



Bulletin

Vol. 23, No. 6

February 7, 1968

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THE ACHIEVEMENTS OF CANADIAN FEDERALISM

The following extracts are from a recent address by Mr. Maurice Sauvé, Minister of Forestry and Rural Development, to the second annual conference of the Liberal Federation of Canada (Quebec), in Montreal:

To a foreigner, one of the most puzzling characteristics of Canadians is their tendency to indulge in bitter criticism of their own country. Fastening on the inadequacies of Canada rather than celebrating its achievements, Canadians often seem blinded by doubt from seeing the value of the society they, and their forefathers, have built. The outsider is astonished that, over a century, four scattered colonies of a few hundred thousand people have grown to a modern country of 20 million spanning a continent. Canadians often seem dismayed that they have failed to accomplish even more....

The greatest accomplishment of the Canadian federation has been the nourishment of the French-Canadian community in North America.

That survival is the important fact of Canadian life – not only for French Canada but for the rest of Canada. For it is the survival of French-Canadian culture which gives Canada the possibility – a possibility which I believe is becoming more and more reality – of achieving a unique society. We are not simply a North American society, one which has rejected the privilege, the class, the inequality of European life – we are an egalitarian society which has adopted as a goal the ideal of two great cultures living together in harmony. We are not the United States – because we have rejected for ourselves the construction of a homogeneous society. We are trying to achieve a difficult and different goal. And that is why the survival – the *thriving* – of French Canada is important to all Canadians. It is essential for the realization of a unique Canadian society.

SURVIVAL FACTORS

French Canada's survival has depended on three factors. First of these is our own determination that our culture should continue. But it also depends on other factors: the fact that, in the past, even if English-speaking Canadians felt no great sympathy and understanding for French Canada, no sizable group of them was determined to extinguish our culture. Our survival, in other words, has depended not only on our resolution – it has also depended on the tolerance of our compatriots.

It has depended, thirdly, on the establishment of a federal system of government – one which gave responsibility for governmental activities of regional importance to provincial governments. The result was a provincial government – that of Quebec – dominated by French Canadians, which was responsible for governmental activity in areas, such as education, in which, there was and is a clear French-Canadian view which, at times, diverges from that of other Canadians.

The built-in protection which, in practice, the Canadian constitution gave to French Canadians has been crucial. For in the years following Confederation, English Canadians often seemed unsympathetic to, or uncomprehending of, the idea of a country which, from coast to coast, would include in an equal partnership the French- and English-speaking cultures. French Canada, turning inward, found a