



# THE ROYAL BANK OF CANADA

## MONTHLY LETTER

VOL. 47, No. 3

HEAD OFFICE: MONTREAL, MARCH 1966

### *A Citizen of Canada*

TO BE A CITIZEN OF CANADA is to be a citizen of no mean country. She may be an old-fashioned country in some ways; she has differences of language and economics and perplexities in government: but her foundations are solid and the spires of her many faiths point to the same ideal.

There is something vital and singular about being a citizen of Canada. As J. B. Brebner said in his presidential address to the Canadian Historical Association in 1940: "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."

We have assembled in Canada the adventurous spirits of numerous races in surroundings favourable to the creation of a great citizenship. They have brought with them vivid ideas and principles a thousand years old. No commonwealth ever wished for more ideal conditions than are provided by the contribution all these people can make toward the good life.

Centennial year offers us the opportunity to mobilize our imagination and our institutions in a vigorous national effort to improve knowledge about citizenship and expand participation in it. This will require commitment, energy and time from every well-disposed person and association, but we must not postpone it or the very undoing of our way of life could begin.

Canada is something we are building. Canadians are on the move. They have been on the move west and north ever since Louis Hébert ploughed that first patch of farm land in the shadow of Port Royal in 1604 and then moved westward in 1623 to plant his seeds in ground that is today the Upper Town of Quebec. We are participating now in space exploration. Canada was the third nation to have a satellite in orbit around the earth.

Canada has developed her thinking, too. This is a nation with its own cultural and political and social identity, and not merely a marginal tribe of French

and English adventurers united only by the desire to make a living. Canada's first government, made up of French and English cabinet ministers, proclaimed in the speech from the throne at the first session of the first parliament that "a new nationality" had come into being. From that time on, people had the opportunity to realize their highest potentialities as citizens of a democratic national state.

But having made ourselves sovereign as a nation we must now behave intelligently as citizens.

### *The roominess of life*

It is a pity that we worry so greatly about our diversity, because it is just this diversity that gives Canada individuality. Out of manifold talents and different ways of looking at things come originality, strength, and a forward-moving spirit. Out of our heritage have come our basic freedoms, our democratic way of life, our art, literature and music. Most important, we have inherited the spirit of challenge, of exploring and pioneering. We are pushing forward on many frontiers, geographical, scientific, cultural and spiritual.

Canadians have always encouraged the newcomer to join them, and have been eager for him to find the roominess of life that Canada offers. This is a land where every man and every woman can find a place in society suited to his or her inclinations and capabilities. It is a country where the ordinary citizen, no matter how humble, has a chance to better his life. But he must accept the spirit of our institutions. It is upon observance of the spirit of the laws and customs by which we live that the worthiness of our citizenship is tested.

In a democratic country like Canada the right to vote is a priceless gift of citizenship. Our way of government does not compel everyone to vote, but democracy may fall into disrepute if those who enjoy its rights and privileges fail to exercise them. In the general election of 1965 only 74.3 per cent of eligible voters cast their ballots.

Voting is not the only duty of a citizen. You cannot vote democracy and then go home and forget it. Democracy needs to be lived by every citizen so as to create the moral and spiritual atmosphere in which the government must operate. The elected representatives have to be assisted, inspired, and sometimes prodded, by public opinion if they are to provide the conditions in which men and women may set about making themselves happy.

### *Meaning of citizenship*

Good Canadianism includes social membership. A citizen is not only an individual but a member of a family, one of a community, a member of a province and of the nation and of the world.

Being a citizen means more than having technical knowledge of the government of the country. It implies the possession of an ideal, a sense of values, and a theory of what life in Canada may become. It takes in the whole scale of thought, knowledge and behaviour.

A citizen is not content to be an anonymous face in the crowd, an unknown quantity to his associates, an item on his employer's pay-roll, a tenant to his landlord, and a non-participating member of a union, church, trade association or fraternal society.

Above all, the citizen is not a hanger-on. He does not look upon the nation as a co-operative business possessing great wealth in which all citizens have a right to share. The thoughtful citizen distinguishes between security, which means being taken care of, reducing him to the status of a baby, and stability, which does not give anything for nothing but makes sure that effort brings reward. The citizen must stand straight and proud, resisting any theories that would undercut the principle of personal accountability and self-respect.

The business of growing up into a good citizen, or of becoming a good citizen upon coming here from another land, is not a matter of learning political science but of taking on maturity. This is made up of two parts: being healthily independent and being what one should be as a social creature.

A good citizen develops his talents for the maximum benefit of himself and society. Canada does not seek to standardize men's minds, producing deadly commonplaceness. Instead, it seeks co-operativeness and goodwill, and flexibility in the face of change dictated by intelligent appraisal of a situation.

### *Democracy and freedom*

Good citizenship is important to those who think that democracy is worth more than a couple of cheers at a patriotic gathering. Citizens in a democracy are free and upright people who take pride in governing themselves and do govern themselves.

Democracy is a spirit, not a law. It provides the

environment for bringing out the extraordinary possibilities in ordinary people. Personal effort is of the greatest significance in keeping democracy on the rails and progressing.

