

(April 11, 1927)

Quebec and the Dominions

BY R. L. CALDER, K.C.*

MR. SEDGEWICK: Gentlemen, it is one of the ideals of the Canadian Club that we should know and understand the problems and aspirations and the feelings of the various parts of the Dominion with the hope that perhaps by understanding we may come to greater agreement. We are fortunate in having today as our guest a gentleman who has devoted a great deal of time to the consideration of the problems of the Province of Quebec, which is his own Province, and who is competent to deal with them and, I think, to interpret them to other Provinces. I have very much pleasure in introducing Mr. R. L. Calder.

MR. CALDER: Mr. Chairman and gentlemen, there was a Roman in the Augustan age who, looking with pride at the equivalent of our baggage labels, expressed his gratification in a verse that has come back to us, which is to this effect: "It is not everyone who is lucky enough to go to Corinth." May I express similar gratification and say it is not everyone who has the chance to speak before the Canadian Club of Toronto.

Wherever I go I angle for invitations to speak at Canadian Clubs. I have several reasons for that. First, the word "Canadian" which you have adopted is a beginning of an attempt on the part of everybody in Canada who may differ to find a common basis. Next, the Canadian Clubs all over Canada are made up of executive, representative and broad minds, and they are willing to have their prejudices arrested and to hear the truth, no matter from what quarter it comes. And in the next place, by speaking to

*A distinguished member of the Bar of Montreal, whom the Custom House Commission of Enquiry had brought to Toronto.

them, I indulge myself in a bent I have for preaching. I am not in any sense a politician. Politically, I am as dead as Caesar, but like the elder Hamlet, I like to revisit the glimpses of the moon from time to time and make the audience's hair stand on end. Away back in my family there was a long line of preachers. Of late we have degenerated into lawyers, but the preaching strain is still strong as far as I am concerned. I believe I would have done vastly more good by occupying a pulpit than by holding investigation commissions.

Now, I have been longing ever since my return from overseas to preach in Toronto. I was like Jonah. I felt an urge to go there, but many things intervened. The whale of business swallowed me up. I was thrown out of the tossing sea of politics. And, I was not invited, which is still more important.

The sermon I intended to preach to you I have preached in other parts of the country, and I am afraid you have got garbled versions of it. But now Jonah is at Nineveh, and you will have the privilege and pain of hearing me.

I may say this afternoon that I expect to be misquoted again. I would like some time to deliver a lecture on the gentle art of misquotation. If the Apostle, instead of writing the Gospel had delivered an address on it at the Jerusalem Club, and had spoken as he has written, you would find the newspapers culling judiciously pungent paragraphs such as: "And Judas went and hanged himself. Go thou and do likewise." And across the broad front of the Jerusalem Globe or the Jerusalem Telegram you would find the headlines: "Apostle Preaches Doctrine of Suicide." Now I trust—I do more than trust, I charge you—that insofar as you yourselves discuss with others who are not here what I have said that, at any rate, you remember the spirit in which I said it.

I cannot expect that what I shall say this afternoon will be pleasing to everybody, but I ask everybody to believe that where I am wrong I am honestly wrong, and that where I am right it would be well to think of the things I shall have said.

The subject you have invited me to speak to you on this

afternoon is the Province of Québec and the larger subject of the French-Canadian. You have heard many addresses on this subject before. You have had men of eminence, men more authorized to speak than I am, who have presented to you various viewpoints and picturings of the French-Canadian mind. May I say to you wherein they fall short. They fell short because of circumstances. They were French-Canadians and they were speaking to English-Canadians, and you cannot imagine to what an extent these two facts deform unconsciously their presentation of the subject. Now, I am neither and I am both, and I trust I will be able to deliver to you the true psychology of the French-Canadian in order that you may understand it, react properly to it, and co-operate with them, not in finding the extreme of their desire or yours, but the middle course we must steer if we are not to wreck the ship of state.

Why do I say I am neither and both? By the happy circumstance of birth I am the product of a Scottish Presbyterian and a French-Canadian Catholic. I search myself in vain to find a prejudice and I have done consistently this: I have always defended English-Canadians where they were attacked among French-Canadians, and I have always defended French-Canadians where they were attacked among English-Canadians. It is not a profitable game. It would be much easier to do as some have done, to go to the French-Canadian and irritate his prejudice, and then pass over to the English-Canadian and irritate his; but to counter prejudice, to defend the absent if, when and where attacked,—that is not a profitable game.

