

McCaffery explains the betrayal felt by Canadians

Dan McCaffery - April 2025

Many Americans seem to have been genuinely surprised by the anger Canadians expressed when Donald Trump slapped tariffs on them.

I think the main reason for the wrath is a sense of betrayal.

What few of our southern neighbours know is that we stood with them time and again when the chips were down.

Hollywood has given the Yanks the false impression that they won their wars by themselves. Nothing could be further from the truth.

Take the First World War. Canada joined that bloodbath almost three years before the Americans came in. And we paid a heavy price, with over 62,000 of our soldiers being killed and another 172,000 suffering wounds. More than that, our troops scored many stunning victories, inflicting punishing losses on the Germans.

Canada had only eight million people at that time but it put 620,000 men and women into uniform. In the Second World War we declared war on the Nazis more than two years before the Yanks came into the fight. Although we only had 12 million people, we put more than one million into uniform, including over 45,000 who perished. Once again we gave as good as we got, scoring many impressive battlefield triumphs.

In Korea we sent 25,000 troops to fight alongside the Americans, 516 of whom gave their lives. We also joined the United States in the first Gulf War and the Afghanistan conflict, where we lost another 165 people.

Although Canada wasn't officially in Vietnam, more than 3,000 Canadians joined the American armed forces, including 134 who came home in body bags.

And of course our diplomats put their lives on the line to smuggle Americans out of Iran during the hostage crisis of the late 1970s.

Just from my family history I can tell you both countries benefited greatly from these alliances, which date back well over a century. My dad, Jim McCaffery, took part in an air raid against the German city of Cologne when two of the four engines on his Lancaster bomber were knocked out by anti-aircraft fire. His critically damaged plane fell far behind the rest of the formation, making it a sitting duck for German fighters. But before enemy pilots could take advantage of the situation a flight of American P-51 Mustangs came to the rescue, escorting my father and his six crewmates safely to Allied air space.

A few years later, in Korea, my dad's baby brother, my uncle George, was awarded the Bronze Star for Valour after he left the safety of an armoured vehicle to rescue three wounded American soldiers. Under heavy communist fire, he picked them up, one at a time, and carried them to safety, saving all three of their lives.

That's why we feel betrayed.