

# BOURASSA REPLIES TO PAPINEAU

**Mr. Henri Bourassa has made public the following letter:**

Montreal, August 2nd, 1916.

Andrew R. McMaster, Esq., K. C., 189 St. James St., City—

Dear Sir: On my return from an absence of several weeks, I found your letter of the 18th ult., and the copy of a letter apparently written to me by your partner, Capt. Talbot Papineau, on the 21st of March.

Capt. Papineau's letter, I am informed, appeared, written in English to his "dear Cousin Henri?" How in Montreal, Quebec, Ottawa and elsewhere. You have thus turned it into a kind of political manifesto and constituted yourself its publisher. Allow me, therefore, to send you my reply, requesting you to have it transmitted to Capt. Papineau, granting that he is the real author of that document. I can hardly believe it. A brave and active officer as he is has seldom the time to prepare and write such long pieces of political eloquence. Then, why should Capt. Papineau, who writes and speaks French elegantly, who claims so highly his French origin and professes with such ardor his love of France, have portfolio? and why do you send me a copy, instead of it that a letter, written on the 21st of March, has reached me but four months later, through your medium? For what purpose did you keep it so long in the name of a young and gallant officer, who has the of the letter itself?

It is, you say, an "open letter." It was, nevertheless, meant to reach me. It opens and ends with forms of language bearing the touch of intimate relationship—more so even than could be expected from the rare intercourse which, in spite of our blood connection, has so far existed between your partner and myself. The whole thing has the appearance of a political manoeuvre, executed under the name of a young and gallant officer, who has the advantage or inconvenience of being my cousin. That Capt. Papineau has put his signature at the foot of that document, is possible; but he would certainly not have written it in cool thought, after due reflection. It not only expresses opinion radically opposed to those I heard from him before the war; it also contains inaccuracies of fact of which I believe him honorably incapable.

He mentions "some discussions in the past," "differences of opinion," which have left "uninjured" a "pleasant friendship," dating, he says "from the time of (his) birth." From his childhood to his return from Oxford, I do not think we had ever met, and certainly never to exchange the slightest glimpse of thought or opinion. Of matters of national concern we talked but once in all my life. From that one conversation I gathered the impression that he was still more opposed than myself to any kind of Imperial solidarity. He even seemed much disposed to hasten the day of the independence of Canada. Since I met him on two or three occasions. We talked of matter indifferent, totally foreign to the numerous questions treated with such eloquent profuseness and so little reasoning in his letter of the 21st of March.

How can he charge me with having expressed "unhappy views" "at the outstart of the war," in August, 1914, and held them stubbornly "unchanged" till this day? In August, 1914, I was abroad. My first pronouncement on the intervention of Canada in the war is dated September 8th, 1914. In that editorial, while repelling the principles of Imperial solidarity and their consequences, and maintaining the nationalist doctrine in which Capt. Papineau—and you as well—pretends to be still a believer, I pronounced myself in favor of the intervention of Canada, as a nation, for the defence of the superior interest uniting Canada with France and Britain. My "unhappy views" were thus analogous to those of your partner. It is but later, long after Capt. Papineau was gone, that my attitude was changed and brought me to condemn the participation of Canada in the war,—or rather the political inspiration of that participation and the many abuses which have resulted therefrom. The reasons of that change are well known to those who have read or heard with attention and good faith all my statements on the matter. To sum them up is now sufficient.

The free and independent participation of Canada—free for the nation and free for the individuals—I had accepted, provided it remained within reasonable bounds, in conformity with the conditions of

the country. But the Government, the whole of Parliament, the press and politicians of both parties all applied themselves systematically to obliterate the free character of Canada's intervention. "Free" enlistment is now carried on by means of blackmailing, intimidation and threats of all sorts. Advantage has been taken of the emotion caused by the war to assert, with the utmost intensity and intolerance, the doctrine of Imperial solidarity, triumphantly opposed in the past by our statesmen and the whole Canadian people, up to the days of the infamous South African War, concocted by Chamberlain, Rhodes and the British imperialists with the clear object of drawing the self-governing colonies into "the vortex of European militarism." That phrase of your political leader, Sir Wilfred Laurier, is undoubtedly fresh in your mind. After having given way to the imperialistic current of 1899. Sir Wilfrid Laurier and Liberal party had come back to the nationalist doctrine. The naval scare of 1909 threw them again under the yoke of imperialism; the war has achieved their enslavement; they united with the Tory-jingo-Imperialists of all shades to make of the participation of Canada in the war an immense political manoeuvre and thus assure the triumph of British imperialism. You and your partner, as many others, have followed your party through its various evolutions. I have remained firmly attached to the principles I laid down at the time of the South African war and maintained unswervingly ever since.

As early as the month of March, 1900, I pointed out the possibility of a conflict between Great Britain and Germany and the danger of laying down in South Africa a precedent, the fatal consequence of which would be to draw Canada in all the wars undertaken by the United Kingdom. Sir Wilfrid Laurier and the Liberal leaders laughed at my apprehensions; against my warnings they quoted the childish safeguard of the "no precedent clause" inserted in the order-in-council of the 14th of October, 1899. For many years after till 1912 and 1913, they kept singing the praises of the Kaiser and extolling the peaceful virtues of Germany. They now try to regain time by denouncing vociferously the "barbarity" of the "Huns". Today, as in 1900, 1911, and always, I believe that all the nations of Europe are the victims of their own mistakes, of the complacent servility with which they submitted to the dominance of all Imperialists and traders in human flesh who, in England as in Germany, in France as in Russia, have brought the peoples to slaughter in order to increase their reappings of cursed gold. German Imperialism and British Imperialism, French Militarism and Russian Tsarism, I hate with equal detestation; I believe as firmly today as in 1899, that Canada, a nation of America, has a nobler mission of fulfilment to bind herself to the fate of the nations of Europe or to any spoliating Empire—whether it be the spoliators of Belgium, Alsace or Poland, or those of Ireland or the Transvaal, of Greece or the Balkans.

