

# UNE LETTRE D'ARMAND LAVERGNE

## Il répond au Standard de Kingston

### "WE ARE NOT ONE BIT TERRIFIED!"

Il y a quelque temps, le Standard de Kingston, publiait un violent article sur ce qu'il appelle le péril canadien-français.

Notre ami, M. Armand Lavergne, a, ces jours derniers, répondu au point au Standard, dans une lettre que ce journal a publiée et dont voici le texte original complet, de lecture intéressante et de documentation solide.

Nous le donnons en anglais, la masse de nos lecteurs, élèves des écoles bilingues du Québec, comprenant aussi bien l'anglais que le français.

To the Editor of The Kingston Standard,

Dear Sir,—I have received the copy of the article published by your interesting paper, which article is entitled, "The menace of the hyphenated French-Canadian."

Of course you do not expect me to say that I share all the opinions it contains, but I certainly have no objection to state that I am always interested to hear the other side's views and ideals; and it is a matter for gratitude when in this country of hypocrites, one finds oneself in front of opinions or convictions expressed frankly and without disguise.

This is certainly the case of your article; I feel sure it is sincere, although facts, unintentionally, I have no doubt, are misrepresented.

You first deal with the enlistment of French-Canadians and you denounce it as being "a sorry showing". It seems to me that, (from your point of view), you could have applied this to all Canadians. It is a well known fact that at least eighty per cent of our contingent were composed of men born outside of Canada. Many of them were foreigners, Russians, Roumanians, Americans, even Germans and Austrians, and I know of one Highlander, in the Montreal 5th Highlanders, who is an Italian and not even a British subject.

What is the respective share of the Canadians, English or French? If you take the trouble to go to the militia department in Ottawa, you will find out that in the first contingent, proportion kept according to population, there were more French-Canadians than English-Canadians.

Here are a few figures taken from three Ontario regiments, Royal Canadian Horse Artillery, O. C., Lt.-Col. Henri Panet, (French-Canadian).

"A." Battery—263 men, 4 officers—189 foreigners, 58 English-Canadians, 16 French-Canadians.

"B." Battery—226 men, 6 officers—168 foreigners, 42 English-Canadians, 16 French-Canadians.

No. 1 Heavy Battery, (Toronto)—214 men—143 foreigners, 48 English-Canadians, 23 French-Canadians.

The 48th Highlanders of Toronto had almost a company of French-Canadians of Sault Saint Marie; the adjutant of the regiment was a French-Canadian, Captain. (now Lt.-Col.) Dansereau, and they had to complete their cadres to take one officer of the 61st Regt. de Montigny, Capt. MacLean, who in spite of his Scotch name is a French-Canadian as is often the case in our province.

Since then, five entirely French-Canadian regiments of infantry have been formed and raised, the 22nd, now at the front, the 41st, the 57th, the 69th and the 70th, not counting our compatriots enlisted in English-speaking regiments and in the artillery, cavalry, the army medical corps and other auxiliary services. And it did not prevent the three first named regiments to send repeatedly drafts of 250 men, to needing English regiments.

Why conceal these facts and is it making for national union to seek a quarrel of this petty nature?

Although differing with them on the nature of duty and obligations to the Empire, I have the greatest admiration and respect for those who enlist and sacrifice their life for their ideals. And to me, although I share not their beliefs, they are worthy of great praise, a praise I am sorry that I cannot grant to the bombastic jingo who shout for men to go and enlist and get killed, while they stay comfortably at home, knowing that the only fire they will have to face will be that of their grate.

I have no objection in repeating that I do not believe in the participation of Canada in imperial wars. "Foreign wars". It is my conviction; but is it that of my compatriots? I wish it were, but I am afraid it is not and that on this question, I am in the minority.

I suppose this DISLOYAL statement will shock many with a pious horror; I am willing to stand my trial for high treason, even in Ontario, and I think it would be found there was no ground for the indictment.

