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WHAT QUEBEC WANTS

Reply of La Presse

TO A QUESTION

FROM ONTARIO

For the English Speaking
People of the Dominion

WITH A FOREWORD

By JOHN BOYD

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of Sir George Etienne Cartier."*

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Lord Shaughnessy's Words of Wisdom.

“The good old Province of Quebec will always remain the bulwark and the strongest support of the Canadian Confederation, notwithstanding the irritation and resentment sometimes displayed when the Province is criticized — and it must be said mischievously — by a number of people whose efforts as citizens of the country should be directed towards a good understanding and conciliation.” —
Lord Shaughnessy — Speech at Victory Loan Gathering.

FOREWORD.

Some time ago, Mr. Frank Wise of Toronto, who took a prominent part in the *Bonne Entente* movement addressed me a letter in which he asked "What Does Quebec Want." That was a question the answer to which, it seemed to me, should come from a French Canadian source and I was therefore particularly pleased to see a French Canadian newspaper of the influence of *La Presse* of Montreal responding to it in reply to a similar query addressed to it by Mr. Wise.

The response of *La Presse* is so clear, timely and comprehensive that it should be given the widest possible circulation amongst the English-speaking people of the Dominion. A press despatch giving extracts from the article of *La Presse* has been published in many Canadian and American newspapers, but unfortunately the translation was so defective as to convey an utterly erroneous meaning of the original. To mention but one instance. The first claim presented by *La Presse* is that

the French language, which is recognized as an official language in the Canadian Parliament should be *properly* (convenablement) treated in all parts of the country. In the published extract the word "convenablement" has been wrongly translated as "similarly" an altogether different meaning, the French word for similarly being "également." It will thus be seen that the published extract which was given widespread publicity conveyed an altogether erroneous and mischievous idea to English-speaking Canadians, an idea which has been utilized in certain quarters to make out that "it is the *idea* to force the French language on all the other Provinces".

It is such garbled and erroneous quotations of French Canadian utterances that tend to increase rather than to diminish the unfortunate misunderstanding that at present prevails and in order that an exact version of the extremely important article published by *La Presse* may be available for English-speaking Canadians, it has been deemed advisable to reprint it in the present circular form and to give it as wide a publicity as possible throughout the Do-

minion. *La Presse* by its action has not only presented the case for the French Canadians but has rendered an invaluable service to the cause of racial concord and national unity.

The great majority of English-speaking Canadians, I feel assured, will be ready and willing to give a fair hearing to French Canadian claims and to do justice to their fellow-countrymen of French origin. The persistent attacks that are made on the French Canadian people as a matter of fact emanate, as *La Presse* well says from only a certain element of the English-speaking people of Canada, an element which is more noisy than numerous. It was with justice that the Prime Minister of Quebec, Sir Lomer Gouin, in the great speech which he recently made in the Legislature on Quebec and Confederation, declared that the great majority of the people of Canada are good and fair people, and such being the case French Canadians who constitute one of the most important ethnical groups in the Dominion have a right to expect a fair hearing and justice from their fellow Canadians, the more so considering that their

forefathers were the discoverers and colonizers of Canada and that they themselves are such an important factor in our national life.

The great obstacle in the way of racial concord and national unity is the ignorance that prevails in many parts of the Dominion in regard to the real status, and the actual attitude of the French Canadian people who, in certain quarters have been misrepresented, slandered and maligned to serve the political interests of certain individuals and factions. The article of *La Presse* should have the salutary effect of removing a great deal of the misunderstanding. After carefully reading the article English-speaking Canadians, I am convinced, will realize that there is nothing so drastic or dangerous in the French Canadian claims, nothing certainly to justify the hue and cry that has been raised in certain quarters against the good people of Quebec.

The ignorance that prevails in other parts of the Dominion in regard to the French Canadians, renders it most essential in the interest of racial concord and national unity that the real status and ac-

tual attitude of the French Canadians should be fairly clearly and comprehensively placed before English-speaking Canadians.

Much has been written and spoken on the question of the *Bonne Entente*, and as to the best means of assuring a good understanding between the two great races in Canada. But after all there is but one way by which racial concord and national unity can be assured. It is the way which was formulated by the great French Canadian Father of Confederation, George-Etienne Cartier, the honored colleague and companion in arms of that great English-speaking Canadian, John A. Macdonald. "My policy and I think it the best is respect for the rights of all," said Cartier. RESPECT FOR THE RIGHTS OF ALL! That is the sole key to racial concord and national unity. Unless that precept is practiced by both races, we can never have anything but division and disunion in Canada.

