

CANADA AND THE EMPIRE SINCE 1867

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THE present basis of association between Canada and the Empire can be understood only by reference to a long development in the past, a development whose course has never been reversed, and which has resulted in a union essentially different in kind from that which existed at any previous time.

In 1867 Canada continued to be bound by trade treaties made without her consent, she had as yet appointed no fully accredited plenipotentiaries for negotiation with foreign nations, while participation in political treaties and the appointment of diplomatic representatives abroad were considered impossible save at the cost of formal separation. Reservation of bills passed by the Canadian parliament for Her Majesty's consent was still common, and the Imperial Government continued to exercise both formal and informal control over Canadian legislation. Defence was considered to be mainly the function of the Mother Country, and Imperial troops garrisoned the country until 1906. Through a gradual but steady development, particularly rapid since the War, this colonial basis of association has been almost completely transformed, so that the principle of responsible government in fact, if not entirely in form, governs in internal and external affairs alike.

This same condition prevails in the economic aspect of the association. The repeal of the Corn Laws first destroyed the centralized Empire, for it enabled each colony to base its fiscal policies upon its own requirements. Further steps were taken in the same direction, and finally Canada, through the inauguration of a protective tariff, severed the economic colonial bond. There is no more important step in the history of Canadian self-government, for thenceforth constitutional advance was bound up with direct material advantage.

The result of this past development is a relationship which, whatever it be in strict theory, in effect resembles a personal union under a common Crown. It has two aspects—Dominion nationhood, and free co-operation in matters of supreme concern. The relative significance of these aspects can be understood only by reference to the past development out of which the present relationship evolved.

It is obvious that any such fundamental evolution can be no merely fortuitous happening—that it must represent a change in attitude, not merely in Canada, but in other parts of the Commonwealth as well. A mere change in institutions has little lasting interest compared with the spirit which inspires it. What, then, was this fundamental change in Canadian attitude, reflected in the changing Empire bond? The change was from a colonial loyalty to a national loyalty, based upon a new community consciousness whose emergence gave new meaning to the Imperial tie.

It is, however, necessary to make a reservation at this point. We must not imagine the growth of national feeling to be an isolated phenomenon, alone determining the course of constitutional advance. On the contrary, the ideal of nationhood was in the main a latent one among Canadian leaders, at least in the era from Confederation to 1914. For during this period the problems incident to the development of the national domain played a predominant rôle in public affairs. The Imperial tie not only admitted of almost complete internal self-government, but it provided favourable conditions under which the national sense could solidify and material expansion proceed unchecked. Thus there was a disposition to modify the Imperial bond only at those points where some immediately practical advantage was thereby gained. Moreover the United States stood as a great anti-national force, and thus Imperialism became in a sense a creed adopted by necessity. Thus until 1914 the changes in the constitutional bond were not, as a rule, fundamental. And the same attitude has prevailed in large part up to the present. It was not merely national consciousness which dictated the rapid evolution in the bond since 1919, but a sense of altered community interests. Canada was more highly industrialised, a larger proportion of her external commerce was conducted with non-Empire countries, and her financial ties with the neighbouring Republic were closer.

On the other hand, while it is necessary to guard against the inference that national feeling was an isolated determinant, it is possible to regard the evolution as a manifestation of a changing attitude in which changing sentiment and changing interest were mutually supporting. A community's interests and its national sentiments can not run indefinitely in conflicting channels. Rather does interest tend to mould sentiment into conformity with itself, because a rational sense of interest ministers to the pride of which national sentiment is so largely composed.

Yet national feeling does not rest solely on a consideration of immediate advantage. Communities pursue the goal of nation-

hood as an end in itself, as something that ministers to a spiritual need, which, however intimately related to material need, has yet a purpose independently of it. Therefore, if Canadian statesmen were long satisfied with the Empire relationship, the fact implied that national feeling was as yet not mature. A willingness to accept limitations of self-government constituted the negation of the national mentality, in which freedom is desired for its own sake.

This attitude—a ready acceptance of the bond as it was, and an unwillingness to modify it for purely theoretical reasons—largely governed in the period from 1867 to 1914. There were, however, many occasions on which national sentiment showed its nascent strength—in the inauguration of the National Policy, for instance, or the reception to the Alaska Boundary award, or in the demand for a Canadian navy and the rejection of the "Imperial unit" scheme. At the same time there was steady resistance to all attempts to centralize the governing machinery of the Empire, partly because federation would have impaired rights of internal self-government, partly because the national ideal was assuming a firmer outline in the community mind.

