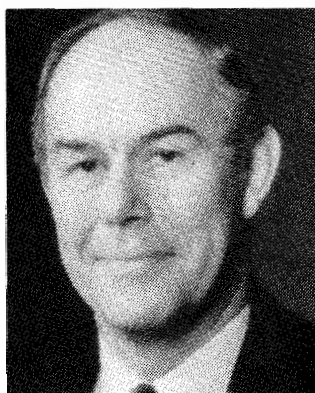


# *Two Perspectives on the Queen in Canada*

William Tupper/Suzanne Blais-Grenier

*On October 3, 1987, the Member of Parliament for Nepean-Carleton, Bill Tupper moved a private member's motion urging the government to consider commissioning a statue of Her Majesty Queen Elizabeth II on Parliament Hill in commemoration of the thirty-fifth anniversary of her ascension to the Throne. Some twenty members spoke on the resolution which was adopted by a voice vote on March 22, 1988. Most members favoured the resolution but the debate illustrated that there are still at least two different perspectives on the role of the Monarchy in Canada.*



**Bill Tupper:** Some Members might have a question about the protocol of raising a statue to a living monarch. This is dealt with rather explicitly in the report on commemorative statues to Canadian Prime Ministers and other commemoratives to other eminent Canadians, issued by the Minister of Public Works to Parliament. Section 6 of that report, entitled *The Monarchy*,

states: "1992 will mark the 40th Anniversary of Her Majesty's reign. No other monarch has served as long since the country came into being in 1867. The practice of raising commemoratives only to deceased people has not applied to monarchs. Hon. Members might wish to consider marking this event."

Canadians have a special attachment to the monarchy and especially to Queen Elizabeth II. No monarch since Victoria has engendered such respect and affection, and very special bonds have developed and exist between Elizabeth II and Canadians. It is because of this remarkably special

relationship that I hope I and others can persuade the House on the merits of the motion under consideration.

On February 6, 1952, Elizabeth II became sovereign. One year later, this House, through the *Canadian Royal Style and Titles Act*, named Elizabeth II as Queen of Canada. Her proper title now is "Elizabeth II, by the Grace of God, of the United Kingdom, Canada and her other realms and territories, Queen, Head of the Commonwealth and Defender of the Faith".

The Queen's main occupation and the one for which she was rigorously trained, is to be constitutional head of state for Britain, Canada and 16 other countries. On April 30, 1985, the Queen became the monarch who has reigned longest over Canada since Confederation.

Queen Elizabeth II has been enormously successful as an institution of government and as a working official. Our system of government, put in place in 1867, and involving the monarch as head of state, together with the House of Commons and the Senate, is one of the most stable, most democratic and least costly in political history. And it works.

Elizabeth II has a reputation among senior statesmen as one of the best informed and most sensible public servants at that level in the world. Many regard her as the most effective statesman of our time in Europe.

Elizabeth II is a very charming person, who inspires affection along with respect. Why has she been so successful? Why do Canadians and others have so much respect for her? What has she done to earn that respect?

One of the principal reasons for her popularity and the respect people have for her is because her interests reflect those of her subjects. She is an acknowledged expert on art, history, politics, and on animals, particularly horses. Before attending a conference, or visiting a country, she studies intensively the history and interests of those whom she will meet. She frequently invites people for luncheon meetings, including artists, scientists, and politicians, in order to discuss contemporary issues and their work.

The Queen has fostered the growth of Canadianism. By assuming the separate title "Queen of Canada" in 1953, she allowed Canadians to realize the dream the Fathers of Confederation had for the Dominion of Canada. In 1962, at her own initiative and wish, she adopted a distinctive personal Canadian flag. In 1965 she proclaimed the national flag of Canada. In 1967, the Order of Canada was established by her authority and with her personal approval. Her presence at the proclamation of the revised Constitution in 1982 turned the event from a politically controversial one into a national celebration.

