

Government Orders

The following description of a plight of an immigrant family living in a cave in Upper Canada was written in 1821.

"The mother, who continued to shed tears, told me that she and her family were Irish immigrants. They had been induced by a series of misfortunes to set sail for Canada, with the intention of obtaining land, and had, after many difficulties, got thus far in their voyage. But, being now destitute of money, they were unable to procure a lodging and knew not where to apply for work, assistance or information. 'A husband and these two boys', said the woman, 'are all who remain to me. My little girl died on the ship and they threw her into the sea. Aye, sure, that was the worst of all', continued she in an agony of grief, 'poor babe, she had neither prayers nor a wake'."

* We do not often hear these stories, but let me remind the House that there are many of them. As a teacher for 30 years, I have books full of them.

Often, after years of working the land, instead of the promised land deeds, these new Canadians received a bill for the total price of the land and of course they did not have the money. The promises that were made to them were all lies, and many of them lost their land. They were promised roads, schools and help that never materialized.

Who were those first Reformers? They were the new Upper Canadians, who were lied to and could see no way of changing or of change coming under the existing system. Hardships? Oh yes.

So we had moderate and radical Reformers from 1824 to 1837. I choose those years because that is when it seemed to rise to a crescendo.

Finally, when peaceful constitutional means did not bring relief or results, William Lyon Mackenzie King became a radical Reformer. How many times was he elected to the legislative assembly? How many times did Bond Head throw him out? He was re-elected again. Frustration? I guess he was frustrated.

We are talking here about fair representation; the result, the rebellion of 1837. What am I saying? Rebellion did not just happen; it took many years of injustices created by a few at the top who tried to control others. Reformers came about because of necessity. Necessity is the mother of invention.

I am well aware that the rebellion in Lower Canada happened again because of oppression by a small group in control. In this case again, English Governor Sir Francis Bond Head, in my opinion, should never have been in the position of power he was in. In history we often find people who are in positions they should never be in. He appointed who he wanted to be his executive and legal counsellors.

In Upper Canada the Anglican Church dominated the scene. John Strachan, of course, the first Anglican Bishop of Toronto, wore many hats.

How did the family compact get its name? Well, they inter-married, many of them, and gave jobs to friends and relatives. I think we call it patronage, do we not? Is it happening again today?

• (1330)

We are talking here of a privileged class of judges and magistrates, again family compact connections in a colonial society, all leaders of Upper Canada, members of the dreaded family compact and in Lower Canada the Chateau Clique, the same composition appointed by one governor, Bond Head. He chose his executive and legislative council from a group of British merchants. The mandate, what was it in Lower Canada? It appeared to be to force the Canadian population to adopt the British way of life.

Louis Papineau emerged as a brilliant orator of the reform movement in Lower Canada. The frustrations of the Canadiens were rooted in both of the following: a cultural division between the French and English in Lower Canada; and the undemocratic nature of the colonial government. Power was abused. There is the saying: Absolute power corrupts; power corrupts absolutely. That is certainly true.

Last night I briefly watched part of a documentary on J. Edgar Hoover. It was frightening. I think perhaps he epitomizes the master of civil servant control and how dangerous it can be if it gets out of hand. Why? It must be that the people who are elected and can be removed, must be accountable.

What happened to Hoover? We saw people who lost their lives. Was it justified that they lost their lives? We saw a president killed. Who killed him? We saw some terrible things happen and all because power was not placed properly.

Wrongs have happened in our country's history. Reformers arose in the 1800s out of necessity. In Upper and Lower Canada again Ryerson, Bidwell, Mackenzie, Papineau, Baldwin, La Fontaine were all reformers. On the east lawn there are statues of two reformers: La Fontaine and Baldwin. My friend from Chambly, these reformers were good men. They were all good men. Unfortunately when people want change and nothing happens they become frustrated. Rebellions happen.

What happened to these reformers? Some in positions of power referred to them as Yankee loving traitors. Does it sound familiar? How often have we heard this in this House? Reformers try to talk about reforming health care. We try to talk about serious things that need to change and are going to have to change if we retain them. Yet we get accused of being American, of trying to force American doctrines in this House. I am really