

LAMENT FOR A NATION REVISITED

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Ron Dart is, arguably, the most significant Red Tory thinker of our epoch. He is certainly the most prolific. Dart follows a path trodden by such notable Canadian political philosophers as Stephen Leacock and George Grant.

It has been fifty years since the publication of George Grant's profound, "Lament For A Nation".

Nevertheless, the message of Grant's book, which resonated so deeply among my generation in 1965, has a contemporary ring to it. Dart is uniquely situated to examine "Lament For A Nation" and tie it together with our present Canadian quandary. The passing of Canadian Conservatism and its replacement by an American style neo-conservatism has gained traction and speed especially since the destruction of the Progressive-Conservative Party of Canada in 2003 was a death knell for the Red Tory Conservatism of John A. MacDonald and John Diefenbaker. Perhaps Joe Clark was its last federal party leader.

The federal election of 1963 was a milestone in this transformation. It was that election that brought many of us young people into the Progressive Canadian Party and introduced us to political action.

Prime Minister Diefenbaker had refused American demands that nuclear warheads be placed on American Bomark missiles located in Canada. Mr Diefenbaker wanted to make it clear that Canada was not part of the U.S. Empire. Leader of the opposition Lester Pearson was ready to yield to American demands and the U.S. government spent millions of dollars in Canada to create a "regime change". Mr. Pearson became Prime Minister; "Lament For A Nation" was inspired by this election.

Something more has eroded in Canada since that time, and this makes Dart's review of Grant's lament urgent and pertinent to our own era. The authority of Parliament has been seriously eroded by the Prime Minister's Office. We can hark back to a time when Prime Minister McKenzie King, though a bit of a comprador himself, would respond to a demand for decisions on major issues with "parliament will decide". Today, the Prime Minister decides and his caucus is bullied into acceptance. Canadians no

longer realise that in our system, we are supposed to elect a parliament, not a Prime Minister. The leader of the party with most seats in parliament is invited by the Governor General to form a government and is named Prime Minister.

George Grant's "Lament For A Nation" speaks loudly to us today, and we can be grateful that

Ron Dart has invited our attention to this seminal work.

Archbishop Lazar Puhalo