

Caouette Replies To Winter

Views Of French-Canadian Separatists Explained

In a recent edition of *The Gateway*, an associate professor of agriculture, G. R. Winter, addressed an open letter to Maurice Caouette of the Department of Modern Languages.

Dr. Winter's letter said that Mr. Caouette was a confirmed separatist, who had given up all hopes of biculturalism for Canada. Dr. Winter challenged Mr. Caouette to tell *Gateway* readers what French Canadian Nationalists want from English Canadians.

In the return letter below, Mr. Caouette replies to Dr. Winter, and explains the position of the "Separatist."

Monsieur Winter,

Si donc j'ai des droits égaux, comme vous dites, et je dis bien SI, je peux donc, Monsieur, vous parler d'égal à égal. Vous me comprendrez lorsque j'emploie ma langue, j'en suis sûr, aussi bien que moi je vous comprends lorsque vous employez la vôtre. Car, vous formez, Monsieur, l'élite du Canada, et je suis sûr qu'un homme éduqué et cultivé comme vous l'êtes, sans doute, qui se soucie des ennuis de son pays, a su sûrement mettre en application les principes les plus fondamentaux et élémentaires de ce que vous appelez cette grande "expérience".

Now In English . . .

You can see, I am sure, Mr. Winter, the futility of my answering in French. I would only confuse and aggravate my readers. If I am to communicate with my fellow countrymen, I must adopt a language which is not my mother tongue, even though French has official status in Canada, and express my arguments in English, and necessarily, not as forcefully as they would be expressed in French.

This, you call freedom and equality of opportunity! I ask you, Mr. Winter; who is conceding a "right?" who is making a concession now?

Before going any further, I must clarify my position. I am NOT to be considered as the representative of the French Canadian opinion in general, nor the representative of the French Canadians of Alberta. Although some of the opinions may be those of the French Canadian position, I disagree with them on many points. These men have in the past, and are still now fighting nobly, and with just cause for what they consider to be a moral and natural right.

"Hurried Away"

The reason I "hurried away," as you put it, from our conversation after the panel discussion on Oct. 17, (since I must clarify it again for you), was indeed not because I feared discussion, as your letter seems to imply, but because it was already 6 p.m. and I had to go home to eat, then return to the university for a rehearsal of *Amphitryon 38* at 7 p.m. I think you would have done the same thing had you been in my position.

You ask me "What concessions would appease your troubled spirit?" Either "troubled" means the French Canadian (or the Separatist) does not know what he wants, in which case it would be foolish to grant concessions, or either "troubled" means insane, in which case it would indeed be insane on your part to grant them their wishes.

You ask me to tell you what Québec nationalists want? I must admit that I don't know what it is exactly you mean by Québec nationalists. If you take the words to mean "the Separatists", then the question is indeed

easily answered. They want nothing from you! But, I think you mean, not the Separatists, but the French Canadian who wants to remain within Confederation if certain changes are made.

Biased Reports?

Yet, the Canadian and French Canadian problem is often stated and analyzed in *Le Devoir*. You will even find a number of articles dealing with the problem, every day. You have only to read the paper, as I do, to be fully informed, or better informed, since the English press incompletely reports, when it does report, the events happening in Québec, and sometimes with a definite bias.

Québec has been in the midst of a very serious revolution for some time now. Yet we only occasionally read of the activities there in the English press, and when we do, it is usually an incident that will stir the anger of the English-speaking Canadian, rather than inform him of the problem of his fellow Canadians. The press is rendering a great disservice to Canada. One has the impression that it is willfully keeping the English population ignorant of problems that one day may separate the country.

Instead of laughing at, or ignoring the French Canadians, who for the majority want to build a stronger Canada, it is high time the English-speaking population in general try to understand the French Canadian, as you, sir, are trying to understand them.

Any Chance?

What chances have French Canadians of surviving as an entity in a world of 200,000,000 English speaking persons? What chances have they in Canada? (To the Separatist, the question is easily answered. French Canadians have no chance of surviving in such a country, but do have a chance if they join the world of 150,000,000 French-speaking people.)

