

Our Readers Write

New vision of several Canadas

Dear Editor:

I have serious concerns regarding the Spicer commission on national unity which was recently established by the Mulroney government in response to the failure of the Meech Lake Accord.

I'm worried that, instead of seeking innovative solutions for our constitutional problems, the Spicer commission will merely reiterate Pierre Trudeau's arcane, utopian vision of Canada, advocating a strong, central, united country in which the French and the English will somehow learn to co-exist in bicultural harmony.

This vision is not shared by the majority of Quebecois who perceive it as a threat to their cultural sovereignty, nor is it being shared by a growing number of English-Canadians who believe they've already made many compromises and sacrifices to accommodate Quebec.

Yet, while such vision of Canada may be debated, the Spicer commission should first question the very premise of national unity. Is national unity a good thing? Should Canada stay together? A good case can be made against this country.

Canada was born an artificial union. Confederation occurred in 1867, not because there was a thread of unity and common purpose binding the colonies of Nova Scotia, New Brunswick, Canada East (Quebec), and Canada West (Ontario), but, rather occurred due to various high-level political and economic interests.

Canada East accepted Confederation only because it offered a federal system of government in which issues important to the French such as language and culture would be protected under provincial jurisdiction. In other words, Canada East accepted Confederation, not because it wished to integrate into the rest of Canada, but only to protect and enhance its own sovereignty.

Meanwhile, Nova Scotia and New Brunswick had to be bribed and cajoled into Canada, even though the majority of people in both colonies were adamantly opposed to Confederation. British Columbia was similarly bribed in 1871.

Canada was born a patch-work quilt of different cultures and regions which have since been unable to properly integrate into a common, cultural union. We search for our national identity but are unable to find it. It doesn't exist!

The patches of this country are

held together by artificial threads, sewn by weavers decades ago (many of whom never stepped foot on Canada) who were more interested in such things as expanded markets, support costs for overseas colonies, and American encroachment on British domains.

Should we not at least consider the option of creating four or five Canadas instead of one. If, for instance, the four western provinces were to merge into a separate nation, wouldn't its citizens have a greater sense of national identity, its politicians (who would all be from the west) better represent their constituents, and its government have a greater understanding of its nation's economic resources, and potential? Couldn't the same case be made for other regions of Canada?

This country's size and diversity make it too cumbersome to economically manage and too difficult to politically and socially unite. Some may argue, however (as did Gary Lautens in the Nov. 4 issue of *The Toronto Star*), Canada is still a great, privileged country and shouldn't be frivolously torn apart. Yet, there is no reason why we must do away with all of the institutions, people, and values which make this country great. We can retain these assets and still adopt a new political arrangement to make ourselves even greater.

Peter Pacak
RR #4, Milton

A \$60,000 debt of gratitude to Scotch Block W.I.

This letter to the Scotch Block Women's Institute was filed with *The Champion* for publication.

Dear Ladies of the Scotch Block W.I.:

On behalf of the other directors of the Milton District Hospital Foundation, I take great pleasure in saying a public thank you to each of you for your group's generous donation of \$60,000, which was made possible by the sale of your meeting hall. We were honoured to be chosen for this gift and have already put part of it to good use. The addition of an arthroscopy in the hospital's operating room is bringing state-of-the-art relief to many patients.

Milton District Hospital Foundation is indeed fortunate to have friends like the Scotch Block Women's Institute in our community. Once again, a heartfelt thank you to you all.

Anne D. Ptolemy, President
Milton Dist. Hospital Foundation

Agricultural hall prepared for opening

Thurs. Sept. 22, 1864 Milton West- Preparations are being completed this week for the Agricultural Demonstration and opening of the new Exhibition Building tomorrow in the fair grounds.

The building, as it has been completed, is a prominent object in our town. It is placed two feet from the ground on a stone foundation. Its length is 80 feet, breadth 44 feet, height 22 feet to the plates, 40 feet to the ridge.

There is an abundance of light from the great number of windows which are of sufficient dimension to light the gallery as well as the lower storey. There is also a circular window set in an arch in front which adds much to the appearance of the building.

The farmers of Halton will no doubt be on hand at the Grand Agricultural Demonstration tomorrow afternoon as it is supposed that it will be one of the gayest days that Milton has yet seen.

It also promises to be a great gathering of the notables in agriculture, Col. Thompson of the Provincial Association, Professor Buckland of the University of Toronto, Col. Dennison, Treasurer of the Agricultural Association, Mr. Clarke, Editor of the "Canadian Farmer", Mr. Edwards, Secretary of the Board of Arts and Manufacturers, Dr. Beaty of Cobourg, James Beaty, Barrister of Toronto and others.

Admission to the event will be 25 cents with music and refreshments provided. The purpose of the whole affair is to raise funds to aid in liquidating the debt on the Hall.

At the annual meeting of the County Agricultural Society in January a committee was appointed to look after "the fit and proper place for the building of a suitable Agricultural Hall for this County". J.W. Bowes, James McCuffin, W.D. Lyon, W.C. Beaty, J. Harrison and Joseph Martin were named members of the committee.

An appeal was made to the Milton Council and to the Halton County Council for assistance in meeting



Moments in History

with JIM DILLS

the desirable objective of providing a suitable place to exhibit the agricultural produce of the county. W.C. Beaty explained to members of County Council such a provision would show the importance of improving agriculture.

Both Councils had considerable debate on their assistance to the Society.

After a petition from 80 residents Milton Council called a public meeting in March to consider granting funds for the purchase of lands by town or the Agricultural Society. The meeting refused to endorse a public expenditure to purchase the lands for the Society or give a grant toward their purchase. It did agree to open a subscription list to raise funds for the Society. Donations were collected to assist in the erection of exhibition buildings in the limits of Milton.

In June, however, after receiving a petition requesting a grant of \$200 to the Agricultural Society, from George Dempsey and 44 others, Milton Council did approve \$100 toward the building. That same month the County granted \$300 despite an attempt from some members to reduce the amount to \$100.

The Society purchased eight acres of land for \$680 from Finlay McCallum (south side of Robert St.) in June and took out a mortgage from Mr. McCallum for \$700.

□ Eighty-second in a series of facts, sometimes sprinkled with imagination, to reflect Milton's past. Research assistance by Jack Charlton and Alex Cooke. (Copyright Jim Dills 1990)

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