Often national sentiment found indirect expression in the older language of colonialism. Thus in the struggle over unrestricted reciprocity from 1887 to 1891, though the issue was frequently expressed as one between "Empire and continent", the verdict was a triumph for the Empire in only an indirect sense; the real issue was the preservation of those national interests created by the National Policy, to which a continental commercial policy stood opposed. It is only in the light of the rising community sense that the controversies over fiscal policy prior to 1897 can be understood. The policy of continental union ran counter to the newer ideal. While the desire for Imperial solidarity found expression in the same immediate course of action as the desire for national preservation, the fiscal system which triumphed was that through which Canada stood as a nation towards the Motherland no less than towards her neighbour.

The War made necessary a readjustment of Imperial relationships. It brought to Canada, as to the other Dominions, a far keener realization than ever before of its essential nationhood and the community homogeneity of its people. One of its first fruits was the emergence of the Dominion into the arena of international affairs. In the years following the War there was an underlying feeling, made articulate by such journals as the *Manitoba Free Press*, and evidenced in the attitude to foreign policy of the King

Government, that the fact of nationhood should receive constitutional recognition. This again, supported as it was by similar feeling in others of the Dominions, reached fruition in the definition of national status given by the Imperial Conference of 1926, and in the reports of subsequent Conferences and in the *Statute of Westminster*, which finally placed the seal upon internal self-government. It would be a mistake to regard these decrees as merely the embodiment, in concrete form, of a position already attained. In the sense that they marked the culmination of a long development it is true, but they accorded enlarged powers (as in diplomatic representation), and secondly, they established a new foundation of principle as a basis for future intra-Imperial relationships. They have not compelled, for instance, the inauguration of separate Dominion foreign policies, but they have rendered the maintenance of a single foreign policy dependent not upon enforced unity but upon voluntary accession.

The growth of a more self-reliant Canadian spirit was at once cause and effect of the altered basis of association. Such exercise of national authority by a government undoubtedly tends to call forth national feelings in the citizens, particularly in a democracy, where the citizen is most closely identified with the government. Thus the National Policy, itself a result of community feeling, by producing a closer community of interest among the various sections of the country, as well as by creating new interests as between Canada and other states, aided the development of national sentiment. Each autonomous advance made more inevitable all subsequent advances.

In considering now the principal forces accounting for the rise of a sense of nationality, we must distinguish between two quite different suggestions conveyed by this term. Certain forces operate to weaken the sense of common community between Canada and the Empire without necessarily giving rise to a positive sense of common Canadian community. Such may be termed anti-colonial forces. If they have aided in the replacement of the colonial mentality by a national mentality, it is only in an indirect manner, for of themselves they are even in some cases anti-national. Thus the presence of minority races in the West, not sharing the traditions of the older stocks, is an anti-colonial influence, inasmuch as the people are not bound by ties of sentiment to the Empire. Yet it is just as positively an anti-national influence (to the extent that assimilation does not take place), for it renders difficult the creation of a national mind. The antipathy of the French-Canadians to Imperialistic policies has

in the past been an example of this kind. Similarly, the general weakening of the trade bond between the Dominion and the Empire has lessened her sense of dependence upon the Mother Country; but if standing alone it would (to the extent that the Republic has taken the place of Great Britain as the country most closely linked to Canada economically) increase Canada's dependence upon her neighbour without issuing in a sense of interdependence between the sections of Canada.

Another important influence of this kind is the pressure of American social and cultural values. The presence of the Republic has meant that Canada could not have that long period of isolation so favourable to the development of nations in their youth. Who can tell what England owed to her insular separation from the Continent? Australia and New Zealand can, in a broad sense, choose those features of external culture most at harmony with their own ideals. In part, the Dominion's culture tends to be continental rather than national. The same standard of living is prevalent on both sides of the border, and in many other respects the same type of civilization. Important agencies of mass suggestion operate on the northern nation from the south, tending to produce a uniformity of thought and outlook, and thus making difficult the preservation of distinctive ideals. This anti-national force is as well anti-colonial. It imparts to Canadian life qualities unknown in any other part of the Empire. It is thus that Australia and New Zealand are more British in the tone of their social and economic institutions than Canada. In all three British influence is felt; in all three there is a modification of what is acquired through the influence of local environment; but Canada alone presents a third element—the inevitable blending, over a wide area, of her civilization and ideals with those of a great foreign community of mainly common racial origin. Thus the spirit resident in many of the Dominion's institutions is North American, a fact which insensibly affects her attitude to the Commonwealth.

