

Canada has been bewitched by charlatans

by Conrad Black



Having given my Canada Day greetings to readers last week, I will confine myself to permutations of the observation of the national holiday. We are celebrating 154 successful years of the only transcontinental, bicultural, parliamentary confederation in the history of the world. We also enjoy, among countries of 35 million or greater population, the most durable political institutions of any country except the United Kingdom and the United States. And in these 154 years, the United Kingdom suffered the secession of the large province of Ireland, after a good deal of bloodshed, and is even now facing the possibility of the secession of Scotland.

The United States had just concluded two years before the noble but terrible U.S. Civil War in which 750,000 Americans in a population of 31 million perished and five states were smashed to rubble and scorched to ashes by the Grand Army of the Republic under the command of Generals U.S. Grant and William Tecumseh Sherman. Lincoln said everyone knew that slavery was ultimately the cause of that war but it required an additional century after emancipation for African-Americans to achieve the right to vote, and the struggle for economic equality, though it has made great progress, continues yet and with, as we see almost every day, no shortage of violence.

The British and Americans are two of the world's greatest countries and it is not for us or for anyone to disparage them. Even less should we be deluging ourselves for our imagined and magnified shortcomings. A commercial acquaintance who is a cutting-edge operator in new media was preparing a Canada Day celebration for a number of corporate clients and had filled her back yards with evidences of Canadian patriotic enthusiasm for photo shoots with her clients's products, when she was stood down with the solemn admonition that "When heart-breaking stories like the 215 children in Kamloops and the growing numbers from former residential school sites emerge, we often don't know how we can help. On June 30th, radio stations across Canada are coming together to amplify indigenous voices in Canada. It will be a 'day to listen.' "

Perhaps one of the radio stations helping us listen (which many of them could most helpfully achieve by observing total and durable radio silence), was the one that fired me as a weekly (unpaid) commentator for having the temerity to declare that Canada is not a "systemically racist" country. It isn't, and nothing has been done in or by Canada as a country that imposes any obligation of silence on us. As I have said and written ad nauseam, Indigenous people have legitimate grievances and they must be addressed in a radical reconstruction of the entire relationship of the authentically

native population with the country as a whole. That will require the deconstruction of the existing bureaucracy and the dismissal of the Aboriginal victimhood industry. There should also be a supplement to the Truth and Reconciliation report on Indigenous residential schools that more accurately reflects the nuances of the information adduced. We cannot humble ourselves and lower flags every time unmarked graves are discovered near these schools without further research. It was a time when child mortality rates in all groups were much higher than they are now.

The prime minister had no business ordering that the flag be lowered on top of Canada's Parliament on July 1. We should stop prostrating ourselves in sackcloth and ashes and mutilating our history, and demanding others, such as the Holy See, do so as well. In fact, while far from the most exciting history of any nation, Canada's is among the least blameworthy. We have effectively reached the point where what Canadians should be embarrassed about is the level of confected embarrassment in which we are now wallowing. Other than religious figures, (and not many of them), there is no one of whom a statue has been erected who has not committed acts which if over-emphasized could not be cited as justification for removing their statues. Quebecers of my age will remember that the statue of five-term Québec Premier Maurice Duplessis languished in the basement of the Montréal provincial police building on Parthenais Street for 17 years until Rene Levesque, an outspoken opponent of Duplessis, unveiled it outside the National Assembly, (Levesque's own statue now stands nearby). The treatment of John A. Macdonald is an unmitigated disgrace perpetrated by cowards, poseurs, and idiots.

There is something obsessive and totemistic in the righteous self-hate that we have accorded to the cause of Aboriginal people. Let us accept that we have atoned for it and have deluged the aggrieved with reparations, and let's produce a

new policy. Pierre Trudeau announced that he was abolishing what was then called the Ministry of Indian Affairs and that anyone joining it had to sign a form acknowledging that they might be put out of work. This was the policy of the Reform Party prior to its merger with the Progressive Conservatives. My friend Catherine McKenna, a federal cabinet minister, has just announced that she is retiring from politics but will devote herself to helping the indigenous and "fighting climate change." This incites visions of King Lear shaking his fist at the sky. Catherine could do Aboriginal people a favour by outlining her ideas for a complete makeover of native policy which should cease to be guilt-ridden and instead focus on assisting those natives who wish more fully to integrate in Canadian society to do so and assisting those who wish to maintain a separate and traditional existence to do that in a way that is sustainable and conducive of community self-respect. Smearing our ancestors and ourselves with muck is not a policy.

Demonstrating what a fun person I am, I spent part of July 1 reading the 37-page Ontario Rules For Areas in Step 2 (of the reopening of Ontario from the pandemic closing). It was a depressing, almost incomprehensible thicket of dumb, bureaucratic officialese requiring small business people to make complicated and unenforceable calculations of space densities for possible reception of masked members of the public: redundant and authoritarian nonsense for no purpose. Even at this late date, our governments are punishing the population instead of segregating and insulating the vulnerable.

Canada's problem isn't "systemic racism," or a menacing climate, or a pandemic that would have been almost completely banished months ago if the federal government had not made an unholy shambles of getting and distributing the vaccine; it is that we have been bewitched by political charlatans and weaklings into squandering our national energies in these

ridiculous culs-de-sacs. Canadians should stop blaming themselves and throw out their political leaders, bag and baggage, as John A. would have said.

First published in the