

Rebellion or Remedy?

Newfoundland and Labrador Premier pulls maple leaf in defiance of Feds

Julie Bull
Reporter



“Oh Canada, our home and Native land...” Familiar song lyrics to us all; however, the peace, harmony and freedom that is meant to be portrayed through this song are the last things that is being felt in Newfoundland and Labrador, and much of the Country for that matter. Without allowing my personal biases to overtake this article, I would like to present to you the latest details as it relates to the ongoing controversy of Newfoundland and Labrador’s (NL) Premier Danny Williams’ decision to remove all Canadian Flags from Provincial Government offices in the province. (Be thankful he isn’t in the US!).

Newfoundland and Labrador were the last province to join confederation, and as such, there are many natives of that province that feel they have been slighted when it comes to any deals and/or benefits. Arguably, there are issues like these in every province, but recent talks with the Federal Government on the Atlantic Accord have resulted in something previously unseen in Canada (except maybe in similar cases with Quebec in years gone by). Who is to say if it is right or wrong to take down the ultimate symbol of a Nation, no matter what the fight is about? There is no unanimous stand on the issue, even within the province of Newfoundland and Labrador.

According to NTV (Newfoundland Television) News, Premier Danny Williams said just days before his decision to withdraw flags from government buildings that December 22 would be the deadline for an Atlantic Accord deal. “If we can’t close a deal on Wednesday, then I really don’t think we can

close a deal. That means there are hurdles we can’t get over” says Premier Williams. “So it’s show time, and we just have to finalize this. And if we can’t do it in Winnipeg on Wednesday, then at that point I’m prepared to throw up my hands and say we can’t reach a deal and then we have to move on from there.”

It cannot be denied that there are many people who support this decision - people who are on the Premier’s side; however, there are also many that oppose this decision saying that it is showing disrespect for the rest of the country. Opposition Leader Roger Grimes was cited as saying that “We should be making the moves and moving this forward, rather than throwing temper tantrums and getting on with a lot of rhetoric, making bad decisions like removing the flag and slowing down the process.”

According to VOXM news, Prime Minister Martin has said that he is willing to start negotiations, but will not make a step further until the flags rise high again. “I do not believe that the Canadian flag should be used as a lever in any negotiation, any federal-provincial negotiation ... [and] I don’t believe that Newfoundlanders and Labradorians [think it should either]. The flag is a symbol of unity and it should not be used in terms of difference and division.” Martin says. (VOXM Newsworld).”

Some people are taking this so-called flag flap one step further. Not only are they removing the Canadian Flag, they are replacing it with what is commonly known as the Republic of Newfoundland Flag. The pink, white and green tri-color flag has long been a symbol of Newfoundland and Labrador pride and independence. There are many ideas as to the meanings of the colors, but the most cited is that the pink

represented England and the green Ireland. The white represented one of two things: the peace between the two sectarian groups or the Scottish emigrants who also settled in Ireland. There are many people who support Newfoundland Nationalism and this flag is symbol of that.

People such as the mayor of Mount Pearl have said that this seeming charade is not about being anti-Canadian, it is about being pro-Newfoundland and Labrador. Also, according to St. John’s Mayor, Andy Wells, people are in agreement with the Premier’s decision because it is a part of the larger problem with the relationship between the Province and the rest of Canada.

Who is to say who is right and who is wrong? Completely relative in every sense of the word; however, we

can be hopeful that as bad as this situation is, and may continue to be, that it will ultimately solve some of the issues with the division of Provincial/Federal monies and power. You never know, maybe this is the start of great things to come, after all, someone has to lead the way! Without condemning or condoning what is going on in the Province of Newfoundland and Labrador, I would like to pose this thought: is it not possible that in the minds of all Canadians there is something that we would like to protest? A little anarchy in us all? It is possible that what Danny Williams is doing is mere protest, albeit, extreme? Maybe he has a point. On the other hand, maybe it is just another political scam that fits like a glove to some hidden agenda. Only time will tell. “Oh Canada, we stand on guard for thee...”

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