

We have had problems, injustice, and economic inequalities and those who have thought their rights affected have fought well and are still doing so with the zeal and spirit characteristic of Canadians.

This is a good omen, and we can look forward with hope, never contented with what has been achieved, ever rising in the greatness of the future and ever aiming at the great objectives of justice, equality and perfection such as are obtainable on this earth. The application of the golden rule has been most rewarding to all of us.

The men and women whose memory is recalled in this Centennial have paid dearly through their personal efforts and suffering to make us into what we are, for we are looking forward to a future which our most prophetic forebears could never imagine and we are duty-bound to laud the progressive ideas, the tolerance and the political talents of men and to become conscious of the rules which made all these accomplishments possible.

The better to understand them, let us recall the very factors which brought on Confederation and which too few know, unfortunately, but which undoubtedly have had an important influence on our thinking and which will help us determine why Canada undertook, among other things, the unprecedented task of uniting two peoples into a single nation and to invite all peoples to a common table.

Canada before 1867 would seem to us a very strange world. It had none of the things we consider normal today: large plants, major metropolitan centres, large cities, national highways, automobiles, airplanes, television, electricity. At that time, there were only a few miles of railroads along the St. Lawrence river.

The population was approximately 3½ millions of which 80 per cent were concentrated in the provinces of Upper and Lower Canada—Quebec and Ontario. Four-fifths of the population lived in rural areas. Quebec and Montreal, with some 100,000 inhabitants, were by far the most important Canadian centres.

A small number of industrial undertakings, crafts and services throughout the inhabited regions depended on agriculture and the primary products of the forest and of the sea.

In those days, on each family had to shift for itself, as the economy was still in its embryonic stage. Income was spent mostly on basic needs: food, clothes and lodging. A worker could always go back to the farm to

gain independence. Still, the growth of population and the aspiration for a broader scope of life were gradually becoming obvious.

Between 1848 and 1854, Canadian affairs reached such a low ebb that people started to wonder about the very survival of Canada. The introduction of free trade in Great Britain and the accompanying removal of the preference enjoyed by Canada on British markets gave even more weight to the argument of supporters of the union with the United States. Domestically, Canada was facing several frustrating matters with no apparent solutions within the framework of the existing political institutions.

In 1864, the country was mature for a federation. The American War of Secession, which had begun in 1861, had created difficulties with the northern states and even the Canadian boundary came under fire. Fear of invasion was more than an invention of the mind.

Confederation, in turn, was the rejection of political and economical annexation by the United States. Left to itself, even within a huge empire, each province was too weak to ensure its own economic stability or resist armed pressures from its powerful neighbour to the south.

What remained to be done except to try to bring about an agreement which would enable not a group of isolated provinces with a limited population but a unified community to face the danger?

How else could Canada keep on living and preserve her identity in America? That is how our nation was born.

In 1867, the Fathers of Confederation created something which did not yet exist: a new nationality. They recognized the need for compromise, for tolerance and the very simple and useful art of disagreeing in a friendly way. The rest of the story is undoubtedly better known.

After a hundred years, it is realistic to think that this Confederation agreement or pact may require some amending as far as some of its clauses are concerned to meet all the needs of the space age, but I am not one of those who think that many important points need to be revised.

Nevertheless, it would be quite unreasonable to take the Fathers of Confederation to task for their failure to foresee all we were to accomplish and the future developments in our country. In spite of all the deficiencies found in it by some people, it must be said to