

If Canada is a free country, her people a free people, Canadians are free to express whatever political opinions they may hold, including opinions as to the best political destiny for this country. And any Canadian who speaks out honestly in this regard is entitled to respect among us for his honesty and courage, even though his ideas do not suit others. Accordingly, any citizen of the Dominion who thinks that the independence of Canada, in the sense of complete separation from the British Empire, a separation as complete for example as that of France or the United States, and who says so, is entitled to respect for his honesty and courage, and entitled to considerate argument. Sir WILFRID LAURIER showed honesty and courage when long ago he proclaimed that in his view the ultimate goal of Canada should be independence, as against British connection. Anyone who thought differently could debate the matter with Sir WILFRID feeling at least that the case was one of dealing with a decent opponent.

The indecent opponent would be a man who aims at destroying British connection, but who, fearing to say so because the result might hurt the chance of his political party getting into power in Canada, conceals his feeling in order not to offend people among us who like British connection, yet seeks by dishonest phrases to pander to some of our people who do not like it, and whose votes he hopes to gain thereby.

Such was the nature of the indecency embodied in that resolution of the Laurierites of Central Ontario which THE JOURNAL and Mr. R. P. SPARKS have been discussing. The resolution, by demanding "the absolute equality of Canada with other self-governing peoples," proclaimed that Canada lacks equality with self-governing peoples—that her people are not free. THE JOURNAL took exception to that, arguing that Canadians are a free people, as intelligent persons of all parties know, and that to assert otherwise must have some dishonest purpose. The dishonest purpose we guessed to be that as Great Britain could be the only power holding Canada down, the Toronto Laurierites for the purpose of gaining votes among the sections of our population which do not like British connection were endeavoring by a dishonest ambiguous phrase to cater to anti-British prejudice, while at the same time dodging the danger of directly offending the British sentiment of others of the people.

Our comment gave offence to Mr. SPARKS, an Ottawa Laurierite, who arose to champion the resolution. He maintains that Canada is not free. An English evening paper, he points out, declared recently that the Imperial Government would not allow Canada to be represented at Washington. Worse than that. Canada, Mr. SPARKS remembers, when her Parliament midway in the war decided to prolong its own life, was obliged to go to England for permission. Therefore, according to Mr. SPARKS, Canada is not a free country. Canadians are not a free people.

Mr. SPARKS thus establishes the dictum to his own satisfaction that any constitutional obligation or affiliation under which Canada exists with regard to Great Britain is a denial of our freedom. Now, it is clear that in Canada's case only one escape from some sort of constitutional affiliation with Britain can exist, namely a declaration of the complete independence of Canada. And inasmuch as Mr. SPARKS champions the Toronto Laurierite resolution which denounced our alleged subordination, and that according to Mr. SPARKS himself our subordination must continue so long as we have any constitutional affiliation with Great Britain, Mr. SPARKS himself champions independence.

So his advocacy of the Toronto resolution illustrates the accuracy of THE JOURNAL's estimate when we conjectured that the resolution was aimed

"to pander to the independentists, racialists, alien immigrants, Sinn Feiners and all the rest in Canada who disapprove in their souls of the British Empire, and whose votes the Laurierite party would like to collar."

Now, we do not despise independentists or racialists, or Sinn Feiners or aliens, nor have we any desire to intimate that they are anything but perfectly respectable people. A courageous and honest and frank man is admirable, no matter what he calls himself in politics. THE JOURNAL was not criticising men; it was criticising a dishonest political cry. Our criticism was criticism of a dirty partisan device which is pretty frequent in our politics. And Mr. SPARKS again bells the cat for us. Mr. SPARKS insists that Canada is not free, that the Toronto resolution pointed to a truth when it declared that we do not possess freedom. Well, if Canada is not free, those who like Mr. SPARKS argue so, and make a grievance of it, should have the common manliness and honesty to speak right out in meeting and say that they want Canadian independence. That would be perfectly fair and perfectly respectable. The dirty thing, the thing which THE JOURNAL attacked and which Mr. SPARKS champions, is keeping quiet about such a vital matter in order not to lose votes in Canadian party fighting, while seeking to pander to votes of another kind by roundabout assertions which if they are not true are dishonest, and if they are true are cowardly. We feel obliged to Mr. SPARKS for bringing out the truth so clearly.