Now, this is an auspicious moment for us to think about the various component parts of the Dominion of Canada because in two months we are going to celebrate the sixtieth anniversary of our birth as a nation. That should not be an occasion for rejoicing. It should be an occasion for deep thought and scrutiny and stocktaking. It is proper that, as we have been breasting the hill for sixty years, we should stop now and look back and see how far we have come and how far we have risen. This is the time for all of us to get together and speak with the same frankness that characterized the Fathers of Confederation

when they adopted the constitution. The Fathers of Confederation were not prophets. They were statesmen, and they seized the occasion and Confederation was born of stress and circumstances, and was born in haste. One of the greatest drawbacks we have today is that these men are not living in order to measure how far their intent was carried out and their purpose fulfilled.

But we can, to a certain degree, estimate the result, because we can read the Confederation debates where the purpose was fully and frankly set forth, and we can, by simply examining the conditions of today, find out to what extent the intent has been fulfilled and the purpose accomplished.

I say that Confederation was born of stress and circumstances, and was born in haste. I was reading recently a book just published in Toronto, "The Memoirs of Van Sittart." If you read it you will see that Confederation was an expedient, that the men of 1867 were trying to escape from an intolerable situation, at least so far as Ontario and Quebec were concerned, and if you read their debates you will see that there was one section of the population which did not stipulate for the material things. That was the French-Canadian group whose passive resistance had produced the intolerable situation. They stipulated for this, that in Canada everyone who would might retain racial individuality, that we would not adopt the theory of the melting pot, that we would not stamp language down into one form as you grind out pants buttons, and they stipulated that for themselves. Rightly or wrongly, that was their stipulation, that the French-Canadian group should remain distinct, individual, and the only complaint of the Province of Quebec today, as far as Confederation is concerned, as far as the French-Canadian throughout the Dominion is concerned, is that there has been a series of attempts to take away altogether what was given, a series of attempts to return to the theory of the melting pot, a series of attempts to make the French-Canadian an Englishman.

Now, I am going now to begin the difficult and delicate part of what I have to say. There is nothing that slumbers

so lightly as prejudice, and you will find I shall be obliged to tiptoe among the various sleeping wild beasts in order to bring you with me to the point I have to reach. I am going to restate a few historical facts.

Now, at the beginning and throughout all this review, I ask you to remember one thing of which you are not conscious, that the French-Canadian is an Englishman speaking French, or rather and more truly, let us say that the English-Canadian is a Norman speaking English and the French-Canadian a Norman speaking French. Out of the Baltic Sea and the Jutland Peninsula two streams flowed, one into Canada via Great Britain and the other via France, and each of them has the same pride, the same intellectual complexion, the same powers of resistance; and if you want to understand the French-Canadian, remember what you would do if the circumstances were reversed. Just as the Anglo-Saxon in England was made French by the Norman conqueror, just so you and they are both of the same breed, the same bond and the same blood, and you have the same resistance; and they won't be conquered because you won't be, and for the same reasons.

Now, when Confederation came the French-Canadian resolved that he should remain French and Catholic as long as he himself pleased so to remain. Without any co-operation or agreement that oath was sworn in every small house in Quebec and by everyone of the sixty thousand Canadians whom France left on these shores when she withdrew her flags, her battalions, and her ships; and the express right to carry out this promise was secured by a series of legislative enactments—first, the Quebec Act and then the Constitutional Act in 1837. There the opportunity for the fullest and completest union was lost and missed. What happened in 1837 was this: There was a constitutional question in every one of the Provinces of Canada. In Nova Scotia, New Brunswick and Prince Edward Island it nearly broke out. In Ontario it broke out into armed revolt; and in Quebec it broke out into armed revolt no greater and no less, and for the same reasons that it broke out in Ontario. Up to that moment, no student of history can fail to recognize that the operations of justice and

toleration were slowly shaping themselves. Confederation was in the wind. You see written large all over the history of the Province of Quebec the period from 1812 to 1837 is known as the time of the good years, the years that strike the note frankly and without reservation, the years when the industrial and commercial classes brought labor from England. The French-Canadian thought he had established that there would be no difference between him and the rest.

Then came the Rebellion of 1837, and what happened? You may think I am going too far back. Search your own soul and see what are the roots of your prejudice. In 1837 the rebels in Ontario and the rebels in Quebec broke out into revolution for the same thing—constitutional government—and it was only an accident in the Province of Quebec that the constitutionalists were on the French side. But what happened after that? Although the French language had nothing to do with the breaking out of the revolution, the French-Canadian was punished by having it taken away from him. Why? You can read Lord Durham's report. Even he missed the important point that the revolution was not due to race or religion. It was due to the fermentation which throughout the entire world said no man should be governed by another, and even though they were hostile, they were married to Ontario, and Ontario hated the marriage just as much.