Canada's democracy is democracy in a changing society. It is not imprisoned by a rigid constitution that declares: "This is the extent and the limit of freedom which citizens shall enjoy for all time."

Other nations have changed, too, some of them for the worse. They thought their best way was to turn over their lives to unrestricted political control. They found temporary relief from some worries and gained the illusion of future security, but they lost their democratic liberty and sacrificed the prospect of gaining what their individual qualities fitted them to enjoy. Others have moved with brash arrogance into the state where they believe that "freedom" and "liberty" convey the right for every man to do as he likes.

Democracy is something learned, not bestowed or legalized or seized. We learn about it by studying or working alongside people who do or say things unusual to us, and by listening sympathetically to people who question some of our assumptions. Without the interchange of ideas the human race would still be sitting in primitive darkness.

Democracy presupposes the right of every minority, even of only one person, to dissent from the opinions of the majority. As George W. Brown wrote in *Canadian Democracy in Action* (J. M. Dent & Sons, Ltd., Toronto, 1947): "Whatever democracy is, it is not government by brute force but by persuasion. It is a sense of fair play, of justice and sportsmanship in the highest sense of that term."

Democracy provides certain freedoms: of speech, of discussion, of assembly, of the press, of vocation, of ownership, of residence, of movement, of worship, of political belief, of association, and freedom from unjust arrest.

We know that we are free when conditions permit us to make greatest use of our capabilities as individuals, and to develop to our full capacity materially, intellectually and spiritually.

Charters of "Rights" should make clear that these charters do not set forth what men would like to have, or what men can manage to get, or what the State thinks it can safely allow them, but what men must have in order to function fully and freely as men.

The only protection of these rights is the understanding of them by the people and the determination to preserve them, not only for themselves but for all other citizens. We acquiesce in the loss of freedom whenever we are silent in the face of injustice to anyone.

### *Many roles to play*

The citizen has many roles to play on the nation's stage.

He is a good neighbour. As a member of the com-

munity he will have real consideration for the feelings and needs of other people. He will support his institutions, and will give people of another religion or race the same consideration as he expects. He will set apart some of his time and put forth some effort to help his neighbours to make the community a better place to live in. He will take an active part in helping his neighbours to make the government of the community work better.

Plutarch, that extraordinary writer of the first century, drew attention to the importance of the contribution of humble citizens. "You will have no wars to wage," he wrote to a friend, "no tyrants to put down, no alliances to consolidate. The utmost you can hope for is to abolish some petty abuse, fight some bad custom, revive some charitable foundation, repair an aqueduct, rebuild a temple, adjust a local tax." These are duties well worth doing, he said.

The good citizen knows the important problems that face his representatives in municipal, provincial and federal government. He studies and discusses these problems so as to make use of the knowledge when he goes to vote. This is an inescapable duty, because the strength of a democracy depends upon its electorate being well-informed.

The citizen as a parent will teach his children to distinguish between right and wrong, and inspire them to prefer what is right. He will teach his children to get along well with other people, encourage them to get a suitable education, and teach them to accept more and more responsibility for their actions as they grow toward maturity. The first-rate citizen adds to good fellowship in his family the plus value of understanding. He guides and directs, participates sympathetically in the ups and downs of adolescent life, and provides fruitful soil in which young people develop settled roots. His children, governed by principles, are unlikely to be led astray by demeaning whims.

### *Sense of responsibility*

It is evident, then, that more than the privilege of being inserted on the tax roll is meant by becoming a citizen of Canada. The essence of good citizenship is the acceptance of responsibility, and every citizen is under bond to do his best in caring not only for himself and his family but for society.

Citizenship is not something for passive minds. The lonely person who stands on the side-lines watching the parade, speculating and conjecturing and criticizing, and thinking how much better the show might be, is not a citizen, for citizenship demands participation, involvement, and contribution. No man gains a feeling of significance in life if he lives in isolation.

First of all a citizen must do what all good people are expected to do, and then he must do what his own particular position in the world demands of him and puts him in position to do. Pericles, Athenian statesman of the fifth century B.C. said: "We do not allow

absorption in our own affairs to interfere with participation in the city's."

Canada is being enriched every year by the cross-fertilization of many different minds and many different abilities. Citizens are showing how people can be themselves and at the same time be part of the nation and of the human race.

Our democracy is a way of living in which the people rule by discussion and compromise. You do not need to be the same as the man next door, but he and you need to have the same ideas about citizenship while differing as to the details of administration. Everyone going somewhere through a crowd must step aside, keep his elbows in, back up or advance, according to conditions.

The most conspicuous enterprise of the citizen is that of discovering or creating relationships of sharing, not only the business and government of the land, but space, thought, esteem, dignity and tolerance.

The citizen has a lifelong assignment in human relations if he is to share actively in the human enterprise. He belongs to a society of people united by agreement as to the things they love and working toward them.

### *Sense of values*

The citizen needs to cultivate sharp-witted tests of values, or he will find himself at the mercy of professional purveyors of mistaken theories.

Canadians have reached their present high standing among the peoples of the world by developing discrimination in the quality of things and ideas. If there are people who invoke new ways and praise new systems, they do not go so far as to say that democracy has been tried and found wanting, but only that democracy has been tried and found difficult. The new ways are not said to be better, but easier.

