

Coalition Government

As leader of the Grits, George Brown opposed the beliefs of the Conservative party. He was John A. Macdonald's political rival. For years, the two men had hurled bitter remarks at each other across the floor of the Assembly. If they passed each other on the street, neither one would speak.

But the future of the province meant more to George Brown than his personal feelings or his political party. He suggested that the answer to political deadlock was a coalition government. A **coalition government** is the joining of different political parties into one government in the time of an emergency. Together they could do what no one party could do by itself. George Brown persuaded many other

members of his own party to support the coalition. Of the 130 members in the Assembly, at least 100 would vote together.

The coalition government had two plans. The first was to try to form a union or confederation of all the British colonies in North America. If this first plan failed, the second plan was to split Canada again into two provinces (Ontario and Québec). Each province would run its own local affairs, but there would be a central government based on representation by population to look after matters of concern to both provinces. Other colonies could come in later if they desired. The idea of Confederation was beginning to gain momentum in Canada.

On the subject of a coalition government for Canada in 1861, George Brown said in a speech:

For ten years I have stood opposed to the honourable gentlemen opposite. . . . But I think the House will admit that, if a crisis has ever arisen in the political affairs of any country that would justify such a coalition, such a crisis has now arrived in the history of Canada . . . I do say, that if by any means we can find a solution to the difficulties, every man who has the slightest interest in the country will be grateful to those who accomplish it . . . I desire no greater honour for my children to remember than that I had a hand, however humble, in bringing about that great work.

