

MULTICULTURALISM

Can Trudeau's Liberalism tolerate it?

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FOREWORD

Recently, a member of the Toronto Sikh community was reinstated in his job due to intervention on his behalf by the Ontario Human Rights Commission. His employer had fired him because he insisted on wearing a curved dagger in his belt. The employer claimed that the dagger was an offensive and dangerous weapon, but the Sikh employee maintained that the knife had a religious significance and that, as a member of a particular sect, he had the religious obligation to have it with him at all times. The Human Rights Commission, while recognizing the requirements of the law in this respect, succeeded in obtaining an exemption from those requirements in this particular case.

For the introduction to a speech on multiculturalism, this incident is important in that it highlights our national concern for *individual* rights. The case is analogous to the occasional exemption from paying union dues for certain workers who are legally covered by a collective agreement. We pride ourselves on our tolerance toward individuals who happen to hold certain convictions that are not in line with the wishes of the majority.

Majority rule and individual rights are the two pillars on which liberalism rests. Liberalism conceives of society as a mere collection of autonomous individuals who, except in cases of deep-seated religious convictions, must submit themselves to the will of the majority. This liberal idea, however, leaves no room for groups or communities who hold different opinions and who claim equal treatment and recognition as well as the right to participate, *as a group or community*, in the affairs of the nation or of the industrial enterprise. Increasingly this results in attempts to establish a homogeneous state in which minority groups, be they French-Canadian or otherwise, cannot flourish and make their own contribution to the national well-being. It is precisely this drive for a uniform state that is responsible for a homogeneous school system, trade union movement, university structure, and a parliamentary rule by one party only.

Groenewold contends that the Canadian Confederation originally envisaged and embodied a genuine form of multiculturalism and that this ideal of the founding fathers only gradually lost out against the liberal idea of majoritarianism. Groenewold further states that the liberal drive towards the homogenous state meets with increasing opposition not only in Quebec but also from other minority groups, such as the Indians, the Inuit, and many of the other communities that comprise the Canadian mosaic.

The Christian Labour Association of Canada is one such group. Established in 1952 by Canadian workers with roots in the European trade union tradition who rejected the secular, homogeneous labour movement, the CLAC sought to be a trade union whose objectives and strategies spring from the belief that the Scriptures of the Old and New Testaments are intensely relevant to labor. As an independent, and by now indigenous, trade union, the CLAC demands to be recognized and respected for the contribution it wishes to make in the area of labour in an era of industrial conflict.

It took the CLAC eleven years of struggle, culminating in an order from the Supreme Court of Ontario, to gain official status as a legitimate trade union. Today, 26 years after its inception, and despite the fact that it holds the official representation rights of the employees of some 200 companies in Ontario, British Columbia and Alberta, the CLAC often still faces intolerant mainline unions who employ almost every legal and illegal means to destroy what they consider to be a rival organization which threatens the “solidarity” of the workers.¹

Groenewold’s lecture was the first in a series of five presented at the CLAC-sponsored Christian Social Action Conference in Paris, Ontario, on June 12, 13 and 14, 1978. The other lectures dealt with equally important topics such as the legal space for minority groups in Canada, the threat of a new corporation, and the development of social thinking among Canadian mainline and evangelical

¹Note from the editor of this www.SocialTheology.com: For more up-to-date information regarding the current CLAC (2017), go to < www.clac.ca >. CLAC currently has over 50,000 members and has grown into a major national labour union in Canada.

churches. In the foreseeable future, the entire series will be published by Paideia Press in a paperback volume.

I am happy that this same publishing firm has taken the initiative to print Groenewold's lecture as a contribution to the ongoing debate about Canada's future. This booklet is a valuable help in discerning and assessing the spirits that are moulding our culture. As such it deserves the widest possible readership.

**Ed Vanderkloet, Executive Secretary
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1. The fear of fragmentation

Canada has generated a new, homegrown industry, an industry which is not likely to be taken over by American cultural or economic interests in the near future. This industry – generally called the debate on national unity – has provided fulltime employment to politicians, academics, priests and prophets of cultural tribalism, and various others. All of them – with the exception of Rene Levesque and his supporters – are dedicated to the proposition that Canada's unity must be preserved.

