

tive system. For the first time, the inhabitants of the area were able to elect their representatives who would meet in Parliament.

The birth of democracy was, however, very quickly marred by mistakes. The people suddenly realised that the legislative assembly elected by the people had no authority over the two councils appointed by London. The legislative council and the executive council were composed of a majority of merchants and professionals who lived in the territory and were appointed by the British crown, which thereby maintained control over decisions concerning the French-speaking population.

The Loyalists in Upper Canada, now known as Ontario, experienced the same anti-democratic stalemate as the francophones. And William Lyon Mackenzie and his party of Reformers also rebelled against this state of affairs—they were not, of course, the Reformers we have today, but the Reformers of the time.

In Lower Canada, the Patriotes and Papineau opposed this injustice. An important point to note here is that francophones were in the majority at that time throughout all of Upper and Lower Canada.

These two political movements attempted peacefully to denounce the constitutional impasse. The Patriotes presented a list of 92 resolutions—weaknesses to be corrected in the Canadian political system. The answer soon arrived—Lord Russell refused to agree to the demands made by Papineau and his party.

There were then only two roads open to the leader of the Patriotes: submission or revolt.

Since 1834, the economic, social and cultural context had been seething. Economically, difficult access to land made it more and more difficult to settle numerous families. Socially, the English-speaking elite controlled almost everything, and particularly jobs. In connection with culture, the Legislative Council refused to respond to the need for an education system as requested by Lower Canada, a little like the situation in Ontario today, in Kingston, for those who are not aware of the issue.

Political instability, economic instability, social and cultural instability were all perfect ingredients for the pot to boil over in Lower Canada and Upper Canada.

The Patriotes, then, wanted to exercise real power over the decisions affecting the future of the people living in Lower Canada. One of their principal demands was ministerial responsibility, which involved having an executive council comprised of members of the legislative assembly—elected officials who made decisions and were responsible to the public for their actions.

London's refusal had regrettable consequences—we must point that out—and they were called the Rebellion of 1838–38. I

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will willingly spare you the details of the Rebellion, as they were described earlier, and go on immediately to the situation analysis carried out by Lord Durham.

After studying the situation in Upper and Lower Canada, and noting that francophones were in the minority at that point, Lord Durham, no fool he, proposed the union of Upper and Lower Canada, that would then be called "United Canada", with an English-speaking majority. Remember that because of this union Lower Canada's debt increased by a factor of 16 to pay for Upper Canada's infrastructures.

After an eight-year adaptation period, in 1848, London recognized the second recommendation in the Durham report—ministerial responsibility. Remember that date: 1848—the birth of true democracy.

We can, without fear of contradiction, state that Mackenzie's Reformers and the Patriotes were the initiators of what is known today as responsible government.

These men, who were killed in combat, hanged or exiled, made it possible for us today to work in one of the most democratic political systems in the world, and they deserve recognition from the Canadian government for their enormous contribution to our political institutions.

• (1155)

Quebec has done this already by proclaiming November 22 as Patriot's Day. Pierre Elliott Trudeau himself did it. In 1970, on the sly in Australia, he inaugurated a monument to the Patriotes. It is now up to us to clear their name for the collective memory of Canadians.

[English]

Mr. John English (Parliamentary Secretary to President of the Queen's Privy Council for Canada and Minister of Intergovernmental Affairs): Madam Speaker, it is with great pleasure that I rise today to address the House on Motion No. 257 to establish a National Patriots' Day.

While I agree with my hon. colleague from Verchères that it is important to celebrate the individuals who have helped to establish our system of responsible government, I have several difficulties with his proposal. The first is the lack of inclusiveness of the proposal. Another is the duplication of what already exists. The third is the peculiar interpretation of the development of responsible government in Canada.

In the first place, as my colleague pointed out earlier, there is the possibility of additional cost.

[Translation]

We do not need a new national holiday to highlight these achievements. Canada Day provides us with an opportunity to celebrate the contribution of many Canadians to the establishment of our democratic system of government.