

(January 10th, 1938)

Canadian Patriotism

By L. M. GOVIN, K.C.

MR. CHAIRMAN, GENTLEMEN:—Among us Canadians of French origin, it is one of our customs to visit our relatives during the New Year Season. As a member of our great Canadian family, I thought it was my duty, and a very pleasant duty indeed, to accept at once the invitation of the Canadian Club, and to pay you a friendly visit at this time of the year. I have chosen to speak again on patriotism. I know very well that this topic is not new, but it is the most important one for all Canadians at the present time. The lack of novelty of my subject is more than compensated by its usefulness. My aim is not to obtain any applause either in this Province or in my own Province. My only intention is to serve a great purpose with the humble means at my disposal, as simply and as sincerely as possible. I will put all my sincerity, all my heart in my attempt to do now my share, little as it may be, for securing a more united Canada, for dispelling religious and racial prejudices which threaten our national unity.

Even if you do not accept some of my views and if you take exception to some of my remarks, at least, please do not look upon me as a disloyal subject, as a traitor or even as an enemy. It is true that I am of French origin, it is perfectly true also that I am a Roman Catholic, but, please remember that most of us, we have in common two great titles: we are Christians and Canadians. We all adore the same God and I do not have to lay emphasis upon that elementary fact. But, too often, it seems necessary to repeat that we all have the same Country. Through the divine will of my Creator, I was born a Canadian. For almost three centuries, except my Scottish ancestors, all my ancestors were also born in Quebec. This is why I have only one

country. Call it homeland, motherland, fatherland, or "patrie", as I do, my country is this wonderful land of ours: Canada. For all of us, it is, or it should be, the greatest country in the world.

From its very origin, the glorious history of Canada is the common inheritance, the sacred treasure of all Canadians. English-speaking as well as French-speaking Canadians, we all admire the heroic deeds of the pioneers of New France. We all cherish the memory of the last defenders of the French flag in North America. We all appreciate also the merits of those who conquered Canada, for Great Britain, or who defended her against the invaders. Canadians of every origin, we want the sacrifices of our forefathers, who were once enemies on the battlefields, we want their blood and their sufferings to be fruitful and to serve to promote the greatness and the development of Canada. We want our future, to be the continuation of the epic poem, which is the story of our past.

Let us say a few words now about the origin of the French Canadians. In 1760, Great Britain found in her newly conquered colony, 60,000 inhabitants, those "habitants" already formed a nationality, quite distinct from the people of the mother country, "Les Français de France", as we say. Our ancestors had already become firmly rooted, for over a century, in Canadian soil. There, they had developed their own peculiar habits, their special manners of living in time of peace, and of fighting in time of war. They had their own ways of understanding things and of doing things. At the time of the fall of New France, the "habitants", as they were already called, were recognized as constituting a distinct nationality by the terms of the capitulation of Quebec and Montreal, as well as by the Treaty of Paris, in 1763,

Even then (1763), the "Canadiens" already possessed all the factors requisite for nationality. Those factors are summed up as follows in the "Clash", (p. 4) the excellent book of my good friend, Mr. W. H. Moore.

1. Ethnical Identity; 2. Identity of language; 3. Unity of religion; 4. Common economic interests; 5. Common territory; 6. Common history; 7. Uniform theory of government.

According to the seven standards which we have just enumerated, did French Canadian nationality exist already in 1760? We will see afterwards, if it still exists in 1938.

1. Ethnical identity. In 1760 the conquered people already possessed a perfect ethnical identity. Our parent stock had come mainly from the same districts of Western France; Normandy, Poitou, the province of my Ancestors and Picardie. They had developed here complete homogeneity.—

2. Identity of language? Our forefathers, to have intercourse together had abandoned their respective dialects, and they had realized the Unity of Language by adopting French of L'île de France, even if before they spoke Breton, Provençal or Basque.—3. Unity of Religion? Those who lost the last battles, possessed spiritual unanimity. Almost to the last man, woman and child, we have always worshipped God at a common altar.

