

**Name:** Wetmore, Andrew Rainsford (Hon.)

**Riding:** Sunbury, County of Saint John, City of

**Party:** Conservative Confederation

**Date Elected:** GE 4 Mar. 1865. GE 7 Jun. 1866. BY-EL 4 Oct. 1867.

**Positions Held:** Sworn in as Premier, 16 Aug. 1867 - 25 May 1870. Appointed Attorney General, 16 Aug. 1867 - 25 May 1870. Appointed Justice of Supreme Court of New Brunswick, 25 May 1870.

**Cabinet Shuffle:**

**Retired:** Resigned from politics on 25 May 1870, upon his appointment as Justice of the Supreme Court of New Brunswick.

**Defeated:** GE 10 Oct. 1846.

**Died:** Died at age 71 on 7 Mar. 1892 in Fredericton, NB.

**Notes:** Born on 16 Aug. 1820 in Fredericton, NB. Of Loyalist descent. Wetmore studied law in the offices of Edward Barron Chandler (q.v.) and others. He was admitted to the New Brunswick bar as an attorney on 14 Oct. 1841, and as a barrister on 21 Oct. 1843. Wetmore practiced law in Oromocto from 1842 to 1847, then in Saint John until 1870. He was a tall, imposing figure of over six feet, who towered over his courtroom adversaries. On account of his supple mind, he was able to grasp his opponents' arguments quickly and able to respond with wit and sarcasm just as quickly. A very prominent citizen in Saint John, Wetmore established a reputation as an outstanding trial lawyer.

In 1865, the young Wetmore was recruited after by anti-Confederates in Saint John to offer as a candidate in the upcoming provincial election. He was not opposed to British North American union as such, but objected to the terms offered by the Québec Conference in 1864. Wetmore agreed to run, and as a result of his indomitable - not to mention colourful - debating skill, he was successfully elected. Like many of the anti-Confederation candidates, Wetmore was the subject of a humorous, fictitious and possibly libellous biographical sketch published in the biting satirical (and pro-Confederation) Saint John newspaper ""The True Humorist"" on 2 Mar. 1865.

Wetmore became a backbencher in the newly formed anti-Confederate government of Albert J. Smith (q.v.). In the middle of his second Session in the Legislature, however, Wetmore crossed the floor to join Samuel Leonard Tilley's (q.v.) cause, leading several other converts. In the 1866 election, he was Tilley's running mate in Saint John.

Following Confederation the most senior and ambitious of New Brunswick's politicians chose to enter dominion politics, leaving a vacuum in the NB House of Assembly. Therefore, despite having virtually no political experience or notable leadership abilities, Wetmore was chosen to become the province's first post-Confederation Premier. With an equally in-experienced Executive Council to advise him, Wetmore's government did not accomplish much legislation of consequence. With the major issues of the day now under the purview of the federal House of Commons, the Legislature often simply continued the railway and legislative initiatives of its predecessors. With less revenue following Confederation, Wetmore amalgamated departments, and abolished positions, substantially shrinking government.

Wetmore once joked that since he had been on both sides of the Confederation debate he had certainly been right at least once. In the Assembly Chamber, however, he showed no compassion for any residual anti-Confederation sentiment. When J.W. Cudlip (q.v.) introduced a notice of resolution calling for New Brunswick's annexation to the United States, the Premier stood in his place, cried treason, and employing his large stature to intimidate, chased the smaller Cudlip from the chamber. Wetmore refused to debate the issue and had the resolution expunged from the record.

Wetmore took his position as Attorney General very seriously and even personally prosecuted some prominent cases. His courtroom experience clearly flavoured his political style. Instead of conciliating diverging interests, Wetmore bullied and forced his own point of view. Instead of convincing others of his opinion's merits, he employed sarcasm, hectoring and badgering as tools of debate. His support in the Assembly being whittled away after only a five-year political career, Wetmore resigned in 1870. Shortly after he was appointed to the Supreme Court of New Brunswick on 25 May 1870. By all accounts he was an unremarkable Supreme Court Justice of dubious distinction. In Dec. 1880 he was appointed to the NB Divorce Court, of which he remained a member until a few weeks shy of his death in 1892.

Historian James Hannay argued that ""Wetmore was not a politician by training or by inclination, but he was a man of striking and vigorous personality, who found himself in political life without quite knowing how he came there."" A more recent historian, T.W. Acheson, reached the similar conclusion that ""although he headed the government for three years Wetmore cannot be regarded as a successful politician."" The most damning assessment of the first post-Confederation Premier, however, comes from a former courtroom foe. Jeremiah Travis described Wetmore as ""the worst judge that has ever disgraced the Bench of our Province,"" and dismissed Wetmore's characteristic quick wit as being caustic enough to ""disgrace a brothel."" Clearly, historical appraisal has not been kind to Wetmore.

Wetmore's family members were well-established Loyalists in New Brunswick society and politics. His grandfather, Thomas Wetmore (q.v.), was Attorney General for many years. His father, George Ludlow Wetmore, was Clerk of the House of Assembly.

For more information see also: ""Dictionary of Canadian Biography,"" Volume XII (Ref 920.071 D554); ""The Premiers of New Brunswick"" (971.5 D754 NB Coll.); ""Judges of New Brunswick"" (920 L421 1985 NB Coll.); ""New Brunswick: A History, 1784-1867"" (971.5 M169 NB Coll.); and James Hannay, ""The Premiers of New Brunswick Since Confederation,"" Canadian Magazine, Vol. 9, No. 3 (Jul. 1897)

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