

## One on One with Peter Mansbridge



"Imagine. We live in a country where just last month we called a group of teenagers HEROES because they won a hockey championship wearing the Canadian Maple Leaf on their jerseys. What should we say then about a group of young people who have the Canadian Maple Leaf on their headstones? In this country, we say nothing."

These are the words of Peter Mansbridge taken from the 1997 inaugural Annual Lecture in Canadian Studies at Mount Allison University. This presentation so moved listening students they nominated this CBC National News telecaster for an Honorary Doctor of Laws degree, which he received two years later.

"It is depressing, and it is shameful that we do not honour our past ... our ignorance is appalling." Dr Mansbridge then asked the question: "So why is this still a fragile country?" His answer: "... because too many of us are Canadians by default ... too few of us are Canadians by conviction." Dr Mansbridge challenged his audience: "I'm ready to declare that my generation has failed in its responsibility to transmit a sense of nationhood to its children ... you have to stand up and declare that Canada is important to you."

Imagine. The year is 2014, the 100<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the Great War described by Canadian military historian Dr Marc Milner as the 'most catastrophic event in Canadian history'. Dr Mansbridge, now Chancellor of Mount Allison University, is presiding over the official opening of a new Arts Centre on campus. Remnant stones of the levelled Alumni Memorial Library lie buried in the ground of the old academic quadrangle, a pathetic 'echo' of the dedicated Cenotaph that once stood proudly on this site in enduring honour of our HEROES, those young students who left their classrooms to cross oceans and fight in trenches for our freedom ... never to return. They are buried elsewhere with "the Canadian Maple Leaf on their headstones".

Why was this Cenotaph destroyed? Where was that "Canadian conviction" when someone had "to stand up and declare": 'This is wrong!'

Alas, Mr Chancellor, "In this country, we still say nothing."

Over 1400 Allisonians and Friends have stood up and signed a petition to *Save the Mount Allison Memorial Library*\*. Others also raise voices to join a chorus of protest that echoes Mansbridge's lament: "Is it not shameful that we do not honour our past?"

From the Mount Allison Administration and Regents the silence is deafening ... and those that lie in Flanders Fields cannot speak.

Robert Eaton

Save the Mount Allison Memorial Library Committee

\*for more info visit:

[www.eastmarket.com/smash](http://www.eastmarket.com/smash)

[www.thepetitionsite.com/2/save-the-memorial-library](http://www.thepetitionsite.com/2/save-the-memorial-library)

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