4. Common economic interests and 5. common territory? In 1760, the majority of French Canadians were already settled in the Valley of the St. Lawrence. No economic antagonism could possibly exist between these poor and heroic settlers, farmers, fishermen, fur traders and soldiers.—6. Common History and Tradition? For over a century and a half, our ancestors had already written with their blood admirable pages of heroism. They had discovered and explored Canada from the Atlantic to the Rockies. They had colonized Acadia and New France. They had fought with super-human courage against the Indians. They had heroically defended this country, against their conquerors. 7. Did the "Canadien" possess in 1760 a uniform theory of government? They were in no way theorists, this I admit quite willingly. But, they had and that was much more important, they had instinctively the practical will, to survive as a nationality. When they ceased to be a French colony, our ancestors decided to remain true to themselves, to keep and to preserve as a sacred legacy: their Canadian identity, the unity of their language and of their faith; they decided to defend together their common economic interests, poor and disinherited, as they were. The old "Canadiens" were well determined to continue to keep their own native soil, under their new flag which now floated over their land.

They were also well resolved to be faithful at any price to their common past and to their traditions.

Our ancestors, 60,000 only in number, all in all, men, women and children, had the unconquerable will to survive to a degree which no other nationality has ever excelled. And because it was so, because our forefathers had in their hearts that unconquerable will to survive, the military regime and the abolition of the customs of Paris, far from bringing about the denationalization of our people, gave them new energy to remain faithful to themselves. It is true that the conquest had brought upon us defeat and suffering. But, it is true also that we have found among our conquerors men who did not believe in the old barbarian doctrine of "Woe to the conquered". The names of some British statesmen and of some of our governors will always remain dear to the hearts of all Canadians, of French origin. Thanks to the patriotism and to the spirit of justice of such men, in 1774, our French civil laws were completely restored to us. At the same time, our religious freedom was fully guaranteed. We call the Quebec Act our "Magna Charta" because it is the first step towards our present autonomy. Then, the Act of 1791 marked another step forward. It gave us a new Constitution with a representative form of government. 1774 and 1791 are two dates which do great honor, to Great Britain. They show that British fair play exists not only in words, but that it is the traditional policy, which has been applied repeatedly. Indeed, British fair play has always asserted itself in this country, at the most critical times of our history. May it please God that it always continue to be so! I must add that the benefit of such a policy of fairness and equity has profited to those who gave, at least as much as to those who received justice. Justice indeed is the very basis of any commonwealth, which is to endure. Otherwise there is but dissatisfaction and trouble. Thus with the years, there arose and grew in Canada an intolerable system of bureaucracy. The grievances of this Province as well as of the Lower Province finally ended in the rebellion (Les Troubles as we say) of 1837. Such a Rebellion was a constitutional conflict for self-government against despotism and family compacts. If time would allow, I could quote on this point the very illuminating pages of Col. Bovey in

his *Canadien*, (p 96 ff). This excellent "*Canadien*" (Col. Bovey) shows that the troubles of 1837 were a constitutional conflict, not the pure racial uprising of a conquered people. The period immediately following 1837 is still remembered for the systematic efforts then made to denationalize us. But, it is with great emotion that I evoke the memory of the two illustrious men who saved our Country during the ill-fated period of 1840. I wish to name with reverence and respect, coupling them both in the same feeling of admiration those two very great Canadians: Mr. Baldwin from York and Monsieur Lafontaine from Montreal. The example of Baldwin and Lafontaine proves that differences of language, of origin and of religion do not prevent co-operation between the two great races which have given birth to this country. For their sound patriotism, their loyalty, their energy in defending the rights of their people and in teaching them all to fulfil their duties to their common country, Lafontaine and Baldwin remain among the greatest of our patriots.

As you all know the so-called union, (because no country was ever more thoroughly disunited,) the so-called union ended in the deadlock which made Confederation a political necessity, not exactly a marriage of love.

