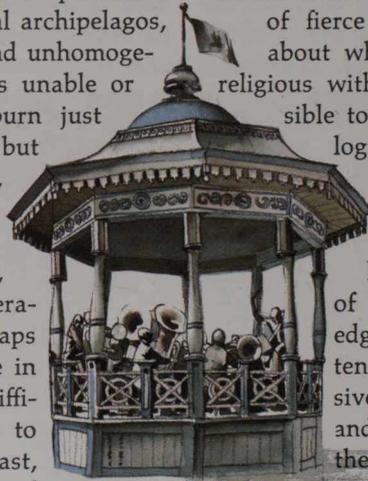


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liberal governor of Minnesota deplored this unexpected evidence of McCarthyism in Canada. It was of course nothing of the kind. In a sense, it was just the opposite — an almost touchingly stupid application of the letter of the law, born of respect for regulations. There was little real concern about doctrines. In Canada ideas abound and rebound with Hindu proliferation, and except among some French Canadians are not taken very seriously anyway.

Canada is a place not easily confused with paradise or the promised land. This 'indigestible Canada,' this Marx Brothers' Freedonia, this Austro-Hungary of the new world, with its two official peoples and its multitudes of permitted ones, its ethnic islands and cultural archipelagos, its ghettos of the unpasteurized and unhomogenized, this harbour of old Adams unable or unwilling to be reborn or to burn just yet their old European clothes, but growing attached, many of them, as deeply as the Indian or the pioneer to the landscape of farm and city—this Canada has, alas, not even carried diversity and toleration nearly as far as it might (perhaps lest they become principles), since in practice it has been extremely difficult for Asians and West Indians to immigrate to Canada. By contrast, one conjures up a hopeful vision of



the year 2070 in which the majority of Canadians will be of Chinese origin—though the ones that speak English, who will be called 'Anglo-Saxons' in Quebec, will undoubtedly have their quarrels with those who speak French, some of whom will be unable to get their children taught in French in British Columbia.

Canadians often apologize for or feel guilty about the lack of revolution or civil war in their history to stir up their phlegmatic souls. The poet James Reaney recalls someone at a cocktail party sneering at one of the Riel rebellions because so few people were killed.

In a world where independence often arrives with swift violence, it may be good to have one nation where it has matured slowly: in a world of fierce national prides, to have a state about which it is hard to be solemn and religious without being ridiculous, and impossible to be dogmatic. In a world of ideological battles, it is good to have a place where the quantity and quality of potential being in a person means more than what he believes: in a masculine world of the assertive will and the cutting edge of intellect, a certain Canadian tendency to the amorphous permissive feminine principle of openness and tolerance and acceptance offers the possibility of healing.

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