These forces have served to modify the colonial outlook, but not to encourage a positive sense of nationality. They have been instrumental in the evolution towards Dominion status through undermining the spirit of dependence upon the Mother Country.

But if the United States exerts an anti-national influence, it is also true that Canadian nationality is based on resistance to this influence. This has been exemplified most continuously in economic policy. The abrogation of the reciprocity treaty and the refusal to renew it gradually turned Canadian statesmen towards a national fiscal policy. Even before Confederation the beginnings of a pro-

protective policy were made, and the principle found ready acceptance after all efforts to renew closer trade relations had proved vain. The National Policy, which forms the economic basis of Canadian nationalism, was thus immediately the result of Canadian propinquity to a powerful industrial neighbour. While a tariff against the manufactures of the Mother Country would probably eventually have come about even apart from American influence (as is illustrated in the other Dominions), the presence of the United States made its inception and its continuance more imperative than they would otherwise have been, and thus profoundly stimulated the movement towards separate nationhood within the Empire.

Thus it was paradoxically in offering a constant alternative to nationhood that the Republic exerted her greatest influence on the growth of nationality. Ultimately, and behind the immediate pressure, there already existed a potential national sense, as such events as the founding of the *Canada First* party showed. The more consciously held national feeling, however, was sentiment for the Empire. It was the determination to retain British citizenship which underlay Confederation. But the path of continued colonialism, and the path of closer Imperial ties, were both barred by the *British North America Act* and the earlier grant of responsible government. Gradually a new ideal arose under the threat from without. Colonial loyalty was not a force dynamic enough to hold together the scattered provinces, and therefore the path of nationhood was deliberately chosen. Some there were who still counselled the easy road to continental union (some to whom the national ideal was scarcely present), for to them the only issue was whether Canada should preserve an "unnatural" alliance with a nation three thousand miles away or should join the kindred nation at her door. This was the thought, consciously held by a few, unconsciously by more, which found its logical fulfilment in the commercial controversies between 1887 and 1891. For our purposes the essential error of those who counselled this choice of road was that the spirit to which they opposed their efforts was not one of colonial dependence but of Canadian nationalism, inarticulate though it as yet largely was.

Thus the desire to remain a political community apart from the Republic, though in a sense it preceded any influence or action of that country, came through that influence to assume a new purpose and to acquire a new emphasis. The national and Imperial motives, originally one, became increasingly separated with the changing economic structure and material interests of the Do-

minion. A policy of closer continental trade relations, instead of being urged as an ultimate solution, became at most the corollary of national aims.

Yet the adoption of an economic national policy was but the framework of the whole national purpose. The only ultimate sanction for the maintenance of two communities on the North American continent is the preservation of unlike spiritual values. In this course Canada is aided by the very real differences which exist between the countries, differences in personal characteristics and institutions alike, which are in turn due to various causes, in part the political separateness itself, in part Canada's closer cultural relations with Europe. It is in the degree to which she can preserve these consciously-realized distinctions that her national future is assured. As we have seen, there are difficulties in this task, for Canadian life tends to become but a part of continental life. But the mere attainment of the national goal, quite apart from the continuance of the conditions which originally made it imperative, will of itself act reciprocally as a support to those distinctive imponderable values upon which separate nationality must rest.

In constitutional affairs as well, the Republic has influenced Canada's growth to national stature within the Empire. Her North American position gives the Dominion external interests apart from all other parts of the Commonwealth, and in the preservation of those interests her relationships within the Empire become necessarily modified. The demand for the direct control of negotiations was fulfilled in post-War times through such reforms as the power to execute bilateral treaties and the right of diplomatic representation. It has not led to what may be termed strictly a foreign policy of her own, but Canada has been enabled by her North American interests and outlook to exert a decisive influence upon the policy of the Empire.