In the Empire we are either a colony or a sister nation; if we are a colony, we have the obligation of a colony, that is "the territorial defence of this country." We did not decide this, we are not allowed to do this kind of thing; it has been done by Great Britain, as you will see in Lord Grenville's message to

Sir G. E. Cartier, when he was minister of militia. And this obligation every French-Canadian will fulfil to the last drop of his blood, just as he has done in the past, when the Anglo-Saxons in the States were in rebellion and those in Canada, awaiting the result of the contest on the Island of Orleans.

"But we are a sister nation!" I hear the jingo crying. Are we? Then we should not only have the obligations but also the rights of imperial citizenship. The only right a colonial has in the present war is that of being killed; why are we not granted our share in the control of imperial affairs? This has always been denied us by Great Britain. "It is an imperial prerogative", says Mr. Asquith, "which Great Britain cannot and will not share". Very well, but if she wants to treat us as colonies let us on the other hand safeguard our colonial prerogatives. I have my affections for Great Britain or for France, but my sole interest is in Canada.

You must admit that our participation in this war is voluntary, our enlistment is also voluntary. Therefore it is open to discussion, unless we are living in Germany. But let me say that if I believe as you believe, as the majority of the people you pretend believe, that we have an obligation to participate in this war, that Canada's life itself is in jeopardy, I would not think that we were doing our duty, except perhaps in a mean and miserable way. We are sending to the war about 150,000 men; we could send at least 600,000 with conscription.

Canada is in danger, say you; then the greatest effort we can give is required from us. The Canadian jingo government and the equally jingo opposition cry out that the Empire is going to ruins if we do not come to "its rescue, that it is our solemn duty. And what are they doing in face of their own declarations? The house is on fire they tell us, and they fight the conflagration with a pail of water, when they have stored away at home a steam pump.

Are they sincere or playing a game of hypocrites that can work equally with the jingo and the nationalist Canadian? They are afraid to do what is their duty from their point of view, because they know that public opinion in this country would rebel against compulsory service. These loyal Imperialists still like power and office better than their principles.

Was it Johnson who said that patriotism was the last refuge of scoundrels?

We fought in 1910 in Drummond and Arthabaska, and in 1911, with conservative financial aid and tory complicity against the participation of Canada in imperial wars. If such principles are treasonable to-day, they were treasonable then. How could the loyal Tories accept them and the men defending them?

I could not believe in such hypocrisy. They must have been most acceptable at those times, then why should they be today?

Our public men's position in face of that seems illogical; but allow me to say so, is yours any better? You are making great, noble appeals to defend civilization, right and liberty in Europe against Teuton tyranny. But what is going on in your own province under this standard of liberty? You raise your voice so that French-Canadian children shall not be allowed to learn their own mother tongue and you ask to "either throttle or muzzle" those protesting against such an injustice. Is this not the Prussian system? I am beginning to think that the hyphenated French-Canadian is too British for this country.

When you denounce German methods have you ever thought of the words of the Master: "And why beholdest thou the mote that is in thy brother's eye, but perceivest not the beam that is in thine own eye?"

But what gives us more pleasure is your serious talk of "the menace of the hyphenated French Canadian." I have never read anything so funny and so untrue to history. Why even under the French regime we ceased to call ourselves French, to call ourselves solely "Canadians". This is our country; we know and love no other. Most of our English-speaking compatriots have not yet decided whether Canada or Great Britain was their country and many of them still call England home. This is not the case with us: French Canadians love Canada first and last.

To this; to the generous treatment we have given the English-speaking minority in this province of Quebec; to our offers of brotherhood; to our attachment to our noble and beautiful language, (and is there in humanity a loftier sentiment?) you answer by a threat of wiping us out of Canada, a direct appeal to civil war.

Here is our answer: We are not one bit terrified! We want to live in peace, to live and let live; but we are no cowards. We belong to the race that is to-day giving to the world the greatest lesson of courage, of dignity and of patriotism.

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