It would be sad indeed if Canadians were to be seduced by this specious plea into casting away what has been so painfully built up by their ancestors and themselves. But, as Churchill said in addressing the House of Commons in 1945: "Very often the eagles have been squalled down by the parrots."

People are likely to become confused by the babel of tongues, and to be misled into thinking of what keeps men apart rather than what brings them together. The surly nibbling at the institutions of democracy by people who have no hammer for building but only a torch for burning comes of a long line of destroyers. The Hittites, mentioned in Genesis as a powerful nation, have left nothing but the reputation of having destroyed many things which other people had built up with great pain and care.

Some critics of Canadianism are anarchists, people who profess to believe in the right of every man to do what he likes. Some are jingoists — whose name was used in a music hall song in 1878 to set forth the

character of rabid patriots. Some are hostile people, full of aggressiveness, who are merely showing evidence of immaturity of the sort that causes a small child to scream when things do not please him.

But there is a reservoir of good sense and goodwill in Canadians which will prevent mischief-makers from making headway. Public opinion — and every citizen has some responsibility in making public opinion — ought to be intelligent and well-informed and constructive, in its own interests.

A dominant feature about Canadianism is that our people have plucked beauty and satisfaction from dangerous crags and out of gloomy crevices. They applied their common sense and their sense of values to the situations of life so as to acquire not only a way of living together that works but some of the poetry of life itself.

### *Learning together*

People who go through life with granite-like convictions on every subject under the sun lead a cheerless existence. They miss all the fun of exploring, all the challenge of debating, and all the thrill of finding something new.

We are indulging in juvenile thinking if we expect life to be always smooth, fragrant and responsive to our wishes. Medical men must examine disease if they are to promote health; music, to create harmony, must investigate discord; the citizen has to learn what is ailing and discordant in society so as to produce a healthy, harmonious nation.

It is natural that people should disagree on some points, but to disagree because of ignorance is deplorable and to disagree because of disinterest is not civil. This is why the Citizenship Branch of the Department of Citizenship and Immigration is charged with promoting greater understanding on the part of all Canadians of the privileges and responsibilities of citizenship. It publishes several books, available from the Queen's Printer, Ottawa, and through Government book stores in several cities, and it encourages groups, agencies and organizations to participate in programmes designed to promote mutual understanding and co-operation among ethnic groups.

The Canadian Citizenship Council, Ottawa, supported financially to the extent of two-thirds by business firms, individuals and voluntary organizations, was founded in 1940 to encourage training in citizenship and democracy.

### *Look at old values*

The essence of citizenship is found in its values, in its preferences, its moral commitments, its deep loyalties, its conception of the good life, its standards of excellence, its measures of success, and its teachings regarding the things for which and by which men should live.

This might be a good time for Canadians to look

again at some old values and principles, perhaps using a hammer and chisel and sandpaper to remove the caked dust that covers them. When workmen were cleaning the walls of a London church they uncovered a sculptured tear-drop on a cherub's cheek. What a touch of artistry; what an insight into the feeling of the man who sculptured it; how real and alive it makes the past appear!

The customs, principles and values associated with Canada have taken their present form as a result of centuries of adaptation to the pressures of environment and the necessities of life. We cannot detach ourselves from vital principles and live.

Take loyalty as an example. "Loyalty" is a noble word in the catalogue of social virtues. It is a quiet love of family and nation and a pride in the ideals which you are upholding. Leonard W. Brockington, Q.C., LL.D., distinguished member of the Canadian Bar, said in his radio tribute to Sir Winston Churchill on the day of the State Funeral of "this chivalrous and valiant knight": "No man had greater loyalty than Sir Winston Churchill: loyalty to his friends; loyalty to the memory of his father; loyalty to the great causes to which he gave his unremitting toil; loyalty to all the sanctities and the deep unspoken certainties of family life."

How precarious would be our Canadian way of life if we were to fail in our loyalty to its principles. Being disloyal does not necessarily mean insurrection and other forms of violence. It can be what is called "incivism" — disloyalty to the spirit of Canadian life by neglecting one's duty as a citizen. The virtues of western society are the product of education and discipline, and they need continued loyal support and cultivation.

### *A sense of direction*

Citizenship gives orientation to life. Instead of taking a dark and brooding view of events, turning them into a sort of "Götterdämmerung" — a twilight of the gods in which frost and snow ruled the earth — our citizenship stirs us to enjoy and contribute to the best sort of society yet offered to people who are advancing together in search of the good life. This is a time to read the record and find our citizenship ten times more meaningful than it has ever seemed before.

Of course, some will say: "all this is counsel of perfection: things are not so simple." Good citizenship can be simple if Canadians will think of it as not something merely legal or intellectual, but something transcending law and reason, something deeply felt, deeply believed, dominant even in our dreams.

Canada exists in terms of each separate citizen of Canada, and every person's contribution through active citizenship benefits the nation. The worthy citizen is one who stands upright so that he looks beyond his own toes to get a long and wide view of the good of the whole country. It is upon that good that his own good depends.