The obsession with national unity can only be explained by a deep-seated fear of the fragmentation of Canada into small, quarrelsome, ineffectual states. To avert such a disaster, the advocates of Canadian unity urge that minimal structural adjustments or concessions be made to silence the demands of such various disaffected groups as the French, the Inuit, the Indians, the Ukrainians, and others.

Given the extent of the debate on national unity – sometimes also described as a search for a Canadian identity – one would expect, and indeed demand, a carefully worked out definition of the problem. In addition, one would expect a careful analysis of Canada's cultural heritage. However, we find only an overabundance of words and phrases which are full of ambiguity and uncertainty.

What does it mean to speak of founding races, of ethnicity, of a cultural mosaic, of multiculturalism, and the like?² Are some of these terms even relevant in a meaningful discussion about Canada, its culture(s) and its institutions? Frequently these terms are used interchangeably in an attempt to stress the diversity of Canada's population and the dissimilarity of its elements. However, I do not believe that terms such as *race* or *ethnicity* are very helpful in

² G. Grant, *Lament for a Nation* (1965), p. 21; M. Vrieze, *Sociale Motieven in Canada* (1969), pp. 36-40.

examining the nature and extent of Canada's diversity. I suggest that we abandon the notion of race as a determining and shaping force in Canada.

2. The understanding of "ethnicity"

The term *ethnicity*, I would suggest, is equally irrelevant. In the Canadian context, *ethnicity* is generally defined as the preservation of charming old world customs which are appropriately paraded during the periodic festivals presently flourishing throughout Canada. It is not able to take into account structural differences or ways of life of various groups and communities.

Furthermore, the term *ethnicity* is unsatisfactory because it is often identified with the term *multiculturalism*, with the result that both are now frequently used to point to the country of origin of individuals and groups. In other words, the original definition of multiculturalism – the existence of several cultural communities within a single political order – has been lost. The two terms are used interchangeably by many commentators to provide a descriptive account of what is regarded as Canada's strength and uniqueness – a mosaic of peoples.

3. The mosaic analogy

I do not wish to belabor the shortcomings of the mosaic analogy used to describe Canada's cultural heritage. To my mind, the idea of a mosaic assumes the existence of static and dependent cultural fragments which only have meaning and purpose within a culturally dynamic boundary defined by the dominant English community. A mosaic perpetuates the dominant position of the English community and, in fact, becomes a most effective means for social control by this dominant group.³ A mosaic will tolerate differences so long as the fragments do not challenge English cultural dominance or formulate cultural

³ J. Porter, *The Vertical Mosaic* (1970), p. 71.

pretensions. In short, unity, conformity and loyalty must take precedence over diversity. Again, structural diversity is sacrificed in the name of national unity.

Such an obsession with national unity presupposes the possibility, and certainly the desirability, of a Canadian nationalism as an integrating ideology. The advocates of national unity seem to ignore the extreme implications of their position. They fail to realize that the claims of unity, even when defined as a mosaic, demand far more than a formal recognition of the Canadian political order. The doctrines of national unity are rooted in principles and beliefs to which all citizens must give unreserved assent; they command the prior loyalty of all citizens.

Furthermore, an ideology of national unity always tends to cultural homogeneity. It demands that *all* of public life be subordinated to the needs of national unity. Thus it is a foregone conclusion that the public sphere of life determines the boundaries within which private, individual and communal activities may still play a nominal role.

4. National unity as integrating ideology

The advocates of national unity are strongly influenced by a long tradition of history writing which concerned itself almost exclusively with nation-building and growing cultural unity.⁴ Within this context, English-Canadian historians did not accept cultural communities as anything more than vestigial fragments embedded in an English-controlled mosaic. It is only during the last twenty years that historians such as Morton have emphasized the need to recognize the multicultural heritage so evident throughout Canada's history. Morton and other writers stress that Canadians know only too well that their country is "a compendium of ethnic, communal and regional groups, loosely joined in a federal system."⁵ They suggest that the search for a Canadian who does not

⁴ C. Berger, *The writing of Canadian History* (1976), p. 184.

