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A NEW EMBLEM OF CANADIAN UNITY

Addressing the Twentieth Dominion Convention of the Royal Canadian Legion in Winnipeg, Manitoba, on May 17, Prime Minister L.B. Pearson, in the following words, fulfilled his announced intention of speaking "briefly but frankly" on the issue of a national flag for Canada:

...There is unease and division in Canada today which is a threat to that unity; and this, ironically, at a time when our country is admired, respected and envied throughout the world. The only anti-Canadians I know of are inside our own borders.

When I went overseas in 1915 I had as comrades in my section men whose names were Cameron, Kimura, English, Bleidenstein, De Chapin, O'Shaughnessy. We didn't fall-in, or fall-out, as Irish Canadians, French Canadians, Dutch Canadians, Japanese Canadians. We wore the same uniform, with the same Maple Leaf badge, and we were proud to be known as Canadians, to serve as Canadians and to die, if that had to be, as Canadians.

SPIRIT OF UNITY NEEDED

I wish our country had more of that spirit today, of unity, "togetherness" and resolve - the spirit that was shown by Canadians in time of war when the survival of our country was at stake. Well, the survival of our country as a united and strong federal state is also at stake today.

What we need is that soldierly pride in Canada, that confident, passionate pride in Canada, that men had who wore the uniform with the Maple Leaf

badge on it - a pride, I remember, which used to lead to a scrap or two in the canteens with others who didn't always show sufficient respect for our Canadian status or our Canadian uniform.

What we also need is a patriotism that will put Canada ahead of its parts; that will think more of our future destiny than our past mistakes; that rejects emphatically the idea that, politically, we are, or should become, a federation of two associated states - some kind of pre-war Austria-Hungary. We should have none of such separatism or of petty, narrow nationalism of any kind.

I am a Canadian, very proud to be one. But this does not make me less proud of my British heritage or my Irish origins. It makes me all the more anxious to bring that inheritance to the service of my country. So it would be if I were of another race and spoke another language.

I am a Canadian who speaks English. There are millions of others who speak French and have constitutional rights and privileges as French-speaking Canadians which must be respected and recognized. There are also others - and they are an increasingly important segment of our population - who, while they may speak one of the two official languages, also have an ancestral language which they use, traditions and a culture of which they are proud, and which are neither French nor Anglo-Saxon.

But we are all, or should be, Canadians, and unhyphenated, with pride in our nation and its citizenship, pride in the symbols of that citizenship.

(Over)