Harmonious and friendly cooperation between English-speaking Canadians and French Canadians should be no more impossible now than it was in the past. Our

history shows what is possible in this regard. Baldwin joined with La Fontaine, not only to secure justice for the French Canadians but to assure the political freedom of all Canadians. Macdonald united with Cartier that the rights of the French Canadians might be safeguarded and at the same time that a great Canadian nation in which both races were to be on an equal footing might be established. To use Macdonald's historic words there was to be thereafter no superior or no inferior race.

If the ideal of the Fathers of Confederation for a united Canada is ever to be realized, it will only be by a spirit similar to that which animated them, it will not be by one race attempting to dominate the other, or by harsh and restrictive legislation against a people's language but by each race treating the other with a generous measure of justice and fairness, and both cooperating for the welfare and aggrandizement of their common country. The problems that will call for solution in the Dominion when the great war is over will be such as to demand the united efforts of all Canadians and it is therefore of

supreme importance that racial concord and national unity should be secured. With the vision of the true statesman Sir Lomer Gouin has truthfully observed that the war will change many things amongst all the peoples engaged in it and that the development of all the resources of our intelligence and the utilization of all our talents will be essential to repair the disasters, and with wisdom the Prime Minister of Quebec added that very rare, indeed, are the nations that can confine themselves to one language and still rarer the countries that can impose one language upon their people. With a sincere desire amongst all Canadians of good will to reach an understanding there should be no difficulty in doing so. All that French Canadians ask from their English-speaking fellow countrymen is fair play and justice, surely that is not too much to ask.

The ideal of Macdonald and Cartier as well as of all the Fathers of Confederation, it cannot be too often emphasized, was that in the Dominion there was to be no superior or inferior race but that all were to be Canadians on a level of perfect equality. Cartier's national ideal was a united

Canada extending from ocean to ocean in which men of all races, languages and creeds would work together as Canadians for the welfare and advancement of the Dominion. "Objection is made to our project," he said, speaking of confederation, "because of the words 'a new nationality.' " But if we unite we will form a political nationality independent of the national origin and religion of individuals. Some have regretted that we have a distinction of races, and have expressed the hope that in time this diversity will disappear. The idea of a fusion of all races is utopian, it is an impossibility. Distinctions of this character will always exist, diversity is the order of the physical, moral and political world.

"In our confederation there will be Catholics and Protestants, English, French, Irish and Scotch, and each by their efforts and success will add to the prosperity of the Dominion, to the glory of the new confederation. We are of different races not to quarred, but to work together for the common welfare. We cannot by law make the differences of race disappear, but I am

convinced that the Anglo-Canadians and the French-Canadians will appreciate the advantages of their position. Set side by side like a great family, their contact will produce a happy spirit of emulation. The diversity of race will in fact, believe me, contribute to the common prosperity."

The utterance of the great French Canadian Father of Confederation breathes the spirit of true Canadianism. May it be heeded by all Canadians in this critical period of our national history !

JOHN BOYD.

What Does Quebec Want ?

(Translated from "La Presse," the great French Canadian newspaper in which the original appeared on February 20th, 1918.)

Such is the question which Mr. Frank Wise, a prominent Ontarion puts to us. Proud of the important part which he says he took in the *Bonne Entente* movement our fellow countryman of the neighboring Province seems surprised that the French Canadians after having given vent to so many complaints against Ontario have not yet seen fit to place before the Canadian public and especially before the Ontario public a detailed list of their grievances.

To listen to Mr. Wise, it would therefore be thought that we had never yet expressed in a clear and precise manner the reproaches we have to make in regard to a section of the English Protestant ele-

ment of Canada, a section which is more noisy than numerous.

If Mr. Wise is under the false impression we have mentioned we do not believe that there are many people who are in his situation for on numerous occasions during the recent federal elections and long before that time we clearly exposed the bad treatment of which we had been made the butt by the Ontario Government and by the press of that Province. Though it may not, perhaps, be opportune to repeat our just complaints before the country at a time when the agitation, which was in evidence during the recent electoral campaign, seems to have been allayed, it is difficult for us not to reply to the appeal of a man, who declares his good faith and who claims that his sole desire is to reconcile the different ethnical groups of the Dominion and to assure the progress of Canada by the union of all men of good will.

