



# THE ROYAL BANK OF CANADA

## MONTHLY LETTER

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### *Celebrating Canada's Centenary*

**T**O PEOPLE with imperceptive minds the emergence of Canada as a nation is remote and shadowy, but to those with a feeling for the force of history it is as close as yesterday.

The hundredth anniversary of the confederation of the provinces is a mere six years ahead of us, and planning has already begun so that we may celebrate the event on a grand scale. We cannot be content to have only parades and pageants. These are part of our expression of pleasure, but some projects of lasting benefit should show to ourselves and the world that we plan for a great future, suitable to a great country.

The year 1967 can be a wonderful year, like a break of open sky and sunshine in a cloudy world. We should look forward to it in the spirit expressed by Prince Philip in an address on a similar occasion: "There should be general public festivities, gaiety, and enjoyment, because there can never be enough excuses to put troubles aside and to refresh the mind with unrestrained joy; there should be a humble thanksgiving to the Almighty whose influence over the lives of the people has made possible their peaceful progress . . ."

Our celebration of events of the past, expressed in the joy of the present, will be broadened down to the future by our erection, between now and the end of 1967, of tangible evidences of our pride in our history and our faith in our future. This constructive activity will also exhibit us to the world as ongoing people, building upon a substantial base the appurtenances of a happy life.

The celebration is not one to be arranged by the federal government alone, but for provinces, regions, municipalities and associations of citizens.

#### *Have an objective*

It will make the Centenary more interesting if we give a point to our plans. Our aim might be, for example, to expand our opportunities for advancement in education, health, science, the arts, and the exchange

of ideas. We can, if we set our minds to it, uncover areas in our national life which have been neglected; we can find splendid ideas which have never progressed past the dreamed-about stage. If we make up some of our cultural deficits during the next six years, then we shall have that much more to celebrate in 1967.

What are these cultural deficits? They are things which a country settled nearly 350 years ago and politically united nearly a hundred years ago should have by this time: organizations and the physical properties for the production of music, plays, ballet and all expressions of our artistic nature; for the training and use of athletes; for the development of minds through lectures, study groups and exhibitions.

Instead of bronze plaques and marble monuments, we might unveil significant community improvements, like new parks, new houses replacing slums, new city halls, new community buildings, libraries, museums. These are things we want anyway: preparation for our Centenary gives us the opportunity and incentive to get them now.

During the year — and the Centenary should last a year, to give everyone a chance to share in it — we might have a television programme of stature every week depicting some event that was significant in our history. We could have special music, plays and books prepared for publication and production that year. Nathaniel A. Benson wrote a Victory Loan Pageant which was produced and acted by children in schools from coast to coast in 1941 and is still remembered for its stirring presentation of the past and present and future of Canada:

"She whose centuries are storied, whose young banners far outborne  
Are the heralds of a splendour in the ages yet unborn."

Between now and the beginning of 1967 we might produce films and publish books for distribution abroad

to induce people to visit Canada in our Centenary year. Conferences could be organized by business, labour, science, agriculture, education, government, history and professional groups and associations to be held at different times that year in widely separated centres from the Pacific to the Atlantic, and interested people from all the world invited to attend.

It is not too early to start planning. We as individuals need to prepare for our participation and our enjoyment, but governments also must look to their book-keeping. A national anniversary like Canada's is too big for casual methods.

### *A party for everyone*

This Centenary is for everyone. The celebrations will not be alike in all parts of the country, but all will be marking the same happy event.

Everything should not be scheduled to happen on the First of July. Events should be spread out throughout the year to suit the weather, the regional interests, the special days, and the state of readiness of building projects in every section of the country. This will have the big added advantage of giving all of us the opportunity to share in more than one event, thus learning more about one another.

There can be festivals of all kinds at all levels, with every community and organization featuring whatever is a natural reflection of its people. It is not enough to decorate the main street and public buildings; we need to use our imagination, our art and our energy to produce dramatizations of Canada's past. We can open up and mark the old trails and canoe routes which were the first links in exploration and settlement of our country. We can arrange for groups of entertainers who have skills and crafts and arts typical of their own part of Canada to visit other parts. We can start now the sports events which will have their final tilts in 1967.

How is all this to be arranged? Not by a dictatorial central organization, but by the grass roots participation of all our people in planning and carrying out. Once a broadly representative central organization has laid down general principles, then local groups should take over and plan their own celebrations in their own way.

The central organization has been working on the plan since the Canadian Association for Adult Education and the Canadian Citizenship Council started the wheels turning in 1957. In May, 1960, the Canadian Centenary Council was organized as a national non-governmental body. Its purpose is to provide expression and involvement at a national level by voluntary non-governmental organizations in planning for the anniversary of Confederation in 1967.