In Québec, you will say, French Canadians have all the rights they want. Yes, but do rights alone assure survival? Rights without power bring disaster. How much of Québec's industries are in the hands of Québécois? One might say that it was up to them. Was it really? How much of our own Canadian industries are in our own hands? How much of Alberta industries? What applies to Canada applies also to Québec, but more forcefully there, because those who own and rule in industry, use another language to give their orders.

Outside of Québec the problem is worse. The French Canadian is told that all of Canada is his country. Yes, but let him leave Québec, and he must renounce everything French. Oh! he does have a right to migrate, many have, but at the cost of their identity as French Canadians, and

only to be treated, not as Canadians anymore, but as a minority group with no more rights or privileges than newly arrived immigrants.

This is what is referred to in your letter as "equal opportunity" for one of the founding races of our country. These are the "rights" that we possess in Canada, outside of Québec.



MAURICE CAOUETTE
... comes back

Only Bilingual Province

Confederation, outside of Québec, may be a "great experiment in cultural, linguistic and religious tolerance," but for what culture and what language? A visit to Québec proves that the only province that has completely tried this experiment is Québec, the only bilingual province in Canada.

How can you speak of an experiment in linguistic and cultural tolerance, when in Manitoba, for example (where French had

official status before and after it became a province) one of the first official acts of that Parliament was to banish French from schools?

How can you speak of an experiment in linguistic and cultural tolerance, when in British Columbia, for example, French parents who want to maintain their heritage among their children (and isn't that a natural duty?) must doubly tax themselves if they are to have French taught in their private schools one hour a day?

How can you speak of tolerance when the Department of Education forbids French to be taught to English-speaking students after school, even at the request of the parents?

How can you speak of tolerance when we who are proud of our heritage, are not allowed to maintain it?

Not Tolerance

That is not tolerance. We want to be able to continue being Canadians, but French Canadians, and we don't want to suffer because we refuse to become "something else." We want to be able to live our heritage and practice our culture, not only in Québec, but throughout Canada. We no longer want to be considered as speaking a "foreign language," and told to "speak white."

The English-speaking Canadians have to open the door for us. The Departments of Education hold the key. Let the French Canadians have their schools without double taxation and strings attached. Treat us, in your education policies, as the French Canadians treat the English groups in Québec. Don't refuse us entry in your institutions because we don't "speak the language."

Give us programs on TV at hours we can watch, and good programs. (All of French Canada is not made up of the Plouffe family. Why can't we see "Télé-théâtre?") Better still, let us have our own TV station, or for

two national networks, one English, one French? This will not infringe upon your rights. You won't be forced to look at French programs.

We want your press, radio, and TV to be less biased on news from French Canada and to stop calling us Nationalists as if it were a vice. Of course we are Nationalists! We were the first Europeans to make our home in Canada. We are pro-Canadian, don't force us to be any different. For too many other Canadians, to be Nationalistic means to be American!

What Is Treason?

You tell me, Mr. Winter, that those who advocate separation are irresponsible and treasonable. That all depends on what you understand as irresponsibility and treason.

I would indeed be a traitor to my ancestors, to my heritage and culture, and to myself if I didn't resist forces which are trying to assimilate me. Don't I have a responsibility to myself as a free individual and as a man "with equal rights" to be myself and not put on a mask which isn't even Canadian in many instances, but American?

Separation is not the solution Québec wants, but it is ONE solution. You are forcing me to take it. More than half of the French Canadians I started school with have given up being French. And it becomes worse every year. I will not! I want to live as a French-speaking Canadian in my own country with all that I think my freedom implies. If I can't (and every day I see more reasons why I can't), then only if Québec should secede from Confederation, at whatever price, I would, I am afraid, have no choice but to leave. In this sense, I am a separatist.

Yours truly,
Maurice Caouette
Department of
Modern Languages

STUDIO

THEATRE

DIE KURVE

Tancred Dorst

THE CURVE

Dorst, translated H. Beissel

NOVEMBER 29th, 30th

Phone GE3-3265

8:30 in German

9:30 in English

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