

Every American state, with the possible exception of Brazil, enjoys its independence through a break by violent means from the mother country - England, Spain, or France. In our case the break was not violent, nor indeed absolute. Our political and economic position, and the recurrent threats through history to our national unity, denied us the pleasure of spectacular gestures. It was only by turning to the more modest "possible" that Canada was enabled to survive successive crises and to present to the world today a strong, unified and healthy nation.

Let me now examine some of the reasons why our progress towards nationhood took the form it did.

In the first place, we had difficulty in developing one united national feeling. Until 1760 Canada was a French colony, and except for some small British settlements in Nova Scotia, the growth of the English population after the British conquest was largely deferred until the termination of the American Revolution. From that time on until 1867 Canada was divided not only between the French and the English elements, but also administratively in the colonies of Upper and Lower Canada, New Brunswick, Nova Scotia, Prince Edward Island and Newfoundland. Differences were so great between them indeed that Prince Edward Island only joined the federation in 1873, and Newfoundland in 1948. The extent of the differences can be judged by the fact that even today many people in these provinces consider that they were tricked into Confederation.

But this is not to mean that a distinctive attitude among Canadians did not develop. Among French Canadians it was marked by a strong nostalgia for French culture, a devoted attachment to the Catholic Church, and a deep-seated conservatism. After the French Revolution this tended to make the breach between the French of France and French Canadians even greater, the ideas of the Revolution being rejected almost in toto.

As for English Canadians, the bulk of the first settlers were refugees from the United States, who had remained loyal to the King in the Revolution and were either forced to flee after the independence of the 13 colonies, or who chose voluntarily to make a new life in the wilderness rather than remain under republican rule. Their point of view therefore was marked by a fierce royalism, a strong anti-American feeling, and a stout individualism. The qualities which obliged most of the peoples of America to fight for their independence against the mother country proved, in the case of Canada, necessary in a continual struggle for independence against the boisterous American colonies which invaded Canada twice - during the Revolution, and again during the War of 1812. It was indeed this feeling of insecurity vis-a-vis the United States and the need to rely on outside help, which could only mean Great Britain, to maintain the balance in North America, which made the Canadians hesitate to throw off