

*Private Members' Business*

to the following principles: equality of citizens, regardless of origin, language or religion”.

The second goal was the establishment of truly democratic institutions. Specifically, they demanded the establishment of the principle of ministerial responsibility or, in other terms, the creation of an executive formed primarily of representatives in the House of Assembly and responsible to it—that is, accountable to the people rather than to the British crown. At the meeting mentioned earlier, one of the resolutions passed required delegates to adhere to the principles of an elected legislative council, an executive responsible to the people, and finally legislative control over all public moneys from any source.

The third goal concerned, to a large extent, the civil, political and economic liberties that many peoples of the world were beginning to adopt.

In addition to being clearly set out in the hundreds of resolutions passed by the various Patriote assemblies, these three main goals were also mentioned in assembly proceedings, statements, newspaper articles, speeches in public and in the House, petitions to the British Crown and throughout the literature of the movement published at the time. For many long years before they took up arms, the Patriotes peacefully defended their civil rights. The pen and the word were the Patriotes' main weapons, before they turned to pitchforks and shotguns. When they saw that their speeches in parliament, their demonstrations in the streets and the articles they published in newspapers were powerless to reorient the governor's autocratic and arbitrary power and that he preferred to further limit their rights, some Patriotes finally decided that they had no choice but to take up arms against Britain's authority.

Some people might wonder whether it is relevant to debate and vote on such a motion today in this House. In answer to their protests, I say that citizens who are interested in history and justice, descendants and friends of Patriotes and Reformers, have been striving for many years to ensure that parliaments recognize, finally and officially, the very source of their existence.

Besides these aspirations that have been held by certain segments of the population, historical arguments can also be raised to justify passing the motion before the House today.

The Patriotes and the Reformers, before some of them decided that peaceful means would not be adequate to the task, were what we would call today model citizens who were involved in community life; they worked toward establishing a government that was responsible for its acts, and promoted self-determination and representative elections.

• (1110)

But our interpretation of history is often quite unreliable; our collective memory seems to retain only what suits it. It must be remembered that some persons who are now described as Canadian heroes were closely linked to the patriot movement. We have only to think of George-Étienne Cartier, a lawyer but also an active politician and later a father of the Canadian Confederation and Prime Minister from 1857 to 1858. We can also think of Louis-Hippolyte Lafontaine, an ardent supporter of the Patriote cause, imprisoned without having taken part in the violence and later Premier from 1848 to 1851.

We can also think of Louis-Joseph Papineau, an MP for 25 years, a politician and above all a free speaker, admired by his peers and by the public; or of William Lyon Mackenzie, an MP from Upper Canada, expelled from the Upper Canada Assembly for libel and then re-elected five times, who chose arms as a last resort. Finally, we can think of Robert Baldwin, who shared the democratic ideals that Louis-Hippolyte Lafontaine believed in, so much so that these two men became the leaders of the reform parties in Upper and Lower Canada respectively.

Paying tribute to these persons who ensured that we may live in this democratic system of which we are so proud means, among other things, not denying a part of their lives or the strength of their convictions just because it suits us to do so. The motion tabled today is part of a lengthy historic evolution. In fact, it is one more step toward the recognition of the historic contribution of the Patriotes, which has been laborious and full of unexpected twists.

In February 1849, the Amnesty Act signed by Queen Victoria granted royal pardon to those involved in the skirmishes of 1837 and 1838. That Act paved the way for reparation for losses borne by the people of Lower Canada during looting by British troops. We note that a similar act had been proclaimed in Upper Canada four years earlier, in 1845. This royal pardon made waves in loyalist circles, resulting in the fire in the Parliament buildings at Montreal in April 1849.

A number of years were to pass before a monument to the glory of the Patriotes was unveiled in 1926 by Lieutenant Governor Narcisse Pérodeau, in front of the former Prison du pied-du-courant in Montreal, where 12 Patriotes, including Joseph Narcisse Cardinal, MP for La Prairie, had been hanged nearly a century earlier.

One hundred years after the events, in 1938, the Government of Canada seemed disposed to promote the cause of the Patriotes. An imposing arch to their memory was built at Niagara and unveiled by Prime Minister William Lyon Mackenzie King. This arch bore a plaque on which were engraved the names of the 32 martyrs of 1837-38, both French speaking and English speaking. Unfortunately this arch was destroyed in 1967, the year of the centennial of the Canadian Confederation, and all