

*Private Members' Business*

indications are that the then Ontario government seemed to find this weighty souvenir too much of a burden. It was only in 1984 that the ruins of this arch were displayed to the public.

In 1982, the Quebec government decided to move ahead with the process of recognizing the historic contribution made by the Patriotes. Referring to the ideal of liberty, Premier René Lévesque paid tribute to the Patriotes in these terms: "The Patriotes of the 19th century expressed that ideal in their own way, with the means they felt they had to use. No one can doubt the honesty of their approach, whatever judgment one may pass on what has been termed the Rebellion. And we must remember that we owe them a debt for having laid the groundwork here for the advent of responsible government, genuinely popular government". It is from this perspective that the National Assembly voted for the introduction of a Journée nationale des Patriotes, which since then has been marked each year on the Sunday closest to November 23.

In 1987, the bishops of Quebec reacted as well, lifting the previous religious sanctions against the Patriotes who had fallen in battle during the uprisings of 1837 and 1838. At the same time, the bishops recognized that the social and political background of the time had influenced the decision that had been made by the religious authorities. As a result, religious burial of the rebels' remains was finally allowed.

At the federal level, unfortunately, there have been stumbling blocks in the way of slow progress toward regaining respectability for the Patriotes. In 1988, Canada Post, claiming to have lost a file, categorically refused to issue a stamp paying tribute to the Patriotes. This refusal was all the more surprising and incomprehensible since in 1971 Canada Post had issued a stamp to the memory of Patriote and reformer Louis-Joseph Papineau.

I would also regret it if I did not stress one event, one of the oddest and most indicative of the ambivalence of successive federal governments.

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In 1970, the Right Hon. Pierre Elliot Trudeau, then Prime Minister of Canada, took part in the unveiling, in Australia, of a monument to the memory of the 58 Patriotes from Lower Canada, exiled and imprisoned there for two years and then freed conditionally before most of them decided to return home.

On this plaque can be read, in both of Canada's official languages, the following words: "—in commemoration of the 130th anniversary of the Canadian exiles' landing in Australia and the sacrifices made by many Canadians and Australians for the advent of independent, equal and free countries within the Commonwealth".

We also note that a monument in honour of the 92 Reformers from Upper Canada, who had been exiled to Tasmania, was also unveiled by a Canadian official that same year. It would seem that the Australians have a keener sense of history that did the governments of Canada of those times. This absence of official recognition by successive governments and Parliaments of Canada is all the more odd since we find numerous references to the Patriotes enshrined in the very walls of the building in which Canadian democracy is exercised.

Indeed, sculptures of George-Étienne Cartier, Louis-Hippolyte Lafontaine and Robert Baldwin can be found at the entrance to the House. Cartier is also one of the persons in the famous painting entitled "The Fathers of Confederation". What is more, in the northeast corner of the grounds of the Parliament Buildings is a statue of Louis-Hippolyte Lafontaine and Robert Baldwin. We note in passing that coins struck in honour of the Patriotes were legal tender in this country in the 19th century.

While it is very disappointing to see that, until now, successive governments of Canada have not deigned to recognize the historic role played by the Patriotes and Reformers, we can still be glad that they have shown more diligence in other cases. One particularly interesting precedent reminds us to challenge the implacable verdicts of history. I refer, of course, to the resolution of May 29, 1992, passed unanimously in this House, recognizing Louis Riel as one of the founders of Manitoba and of the Canadian Confederation.

From that point on, no one could challenge Riel's contribution to the historic development of Canada. Although Riel participated in violent uprisings and was hanged in 1885 for high treason, the House recognized the value and the historic role played by that former MP, who had reached the conclusion that change could only come by force of arms. Joe Clark said, referring to Riel: "We must rely on the positive aspects of our experience rather than the negative ones".

The historic vacuum or, more precisely, the historic ambiguity that has persisted since pardon was extended to the Patriotes in 1849 and the Reformers in 1844 must be remedied. Until now, federal governments and Parliaments have been particularly silent on this issue. The vote that will end the debate beginning now on this motion will clarify formally the position of Canada's Parliament on this issue. By means of this vote, the House will have an opportunity to say whether it prefers unctuous endorsement of the decision made over 160 years ago or whether it is time, in light of the findings of the Durham report, the creation of the Canadian federation, and the introduction of responsible government, to take a fresh look at this period in our history.