From 1837 these two ill-assorted consorts rowed and fought and squabbled until they fought each other to a standstill, and Confederation came because it was the only form of divorce then available. Then what happened? In settling the conditions of the divorce, the French-Canadian thought he had stipulated in Ontario what had been stipulated for the English Protestant in Quebec, and furthermore, he thought he had stipulated to the fullest possible extent for the principle of individuality of race, and it is because he has not had the full realization of that that he is not as cordial as you think he should be.

Two events since Confederation have tended to segregate, to alienate and, to a certain extent, to render him hostile, both in your minds and in his. You say, "He is none of us," and he says, "I am none of them." And let

me tell you that when I speak on this subject everywhere I see in that the greatest possibility for breaking this country apart. What are these events which tended to alienate and segregate? Forgive me if I go into this matter. I go into it because here is the place it should be said. These two events were the enactment in your own Province of Regulation 17 and the conduct of the late war.

I am not going to talk about Regulation 17 very much. It is a political subject, and I know it is largely forbidden to speak of political subjects in gatherings such as this, but it has another point of view. In 1867 the Protestant Englishman stipulated that his schools should remain until the end of time or as long as the British North America Act lasted, and I am here to say that that act has been fulfilled to the utmost. Now, rightly or wrongly, the French-Canadian believes that he stipulated here wherever he was sufficient in numbers to warrant it, he might have a school in which he might learn his own language as a bridge to yours. Is there any disinclination on the part of French-Canadians to learn to speak English? If you think there is, go down to any of the villages of French Canada and try to learn French, and you will not learn a word of it. Nine out of ten French-Canadians speak English as well as you do. These are facts. I know there has been in the more fanatical minds a propaganda that he should not learn English, but the French-Canadian, being Norman and practical, is much too wise to let you get away with the economic superiority which the knowledge of English implies. Now, I say, there never was in Ontario any desire on the part of the French-Canadian not to learn English. But he also wanted to learn French. What possible objection could there be to that? Every Canadian in Canada who knows two languages is the drawer upon two literatures and two minds, and is the richer therefor.

Now, the Protestant Englishman stipulated better than the French-Canadian Catholic for this reason: Wherever the newcomer comes, the Icelander, the Scandinavian, the Italian, he cleaves to the English school and the English school is, therefore, perpetually Protestant and English. But there is in Canada a race which is as intensely English

as you are in spite of protestations, and is as intensely Catholic as the French-Canadians, and this race decants itself into the same school as French-Canadians. I do not blame the Irish for seeking to assert their supremacy. I do not blame the Irish and the French for seeking to assert supremacy in their schools. It is their fight. Why don't you leave it to them? The French-Canadian says you have untrammelled the other and left him to slap us in the face, because the card of unification was played against the card of diversity and individuality, and the enactment was made which the French-Canadian found the greatest disappointment of his historical life because not only were you restricting his rights but you saved that cost. In the Ottawa Separate Schools case I find Lord Buckmaster saying this: "The effect of this circular is to restrict the use of French in these schools"—English-French schools, meaning "those schools, whether separate or public, where French is a language of instruction or communication." And by that Regulation it ceased to be a language of communication.

Now, this case was taken to the Privy Council, and it was decided against the French-Canadian and he was willing to let it go at that because he says, "I drafted my contract wrongly," and I will tell you what change has come over the French-Canadian since this decision.

The next segregating or alienating fact in history was the conduct of the late war. I am not going to say much about that today because I cannot speak of it without passion. I went to the war myself and that gives me the right to judge generously those that did not go, but I want you to consider just one fact. We were all in this war, weren't we? It was our war, not yours or theirs. And what do you think of an army organization which started by granting to the three million French-Canadians of Quebec, who were willing and eager to get into the war because her two parents were in it, what do you think of an organization which granted out of 25,000 men the glorious contingent of 250 men and six officers? Why did the Province of Quebec have allotted to it two battalions that were not French? That was the first and irretrievable mistake, and the whole of the recruiting was colored by that.

You say that the French-Canadians should enlist in Canadian battalions. What about pride, which is the chief factor of a soldier? The Welsh would not enlist until they had got their own battalions; and at the mere hint that the kilt was going to be taken away from them recruiting in Scotland stopped. And you say that the French-Canadian should have been satisfied to lose his identity in English-speaking battalions. I tell you you would not do it. They would have been so merged in the rest you would have said what you say now, that they were slackers. Then arose a propaganda which we had to stop in Paris and London where it was said that the French-Canadians were cowards and would not enlist. Until you have removed the irony of that from the heart of the French-Canadians they will never be different.

