan was to march down Yonge Street in the colonial capital of Toronto and seize the arms and ammunition that were stored in Toronto's city hall. They wanted to use those weapons to force the government to surrender in a bloodless coup.

Mon. Dec. 4th

- o MacKenzie gathers rebels at **Montgomery's** Tavern north of Toronto, about 6 km north of the city
- o Rebels plan to attack **Toronto** and seize parliament
- o **Colonel Moodie**, a loyalist, attempted to ride through the rebel roadblock to warn **Governor Bond Head** in Toronto.
- o Moodie fired his pistol, apparently over the heads of the rebels, the opening shot in the rebellion in Upper Canada.
- o A number of the rebels returned fire killing Moodie. But now Mackenzie hesitated rather than striking directly into the city. This gave Governor Bond Head a chance to organize. The lack of action also led to more desertions from the rebel side.

Time-line for the Battle of Toronto, 1837

- o Tues. Dec. 5th
- o 300 trained fighters were available to defend Toronto
- o Governor Sir Francis Bond Head places his family on a steamer for safety
- o Governor Head sends officials to bargain with MacKenzie for a truce
- o A **pardon** was offered to those who laid down weapons, but MacKenzie refused
- o **Samuel Lount** led armed rebels in a night attack
- o At Mrs. Sharpe's garden, Sheriff Jarvis and 27 troops ambushed the rebels
- o Both sides retreated

Time-line for the Battle of Toronto, 1837

- Wed. Dec. 6th
- Reinforcements began to arrive in Toronto
- Main buildings were barricaded
- MacKenzie and Lount hold up a **stage coach** and seize letters about the defense of the city



Time-line for the Battle of Toronto, 1837

Thurs. Dec. 7th

- o Van Egmond (He had experience in the Napoleonic Wars) takes control of the rebel troops at Montgomery's tavern
- o Only 500 poorly equipped rebels
- o Governor Head and Loyalists move to attack the rebel headquarters at Montgomery's tavern
- o Peter Matthews was given 60 riflemen and sent to the Don River Bridge as a diversion, but they were driven off. The move did not divert the main loyalist force, more than 1000 men divided into three columns, supported by two cannon. The main rebel force left at the tavern numbered just 400, with only 200 of those with firearms.
- o Loyalists used cannons and the rebels started to flee
- o Governor Head found MacKenzie's papers in the tavern, which contained names of the rebels
- o Less than a half hour the fighting was over and the Loyalists won
- o Rebels leaders fled to avoid being taken as prisoners

The Aftermath

- o MacKenzie fled towards the American border at Niagara.
- o There was a £1000 price on his head.
- o Supporters helped him escape.
- o From Navy Island, he tried to keep his rebellion alive. He conducted raids along the border.
- o Officials in Upper Canada complained and MacKenzie was arrested. He was put in jail for 18 months.
- o 12 years after the rebellion, MacKenzie was pardoned and returned to Toronto.

Rebel Leaders Executed

- Of the several hundred people arrested during the winter 1837-38, only Peter Matthews (had a wife & 15 children) and Samuel Lount (had a wife & 7 children) were hanged in public for treason, as examples to other would be rebels. The executions took place on April 12, 1838 in Toronto's courthouse yard.
- Lount's wife pleaded with the governor for mercy. She collected 30,000 signatures, but the governor refused to listen.
- The governor refused to turn the bodies over to the families. They were buried in unmarked graves.
- When MacKenzie returned, he had the bodies moved to a burial ground and erected a monument.

Was the hanging to Samuel Lount justified? Would he be hanged for the same offence today?

Opinion, but keep in mind:

- o People were killed during the rebellion;
- o Was it treason?
- o Was he a martyr?
- o Was it wartime?
- o And that Canada no longer has the death penalty. What is the penalty for treason today?
(Life in prison)

Lower Canada



Causes of discontent in Lower Canada

- o The elected Assembly was pulling in one direction and the two appointed councils were pulling in another direction
- o The **Assembly** was made up of **French-speaking members** and the **English governor** would not agree to all the laws they wanted
- o **Chateau Clique**: Ruling class of Lower Canada. English-speaking merchants and speakers. Governor chose them to be councilors.
- o They wanted to preserve their language, Roman Catholic religion and traditional way of agriculture
- o The French feared the English would take up all the **good farm land**
- o Resented the number of English settlers in the cities, as they wanted to change to an **industrial society**. They wanted to build roads, canals, bridges and banks. This would bring more English settlers

What part did the British government and the Chateau Clique play in causing the rebellion in Lower Canada?

- o They did not **listen** to the complaints
- o Used **tax money** for their own benefit
- o Used **government positions** to support themselves and the majority of citizens

Louis-Joseph Papineau

- Leader of the French-speaking majority in the Assembly
- Lawyer
- Became leader of the reform party in Lower Canada
- He wanted French-speaking people to have a greater share in lawmaking
- He dedicated his life to preserving the French language, law and religion.
- He and his supporters became known as **Patriotes** and they attacked the Chateau Clique

92 Resolutions (1834)

o Ninety-two Resolutions:

- o A list of complaints drawn up by the Assembly of Lower Canada.
- o They threatened to vote against taxes being collected. This meant that the government officials could not collect their salaries.
- o Also, the building of bridges, roads, and canal would stop.
- o Papineau ordered the Patriotes not to buy British goods from English merchants.

