

Public Bills

subject immediately before the chamber. In fact, reading the remarks of the then hon. member for Renfrew North I was not sure whether he was speaking about Sir John A. Macdonald Day or St. Patrick's Day. In the course of developing his argument he quoted a wide variety of historical sources from Pliny the Younger to Henry Ford, who described history as bunk.

• (5:30 p.m.)

Not only did we have speeches from the hon. member for Renfrew North, who is the present Minister of Energy, Mines and Resources, but also from a gentleman who is now Premier of Nova Scotia. Reading his remarks it is difficult to know whether he was more enamoured by the concept of Sir John A. Macdonald or Joseph Howe. It was an interesting debate in so far as it revealed a great deal about private members' hour.

The idea of a national day for Sir John A. Macdonald creates a number of interesting questions, Mr. Speaker, but I do not intend to deal with them all. Aside from the merits of the man himself and his particular and unique position in Canadian history, one of the really compelling arguments is the broader idea of recognizing in a suitable way those Canadians who have made a remarkable and unique contribution to our history.

As a part-time teacher, one of the things that I find depressing about our situation in Canada is not so much the absence of heroes but that we do not seem to know very much about any Canadians who have made a contribution. This is probably as much the fault of our publishing industry, boards of education, departments of education or to the shortage of interested and creative authors, as anything. The fact remains, however, that Canadians generally are not too conscious of figures of historical importance. What is worse, they are not aware of the rather unique qualities of the Canadian historical process, not just the evolutionary constitutional process which is dealt with in university courses but some of the very particular qualities of our history. I do not think it is possible to overcome this by agreeing to a Sir John A. Macdonald Day. As we have already noticed, there would be a variety of claims from different members of this House for other heroes who more closely reflect different political affiliations. I am sure J. S. Woodsworth might have some support in the House, as certainly would Sir Wilfrid Laurier and some others.

In discussing the merits of this particular case we expose a real problem within our country that in our schools, universities and the population at large there is an appalling ignorance of our history, of our antecedents and of the process that led to the development of our country. It may not be argument sufficient to justify Sir John A. Macdonald Day, but it is sufficient for everybody to examine what is going on in the country and ensure that something be done not in a chauvinistic way but in a rational and broad minded way to overcome this deficiency. It could instil in Canadians an understanding and appreciation for the history of their country and in particular for the people who made the important decisions at various times in its development.

[Mr. Faulkner.]

Mr. Speaker, when I started making a few notes for this debate today, having lost the notes I had prepared for the three previous aborted sessions we had, I sent to the reference library for some material.

Mr. Stanfield: What about Information Canada?

Mr. Faulkner: As I understand it, Mr. Speaker, Information Canada is not dealing essentially with Sir John A. Macdonald.

Mr. Knowles (Winnipeg North Centre): They will tell you about Laurier and Trudeau.

Mr. Faulkner: I was going to add that, but I thought it had better come from the hon. member for Winnipeg North Centre (Mr. Knowles). One of the documents the library sent me is very interesting. It is entitled "The Dominion Campaign! Sir John Macdonald on the questions at issue before the people. The Premier's great speech before the workingmen of Toronto." Inside is the title "A brilliant review of the vital issues of the present Campaign." I am not sure who published it, but I could hazard a guess.

Mr. Knowles (Winnipeg North Centre): Information Canada!

Mr. Faulkner: What is particularly interesting about this speech is the first two pages. Unlike the speeches today, in that day they used to add the audience response to the remarks made by the speaker.

Some hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Faulkner: We are probably just as lucky that it is not done, today, but in Sir John A's day there was no risk apparently. In the first page he has one "loud laughter", one "loud cheers", one "laughter", one "cheers and laughter", one "renewed laughter" and one "great cheering". On the second page he has one "hear, hear and applause", five "cheers", one "loud cheers" and two "applause".

This occurs throughout the speech, Mr. Speaker, and is characteristic of the quality of the speech. But one thing I ran across is a familiar argument to people in public life. He was explaining his record to the workingmen of Toronto and was caught in the ambivalent position of all politicians in power, that of trying to claim credit for great achievement and explaining away those areas where there was not achievement. He said: Why then, I ask, has not more been done?

Three years is a short time, but in three years much has been done.

Mr. Speaker, the argument will come as a surprise to you. It was:

Because we have had an unscrupulous opposition; because we have had an unpatriotic opposition.