⁵ W. Gagne, "Technology and Canadian Politics," in *Nationalism, Technology and the Future of Canada*, ed. W. Gagne (1976), pp. 25-6.

have his roots in the old world be abandoned as an exercise which is incapable of bringing any results.

5. The founding fathers and national unity

The most telling response to the advocates of national unity would be to point out to them that Canada was shaped by many forces running counter to nationalist doctrines. They overlook the fact that the whole idea of national unity and nationalism was rejected by Canada's founding fathers. Not one of the founding fathers appealed to a national identity or a national culture. Rather, the founding fathers sought to establish a state composed of cultural communities sharing a common political allegiance. They realized that any attempt at nation-building – based on European examples – must lead to the utter ruin of cultural diversity and the triumph of Anglo-Saxon faith in the absolute truth of the will of the majority as being the only democratically correct view of life.

To solve the political problems of the 1850s and 1860s, Canada's founding fathers turned to precedent and history for a solution. They interpreted the past as having been guided by the principles of compromise and accommodation, a tradition having its origins in the British conquest of 1760. No historian would deny that at the time of the conquest, the French community was, in the true sense of the word, a cultural community.⁶ The French community had its own way of life, its own social, political and judicial institutions, its own language, and its own religion. The British rulers, concerned to control these new subjects, adopted a policy of cultural assimilation.

In spite of this official policy, the generals who ruled Quebec from 1760 to 1782 made no attempt to implement it. These generals established close cooperation with the cultural elite of the French community, leaving intact all key institutions of communal life. The generals recognized and accepted the integrity of the French cultural community.

⁶ M. Vrieze, *The Community Idea in Canada* (1966).

The Colonial Office was finally persuaded, albeit reluctantly, of the French fact and granted it a juridical foundation in the Quebec Act of 1774. In spite of the demands of English subjects, the Colonial Office decided to maintain the structures and institutions of the *ancient regime*. A conciliar government was appointed to ensure that the small English minority would not determine policy for the French community.

6. The United Empire Loyalists' effect on cultural diversity

As long as the English community was relatively small, the Quebec Act posed no hardship or injustice on anyone. But with the passing of years, so many English immigrants came that cultural conflict seemed inevitable.

United Empire Loyalists, escaping from the American Revolution, demanded their birthright as loyal subjects of the Crown. They made their claims in the belief that all things British were far superior to American democratism or French paternalism.⁷

The Loyalists demanded that only an English order be established in British North America. Once they were settled in Canada, the Loyalists formulated an ideology which can best be described as cultural Anglicanism, with its emphasis on tradition, unity, and comprehension.⁸

The emphasis on society as an organism made fundamental differences impossible. Toleration and compromise was only possible within the established boundaries.⁹ The consequences of this Loyalist position for the French cultural community were obvious to the French elite. They feared, rightly, that the Loyalist way of life would lead to the cultural assimilation of the French into an Anglo-Saxon world.

⁷ Grant, *Lament*, p. 63.

⁸ J.L. Finlay, *Canada in the North Atlantic Triangle* (1975), pp. 90-91.

⁹Vrieze, *Sociale Motieven*, pp. 264ff.

7. The Constitutional Act

The French elite, aware of these implications, turned to the Colonial Office for protection. By the late 1780s the conflict between the two communities was so intense that the Colonial Office renounced its policy of assimilation in favor of cultural diversity. Each community received its own political institutions; the two were regarded as co-equal in the eyes of the colonial officials. Both Canadas received representative governments and appointed councils. For the first time, both communities had a political forum in which to express their cultural aspirations.

What is most striking about the demands leading up to the Constitutional Act of 1791 is the absence of enlightenment ideologies as culturally shaping influences. No one appealed to the democratic doctrines of equality, liberty, inalienable right, or popular sovereignty; rather, both communities spoke of their historic rights and traditions. The elite were anti-republican and anti-democratic; they emphasized order, hierarchy and paternalistic authority. The debates of the 1780s produced no Burke or Voltaire or Jefferson. The debates did not focus on the nature of the community but only on the exercise of political authority and on the right of each community to exist.