Rebellion in Lower Canada

1837

- o Nov. 6th 1837 = fights break out on Montreal and other parts of Lower Canada. The governor calls in troops
- o Nov. 23rd 1837 = Colonel Gore leads a British attack on Patriote headquarters in St. Denis. Patriote's win
- o Nov. 25th, 1837 = Government raids Patriote stronghold at St. Charles. Town is burned and many dead. Patriotes blame their defeat on old guns and that they were outnumbered 2-1.
- o Dec. 14th 1837 = 2000 troops advance on St. Eustache. Troops set fire to the church, where the patriotes were. As the Patriotes flee, 70 are shot. The town is looted. Papneau flees to the USA. The rebellion is over.

Why did many Patriots refuse to take up arms against the government?

- Moderate reformers did not believe that armed rebellion was the way to bring about change.
- The Roman Catholic Church warned people not to take part in any violence.

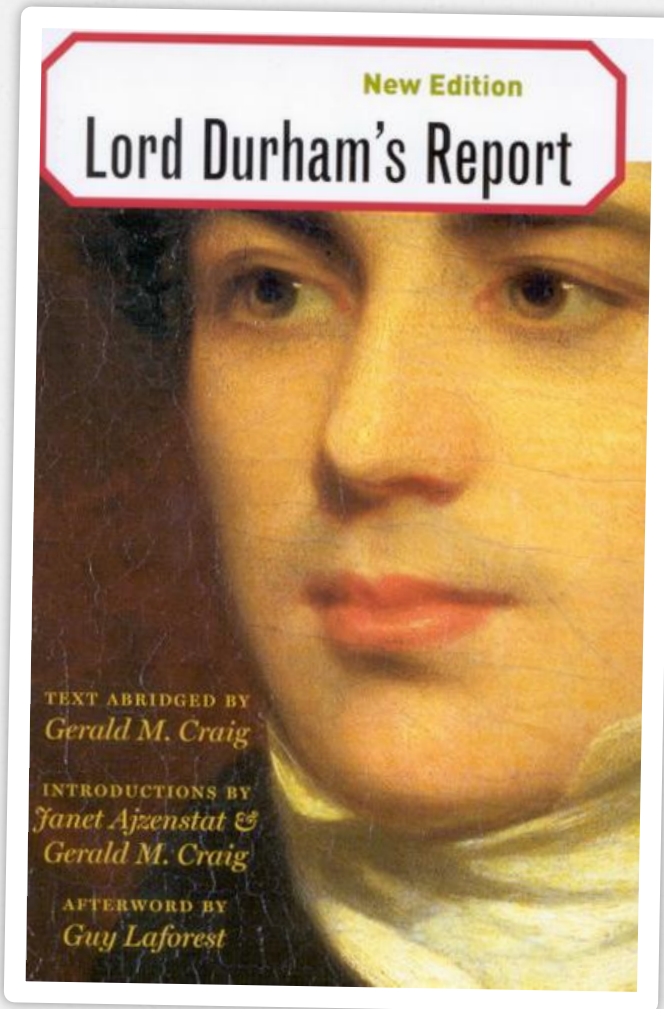
Why the Rebellion failed

- o The Rebellion was not well planned and it lacked leadership
- o Only 1 in 10 Patriotes had a gun
- o They were not trained soldiers
- o Many Patriotes were unwilling to go against the church
- o Papineau was eventually pardoned and returned to Quebec in 1845.

The Maritimes

- o It was not violent
- o In each colony the government was controlled by a small influential group who worked closely with the governor.
- o Reformers were eventually elected to the Legislative Assemblies: Joseph Howe (NS), George Coles (PEI), L.A. Wilmot (NB)
- o They worked to pass laws that the people wanted.
- o Their patience paid off. When responsible government was achieved, it came to NS first.

Durham's Report



Why was Lord Durham chosen to investigate the problems in the Canadas?

- o For years the colonists of Upper and Lower Canada have complained about the way they have been governed, but Britain ignored them
- o **Armed Rebellions** showed that it is time to act
- o Lord Durham was sent to investigate on the troubles and suggest reforms
- o He was given the rank of Governor-in-Chief
- o He was welcomed, as he was known to be a British Reformer. He was from the wealthy class, but supported reforms for the working class.
- o He was nicknamed "**Radical Jack**"

Recommendations of Lord Durham's Report & The British Government Response

- o That the two colonies of Upper and Lower Canada should join as one province
- o That responsible government should be granted. All advisors to the governor should be chosen from the largest party in the Assembly elected by the citizens.
- o Upper and Lower Canada were united by the Act of the Union in 1841
- o Canada West and Canada East. Capital was Montreal

Lord Elgin

- o 1846, a new governor was appointed
- o Son-in-law of Lord Durham
- o In the election of 1848, more Reformers than Tories were elected to the Assembly.
- o Lord Elgin promised he would take their advice of the reformers as long as the Reformers held the majority in the Assembly.
- o **Responsible government** had arrived in 1848

Rebellion Losses Bill

- o Rebellion Losses Bill: A bill that proposed that a large amount of money should be paid to people in Lower Canada whose property had been damaged during the rebellion. (1849)
- o People would be paid for damage to their homes, barns, fences, livestock, wagons and other personal property.
- o Tories voted against the bill.

Why was the signing of the Rebellion Losses Bill a dilemma for Lord Elgin?

- o The Tories were against the bill as they believed that the rebels, as well as the Loyalists, would be paid for losses they suffered. They called it **a reward for those who rebelled**.
- o The Reform party had the largest number of supporters and outvoted the Tories. The bill was passed.
- o The Tory leader hinted that there might be more violence if Elgin signed the bill.
- o His wife was pregnant and feared violence might to her danger. She was Durham's daughter and she supported the bill.
- o After he signed it, he was attacked by the Tories. His **carriage was damaged**, but he never fixed it, as he wanted people to remember at what price responsible government had been won.