Let it, however, be well understood that in place of repeating accusations, which might be regarded as tiresome in

certain quarters, we will rather place before the public what French-Canadians expect and hope for from a majority, which so frequently invokes British fair play.

FRENCH CANADIANS DESIRE : —

1. That the French language, recognized as an official language in the Canadian Parliament should be properly treated in all parts of the country because it has rights acquired by virtue of treaties and of the Constitution, because it is the key of a literature and a civilization which are the glory of humanity, because it is the language of diplomacy and the language which was spoken by the founders and the missionaries of the country in which we live.

2. That the Ontario Government, instead of making regulations to ostracize the French language and to prevent French-Canadians by the pretext of a shameful oath from settling in the Pro-

vince under its direction, should rather endeavor to respect the conscience of our people and to treat them as brethren, that is to say as the Anglo-Protestant minority of Quebec is treated by the French element, which is in the majority.

3. That the Roman Catholic religion, which is the trunk of Christianity and which, after all, rests upon beliefs, which Protestants largely share should be more respected by the Ontario press.

4. That the treatment of minorities should be based upon evangelical justice, Christian fraternity and the intention of the Fathers of Confederation, rather than upon the strict letter of the law.

5. That the opinion of the race which founded and evangelized Canada, which saved our country to the British Crown and which has done much for the Allies in the present conflict, without being constitutionally bound to do so, should no longer be despised, considering that our mentality, our ideal and our aspirations

necessarily differ from those of our English-speaking fellow countrymen.

6. That it shall cease to be believed that national unity can only be acquired at the price of unity of language.

7. That the law of the strongest shall no longer be practiced against us.

8. That the *bonne entente* between the two great races which predominate in Canada shall be established on a knowledge of the two official languages it being granted that in order to agree we must first understand each other well.

9. That without injuring the English element in the slightest degree we have the right to develop according to our traditions and our ideal.

10. That while having a feeling of firm loyalty towards Great Britain, we have also the right to regard Canada as a country which we must more especially love as it is our native land and that in which our forefathers repose.

French Canadians do not claim to have never been mistaken in their appreciation of the intentions and the actions of their fellow-countrymen of Anglo-Saxon origin, but they at least endeavor to treat them in accordance with the rules which we have outlined.

Editorial Note of "La Presse".

(From the issue of March 6th, 1918.)

We are thankful to our *confrère* the *Toronto News*, for having pointed out the serious fault in translation made by several Ontario newspapers which have published, some in full, others in part, the answer of *La Presse* to the question of Mr. Frank Wise "What Does Quebec Want?"

We wrote:—

1. That the French language recognized as an official language in the Canadian Parliament should be properly (CONVENABLEMENT) treated in all parts of the country because it possesses rights acquired in virtue of treaties and the Constitution, because it is the key to a literature and a civilization which are the glory of humanity, because it is the language of diplomacy and the language which was spoken by the founders and missionaries of the country in which we live."

Several of the Ontario newspapers, we wish to believe, through ignorance of French rather than from a want of literary truthfulness, made us say :—

1. That the French language recognized as an official language in the Parliament of Canada be similarly (*également*) treated in all parts of the country.”

It will be admitted that this garbled translation alters the meaning of the principal part of the first paragraph of our answer to Mr. Wise.

The *News* in this connection pretends that a considerable number of the leaders and sub-leaders of the French Canadians have demanded that the French language shall be put on a footing of equality with English in all parts of the country. We maintain that the assertion of our *confrère* is false. For instance in the Legislature of Ontario, English is the official language and we would ask our *confrère* to cite the name of a single prominent French-Canadian who complains of this. In the Canadian Parliament and in the Legislature of Quebec, English and French are recognized

and used as official languages, and that suffices us. As to the rest we repeat that we simply wish that the French language shall be PROPERLY treated in all parts of the country for there is not a single corner of Canada where it does not possess acquired and indefeasable rights to existence."

The True Canadian Spirit.

SIR LOMER GOUIN ON THE LANGUAGE
QUESTION.

(From the great speech on Quebec and Confederation, delivered by SIR LOMER GOUIN, Prime Minister of Quebec in the Quebec Legislative Assembly, January 23rd, 1918.)

