

Private Members' Business

● (1830)

The historian, Faillon, described the horse as "small but robust, hocks of steel, thick mane floating in the wind, bright and lively eyes, pricking sensitive ears at the least noise, going along day or night with the same courage, wide awake beneath its harness, spirited, good, gentle, affectionate, following his road with finest instinct to come surely to his own stable". What fitting attributes for a national symbol.

Another reason to recognize this uniquely Canadian breed as our national horse is its need for protection and encouragement. Throughout history, despite its strength and stamina and sometimes because of it, this little horse has often been in real danger of extinction. After 1670, the last year that horses were shipped to Canada as gifts to nobility, the 40-odd horses in New France multiplied. Their numbers reached 5,200 by 1720 and 12,000 by 1760. However when the British captured Quebec in 1759 the fortunes of the Canadian horse began to decline. British immigrants brought their own horses and bred them to the durable little Canadians, depleting the purebred stock.

Many French Canadians packed up and moved away to Manitoba or the United States, taking their horses prized for their cross breeding qualities with them. From 1861 to 1865 thousands of Canadian horses were shipped to the U.S. to be used as cavalry mounts and pack horses during the American civil war. A great many died in the war and those that survived never returned to Canada.

By the end of the 19th century only a small number of pure blooded Canadian horses were left. Despite breeding programs only 383 registered Canadian horses were on record as of 1976, and the future of the breed seemed pretty dark. Since the late

1970s determined Canadian horse lovers and breeders who believe it is a perfect all-purpose family horse have increased the numbers to the point where the breed is no longer in danger of disappearing.

As gentle, relaxed and intelligent as they are, some breeders believe they will be in greater and greater demand for tourist activities from endurance trail rides to pulling visitors through the narrow streets of our oldest cities.

However until now the horse that can "do everything but dance" has certainly not received the recognition and honour it deserves. The little iron horse was an integral part of the lives of Canadians more than 300 years ago, working alongside our first colonists and doubling as carriage horses for the family and race horses on Sundays and holidays.

All in all it is what J. G. Rutherford, federal veterinary director and livestock commissioner, reportedly testified before a parliamentary committee in 1909 when he said that it was "the best general purpose horse raised in Canada".

It is high time we recognize it as Canada's official national horse and I thank my hon. colleague from Lanark—Carleton for bringing it to the attention of the House.

The Deputy Speaker: There being no further members rising to speak on the matter, the time provided for the consideration of Private Members' Business has expired and the order is dropped from the Order Paper.

It being 6.35 p.m., the House stands adjourned until tomorrow at 2 p.m.

(The House adjourned at 6.35 p.m.)