

Let's fight our colonial mentality

They must receive justice in Canada, but Canadians must also receive justice in their own country.

Let me give you a little cultural example of what I call inherent colonialism.

Gratien Gelinas wrote a play which had 400 productions in Canada. It was a smashing success — it spoke to Canadians and they knew what it meant.

It went to New York and played a very few days and was declared a parochial failure.

Now, 400 Canadian audiences can't be wrong. The parochialism was in New York. They were unable to understand another culture which simply did not talk the 'American language.'

And so they said "parochial culture" unaware that they, in fact, had the parochial minds. . .

Canadians cosmopolitan

Canadians are among the most cosmopolitan people in the world — they know the U.S., they know Britain, they know France.

But these countries know nothing of Canada.

They call Canada 'parochial' because they don't understand it.

You have this problem with many university professors who come to Canada, and know nothing

about Canada, often with a contempt for Canada and very often say that if Canadians want to know anything important, they will know what is going on in the U.S., Britain and la belle France.

I want to look at something which isn't usually talked about in Canadian universities — Hodgett's book, *What Culture, What Heritage?*

Read it and grow gray, it's a shocking book. I'm going to read a couple of extracts to show you that the colonial-mindedness in Canada is destroying Canada. . .

"Students in faculties of education as well as practising teachers showed inability to identify anything unique in Canadian history, or in our modern society; lacked concern for, or awareness of, any difference between French Canadians or other Canadians, or between their own cultural heritage and that of the U.S."

Hodgett also disapproves of Canadian educators who "grasp with uncritical haste at every idea coming across the border from the U.S."

Here is what he has to say about the new courses being developed in the U.S.: "no more than different approaches to an old (U.S.) nationalism redesigned to serve the needs of a world-wide imperial power."

(By the way, Mr. Hodgett, as far as I know, is

not 'left' or an NDP member.)

That brings us to the problem of non-Canadian scholars in the universities.

Speaking of individual scholars one does not want to say 'that man is a beast' or 'that man is dreadful'.

One is not saying that the individual is a danger to Canadian universities. Very often individuals will write to the local papers saying that 'I'm just a simple red-blooded historian and I'm just teaching history and why are you picking on me?'

We are not picking on individuals — we are directing attention to a major national problem, which is the de-Canadianization of our universities.

The non-Canadian scholar, particularly the scholar from chauvanistic nations, from empires and past empires, very often feel that they come from a superior culture.

They believe that, and why shouldn't they, poor things — they've been conditioned to believe it.

Bringing culture to 'wogs'

When they come to Canada, they honestly believe they are bringing the 'best'; bring culture to the 'wogs'.

Why shouldn't they believe it, at home they are told they are going to an underdeveloped country. . .

When you go through the non-Canadian group, one sees them as a genuine national problem.

And Canadians must right that problem.

But Canadians must not, with rancour or hatred, attack these people, unless they are foolish enough to say the kind of idiotic thing that James Smith says in the *Toronto Star* article "This U.S. professor tries to slow down the influx of Americans."

He says that aside from his duties as Associate Chairman of his department, he teaches two subjects, American government and the government of Germany.

"Naturally the first (U.S. government)" he says, "is taught purely from a U.S. point of view."

"Naturally," the article says — but why?

Because he is an American and he thinks that the teaching of American government is best taught from a U.S. point of view.

But the teaching of American government in Canada is best taught and screened through the knowledge, the traditions and the comprehension of Canadians.

To learn U.S. government as an American wants you to see it is to be brainwashed into the American position of what American government is.

But Smith goes on "When I teach on Germany's government I try to be careful of comparisons. I use only Canadian terminology. I always use riding, for example and not electoral district."

No there is a profound recognition of the Canadian fact!

Further: "While Smith leans over backwards to hire good Canadians at the junior level, he's blunt about getting the best for the senior ranks.

"I don't care where they're from," he says. "When you hire senior staff, you're hiring considerable professional expertise and because the U.S. is next door, with a population of 200 million compared to Canada's 20 million, that's where most of the well-seasoned professionals can be found. . ."

(This quote provoked much laughter and applause.)

We also have the problem of the colonial-minded Canadian taught in the U.S., and I think that we have to recognize that this is a serious problem.

They come back from the U.S., many of them with their minds blown, especially in the Social Sciences where the American way of studying is to universalize every model, but to universalize it in terms of what is unfortunately U.S. Manifest Destiny and U.S. Imperialism. . .

What, then, is to be done?

We must learn to struggle in our classrooms and in our economy. We must become masters in our own house.

This is an abridged version of the speech given by Carleton English professor and fervent Canadian nationalist Robin Mathews at York on January 30.

