

## “Rep by Pop”



Under the Act of Union, Canada East and Canada West had equal numbers of representatives in the combined Legislative Assembly. Over time this created problems for decision making in the Assembly. Often, decisions became stalemated (could not be made), because all the representatives of Canada East (mostly French-speaking) voted one way, and all the representatives from Canada West (mostly English-speaking) voted in the opposite way.

By about 1850, the population of Canada West had grown, for the first time, to be larger than that of Canada East. Because of the continuing arrival of many mostly English-speaking immigrants, it appeared as though Canada West would continue to grow rapidly. For this reason, the representatives of Canada West began to push for “rep by pop”—representation by population—meaning that the number of members of the legislative assembly should depend on the number of voters. This way, Canada West would be assured a majority in the Legislative Assembly.

The stalemate situation in the Legislative Assembly was saved by the *Great Coalition*, or a cooperation agreement between representatives John A. MacDonal and George Brown (both of Canada West), and Georges-Étienne Cartier of Canada East. However, Cartier opposed “rep by pop”, because he believed that eventually the English-speaking population would dominate all government decision making and the *Canadien* (French) culture would not survive.

In the discussions for Confederation of all the colonies, most representatives felt that “rep by pop” would be the fairest representation of the people. However, Prince Edward Island, with the smallest population, was concerned that they would lose power under the new government.



**What do you think about this issue of “rep by pop”?**

**With a partner, complete the chart on the next page and discuss your conclusions with another group of students.**

# "Rep by Pop"



What does "*rep by pop*" mean?

Reasons for "rep by pop"

Reasons against "rep by pop"

Who benefits from "rep by pop"?

Who does not benefit from "rep by pop"?

Our conclusion: