

National Anthem

A nation's destiny is not in its learning or the amount of information it acquires; it is in its character. Mankind has found that feelings and convictions are conveyed more effectively in symbolic acts long understood and accepted, and that is "O Canada". A national anthem is the expression in words and music of the very essence of the patriotic fervour of a people. As eternal is the yearning for the peace in all civilized nations, it is perils confronted, the sufferings endured and the heroic sacrifices made in the time of war which intensify those feelings mankind from time immemorial has termed patriotism. Thus it is that almost all national anthems are martial songs.

Many national anthems began as popular songs which became favourites of the soldiers because their stirring rhythms made them ideal marching tunes, and suitable words were often added later. Other anthems are based on folk songs whose origins are lost in the mists of time. But not we Canadians; we went so far as to issue commemorative stamps on our supposed national anthem and its composers on June 6, 1980, long before the date of this bill, June 18. So I feel proud to have brought it to the attention of the government.

Rudyard Kipling stated:

Take 'old of the wings of morning,
And flop round the earth til you're dead;
But you won't get away from the tune that they play.
To the bloomin' old rag over'ead.

All these patriotic songs express feelings of deepest loyalty to the traditions, the ideals, the aspirations, to the very heart and soul of the lands in which they are sung. Such is "O Canada".

Custom and tradition are very real aspects of life but are hard to define precisely. Customs and traditions are living things. They reflect moral values and social conditions, and that is why "O Canada" must live. Custom may be said to be a long-established practice, an unwritten rule, dependent for its continued usage on long consent of society. Such is "O Canada". Tradition is the process of passing from one generation to another beliefs, feelings, codes of behaviour, a philosophy of life. Tradition is symbolism, for most people find it difficult to express spiritual and abstract ideas in a few words.

"O Canada" has its roots in the formation and development of this great nation. Its genesis goes back to the year 1880 when it was suggested that a competition be held for the composition of a national anthem. Some of the principals involved in the evolution of "O Canada" were Mr. Justice Routhier; the Lieutenant-Governor of Quebec, Dr. Theodore Robitaille; the famous French Canadian composer, Calixa Lavallee; music editor, Arthur Lavigne. It had its prime roots in French Canada. It was not until the turn of the century in 1908 that an English version composed by Robert Stanley Weir gradually came into use.

In 1924 the Association of Canadian Clubs endorsed Weir's version as a suitable anthem to be sung at all Canadian Club meetings. At the same time the Weir version was printed in many school readers in several provinces and was given official

recognition by the federal and provincial governments on many important occasions. The Weir version was used to mark the fiftieth anniversary of confederation on July 1, 1917.

As stated previously, the words in my private member's bill were those in common usage in both English and French. In 1948, by order in council it became the anthem of Canada's Armed Forces, and they were required to salute it. Similarly, the Department of External Affairs provided that "O Canada" be afforded the recognition of the national anthem of Canada. Also as stated earlier, in 1967 the special joint committee of the Senate and the House of Commons recommended that the government be authorized to adopt the music of "O Canada" as composed by Calixa Lavallee as the music for the national anthem.

The original Weir version would be best but let us not prevaricate. At the present time there are records and printed cards in both official languages. Probaby many members are aware of them; I have them here. I would urge, whatever happens to this bill in the new version we come out with or if it remains the same, by private member's bill, that cards and records be printed immediately and that by working with the department of education in each province they are placed in every school in the land. We could educate at the television level also. I would recommend the national anthem be played for one year following the date of its acceptance at the end of the CBC newscast, superimposing the words on the television screen. I recommend that we use this opportunity of a broadcast publicity campaign for national unity.

Some hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Stewart: Canada's present has not arisen because of some strange miracle, as was pointed out across the floor as well, but because generations of men and women have been ready to stand for freedom, the rule of law, and to work with courage and dedication. Our hope must be that Canadians of today and of tomorrow will not forsake the idealism that inspired our forefathers and strengthened the purpose of the brave men and women who forged us a new country in a new world. The so-called old-fashioned virtues are as essential today as they ever were to the formation of a new generation worthy of our pride. Nothing can change the need in our national life for people who have industry, courage, charity, patriotism, loyalty and honour.

The designation of "O Canada" as our official national anthem will have symbolic significance and perhaps make a worth-while contribution to the cause of national unity. It may bring to all of us a deeper appreciation of our national heritage and a common feeling of national pride—pride in our forefathers, in their visions and indomitable courage; pride in a rich and generous land; pride in the growth and development of our country; pride in the Canadian people. Perhaps this pride can be expressed appropriately in the words of J. A. Ritchie when he said:

The wholesome sea is at her gates,
Her gates both east and west.