I said I would speak to you of the new frame of mind of the French-Canadian, a most dangerous frame of mind. What is he going to do by legislative enactment? What is he going to do through the courts? Nothing, and less than nothing. He is going to wait and guard patiently that host, that race, with the virility and power, and strength which have brought him from 60,000 to 3,000,000 without immigration and without counting what he has lost to the south, that he will be able to take unto himself what rights are his without legislative enactment and without the help of the laws. Now, I said take unto himself, but not take away from you anything. Whatever belief might be lurking in the minds of a few half insane people among the French-Canadians, there can never be any domination of the English-Canadian by the French-Canadian, but he does not even think of it. It is not his ideal. If he dominates you, he falls away from that ideal. What he has laid down is this, that in the Dominion of Canada, if you want to be diverse, we shall be diverse, and work just the same. Do you think that is a danger? The old grey mother, Britain, is usually a melting pot. In the north of Scotland you have men who are not only bilingual, but trilingual. Some do not know a word of English. In the south you have the Welsh, who are just as distinct and separate as the French-Canadians. Does that work to the detriment of Britain? What

was the greatest country in the war? What country bled itself white before conscription and after conscription? It was Britain. And from the North of Scotland the Gaelic gave 100 per cent. of its manhood, and the Welsh in the south 89 per cent. of its manhood. Do you say after that that language is a cleft, that religion is a cleft? Religion is no bar for this reason, that it had never been invoked anywhere as a power in the political and national questions.

Now, I have given you the purpose of the French-Canadian. May I say how it is carried out? This is where the headlines will come. As long as one race leaves the soil and the other dislikes it, as long as one race has twelve children and the other two, just so long will the French-Canadian continue to take up the land and to eat up the Province. How has it worked out? When I was a boy in the eastern townships the only language was English. Now it is French. Do you think there has been an ouster there? Do you think any of the English-Canadians have been driven out? They have gone out of their own accord by the simple process of getting rich on the farms, and they sent their one son and daughter to college and they would rather die than come back to the farm. And the French-Canadian bought that farm for his first son, and another for his second, and another for his third, and in spite of the alarming reports in the press, you can usually find on the farm a direct descendant of the French-Canadian who bought it first. When I was a boy the McQuaig's had one side and the Venette's the other. Now the Venette's have both sides.

New Brunswick is becoming French. How about your own Province? The French-Canadian is marching on Toronto. He is marching just as the Scotch marched on London. I have still to find where the Scotchmen altered or depreciated London. The remedy is in your own hands. You can stem that tide whenever you want by sticking to the land, by having children, and by honoring the oldest of professions. But, if you do not, why then the march onward is irresistible. You will improve the farms, and the French-Canadian will get them.

Now, if you could stop this, would you do it? Would

it be wise to do it? How can you stop it in the first place? By legislative enactments? I would like to see the legislative enactment which would prevent a prosperous English farmer from selling his farm to a man who wants to buy it. Well, now, I have told you about the silently assumed resolve on the part of the French-Canadian to let time operate. Now, this is my parting word. Why don't you let time operate? Why don't you divest yourselves of some of the prejudices which are whipped into you every election? I read in one election, the last one before Confederation, the election book was the Book of Revelations because Rome was the scarlet woman sitting on the hill. The French-Canadians do not expect to dominate, nor would they take domination if they had it. They want to co-operate and they want Canada to be one in all things in which it can be one, and to remain separate, distinct individualities in everything else. Why don't you let time operate? Why don't you let kindness instead of passion be your watchword? Oh, but you say, they are not kindly. Who should begin? The strong or the weak, the majority or the minority? It is when you are strong and powerful and can dominate that it is lovely to agree with your adversary in a game.

If you will allow me, I have just five minutes, but that will be enough to bring before your minds a cogent illustration of what the course of this country will be. You must expect in a country built up like ours that clefts will remain. Are you surprised that sixty years after Confederation there are still differences between us? My partner served with a Breton battalion in France, and he told us they could not put the Bretons and Normans together. And they have been brought up next to one another for a thousand years and more. Yet who is there so absurd as to say that France is not one country. If you go down to Montreal from Quebec, as your steamer passes the end of the Island of Montreal, if you lean over the taffrail you will see two rivers meeting in the middle. The clear jade of the St. Lawrence coming in one sweep from the lakes, and the clear amber of the Ottawa which is colored by its struggles down past the islands and fretted shores of its course. And you lean over and see this division, the green and the brown, clearly defined. Now, supposing they were races instead of rivers,

somebody would put up breakwaters and dams and force them to come together and produce maelstroms. You keep looking on and you see all at once it has gone, the rivers have commingled. They have been allowed to flow side by side in the same bed and they have merged at last. If you will allow each of the races in Canada to go on being individual without let or hindrance, they will come together soon and they will meet in the broad-flowing colorless and clear stream of Canadian citizenship.