The Queen has been a great unifier of a diverse Canada. Long before the *Official Languages Act* was thought of, the Queen spoke in both English and French in all parts of this country. I was particularly touched by a speech which she gave in the Province of Quebec during her visit to Canada at the time of the Olympics. I want to quote what she said:

How Canada resolves her political and constitutional differences is her own affair; but how she resolves her linguistic and cultural problems matters to thoughtful people everywhere. The world, all too familiar with the tragic price of conflict between people of different race, language, religion and culture, can look to Canada for a better example, and for a renewal of the human spirit. It can look to her for a practical demonstration of how two strong communities can live together in peace, drawing from each other's strengths, respecting each other's differences.

Her 15 tours and stays in Canada were in 1951 as Princess, 1957, 1959, 1964, 1967, 1970, 1971, twice in 1973, 1976, 1977, 1978, 1982, 1983 and 1984, as well as four stop-overs. As a result of those visits she has brought hundreds of small Canadian communities and groups which ordinarily go unnoticed to national and often international attention.

As the personification of our history, she has presided over and endured the success of numerous Canadian anniversaries and national occasions. They include the centenary of the Confederation Conference in 1964, the centenary of Confederation in 1967, the provincial centenaries of Manitoba in 1970, British Columbia in 1971, and Prince Edward Island in 1973, and the bicentenaries of Ontario and

New Brunswick in 1984. She opened the St. Lawrence Seaway in 1959 and the Montreal Olympics in 1976. In 1983, from Vancouver, she invited the people of the world to visit Expo 86. That was a proud moment. She opened Parliament in 1957, the first monarch to do so, and again in 1977. In 1967 she addressed both Houses.

The Queen's personal qualities have continued to inspire Canadians individually and nationally. This has been an immeasurable contribution to Canadian life over nearly 36 years. The Queen's example encourages many, many people to emulate her virtues in their own lives and in their work. Duty and service have been pre-eminent among her personal qualities. She has always put her country ahead of herself. Her constitutional behaviour has been impeccably correct. Because of this she has brought prestige and credibility to our system of government which, as democratic systems tend to do from time to time, commonly creak. She has been a stable person during a long voyage.

The Commander in Chief of the Canadian Forces is vested in the Queen, and her Majesty has performed three vital services for Canada in this area. First, the Queen has been the focus of loyalty for the Armed Forces, ensuring the military is an agent for and not a master of the state. Second, the Queen has brought proper attention to the forces as a link between them and the people. For instance, in 1984 her Majesty presented a guidon to the historic Queens York Rangers, the first American regiment, in a moving ceremony in Toronto. The Queen's presence drew 50,000 people to the event. These people, frankly, would not have otherwise paid tribute to and learned about that great Canadian regiment.

Finally, as Captain General or Colonel in Chief of the Royal Canadian Artillery, the Canadian Guards Regiment and numerous other regiments and branches, the Queen has always taken an active interest in the lives and concerns of the men and women responsible for defending this country.

As the fountain of all honour, the Queen has played a major role in bringing national and international attention to deserving Canadians. Throughout the 1970s and 1980s, the Queen approved the establishment of distinctly Canadian bravery and service distinctions. The Queen thus fostered and brought recognition to public and voluntary service in Canada, making Canada a better place in the process.

The Queen has fostered the genuine multicultural character of Canada. She herself is a living testimony to the value of multiculturalism. She herself has in her immediate or distant background nearly 30 different ethnic strains and she is the personification of what Canada is as a country.

Her visits to many different ethnic groups in Canada for festivities and celebrations have helped both to enhance the culture of these groups and to integrate them more fully into the Canadian context. Among the more memorable of such visits were those to the Acadians in Prince Edward Island in 1973, the Ukrainian-Canadians in 1978, the

Chinese-Canadian in 1983 and the Italian-Canadians in 1984. The Queen's involvement in the 1984 Loyalist celebrations also had a multicultural dimension because the Loyalists of the 18th Century were white, Indian and black.