This purpose is to be attained by stimulating interest in appropriate observances and celebrations; by establishing principles and objectives and directing public attention to them; by encouraging and assisting in the initiation of certain projects which are designed to eradicate our social deficits; by acting as a national clearing house and information centre; by providing planning facilities and services. Mr. Alan Clarke, Executive-Director of the Canadian Citizenship Council, is Secretary of the Canadian Centenary Council. His address is Postal Box 2310, Station D, Ottawa, Ontario.

### *Why celebrate?*

We have taken for granted that every Canadian will be eager to take part in the Centenary, but it will do us no harm to tot up a few of the good reasons for being joyful.

We do not wish to approach the celebration bathed in the dewy evening light of retrospect, yet it would be wrong not to lay the lessons of yesterday before tomorrow. We can well look back and ask: "How does this affect our life today? What lessons have we learned for the future?"

It would be fatal to our happiness in coming years if we were to allow this special occasion to call up ancient grudges and give the occasion for fighting over again the old battles of war and politics and regions and sections.

We have inherited the fruits of the labour of forefathers we are proud to recall upon this occasion.

The three centuries that elapsed between Cartier's first voyage to Canada and the confederation of the provinces were marked by the hardship of pioneering in a country for which life in French and English villages had been a poor rehearsal.

Besides the difficulties of climate and loneliness there were hostile clans, belligerent neighbours, natural barriers, and the uncertainty of life under rulers who were three thousand miles away across an ocean traversed slowly by sailing vessel, rulers who knew little about conditions in their colonies.

This backward glance should give us a hint about what we are planning to celebrate. It is not some philosophy of loyalty to an abstract and general thing we know and think of as "Canada". That, indeed, would be a difficult enthusiasm to arouse in a land so big and with so many diversities of people, economies and environment. What we celebrate is the courage of men and women who settled here, the skill and pertinacity which kept them here to build what we inherit, the good sense which enabled them to live and work together, and the vision which prompted them to form this union we call "Confederation".

## *Preserve our history*

Every province and every locality has its own highlights which it will wish to memorialize, and its own ambitions to fulfil, but all these historical episodes and plans for the future are comprehended in the Centenary.

An excellent chance is offered by the celebration to collect regional and local histories, a part of our culture which is much neglected. Starting now, historical societies can engage the interest of thousands of people in providing letters, diaries and records, early newspapers, archives of local governments, and material things like tools, utensils and implements used by former generations.

Writing local histories might be made a project for the schools. When Saskatchewan held its Jubilee a few years ago the school children came up with some 3,000 local histories which have been microfilmed and filed in the Saskatchewan archives.

This is a good time, too, to think about local historic sites. It is not enough to build a stone monument and affix an all-but-unreadable metal plaque saying "on this site . . .". A score of tablets will not take the place of the birthplace of one of the world's most eminent astronomers, now falling to pieces, or of the War of 1812 buildings and trenches if they are allowed to disintegrate.

A revival of interest in historical sites is evidenced by the number of people who visit those which have been preserved or restored. In the United States, historical sites are running ahead of scenic areas in the percentage of increase in tourist visitation.

## *Our heritage*

The proper place to start a birthday story is in the past. There is no need, on this occasion, to wrinkle our brows in attempting to disentangle the web of events, because all Canada's history is woven into the fabric of the dress she wears today.

It is said that the greatest benefit of inheritance is to succeed to an ancestor's virtues. Together with practical qualities there has come down to us a love of right things and the desire to live life for all it is worth. That is our heritage.

Canada has offered to many other nations one supremely valuable demonstration, that tolerance must be an intrinsic part of any real democracy. The development of two cultures, two attitudes, hallowed by a legal and constitutional system, is the reason why our ten provinces can celebrate the Centenary in fellowship. Quarrels refused to turn to hate, animosities broke down into friendship, seeds of dissension were sown in a soil that brought them up as flowers.

Our heritage prompts us to continue building toward a nation in which all talents are generously recognized, all forgivable oddities forgiven, all viciousness quietly frustrated, all graciousness honoured.

While we are built upon the bedrock of two cultures, our country includes large numbers of other racial groups. This cosmopolitan population requires that we treat the Centenary in such a way as to emphasize our common Canadianism.

Querulous and impatient voices occasionally rise in demands for the conventional symbols of nationhood, but we can see all around us the more mature symbols of a people working together in unity but not uniformity.

## *Confederation*

All of the good that is Canada today cannot be credited to passage of the British North America Act of 1867, but who can express the impact of that event upon what followed? Canada was an imposing ideal in the year of Confederation, but a very unimpressive reality. The provinces had no association with one another, and every province operated under a separate government with its own political structure. Today, separated by miles of mountain, forest, lakes and wide rivers, every region is making its special and necessary contribution to the Confederation.