8. Failure of the Constitutional Act

Although the Constitutional Act of 1791 resolved communal conflict between the communities, it did not deal with the internal character of either community. Consequently, during the following decades internal debate took place within each community regarding such issues as the role of religion, the authority of political offices, economic activity, and the like. In other words, during the opening years of the nineteenth century, members of both communities began to question the fundamental assumptions underlying the respective social orders.

The opponents of the established regimes wanted to end the closed oligarchic and privileged rule of the Family Compact and Chateau Clique. They believed that communal ideals and institutions could no longer comprehend all the people adequately.

In English Canada, the reformers demanded a cultural Anglicanism without the Church of England. Scottish Dissenters, Scottish Presbyterians, Methodists, and others suffered from a sense of injustice done to them by powers over which they had no control. This sense of injustice was equally strong in French Canada. In both instances, reformers demanded redress of grievances, not a revolution as the destruction of the established order.

The demands for reform had widespread support in the Canadas. However, this support quickly evaporated when leading reformers such as Papineau and Mackenzie began to agitate for the radical restructuring of society on the basis of Anglo-American democratism as it came to expression in Jacksonian democracy. Their followers rejected such a radical ideology and refused to support the attempted rebellions in 1837. Although many people favored reform, only a few were willing to support ideological extremism. The collapse of the rebellious movements not only marked the end of the influence of American democratism but also strengthened the communal character of both English and French societies.

9. The Act of Union

The British response to the rebellions was the Durham Report. It condemned a corrupt system of government – not the essential character of the societies. The Report recommended that a new political order be established based on that of the reforming government of Great Britain.

As a result of the Durham Report, the British government passed the Act of Union in 1840. The Act introduced a common political order without abolishing

cultural diversity. All privileges granted to the English and French communities since 1760 remained in force.

The Act of Union did more than merely unite the two Canadas. It also established colonial self-government. The imperial government, in effect, placed the burden of government on the colonial elite. Would conflict between the communities again dominate a united Canada? Would it inevitably lead to political chaos and anarchy? Indeed, would it even be possible to establish a just and effective political order within an imposed framework? The answers to such questions depended entirely on the quality of leadership provided by such men as Baldwin and Lafontaine.

The response of these leaders was unequivocal. Neither one desired competition or conflict; both men accepted cultural diversity as a fundamental fact of Canadian political life. Both searched for a political unity not based on claims of cultural homogeneity or hegemony. They established the principle of accommodation and cooperation as the foundation for public life. No legislation was enacted detrimental to either cultural community. Negotiation and compromise, rather than majoritarian views, guided the relationship between the two communities. The years after 1840 clearly illustrate a willingness to abandon majoritarian politics.

10. Accommodation politics and its demise

Accommodation politics was very successful because of the quality of political leadership after 1840. However, it could only be successful so long as the political elite of both communities remained committed to the basic principles of compromise. The fact that the Act of Union was a constitution for a unitary state was overlooked. The Act made no provisions for structural pluralism.

The consequences of attempting to govern a pluralistic society within a unitary state became apparent by the mid-1850s when the Clear Grits, led by George Brown, demanded an end to accommodation and the introduction of the

majoritarian principle based on representation by population. Interestingly enough, this demand came only after the census of 1851 which indicated that, for the first time, the English community had a numerical advantage over the French community.

“Rep by pop” became the battle cry of the Clear Grits. The Conservatives, led by J.A. Macdonald and Etienne Cartier, rejected the demands of the Clear Grits on the grounds that such a policy would be discriminatory and would damage the existing political order. But the insistent demands of the Clear Grits gradually eroded accommodation between the communities.

Canadian politics became so polarized that by 1864, governments rose and fell within weeks. Political leaders realized the urgent necessity of ending the conflict between the communities and resolving the serious political deadlock. After protracted negotiations, they agreed to work together to seek a just solution.

11. The British North America Act

The basic assumptions bringing the founding fathers together illustrate that compromise and accommodation was essential to ending the conflict between the communities. In spite of George Brown and the Clear Grits, the political elite accepted the existence of fundamentally different ways of life. They rejected outright majoritarian politics and they agreed that the aspirations of individuals, groups and communities must be met within any proposed political framework.¹⁰ They assumed that “the rights of nations as well as the rights of individuals would be safeguarded by the central authority.”¹¹ Given these basic assumptions and agreements, the founding fathers quickly decided on the framework of Canadian confederation. The imperial government enacted the Canadian compromise in the British North America Act of 1867.