In 1867, MacDonal'd wanted legislative union. Cartier and all Canadians of French origin were absolutely opposed to such a scheme, in spite of its economic advantages. A compromise was made by the adoption of federalism. We thus followed the precedent established by the American Constitution. Instead of having only one Canadian parliament, we have a Dominion Parliament, and also Provincial Legislature. Legislative powers were thus divided between the central power and the provinces. Matters of general interest were given to Ottawa; local questions were entrusted to the various legislatures. In this way, national unity was achieved by preserving regional differences.

Confederation could not possibly be realized against the will of the French Canadians, then under the leadership of Cartier. Confederation could not be done without Cartier and the French Canadians. The representatives of my people have voluntarily accepted our present constitutional system. We were not forced into it. It was not imposed upon us.

The next question which we have now to examine is the following: Under the British North America Act has French Canadian nationality survived? It is very clear that our Federal Constitution is based upon the very principle of dual nationality. In the Federal Parliament, English and French are both official languages. So it is also in our Federal Courts. In Quebec, the French Canadian majority is given the fullest measure of provincial economy. For all internal purposes Quebec is a State, just as much as any one of the States of the American Republic. In this minor sense, Quebec could even be said to be a French Canadian State or Province, with its own French civil laws, its own system of education, etc. In fact, in educational matters, guarantees were given to the English Protestant minority in Quebec as well as to the French Catholic minority in the other Provinces. Thus, our Constitution formally recognizes the existence of our French Canadian nationality, French in language with, in Quebec, the French legal system in civil matters, and with also the Catholic Faith enjoying special privileges. Our Federal Constitution embodies the recognition of the principle of dual nationality. Since 1867 has our French Canadian nationality disappeared? Again, to answer this question, we will take one by one and very rapidly, the seven factors which according to Mr. W. H. Moore constitute nationality. We will see if our people still retain the national elements which they possessed in 1760.

2. Ethnical identity. In a book published during the course of last summer (1937), and entitled "Les Canadiens Français chez eux" Mr. Albert Levesque estimates the total population of Canadians of French origin, in Canada as well as in the United States, as amounting to 6,000,000. The immense majority of the inhabitants of Quebec (79%) are French Canadians. In Ontario, the population of French origin represents only 8.7%, but their numbers are about 300,000. The next Province most important in proportion to its French population, is New Brunswick. The Acadians, a distinct branch of our Canadians of French origin, and the French Canadians of Madawaska specially, are about 140,000 in New Brunswick, namely 33.5% of the total population. In Nova Scotia and Saskatchewan, you will find

about 50,000 Canadians of French origin. The same is almost true also of Manitoba. In Alberta our population is about 39,000; in Prince Edward Island it is about 13,000. In British Columbia and in the North Western Territories, there are about 16,000 French speaking Canadians. In all, we represent about 28.22% of the total population of Canada or 2,927,990 inhabitants. From this it follows, that about 3,000,000 Canadians have still kept their French ethnical identity. Let us now come to the second factor, the unity of language. It has also been preserved jealously by my people. The language we speak can be understood everywhere in France, in Paris as well as in the various Provinces. Our language is understood in France in the same way as your English is understood everywhere in England. As you read books published in Great Britain, so we read books printed in France. Books by English Canadian authors find a market in England; in the same manner our French Canadian books enjoy circulation in France. Our critics try to cast ridicule upon our language. But, French academicians when they visit Canada, like Mr. Louis Bertrand, who came here last summer, are moved to tears when they hear again the language of France after, and despite, three centuries of political separation. As we have retained our ethnical identity, and our unity of language, so also we have preserved the unity of our religion.

If we now turn to our economic interests, let us note first of all that the economic interests of our people in Quebec and Ontario, whether English or French-speaking, are identical. There is no possible economic antagonism, between our two Provinces. If we now examine the economic condition of the other provinces, we see that there is no sufficient discrepancy of interest to break up the bonds of French Canadian nationality between the inhabitants of Quebec, of the Maritime Provinces, or of our Prairie Provinces. Let us remark here also that French Canadians are grouped in a solid block so to speak in Quebec, but that they are also grouped together with a remarkable degree of cohesion in particular regions of this Province, of Manitoba, Saskatchewan and Alberta. The same is true also of our three Provinces of the Atlantic. Thus, we can be said to inhabit a common territory. We have kept our ethnical

characteristics which have been modified only by our climate and by our local surroundings. We have also kept faithfully the traditions of our past. History, as taught in our schools, is one of the main elements of our survival. The memory of the days gone-by continues to be cherished by us as our most precious inheritance. We now come to the last requisite of nationality, namely, a uniform theory of government.

