

Indians extended a warm welcome to explorer Jacques Cartier with demonstrations of joy, repeating the Algonquian word "Cantata", which meant "Welcome". Another explanation, quite as plausible, is that our country has been named after the Spanish words "Aca nada", which mean "There is nothing there". The Spaniards at the time kept repeating those words while sailing up the St. Lawrence because they could not see any sign of wealth. The situation has changed somewhat since then, and time has probably come, four centuries later, to replace the term "Aca nada", meaning "There is nothing there", by the words "O Canada", which mean "Here, there is something, starting with tolerance and richness of the mind".

For every Canadian, Canada is a huge land whose outline is indefinable, whose centre is everywhere, a land already rich with traditions and still full of promises, a country blessed with human and material resources.

[English]

Sir Wilfrid Laurier expressed the same idea in the following terms:

To those who have life before them, let my prayer be this: Remember from this day forth never to look simply at the horizon as it may be limited by the limits of the province, but look abroad over all the continent.

In June, 1967, a joint committee of the House and Senate was formed and given a mandate to study the question of the national anthem of Canada. This committee issued its report in February, 1968, and unanimously recommended that the government immediately adopt "O Canada" as the national anthem of our country. The committee recommended that the slightly modified version of Judge Robert Stanley Weir's text and the original of Sir Adolphe Basile Routhier's French text be adopted together with the music of Calixa Lavallée. This is the recommended version that I have the honour to propose to the House of Commons today.

Madam Speaker, a number of members on both sides of the House have expressed concern over some of the wording of the version recommended unanimously by the 1968 joint committee of the House and Senate. The Minister of State for Multiculturalism (Mr. Fleming), members on this side of the House and, I am sure, on the other side of the House among all parties feel that some of the wording should be changed. Many would like to see the words "sons" and "native land" replaced—in the case of "native land" by the words "cherished land"—to better reflect the reality of Canada. I believe all members are sympathetic to these concerns. I would therefore like to assure hon. members that in the course of the next session the government would be more than willing to see the subject matter of a private member's bill on this question—

Mr. Baker (Nepean-Carleton): Or bills.

Mr. Fox: —or bills, as indicated by the House leader of the official opposition, referred to the appropriate committee of the House for consideration.

At this point I should like to go back in time to present a brief history of "O Canada", to recount briefly the story of its origin and development over the years. Because this subject is

National Anthem

of direct, even personal interest to Canadians across the land, I believe many will want to trace the progress of the events which have led to the tabling of the proposal before us today.

Let us, first of all, journey back to the years shortly after confederation—back to the preparations for a great coming together in Quebec City in 1880 on the day of the feast of Saint-Jean-Baptiste. This was heralded, and rightly so, as a great occasion. The program included a grand banquet attended by the Governor General of the day, the Marquis of Lorne, and his wife, the Princess Louise. Not only was the occasion to involve the highest leaders of state and church but it was expected to attract visitors from the already sizeable French community in the United States as well as participants from many distant parts of Canada.

It would appear from the records that the committee arranging the convention had plans for commissioning a patriotic song to mark the occasion and a competition was to be held. The winning entry would make its debut on June 24, 1880. But time went by and the group responsible for finding a patriotic song realized that it was too late to launch the competition. This turn of events resulted in the involvement of Theodore Robitaille, Lieutenant-Governor of Quebec. He was a man who must have combined a good deal of perception and inventiveness. He took the matter of the patriotic song into his own hands and approached Calixa Lavallée, one of the leading musical figures of his day, who had received recognition both at home and abroad. Lavallée seems to have accepted the assignment eagerly; he had sketched out the music on paper within a week.

Next, Lieutenant-Governor Robitaille approached a judge of the Quebec Superior Court, Adolphe Basile Routhier, who was well known as an orator and man of letters. Mr. Justice Routhier met the challenge with enthusiasm and produced the French lyrics of "O Canada" which have reverberated unchanged for almost a full century.

And so the song "O Canada" had its "coming out", so to speak, during the banquet attended by the Governor General of Canada and by the Lieutenant-Governor of Quebec. The now well-known anthem thrilled the audience when first played on June 24, 1880. Surprisingly, though, nothing much was heard of "O Canada" for more than 20 years. Then, for some unexplained reason, it surfaced again.

[Translation]

In 1915, the newspaper *Le Devoir* published an article by Mr. Arthur Letondal which read in part as follows:

One cannot introduce in the vocabulary a new word or impose a patriotic song on the people. There has to be the right timing, and a set of circumstances which can stir the national spirit and gain its favour. This song, which certain people held in the recesses of their memory, took another 20 years to surface. For what reason? We cannot say. What we do know is that around 1900, by some sort of mysterious agreement, the groups with whom we came to be associated, started a propaganda in favour of what we then called Lavallée's anthem. Our concerts and our ceremonies ended with this song and enthusiasm for it increased every day. Things were in motion. Some editions were then published with English words and were spread across the country, where its adoption is now a certainty and its popularity well recognized.