The Queen's contribution in this area of Canadian life is nowhere better seen than with the native peoples. In 1970 at The Pas Indian Reserve, she created an opportunity for the Indian people there to gain a public hearing for the injustice they feel they have suffered at the hands of the Government. In 1976 the Queen received a much publicized delegation of Alberta Indian Chiefs representing Treaty Area 6 and Treaty Area 7 at Buckingham Palace. Most moving of all was her 1970 visit to the Inuit at Resolute Village. "Thank you", she said to those too shy to approach her, "for being just the way you are". The Queen has seen genuine Canadian multiculturalism as a pattern for other countries.

Perhaps the Queen's greatest contribution has been to provide the Canadian Government with a human face, allowing Canadians to be truly a national family. No one can doubt her personal commitment to Canada and to its people. When she proclaimed the revised Constitution in 1982, she declared: "There could be no better moment for me, as Queen of Canada, to declare again my unbounded confidence in the future of this country."

In short, the Queen has succeeded in raising the Canadian Monarch to heights undreamed of by Queen Victoria. ♦



Credit (F.R. Leclaire)

**Suzanne Blais-Grenier:**

As a French-Canadian from Quebec, I do not personally identify with royalty as closely as my English-speaking colleagues. For us, the Queen of England was never considered the perfect incarnation of the French fact in Canada. She is certainly a gracious Queen and we would never question her grace and the important role the British

Crown has played from one

generation to the next. England was a great country, and historically, it certainly gave us one of the major cultures in the world today.

Simply put, the fact is that, in my own region, we are not as thrilled by the Queen of England as people in other regions. We are not quite on the same wavelength. A few years ago, she suddenly became the Queen of Canada. This brought her a bit closer to us. We could feel a bit more than before that she belonged to us. However, I believe that to motivate our

young people and incite them to develop this country, we should find personalities closer to us. Such personalities might not be able to claim that their ancestors go back to the *Magna Carta* as does the gracious Queen Elizabeth, but they should know about the realities of this country and have lived in this British colony which we had to make our own and develop in an admittedly very hostile continent.

Once more, we are not questioning the virtues of the Queen. She has personified the respect of individual rights for an entire nation. She has personified family values, the permanence of certain values of social solidarity, but I believe that she is already ever present in Canada. She is on our dollar. She is on our stamps. She is often here in person. Her children come to see us. So do her cousins, nephews and nieces, and I believe that we always welcome them very graciously, as we would welcome our own family members. We are always very happy that they are here, but if we want to have our own personality, to develop and to define what makes our country so special and so different from England, we have to be able to identify with values which are typically our own.

Moreover, I believe that, by erecting immediately a stone statue to a Queen who is very much alive, we would be freezing her in a state from which she could not longer move. Finally, I prefer to see her here once in awhile as during her last trip when she went to Saskatchewan and to Rivière-du-Loup, met with the public, kissed children and spoke with adults. This seems to me much more charming and human than a stone statue on Parliament Hill.

I prefer to see the Queen as a symbol of this Commonwealth, a group of nations helping each other to develop their most democratic and humane qualities, even though some of these nations might unfortunately lag behind the others. Canada plays a very positive role in that organization. I believe that the Queen is an important symbol of the Commonwealth but, because I represent Quebec in Ottawa, I would prefer to have in this House symbols that are more representative of the French culture, which is one of the two main cultures in a multicultural Canada. I would rather have monuments that represent all of that, and consider the Queen as the symbol and the head of the Commonwealth. I do not think that a statue of Her Majesty would mean very much for those I know in our young generation, for people in their 20s and 30s. I would rather see Her Majesty enjoy a long and happy life and keep her international role as head of the Commonwealth. Quite honestly, I do not think that a stone statue can play a very positive role.

I do not agree with this motion. I hope that we will find in our midst, within our borders, symbols that will help us promote respect for the individual and for our democratic rights. We do not need one more statue of Her Majesty. We prefer to know her as a living monarch and not as a stone statue on Parliament Hill. □