

## Resignation, with Rumors

All week long the rumors swirled and eddied through the windswept streets of Montreal; for one reason or another, by resignation, illness or dismissal, Msgr. Joseph Charbonneau was through as Archbishop of Montreal and chancellor of the University of Montreal.

In the welter of stories one hard fact stuck out: the white-haired, 57-year-old prelate had left his red brick palace and flown across Canada to the seclusion of a Catholic nursing home in Victoria. At midweek, an archdiocesan official confirmed his presence there "after a period of overwork . . . for a prolonged rest"; neither the official nor alert, sharp-featured Apostolic Delegate Ildebrando Antoniutti would add anything more.

**Titular Rank.** Finally at week's end came an announcement from the Vatican: Archbishop Charbonneau's resignation\* had been accepted "for reasons of health" and he had been named titular Archbishop of Bosphorus.

The news broke over Canada's biggest (955,000) archdiocese like a stroke of midwinter lightning. But far from dispelling the cloud of rumors, it stirred up fresh ones. Among the most persistent: that the archbishop had really been eased out, partly at the instigation of Quebec's highhanded, labor-hating Premier Maurice Duplessis. The two men had clashed sharply when Archbishop Charbonneau and the local clergy sided with members of the Canadian and Catholic Confederation of Labor in the bitter Asbestos strike (TIME, Feb. 28, 1949 *et seq.*) even after the strikers barricaded the town and fought Duplessis' provincial police with clubs. Inevitably the two had also found themselves on opposite sides of the Montreal teachers' strike (TIME, Jan. 31, 1949), and there had been differences over Charbonneau's administration of the university.

**Painful Conflict.** Though the Vatican termed stories of intervention by Duplessis "ridiculous," its spokesman noted that the archbishop's resignation "automatically dispels what had become a painful conflict of opinion between ecclesiastic and civil authority." Msgr. Antoniutti, charged with settling the conflict, had put his problem to Charbonneau. The archbishop said he could not draw back from his pro-labor stand, but added that his health had been poor and that he had been intending to resign. Said the Vatican statement: "The greatest possible freedom was left Charbonneau in taking the decision, which was entirely his."

Just how far the church cared to go in dispelling painful conflicts remained to be seen in the appointment of Archbishop Charbonneau's successor. Meanwhile there were unofficial reports in Quebec City that a pastoral letter, signed by all the bishops of the province and approving the Social Action principles of Quebec's liberal clergy, was being prepared for reading in the churches of the province within a month. That would do much to strengthen the stand of such other pro-labor prelates as the outspoken Rev. Georges-Henri Lévesque, dean of Laval University's faculty of social sciences, Sherbrooke's Bishop Philippe Desranleau, and Quebec City's Archbishop Maurice Roy.

\* An unusual but not unheard-of practice in the church. Resignation from an administrative or ecclesiastical function usually does not change the priest's church status or his hierarchical rank.

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