To sum up, the United States affects Canada's national development in a complex manner. In some respects she merely acts as a wedge between the Dominion and the Mother Country—as in social and cultural pressure—without thereby stimulating a sense of nationhood (save insofar as conscious resistance to this pressure is caused). But while, in the road to the national goal, she has ever proved an obstacle, this very fact made the choice of the road imperative. Paradoxically, Canada had to become a nation to remain within an empire; and in so becoming she altered the very meaning of empire.

The distinction which has been made between anti-colonial and truly national influences illustrates an important fact, that

Canadian nationality is still in process of development. The growth of a national sense as towards the Empire is a different evolution from (though reciprocally related to) the growth of a sense of common community among the various parts of Canada. Nationality implies at once a recognition of common tradition and common destiny, and a desire to achieve political self-sufficiency in accordance with the fact of exclusive and inclusive spiritual homogeneity within the community group. Such a synthesis is seldom present save as a result of long residence in a common territory. Canada does not claim nationality in the terms of so narrow a definition. Her citizens do not all share common traditions and culture; there is as yet a wide disparity in general economic interest among the four sections into which the country is physically divided. Ethnic and provincial loyalties have at times tended to displace or overshadow common loyalties. The term "nationality" is always a relative one, for the sentiment it connotes is more impelling at one time, or among one class, than at another time or among another class; where localism intervenes, its very meaning is lost.

If the United States hinders the growth of distinctive values, dual nationality prevents the acceptance of common values. In the transformation of sentiment among the Anglo-Canadians, the change from a colonial to a national loyalty, French-Canada has not directly shared. Her attitude to national and Imperial destiny to-day is not markedly different from her attitude in 1867. Long severed from the land of her forefathers, her loyalty under British rule has two distinguishing characteristics which are the outcome of one fact, that in his national sentiments the French-Canadian is bounded by the territory which his ancestors first settled in the New World. In the first place, his is partly a colonial loyalty in that he desires the Imperial power as a means of protecting him in his racial, religious and linguistic privileges. Thus he has opposed the acquisition of certain powers of self-government. In time of war he has acted as a barrier to the adoption of a consistently national policy. To this extent he has retarded the main constitutional development. On the whole, however, this phase of his attitude has less permanent significance than his racialism. It is this alone which gives reality to his colonialism, for the Empire tie is treasured only as a protection to his group in the surrounding tide of Anglo-Saxondom. In the main he is a nationalist as towards the Empire, with sympathy for the majority of the constitutional steps taken. In Canada's opposition to Empire centralization he has played a considerable part.

Thus it is by his racial particularism, his exclusively group loyalty, that he exerts his principal and more enduring influence upon national destiny. The grounds of justification for his colonialism are fast disappearing through constitutional reform. In time of war it is not the fact that he has encouraged a colonial, or at least a racial, attitude in his fellow-Canadian which is important, but that in his provincial isolation he has been unmoved by the pan-national ideal and thus he has defeated the acceptance of a common national motive for participation. Although he is at once colonial and national in his sentiments towards the Empire, the national aspect has more of essential permanency in it than the other. With the ideal "Canada a nation within the Commonwealth" he is fundamentally in sympathy. It is rather to the growth of intra-Canadian nationality that he imposes an obstacle. As yet, to the French-Canadian the nation means something less than all the people in the Dominion. Moreover, even were a wider emotional unity existent, Canadian nationality would be but a super-nationality, for no blending of cultures seems destined to eventuate.

In spite of these obstacles to logical nationalism, however, a sense of distinctive community life is developing. It is produced in part by the political institutions themselves; for, as before stated, there is a reciprocal relation between autonomous advances and the feeling of which they are the result. Then, again, the common racial derivation of a majority of the people, the flow of traffic east and west, due largely to deliberately enacted fiscal policy and the improvement of channels of communication, the dissemination of thought by professional and other societies, a conscious effort on the part of Canadians in the past to foster national spirit, and not least, participation in the Great War on a national scale—all these serve now or have in the past served to make more real the sense of oneness between the parts of the country.

There is, however, a more subtle influence accounting for the evolution of separate nationhood, not only in Canada but in the other overseas Dominions as well. This is the reaction upon a people's mind of new environment, necessitating new occupations and a new social structure, and thus, through several generations, effecting a transformation in individual character and outlook.