Politicians of both parties, your Liberal friends as well as their Conservative opponents, feign to be much scandalized at my "treasonable disloyalty." I could well afford to look upon them as a pack of knaves and hypocrites. In 1896, your Liberal leaders and friends stumped the whole Province of Quebec with the cry "Why should we fight for England?" From 1902 to 1911, Sir Wilfrid Laurier was acclaimed by them as the indomitable champion of Canada's autonomy against British Imperialism. His resisting attitude at the Imperial Conferences of 1902 and 1907 was praised to the skies. His famous phrase on the "vortex of European militarism," and his determination from keeping Canada far from it, became the party's byword—always in the Province of Quebec, of course. His Canadian Navy scheme was presented as a step towards the independence of Canada.

Then came the turn of the Conservatives to tread in the footsteps of the Nationalists; they soon outstripped us. A future member of the Conservative Cabinet, Mr. Blondin, brought back to life an old saying of Sir Adolphe Chapleau, and suggested to pierce the Union Jack with bullets in order to let pass the breeze of liberty. The Tory leaders Sir Robert Borden, Sir George Foster, the virtuous Bob Rogers, and even our national super-Kitchener, Sir Sam Hughes, while trumpeting the purity of their Imperialism, greeted with undisguised joy the anti-Imperialist victory of Drummond-Arthabaska, and used it for all it was worth to win the general elections of 1911.

By what right should those people hold me as a "traitor," because I remain consequent with the prin-

ciples that I have never ceased to uphold and which both parties have exploited alternately, as long as it suited their purpose and kept them in power or brought them to office?

Let it not be pretended that those principles are out of place, pending the war. To prevent Canada from participating in the war, then foreseen and predicted, was their very object and *raison d'être*. To throw them aside and deny them when the time of test came, would have required a lack of courage and sincerity, of which I feel totally incapable. If this is what they mean by "British loyalty" and "superior civilization," they had better hang me at once. I will never obey such dictates and will ever hold in deepest contempt the acrobats who lend themselves to all currents of blind popular passion in order to serve their personal or political ends.

This, let it be well understood, does not apply to your partner. His deeds have shown the sincerity of his political turn. Without agreeing with his new opinions, I admired his silent courage in running to the front at the first call. His verbose political manifesto—supposing he is really responsible for it—adds nothing to his merits. Still less does it enhance the dignity and moral worth of the politicians and pressmen of all kinds who, after having denounced war and imperialism, and while taking great care not to risk their precious body, have become the apostles of war and the upholders of imperialism.

I will not undertake to answer every point of the dithyrambic plea of my gallant cousin. When he says that I am too far away from the trenches to judge of the real meaning of this war, he may be right. On the other hand, his long and diffuse piece of eloquence proves that the excitement of warfare and the distance from home have obliterated in his mind the fundamental realities of his native country. I content myself with touching upon one point, on which he unhappily lends credits to the most mischievous of the many anti-national opinions circulated by the jingo press. He takes the French-Canadians to task and challenges their patriotism because they enlist in lesser number than the other elements of the population of Canada. Much could be said upon that. It is sufficient to signalize one patent fact: the number of recruits for the European war, in the various provinces of Canada and from each component element of the population is in inverse ratio of the enrootment in the soil and the traditional patriotism arising therefrom. The new comers from the British Isles have enlisted in much larger proportion than English-speaking Canadians born in this country, while these have enlisted more than the French-Canadians. The western provinces have given more recruits than Ontario, and Ontario more than Quebec. In each province, the floating population of the cities, the students, the laborers and clerks, either unemployed or threatened with dismissal, have supplied more soldiers than the farmers. Does it mean that the city dwellers are more patriotic than the country people? or that the new-comers from England are better Canadians than their fellow-citizens of British origin, born in Canada? No; it simply means that in Canada, as in every other country, at all times, the citizens of the oldest origin are the least disposed to be stampeded into distant ventures of no direct concern to their native land. It proves also that military service is more repugnant to the rural than to the urban populations.

There is among the French-Canadians a larger proportion of farmers, fathers of large families, than among any other ethnical element in Canada. Above all, the French-Canadians are the only group exclusively Canadian, in its whole and by each of the individuals of which it is composed. They look upon the perturbations of Europe, even those of England or France, as foreign events. Their sympathies naturally go to France against Germany; but they do not think they have an obligation to fight for France, no more than the French of Europe would hold themselves bound to fight for Canada against the United States or Japan, or even against Germany, in case Germany should attack Canada without threatening France.

English Canada, not counting the "blokes," contains a considerable proportion of people still in the first period of national incubation. Under the sway of imperialism, a fair number have not yet decided whether their allegiance is to Canada or to the Empire, whether the United Kingdom or the Canadian Confederacy is their country.

As to the newcomers from the United Kingdom, they are not Canadian in any sense. England or