

A toast to Canada

Ottawa Citizen
August 20, 2011

In his opinion article, Colin Robertson expresses his strong allegiance to the royalty and, although I am not a royalist, I respect his choice.

But, I don't agree with his statement that former prime minister Lester B. Pearson erred in promoting our allegiance to Canada by naming our three services as the Canadian Navy, the Canadian Army and the Canadian Air Force.

As Commanding Officer for the recruiting centres of Montreal, St-Jérôme, Sherbrooke and Rouyn-Noranda, I remember numerous occasions when future recruits asked me why we couldn't swear allegiance to our country instead of doing it to a system that we didn't believe in. Now, you might be tempted to say: "this is Québec." Permit me to differ; it happened in other situations when I was in company of Canadians from different ethnic backgrounds.

I recall attending a dinner (not a formal Mess Dinner) at CFB Cold Lake when a United States Air Force major stood up and made a toast to his country "The United States of America."

Not to be outdone, I broke the tradition of making a toast to the Queen and I stood up and made a toast "To Canada." Instead of a mumble from some of the attendees, like is usually the case during a toast to the Queen, all officers strongly answered "To Canada."

After dinner, Canadian officers from English, Irish and Scottish backgrounds came to me and congratulated me and said that, for once, we were all united.

When you have less than 40 per cent supporting royalty, why don't we choose to rally all Canadians toward a common cause: Canada.

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