We have now considered the influence of the growth of nationality upon the bonds uniting Canada to the Commonwealth. But the evolution of Dominion status represents the triumph of the democratic as well as the national ideal. The control of colonies by an Imperial Parliament in which they had no representation

formed a complete denial of the principle of responsible government. There was, however, a different way from that actually followed by which self-government and Imperial unity could have been reconciled. The Imperial Federationists were acutely aware of a nascent national sentiment, and believed that the only way in which separation could be avoided was through the re-union of the various branches of the British nation, arresting the centrifugal forces and creating a parliament Imperial in fact as well as in name. Federation would have given the Canadian citizen an equal voice in the government of the Empire with the citizen of Great Britain, but Canada, as a *national* entity, would have ceased to exist. That federation was rejected thus illustrates how the gradual relaxing of the Empire bond represented a national as well as a democratic movement.

While, however, these various forces are altering the essential nature of Canadian loyalty, the people of Canada possess a second national sentiment, in part synthesised with the other. Devotion to the Empire, always a vital force in her history, has not been superseded by the newer loyalty. It is bound up with common racial origin and historical traditions. Even more influential, however, is common culture. The fact that Canada shares the civilization of England, that in large measure her ideals, her thought, her sense of values are patterned on those of the Mother Country—this is the strongest link of Empire to-day. In many respects, as in the possession of a common literature, the citizens of the Empire form one community and enjoy a spiritual oneness which transcends local boundaries.

Imperial sentiment has thus a living foundation. It makes of the Commonwealth something more than an alliance. It is reflected in the political bonds of association. For example, the fact that the Crown remains, in spite of certain anomalies, one rather than several, or that the Empire nations co-operate in foreign policy, the fact that they grant one another trade preferences—these are evidences of an Empire community sentiment.

Supporting sentiment are several considerations of national interest. Membership in the Commonwealth allies Canada to one of the world's great powers, thus giving her an added prestige and enabling her to exert an influence upon world policy which she could not have alone. In the realm of intangible values the Empire acts as a counterpoise to the more or less de-nationalising forces of the continent.

The essential nature of the problem of Canada's position in the Empire will appear from the foregoing discussion. About one-

half the population of the Dominion, the Anglo-Canadian group, forms part of the world-wide British nation, inclusive also of Englishmen, English South Africans, Newfoundlanders, New Zealanders and Australians. This group remains in the strictest sense a nation, a mentally homogeneous community. England, or the Empire, is in some sense the spiritual home of Anglo-Canadians. Dominion nationhood emerged under conditions both similar and dissimilar to those surrounding the emergence of European nationality. In the Middle Ages there gradually developed, over wide areas, owing largely to geographical isolation, the possession of separate political institutions and distinctive cultural values, a sense of unifying yet exclusive community homogeneity. This new bond was nationality, and by its aid were the modern European states created. The growth of Dominion nationality presents an interesting contrast. The condition of geographical separateness was present, but in this case political, social and commercial communication formed a constant bond with the Mother Country.

Secondly, there is growing up a new community sense, Canadian nationality, and Anglo-Canadians are becoming ever more conscious of its unifying force. The cardinal feature of the development we have been considering is that as the new psychological bond becomes stronger, it reacts upon the old.

The problem of Canada's membership in the Empire is thus but part of the wider problem of the Empire itself. From the psychological standpoint the problem is: Can the cultural homogeneity of a world-wide community be reconciled with increasing internal differentiation? (The matter is, of course, complicated in the case of Canada and South Africa by the presence of more than one national group within the larger nation). From the legal and constitutional side the problem is: Can sovereignty appertain to a national entity (the Empire) which is itself composed of national entities? Should we not regard the Dominions at present as nations voluntarily leaving certain functions of their statehood in abeyance? That a state can contain more than one nation is shown by the case of Great Britain and Northern Ireland (if we waive the question whether Scotch, North Irish, Welsh and English are not in some sense also a nation). That a state can contain more than one *state* is not, so long as we retain our current conception of sovereignty, so self-evident.

Perhaps the solution of these great problems is that suggested by some writers—that the sense of common community among the various parts of the Empire should be strengthened organically—for example, by enlarging the powers of the Imperial Conference.

Possibly, on the other hand, there will some day arise a new British nationality, uniting Englishmen, Dutch South Africans, French Canadians and Australians alike, in much the same way as the Swiss nation comprises several peoples of different ethnic stocks bound by a common sentiment for Switzerland. But for the immediate future, no Imperial policy can endure which fails to recognize the fact of separate nationhood and the ever-developing sentiment which forms its basis.