“Questions of language, Mr. Speaker, have existed since the world was a world. They existed even previous to the Tower of Babel. Almost everywhere they have resulted in division and in regrettable struggles which always ended with a settlement and this, I am convinced, will also be the case in Ontario. Besides the terrible war now in progress will change many things amongst all the peoples engaged in it. The development of all the resources of our intelligence and the utilization of all our talents will be essential to repair the disasters. Very rare indeed, Mr. Speaker, are

the nations that can confine themselves to one language and still rarer the countries that can impose a single language upon their people. I, yesterday heard with pleasure the honorable member for St. Georges, Montreal (Mr. Gault), express the hope that the Ontario school trouble would soon be settled. He spoke with wisdom, he spoke like one of the early Kings of Hungary St. Stephen, who nine hundred years ago said "*Regnum, unius lingue, regnum imbecilis.*"

"Needless to say, Mr. Speaker, that I have no idea of applying those words to any Province. I cite them simply as the opinion of an authority who experienced the troubles which we ourselves are having.

"We have been insulted, it is true. But I persist in believing that this has not been the action of the majority, but on the contrary of only a small minority. I believe, Mr. Speaker, in fact I know, that the majority of the people of Canada are good and fair people.

"Lord Acton, the great English historian has said that the liberty of a country

is measured by the liberty of its minority. That is to say if a minority is not well treated it is not it alone which suffers as all those of the majority who have a right spirit, a just and generous heart suffer with the minority and to the same extent as it does.

“We must not, Mr. Speaker, forget the good qualities of others, we must remember that it is due to the combined qualities of all groups and of all races in the Dominion that our country has become great.

“Let us preserve, yes, Mr. Speaker, let us preserve intact our field of action and guard against even dreaming of diminishing the great task it is our mission to continue. Let us in the accomplishment of that task be inspired by the courage, by the faith, by the ideals of our ancestors, the discoverers of this country and the splendid visions of the Fathers of Confederation and thanks to our work, to our efforts and to our sacrifices the 20th century will count our country amongst the great nations of the earth.”

A Letter to "La Presse".

(From *La Presse* of February 27th 1918.)

Montreal, February 26th, 1918

TO THE EDITOR OF *La Presse*,

Montreal.

DEAR SIR,

Permit me to warmly congratulate *La Presse* upon the timely and comprehensive manner in which it has presented the case of the French Canadians in response to the question put to it by Mr. Frank Wise of Toronto — "What Does Quebec Want?"

Mr. Wise who, like many others in Ontario, is no doubt sincerely seeking for light had already addressed the same question to me, but I considered it best that the answer to such a question should come from a French Canadian source, and I was pleased to see a newspaper with the influence of *La Presse* responding as it did.

It is to be hoped that the answer of *La Presse* will be reproduced in all the English newspapers of the Dominion not in the garbled manner in which it has been used by some but in its exact form. It is garbled quotations of French Canadians utterances that tend to increase instead of diminishing the unfortunate misunderstanding that at present prevails.

As regards the excellent suggestion made by Hon. Cyrille Delage, Superintendent of Public Instruction for the Province of Quebec in the letter which appears in your columns that the article or *La Presse* should be translated and sent to all the newspapers of the Dominion I may say that steps have already been taken to that end. In fact the article was so opportune that I made a translation of it and am sending a copy of it to every newspaper in Canada and also to our leading public men and leaders of thought throughout the Dominion.

It would be a great mistake for French Canadians to believe that all English-speaking Canadians are hostile to them ; on the contrary, many English-speaking Canadians have strongly protested against

the unjust attacks made upon the French Canadians and have shown that they are in favor of the fullest measure of justice for their fellow-countrymen of French origin. As Sir Lomer Gouin in the great speech that he made in the Legislative Assembly on the Francœur motion declared with justice the attacks on the French Canadians emanate from a comparatively small minority and not from the mass of English-speaking Canadians, who are good and fair people.

The main obstacle to be overcome is the want of knowledge on the part of many English-speaking Canadians as regards the real status of the French Canadians. What therefore is most essential is that the actual position of the French Canadians should be placed clearly, fairly and comprehensively before English-speaking Canadians throughout the Dominion and it is to that work that I am now devoting my humble energies in the interest of racial concord and national unity,

JOHN BOYD.

Quebec and Confederation

HISTORIC SPEECH

Delivered by

Sir Lomer Gouin, K.C.M.G.

Prime Minister of Quebec

On the Francoeur Motion

In the Legislative Assembly
of Quebec, January, 1918

English Text with a foreword for English
speaking Canadians

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