

Canada: Lowered flags are a symbol of a nation in decline



The most frequent opening conversational gambit that I encountered during the past three very social weeks in the refreshingly mask-free, socially undistanced city of London, was the question of why the Canadian flag on top of Canada House in Trafalgar Square appeared to be permanently at half-mast. I had the heavy duty of conceding that it was part of Prime Minister Justin Trudeau's endlessly protracted act of national self-humiliation and confected grief over the history of the white man's treatment of Indigenous people in Canada over the last 500 years. The many informed people whom I encountered in London could not be described as a broadly based and deeply enthusiastic group of admirers of Justin Trudeau as a leader and clear champion of the Canadian national interest. In general, in my experience, he is seen in Europe, as in the United States, as the chic and dapper bearer

of a name well-known in Canada, who deserves the credit due to being a consecutive election winner in a G7 country, but is nevertheless seen as a feckless and rather superficial posturer.

Like most people when absent from the country where they reside, I always do my best to put Canada's case forward as persuasively as I can to doubting foreigners. My explanation for a permanent flag in official mourning over the Canadian High Commission in the greatest public square in Britain was greeted with universal, and not always polite, incredulity. It is a challenging posture to try to defend. For reasons that he will perhaps someday make clear, Trudeau has taken it upon himself to go to unheard of and absurdly histrionic lengths to propagate the historic fraud that Canada should be permanently ashamed of its treatment of the native inhabitants of the land.

One more time, it is appropriate to make a few germane points on the issue of the Indigenous peoples. Canada has no responsibility for the Indigenous policies of the French and British colonial governors. We are no more the inheritors of the legacy of the French who traded alcoholic beverages ("the milk of the king of France") and firearms in exchange for furs to make hats in France in the 17th and 18th centuries than we can claim the credit for the genius of Descartes, Richelieu or Voltaire. Nor are English-speaking Canadians in any plausible respect the moral inheritors of British colonial and Hudson's Bay Company officials who conducted policy toward the Native peoples in Canada west of Lake Erie prior to 1867.

Once Canada was in charge of Indigenous policy, after 1867, that policy was designed to assist First Nations in participating in the life of the country. As we all are now tiresomely aware, the residential schools wrenched a minority of Indigenous children from their families, and many were mistreated, but almost all of them were taught the elements of literacy and arithmetic in a way that they likely would not

otherwise have been able to learn. It should be obvious to anyone who has seriously read the full report of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission that its recommendations and allegations do not faithfully reflect the research in the companion volumes, which reveal a less horrifying picture than has been presented. And the billions of dollars in reparations that Canada and the various churches involved have made should be enough to right the injustices that occurred.

There is neither a moral nor a practical case to be made for further humbling acts or pseudo-conscientious deluges in the perpetual regime of atonement and expiation that Justin Trudeau is inflicting upon us. Having presumed, with no factual or legal authority, to plead guilty on behalf of all of us to the false charge of attempted cultural genocide against the Natives, he has, in six years in government, failed to devise substantial improvements in Indigenous policy. The heinously defamed John A. Macdonald gave First Nations the right to vote; Trudeau has not even supplied them with potable drinking water. This current campaign of self-punitive defamation aggravates, rather than diminishes, the injustices of the past.

I went through Trafalgar Square several times every day for three weeks and was often prompted to reflect on the absurdity of the current state of Canadian politics. Alberta, which has dutifully poured billions of dollars into Confederation through equalization payments, chiefly to Quebec, only to be rewarded by an unholy war by the federal government on its petroleum industry in the name of the fatuous crusade to eliminate carbon emissions, has finally voted against the equalization system. Meanwhile, the prime minister increases the utter fiscal nonsense of sustainable energy, as he makes us an international mockery by his hemophiliac-bleeding heart misinterpretation of the history of our Indigenous peoples.

The equalization payments system was set up in 1955 by the government of Prime Minister Louis St. Laurent, as a

consolation prize for federalism, after Quebec Premier Maurice Duplessis forced the federal government to acknowledge the constitutional right of the provinces to collect their own income taxes and offset them against federal taxes. Quebec, its principal beneficiary, has been well administered in recent years and no longer needs the equalization payments and has made it clear it will certainly not contribute any; and both the prime minister and the opposition leaders are mute as ghosts while Quebec launches a final assault against the English language in that province, even denying, without a peep from Ottawa, the right to speak English in federal government offices and in the workplaces of federally chartered companies in Quebec. Much less numerous French-Canadians in other provinces have much greater rights than Quebec's 1.5 million anglophones, and the federal parties are insipidly quiescent.

It is not clear what useful purpose is now served by the federal Parliament. I have returned to a country that is disintegrating politically and no longer seems to recognize itself. The United States, which is now governed by the most hopelessly stupid, misguided and incompetent regime in its history, has proved itself incapable of securing its border, evacuating its citizens from international danger zones, keeping billions worth of military hardware out of the hands of terrorists or producing a timely defence to the latest Chinese hypersonic missiles. It also treated its Natives much more harshly than we did, but it does not lower its flag over it. Countries that have committed unspeakable atrocities – including Germany, Japan, China, Russia, Turkey, Rwanda, Sudan, Argentina (which massacred its Indigenous population) and many others – do not make a ludicrous pantomime spectacle of themselves before the world, but Canada does.

Canada was not even considered in the new Pacific alliance of the United States, the United Kingdom and Australia. We have become a congenial political irrelevancy to the world; nobody

has anything against us and nobody knows or cares anything about us. We are not competitive, and are steadily descending in the competition of per capita income as capital flees. We have become such a boring and underachieving country that we've induced a coma in our political life while the authority of our central government decomposes like an Ozymandian monument, and the world yawns. No one knows how we descended to this, and the voters seem to have been so heavily anaesthetized that there is no obvious movement to escape from this awful torpor.

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