As you all know, three million Canadians of French origin live here under the same flag, and are loyal to the same King. Three million of us, we are citizens of the same Nation, governed by the same Constitution, and subject to the same Federal laws. According to constitutional law, as well as to international law, we French-Canadians and Acadians, all recognize Canada as our only country. Thus, we possess fully the seven factors mentioned by Mr. Moore, as the essential elements of Nationality. Yes, there is a French Canadian Nationality, not in the international meaning of the word, but for all internal or domestic purposes. Those who are shocked when we call ourselves French-Canadians ignore a great historical fact: the survival of our racial minority which has been called the "Canadian Miracle".

Nobody will ever succeed, by any means whatever, to prevent us from continuing to be what we are and to call ourselves by the name which for more than a century has been our own name.

I am proud of being a Canadian of French origin, but I believe also that I am a good Canadian. My ethnical group is embodied into a greater whole, my French Canadian nationality is one of the constituent elements of our Canadian Nation. Our different racial origins, our two great official languages, English and French, our various religious creeds, all those differences do not prevent us from forming altogether a great Nation. Indeed, to use the words of Le Fur (*Races, Nationalités, Etats* p. 66-7) we Canadians, French-speaking as well as English-speaking, Protestants as well as Catholics, "we have the actual will to live together, the will to continue to develop, to transmit to next generations, the legacy received from the ancestors, the past dark or glorious which prepares the program to be realized in

the future". Or, notwithstanding our dual nationality, to use the words of Renan (*The Clash* p. 11) "our people possess together 'a soul' and a spiritual principle the resultant of a long historic past, of sacrifices and efforts made in common, and of a united will and aspiration in the present; to have done together great things in the past, to be minded to do great things in the present."

Let us now see if the patriotism of Canadians of French origin is in the broadest sense of the word Canadian, in other words, if it is a patriotism acceptable for all, Canadians. All of us French-Canadians, look upon the nine sister provinces of our Confederation as forming our country from a legal or political point of view. I must admit, however, that we do not put our Federal State above our French Canadian Nationality. For instance, we Quebecuers, we strongly believe in Provincial rights. We cannot think of sacrificing Quebec to the Dominion, or to any other province. If we have to choose between the Confederation and our own Nationality, we refuse to sacrifice the soul of our race to any other group. We want Quebec to remain the cradle of our Nationality. We are opposed to any change which would endanger our traditions or which would imperil our Provincial autonomy. Of course, when I speak of provincial rights, you realize at once, that this applies to your own rights, to the rights of the Province of Ontario, as well as to the rights of my own Province. It has often been said that the people of Quebec represent a great traditionalist force. Nobody has given more emphasis to this fact than the immortal author of *Maria Chapdelaine*, Louis Hémon. This great French writer has explained better than anybody else the devotion of the people of Quebec to their tradition. You all remember his admirable lines, when his heroine listens to the voice from the old Province: "Three centuries ago we came here, and here we remain. Those who led us hither might come amongst us without disappointment and without regret, for it is true that if we have learned little, assuredly we have forgotten nothing. . . . In the Country of Québec nothing has changed; nothing will change". It is because we are such a traditionalist force, because in Quebec we do not want anything to change, that we believe in provincial rights, (I wish to repeat it) *in the*

provincial rights, the legitimate rights, of everyone of our nine provinces.

