

ETCETERA

O Canada ... the edited version



'Changing the words of the anthem would be a tremendous cost just to suit (The Famous 5 Foundation's) whims.'

Gwen Landolt
national vice-president, REAL Women

BY ROGER VARLEY
Staff Writer

A campaign to change the lyrics of O Canada won't be receiving any support from Oak Ridges Member of Parliament Bryon Wilfert. "I'm opposed to any changes in the national anthem," Wilfert said last Thursday. "It's an inclusive anthem."

He was commenting on a move by The Famous 5 Foundation last week to collect signatures urging the federal government to remove the phrase "in all thy sons command" from the anthem.

The foundation is named after the so-called Famous Five — Emily Murphy, Louise McKinney, Nellie McClung, Henrietta Muir Edwards and Irene Parby — who fought for the advancement of women in Canada and led the legal battle in the 1920s to have women

declared persons.

Famous 5 president Frances Wright said the anthem should be gender neutral to reflect and inspire all Canadians.

Proponents of the change have suggested the contentious phrase could be changed to "True patriot love in all of us command" or "in all our lives command."

Wiltfert, a former history teacher, is not impressed by the suggested compromise.

"We live in an age of political correctness, it seems," he said. "Are we going to change native land? Where will it stop?"

He suggested those who take umbrage to the word "sons" could be likened to people who would demand a Rembrandt nude should be clothed.

"As one who believes we should promote our history and traditions, I have trouble with looking at something differently just because it's in a different time set," he said. "There are more

important things to deal with."

Liberal Senator Vivienne Poy of Ontario plans to enter a motion this fall asking the federal government to change the words to reflect women as well as men. Poy said the current wording "does not allow women to participate fully in the celebrations, nor does it acknowledge their important role in building Canada."

Gwen Landolt of Thornhill, national vice-president of the right-wing anti-abortion group REAL Women, wondered why Poy is fighting for that particular change.

Noting the senator was born in Asia, Landolt asked why Poy wasn't fighting to change the words "home and native land."

"As far as REAL Women is concerned, said Landolt, "O Canada" is just fine.

"Why are they trying to change it?" she asked. "It's generic. There are all kinds of politically incorrect references

to take it literally is puzzling."

She said neither the Famous 5 Foundation nor Real Women represents all women in Canada. In fact, she argued, the five women the foundation honours "are all known to be highly racist and all were in favour of sterilizing the mentally handicapped."

"Why have these women as role models?" she asked.

"I think (the foundation) wanted publicity and needed something to promote themselves," she said. "Changing the words of the anthem would be a tremendous cost just to suit their whims."

The anthem was first sung — in French — in 1880. The current English version is based on lyrics written by Robert Weir in 1908. There have been some minor changes to the English wording since then. The song officially became Canada's national anthem on July 1, 1980.

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