



Rebellion a long-term victory

ye-fairdays
by mary dawson

In the past we have written several times about Richmond Hill's two colonels, Moodie and Bridgford, and the roles they played in the Rebellion of 1837.

We have failed to deal, in the past, with the larger picture of the uprising.

Although in the immediate sense the rebellion was a failure, in the long term it was a victory as it led to later reforms which eliminated

many of the grievances of those who fought against the government in Upper Canada.

The group of families which represented the aristocracy of York, better known as the Family Compact, who had controlled the government were to see their power broken as a result and the course of government in Upper Canada was drastically changed.

Settlers, fresh from a

growing reformist mood in Great Britain, in the early 1800's, began to challenge the power of the few wealthy families who commanded all the offices of state.

Farmers, millers and small trades people demanded better roads, schools, more honest government and less patronage.

Spokesman and leader was William Lyon Mackenzie, a fiery red-headed Scot, who in 1824

began to publish the Colonial Advocate, a critical political newspaper.

He also held meetings throughout the province and when government supporters wrecked his printing plant and threw his press and type into Toronto Bay, a great deal of public support swung his way.

The press was later rescued from its watery resting place and in 1860 was taken by Wallace

Graham, who learned the printing trade in Richmond Hill, to my home town of Parkhill.

The vandalism did not stop Mackenzie's reform activities. By this time he was a member of the provincial legislature and the Reform Party secured a majority of seats in the legislature in 1828.

Four years later, the Family Compact still unyielding, Mackenzie was re-elected, but ex-

pelled from the house on several occasions.

Mackenzie had been elected first mayor of Toronto by popular vote in 1834 and with the new parliament he formed a committee on grievances.

The Imperial government in London appointed a reform-minded Lieutenant-Governor, Sir Frances Bond Head, in an effort to quell the dissent.

But it soon became evident that he sided with the Family Compact,



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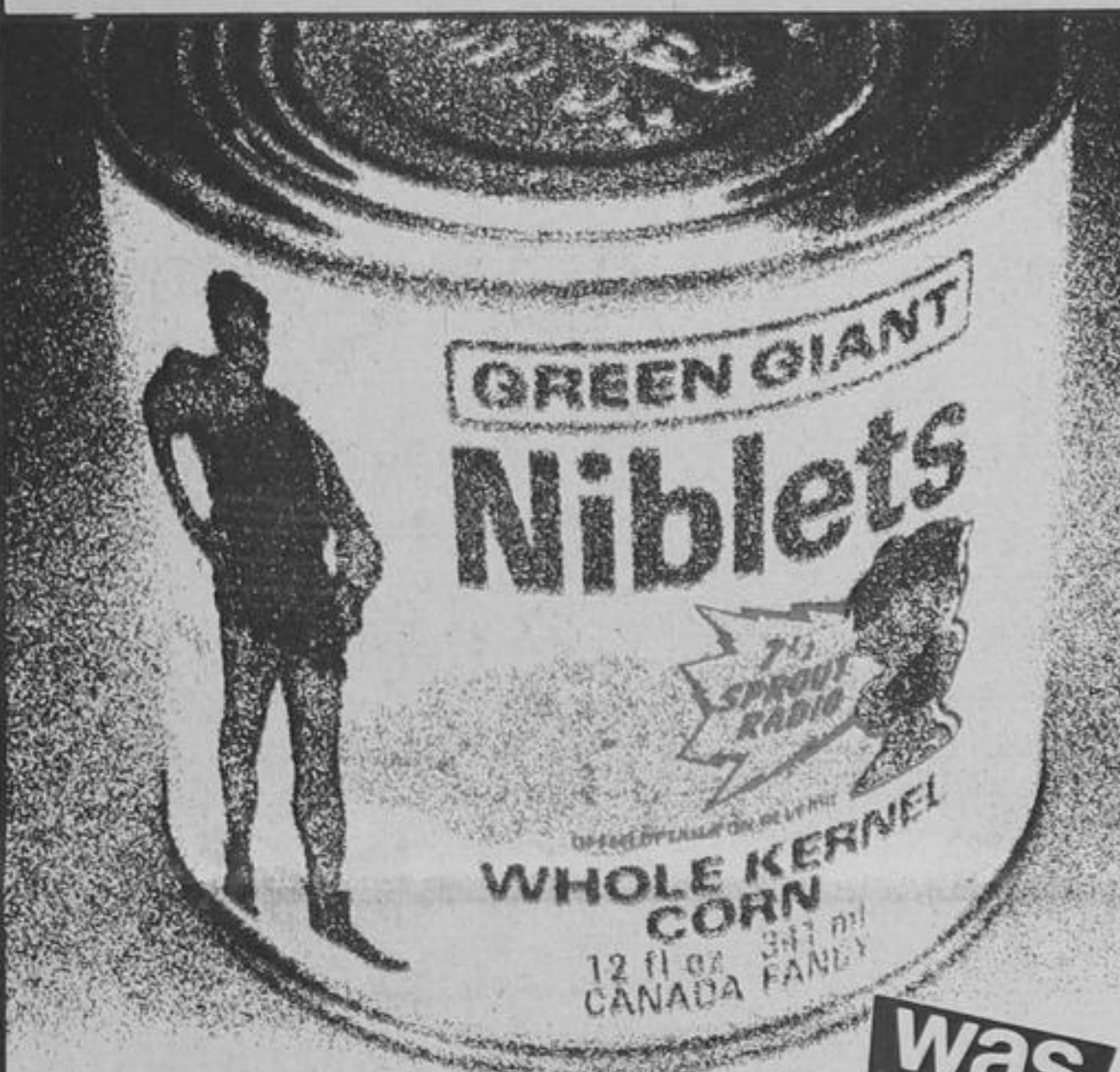
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