

*Gets Material
from
Everywhere in Canada*

CANADIAN COURIER

*Goes to
Canadians
all over Canada*

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OPEN LETTERS FROM LONDON

LONDON, March 15th, 1917.

DEAR HENRI BOURASSA,—I used to be a disciple of yours. Maybe you remember one time when you came up to the University of Toronto and delivered an address to a number of undergrads. I was there. You may remember me because I sat at the very farthest end of the room from you, and I did NOT come up to shake hands with you at the end of the evening. Everybody else did, even the fellows who secretly thought you were a traitor to the Empire. But I didn't think you were a traitor. Your words seemed to me to be wonderful. I was impressed by your audacity and courage, and your relentless attacks on the dreams of the Imperialists and the Centralists. I was so much impressed that I enthroned you then and there as my ideal of a courageous public man, and I determined that I, too, would be as fearless and independent in my views after I quit Varsity and retired to the management of my father's talc mine down in Frontenac county. I met a lot of men who thought just as I did after that dinner. We formed a little group called the Nationalists and we used the phrase Canada First at every meeting—several times in every speech, in fact. But now—

Now I write to tell you that I am weakening. I need help or my Nationalist feelings will go to pieces. If you could send me a personal letter that would make me feel as I felt when I left that Varsity Dinner that night, I would be relieved. Just now I have that nasty feeling that I made a horrible mistake when I signed up as a Nationalist. Hosts of questions are beginning to walk through my mind knocking at every door in the house of Reason. If I dared, I would write down these questions and ask you to please send the proper replies at once. But I am afraid to do that, because I would be making it clear to myself how wrong I have been in the past. . . . I'm not very sure that you could re-convert me, anyhow. For, you see, I have been seeing the heart and centre of the British Empire. Still I intend to tell you my symptoms . . . just in case they might communicate the same feeling to you.

Of course I am a soldier, you know. I joined as a private as soon as Dad was able to get somebody else to manage the talc mine. I meant to go as a private, but was given a commission after I had been at Valcartier a short while. The reason I enlisted, although I was a Nationalist, was because I felt that Canada had a national interest in the war. I didn't go because "England Expects Every Man to Do His Duty," but because I felt it was due to my Nationalist principles. . . . Now that I am here everything seems different. I'm a Nationalist no longer. You may as well understand that at once.

I have just seen the British fleet.

Must close this letter just now, as I have an engagement for dinner and the theatre with another

*A Kingston "Nationalist" on Imperialism, and a Toronto
"Imperialist" on Nationalism*

Transcribed By BRITTON B. COOKE



Dr. Espionage: "I think this will be my last turn. That John Bull juggler seems to get all the big hands with that World-Empire turn, and I don't know how he does it."

—Cartoon by Fergus Kyle.

Canadian officer who came over with me from the Front. He is a Round Table man, I think. We both have London leave. Will write you to-morrow.

Yours truly,

JOHN SMITH.

LONDON, March 15th.

DEAR UNCLE BEVERLY,—I told Dad in a recent letter that I intended writing you. Dad, of course, is a loyal British-Canadian and all that sort of thing, as he would say, and I am not unmindful of the notions of British conduct which he pounded into me in the days gone by. But I feel that you, figuratively speaking, are my political father, god-father at all events. Dad never bothers his head about public questions except on voting day, as you know. He has a queer sort of modesty which makes him pretend that he isn't interested in solving the problems of the Empire. But since you

are responsible for introducing me to the subject of Imperial centralization and the Green Book and the Round Table—and those delightful chaps, Kerr and Curtiss—I feel you are the one who should hear about my difficulties now that I've met some.

Mind you—I am still as staunch a Britisher as ever. I don't think you need to have me say that, but then it's just as well. I love England. I love the good type of Englishman when I meet him—and it IS often, too. I am thrilled with pride that I am able to take even a humble part with this great British race in the fight against the Hun. BUT I couldn't be a Britisher without writing to tell you that my views on the Round Table and on the centralization of the British Empire—have changed. It was easy to believe that when I was in Canada. I can't do it now.

OF course you know we don't talk politics on the other side. It is only when I get back to Blighty, as the English fellows call this England of theirs, that I can get time to think about abstract matters. Sometimes, even on London leave, it doesn't seem worth bothering about abstract questions. One gets a sort of morbid modesty—like Dad's, I think—and feels that the forces about him are too great to be interfered with by the mere thoughts of an obscure subaltern who may or may not be considered worthy of promotion to the rank of captain some day. Especially here in London, surrounded by the monuments of great men and great events in the dead ages, it seems an impertinence to cherish an independent notion. And yet one MUST think and one MUST have opinions and ideals and even radical ideas—if one is to be fair to himself.

I can't hold with the Round Table. That is the sum and substance of things. Borden and Bob Rogers are in London just now, attending the Imperial Conference. Rogers met me in the hotel

lobby the other night and made a great fuss over me—and over all the Canadian officers he sees here—for, of course, it's good politics, I suppose. He said he remembered you and he remembered Dad and he told one or two little stories about the West and then passed on to keep an appointment with Sir Robert. Later he introduced me to Sir Robert, who is a grave and kindly man, courteous and thoughtful—whatever else he may NOT be. BUT SEEING THESE two Canadian politicians over here made me suddenly feel that they were like babes in the wood, or rather, like powerless deputies from some mythical dependency. My first feeling toward them was a feeling of pity—not because they didn't look and act like men of authority, but because, in the midst of London, with all the inertia of London to bear upon them, all the countless influences of old England unconsciously working on their senses—they seemed so helpless and it seemed so futile, to say: "These