What brought this about? Chief among the political aims was to establish a new nation to meet the changed conditions of British policy and to unite the scattered provinces against possible aggression from the south. Economically, Confederation was designed to spread dependence over many industries instead of only a few, and thus lessen exposure to the effects of economic policies then being pursued by both Great Britain and the United States. Through mutual concession it was hoped to preserve cultural and local loyalties, and reconcile them with political strength and solidarity.

Of course, enactment of the British North America Act establishing Confederation did not of itself assure solution of either political or economic difficulties. It did, however, provide a framework within which we are still working to bring about the balance of loyalties and interests, needs and supplies, which an effective federal system requires.

Through the efforts of daring explorers, missionaries, and traders, this land, bigger in area than all Europe, was opened up. Today, we are part of a changing world pattern of innovation and obsolescence. We are firmly based amid new states which have inadequate economic resources, erratic frontiers, dissident minorities, and delusions of grandeur. Many political and intellectual things have shifted from their old moorings.

## *Our task today*

The task facing Canada is to develop a set of values and a series of habits suited to seeing us through the new situations. Besides all the material things that will be erected to mark the Centenary, we need some spiritual things, like a rededication to the principles of the democratic way of life. By espousing democracy we have adopted a lifelong assignment in human relationships.

Anyone can copy out a constitution and translate the democratic ideal into the machinery of self-government. It takes great insight by statesmen, and sympathetic understanding by every citizen, to devise a practical system of democratic government which will most surely suit the needs and character of the people.

But Canada does not stand alone in the world. To be a patriotic Canadian does not mean that we hate every country but our own. If a man wishes his country to prosper, but never at the expense of other countries, he is at the same time an intelligent patriot and a citizen of the world.

Our ideas of geography have changed. Our neighbours are no longer the people in the next county or province, but people in continents at the other side of the earth. Every day sees thousands of transactions pass through this bank's International Division, evidence of business being done by Canadians in Australia, Africa, Asia, Europe and the Americas.

We accept our responsibilities as a member of the British Commonwealth of Nations and of the United Nations. In Pakistan, a party of 150 Canadians helped other members of the Commonwealth to construct a dam, a power station and an irrigation system; we sent a contingent with the United Nations force striving to keep peace in the Congo.

We do not, on the occasion of our Centenary, seek to impose our ideas or our way of life on others, but we do believe that in the course of our history we have discovered some great truths which can help all mankind.

## *Our future*

Canadianism, which started before Confederation but was given definite direction by that union, is no mean instrument with which to face new conditions. J. B. Brebner said in his presidential address to the Canadian Historical Society twenty years ago: "Canadianism . . . is made up of over three centuries of successful struggle with a recalcitrant environment, of over a century's original and successful political adaptation and inventiveness, and of a kind of conservatism which history has shown can be converted by adversity into stubborn, indomitable will."

Every one of us, from east to west and north to south, whatever his ethnic background, his creed, his colour, his economic stature — everyone has a vital interest in seeing Canada endure. Only by a union of its people can a country be prepared for the ambushes set by chance and change. The little states of Greece destroyed themselves by their egotism, their jealousies, and their struggle for rights one against the other.

How shall we contribute, during Centenary year, to the unity we need? Well, we now have Citizenship Week, designed primarily for the benefit of New Canadians: why not make 1967 Citizenship Year for all Canadians?

Citizenship needs a rededication periodically if it isn't to lose its significance. We have not inherited citizenship as something to have and to hold without effort. Every generation has to earn its own citizenship and we need to remind ourselves periodically about its values and its obligations.

Through a year of citizenship exercises we can confirm our status as a close fraternity of people who know what they want to do and are united in finding ways to do it. We can show ourselves as being constructively patriotic, trying to raise the standard of our society. We can display our freedom from those three great enemies of citizenship: indolence, self-interest, and blind adherence to factions. For citizenship is more than the right to vote: it is the art of living together.

## *Let's do something notable*

As inheritors of a great tradition, let us do something notable to mark the Centenary of Confederation. The project is thrilling. We are often called "sobersides" by our visitors: for this occasion, let's really enjoy ourselves, not only in pageantry and festival but in construction and fulfilment.

Disappointment is never so bitter — so "sour grapes" — as when one has had superior advantages and has neglected them or frittered them away or watered them down. Every Canadian should say: "This is Canada's hundredth birthday celebration, and I am going to be an enthusiastic and useful part of it."

As the procession of this century of years passes in review, each year decked with its crown of laurel leaves for achievement and its chaplet of rosemary for memories, we must remind ourselves that 1967 will take its place in the cavalcade. We must make it worthy of the company it keeps.

Then, recalling Tennyson's words, we shall enter the future knowing that . . .

Mind and soul, according well,  
May make one music as before,  
But vaster.