It is also because we are a traditionalist force and because in Quebec we do not want anything to change, that the immense majority of French Canadians are opposed to separatism in any form. Separatists are not true to our traditions. They are not true to our great national tradition of loyalty to the Crown. They are not true to our own historical tradition, because history tells us that our country extends from the Atlantic to the Rocky Mountains. Thus, separatists are not true to the French minorities in the other provinces. This is why separatists are only a few, just a few in number. This is why also, I am absolutely opposed to separation in any form. I am well determined and the immense majority of French Canadians are also well determined to do all in our power to keep our nine provinces within the Dominion. The separatist propaganda is absolutely contrary to the best interests of our Nationality as well as of our country. Such agitation can only stir up racial prejudices. It can only create among us a feeling of distrust. I really believe that separatism would mean the disappearance of the French Canadian nationality.

As we are opposed to separatism, so also we are opposed to communism and radicalism. We want law and order to continue to prevail in Quebec. We believe that it is only a legislation based upon the principles of social justice which can put an end to the present sufferings of our working classes. Much has been said recently here about Fascism and corporatism in Quebec. First of all, let us note that fascism in itself is quite a different problem from separatism. As strongly anti-communists as they are, many French Canadians have a certain sympathy for those who are also opposed to communism. This does not mean in any way that the majority of my people believe that fascism is either possible or desirable in Canada. Many, however, think that some reforms could be adopted here, by taking from the constructive programme of fascism some of the good things which could be found in it. This brings me to say a few words about corporatism. Sometimes it is said that some people want to create a corporative fascist state on the

shores of the St. Lawrence. Some corporatists nourish that very foolish dream. It is not necessary to explain to you that such a corporative state is utterly impossible, impracticable, and undesirable. But, there is another form of corporatism which is, so to speak, quite distinct from fascism. It is trade-union corporatism, namely, a revival of the old Guilds of medieval times in a modernized form, uniting employers as well as employees in the same professional family. Such trade-union corporatism does not entail in any way the transformation of our constitution into a fascist state. It means only the growth, development, and adaption of professional corporations, their becoming legal organizations enacting by-laws for the internal regulation of their trade and so forth. In this form the "corporatisme d'association" has nothing to do with fascism and it is an idea which, I think, deserves consideration. In this form such corporative organizations aim at promoting the social and economic welfare of French Canadians; but they have any chance of success, only if they give full justice to the other elements of our population. They can be as much as French Canadian as they want, but they must not be either anti-British, anti-Protestant, or even anti-Jewish

I have summed up as faithfully as possible the various tendencies of public opinion in Quebec. I believe that a truly national patriotism is possible for the different elements which constitute our Canadian Nation. Each one of our races can be faithful to its past and at the same time we can all be faithful to our country: the Canadian Confederation. Each ethnical group, British as well as French, has the right and the duty to preserve its characteristics. We French-Canadians refuse to be absorbed or assimilated. We want the spirit of the Confederation to prevail. We have already seen that our Constitution acknowledges our racial and religious rights. It does not discriminate against the conquered race and its faith. We refuse to be treated like an inferior race. To those who may still want to steal our soul from us, I wish to repeat the quotation of Arnold Toynbe (The Clash, p. 12): "National culture means the conscious will to enjoy and increase our heritage through the medium of some particular language. It follows that a

national culture, whenever it manifests itself, is as elemental a force as a national democracy, and that to fight against it, is to fight against God."

To nations as well as to individuals, God has said "Thou shalt not steal" and "Thou shalt not kill".

Canadiens we have been for three centuries and Canadiens we will remain in spite of everything. We can speak French and English, practise our own religion, keep our own laws and be just as good citizens as anybody else. We Canadians of French origin, we believe and we have always believed that a Canadian's first loyalty is to Canada. For us, to repeat the few words which I had the honor to hear some months ago, for us: "Canada is a sovereign nation and cannot take attitude to the world docilely from Britain or from the United States, or from anybody else. The Canadians first loyalty is not to the British Commonwealth of Nations, but to Canada, and those who deny this are doing in my opinion a great disservice to the Commonwealth. (And I may add to this country). If the Commonwealth in a crisis is to speak with one voice it will only be because the component parts have thought out for themselves their own special problems and made their contribution to the discussion, so that a true common factor of policy can be reached." These words are borrowed from the speech which his Excellency Lork Tweedsmuir delivered in Montreal, on October 12, 1937.

