

Canadian Flag

to have a destiny to realize. The new vitality of Quebec is one of the most encouraging signs indicating that perhaps our apathy has run its course. The destiny of French Canada is inexorably interwoven with ours and cannot be realized alone. How else to explain the repercussions of this movement in Quebec upon the rest of Canada?

The strange paradox is that many of our English speaking commentators on and observers of the political scene who would extol the virtues of the Quebec development often are the very ones who would deplore an extension of this movement on similar terms to the rest of Canada. The Canadian body politic is starting to flinch, to rid itself of its complacency and apathy, a complacency and apathy albeit more apparent than real. If one welcomes this change, then English speaking Canada can in no small measure owe its new awareness to the sometimes rude jabs emanating from Quebec. Perhaps the rest of Canada has decided to set aside any niggardly resentment and take the development in Quebec as a cue to the initiation of our own re-thinking. True it is that the glamour of the new direction in Quebec should not mesmerize us to the point where we are unaware of the possible damage and repercussions which would arise. However, the attempt to equate the flag resolution with a desire to accede to the desires and aims of Quebec—a very questionable hypothesis in any event—is a telltale sign of an underlying resentment on our part, a feeling we can ill afford to indulge any longer.

Mr. Hamilton: Tom Kent should write more legibly.

Mr. Munro: This tedious and often exasperating discussion—I am sorry, I did not hear the comment of the hon. member.

Mr. Hamilton: I was just asking the parliamentary secretary to tell Tom Kent to write more legibly.

Mr. Munro: This tedious and often exasperating discussion of the flag is fast becoming a great Canadian Preoccupation. Standing alone this question does not deserve such great attention. That there is something of far deeper significance behind this resolution no one will now deny. Perhaps it is our collective desire to go to our own internal brink for one last time, with the desperate hope that the exercise will either kill or cure us as a nation. Does not the whole debate as it is waged here and throughout the country have a fatalistic quality that is unmistakable? Those who

would champion the red ensign instinctively know that they have lost. But lost what? Lost the debate in the commons? Lost a great Canadian controversy? Lost just the battle but not the war? The fact that such champions are forcibly arguing for at best a referendum and at least a general election is perhaps one of the great examples of internal political and moral brinkmanship in our Canadian experience.

Let no one misunderstand me. I am not attributing any base motives to those who would champion the cause of the red ensign. They feel deeply. Theirs is a course of action to which they are totally and utterly committed. After all, was it not this side that brought this issue to the forefront by advancing the flag question in the form of a government resolution at this time? No, I am not being critical of those who would fight for the retention of the red ensign, but rather I agree with those Canadians who think that another trip to the brink is precisely what this country needs.

Alas, one thing all this has proved is that the flag debate has unquestionably debunked the theory of those Canadians who would insist that we as a people no longer desire to indulge in introspection, no longer desire to deal in terms of a Canadian identity. To state that Canadians are not deeply troubled over the question of a Canadian identity, Canadian aims, Canada's role, Canada's destiny as a nation, is to be oblivious to the facts.

There are those who say that the discussion of the scope and direction of a Canadian nationalism is a futile and wasteful thing, outdated in this age of international co-operation. This line of thought has been forcibly advanced by many of our leading scholars and intellectuals.

May I refer to a remark made by a man deserving a great respect, Professor Frank Underhill. He said:

I think we are heading, wherever you look now, towards a rather mean, petty, parochial nationalism.

It is true that Professor Underhill expressed this sentiment in the context of his expressed concern for foreign control, but I feel his statement is no less applicable here. I expect that this flag question will after much turmoil be resolved. I expect we will have a distinctive flag. I believe that during this current process of resolving the matter, and irrespective of the outcome, it can be taken that Canadians have once more served notice