It was with the greatest emotion that I heard this statement of our Constitutional status. No words can describe my satisfaction when Lord Tweedsmuir thus gave to our own ideals of Canadian patriotism such a formal recognition. For this and because he preached loyalty to our Gracious Majesty the King as Sovereign of Canada for this, the name of our present and so distinguished Governor General will always remain dear to the hearts of all Canadians of French origin, and I hope very sincerely to the immense majority of all Canadians. For this the memory of this brilliant scholar (John Buchan) will be cherished forever by my people, by all generations to come. This British statesman has proved that he is a man of vision. I do not hesitate to say that he has spoken with prophetic accents, giving us a

a formula of patriotism acceptable to everyone of us. Such a doctrine, I hope, will continue forever to be for us a guiding inspiration like a beacon.

In foreign affairs we Quebecquers can find on other basis of understanding with the other parts of the Dominion: namely, Canada first, always and everywhere. For our Country, we are willing to do all the sacrifices which may be necessary. But such sacrifices should be asked from us in the name of Canada not in the name of anybody else. In internal matters, we ask the majority to recognize once for all the equality of status of the minority. I am convinced that Canada is destined to continue to be bilingual and to harbour within her territory the offspring of our two great racial groups, the British and the French. By co-operation and by co-operation only we can secure the development and the progress of our Country. We can all work in harmony, doing our full duty towards Canada and respecting the rights of each other. I appeal to your sense of British fair play and I say: Your fate and our fate is in your hands. God has allowed us, in His infinite wisdom, to be conquered by your ancestors. But, at the same time, God has miraculously preserved our Nationality and our faith. Our mission is to perpetuate here the traditions of France and of our Church. We bring to you this strength which has endured for over three centuries in Canada. We offer to you the hearty and loyal co-operation of three million people. We ask you to accept us as your partners, on equal terms. We ask you to allow us to develop Canada in peace with the world in general and with you in particular. This doctrine of inter-racial co-operation I have learned it from Laurier: I have received it also from my father (Sir Lomer Gouin). When I was a boy my father used to repeat to me those words of that great nation builder Sir Wilfrid Laurier. "If I ever lift even my small finger to stir up religious or racial prejudices may God strike my hand dry." All through his life Laurier was faithful to that policy of peace and harmony between our various creeds and between our two great nationalities. My father devoted also all his existence to the same purpose.

His doctrine of Canadian co-operation is the doctrine of all the disciples of Laurier. It is not limited to any

political party: it now belongs to Canadian history. This doctrine is still the doctrine of all well meaning French Canadians. Particularly it is the programme of the spiritual heir of Laurier, of a French Canadian statesman who is a living lesson of true Canadian patriotism; I have named Honorable Ernest Lapointe. It is because I am a disciple of Laurier and of Mr. Lapointe that I believe in this national doctrine of co-operation, which I call real Canadian patriotism. It is Canadian patriotism in the widest sense of the word. It is not only French Canadian patriotism; it is not Imperialism; but it is a kind of homespun patriotism which should appeal to everyone of us because it is Canadian pure and simple. It is as broad as our share of this North American continent. "Ce Patriotisme est aussi large que le continent." This patriotism embraces our entire country, the nine sister provinces and the territories. It covers all our glorious Canadian land from Halifax to Victoria, from the American frontier to the extreme north. I ask you in the name of this common country of ours, I ask you to co-operate with us, to realize all that we have in common. Instead of accentuating so much our differences, let us give full importance to all the points, and they are many indeed, upon which we agree. Let us all work for the maintenance and development of our country, which is your country as well as mine, the Dominion of Canada.

To repeat the words used by my father in the Quebec Legislature in 1918 (January 23rd.): "Let us preserve, yes let us preserve intact our field of action and beware against even dreaming of diminishing the great task which it is our mission to continue. . . . Let us preserve to our country her greatness, to keep in the hearts of our children their hopes and to transmit to them unimpaired the heritage received from our fathers . . . let us work ceaselessly and without faltering for the development and maintenance of the Canadian Confederation.