¹⁰ A. Smith, “Metaphor and Nationality in North America,” *The Canadian Historical Review*, Vol. 51, No. 3 (September 1970), p. 254.

¹¹ Grant, *Lament*, p. 22.

Confederation was essentially a treaty between two cultural communities – or, if you will, a gentlemen’s agreement not enforceable at law – guaranteeing each community the right to its own faith, language, laws, customs, and institutions. It was a conservative agreement seeking to preserve Canada’s cultural heritages. Confederation did not seek to promote human emancipation, freedom, or progress; rather, it stressed public order, tradition, and good government.¹² The founding fathers did not seek to create a new society in a new world.¹³ Rather than any kind of millennial vision, the founding fathers established an open society allowing for diverse cultural expression and activity.

12. Legal status of cultural diversity as a result of confederation

The open character of the Canadian confederation clearly indicates that the founding fathers rejected majoritarianism in favor of a political order suitable to the needs of groups and communities living within Canada’s territorial boundaries.¹⁴ Cultural diversity was not destroyed by union, but it did receive public recognition.

The founding fathers created a political nationality, a nationality not based on claims of race, ethnicity or cultural homogeneity. Men such as Cartier spoke of the need of a political nationality defined as one of allegiance to the monarch. For Cartier, monarchical institutions were indispensable to a pluralistic or open society.¹⁵ The monarchy could guarantee cultural diversity and genuine freedom since it only required allegiance, not conformity to a given way of life.

Once a citizen had given his allegiance to the Crown, he was able to go his own way.¹⁶ There was no need to continually prove his loyalty or to give constant consent to a political creed. This assumption had important consequences. Political nationality could include all peoples in Canada without sacrificing their

¹²*Ibid.*, p. 69.

¹³ H.B. Neatley, *The Politics of Chaos* (1972), p. 18.

¹⁴ P. Russell, ed., *Nationalism in Canada* (1966), p. xvii.

¹⁵ Berger, *Canadian History*, p. 254.

¹⁶ Finlay, *North Atlantic Triangle*, p. 312; Berger, *Canadian History*, p. 254; Smith, “Metaphor and Nationality,” p. 255; K. McNaught, “The National Outlook,” in *Nationalism in Canada*, p. 64.

loyalties to their unique groups or communities. In other words, political nationality rested on the principle of cultural diversity, or, more appropriately, multiculturalism and the open society. The political order must serve the needs of all individuals, groups, communities, or associations without granting special status to any single one.¹⁷

This vision of confederation, held by most of the founding fathers, refused to allow for the liberal claims of majoritarian politics. To that end, Ottawa received all residual powers, and, more importantly, it received the power of disallowance over any provincial legislation which might infringe on the rights of groups or communities.¹⁸ The purpose of a strong, activist central government was to prevent local tyrannies and totalitarian uniformities. The founding fathers assigned to the central government a positive role in ordering public life; that is, government was seen as a positive good for society rather than a necessary evil. The state was the protector of social, cultural and institutional values. Its task was to integrate and accommodate communal needs and aspirations within the political order.

The assertion of cultural pluralism meant that conformity to a national type was not possible, and it doomed to failure any future attempts to create or define a "Canadian type."¹⁹ The Canada First Movement, active in the last decade of the nineteenth century, failed in its attempt to provide Canada with a nationalist philosophy.²⁰ The movement was unable to stimulate widespread discussion or support. It was evident that cultural pluralism could not be enshrined in a common creed.

13. Failure of the French to demand multiculturalism

¹⁷ Smith, "Metaphor and Nationality," p. 266.

¹⁸ D. Smiley, "Federalism, Nationalism and the Scope of Public Activity in Canada," in *Nationalism in Canada*, p. 99.

¹⁹ Smith, "Metaphor and Nationality," pp. 254, 264.

²⁰ G.P. de T. Glazebrook, *A History of Canadian Political Thought* (1966), p. 160.

That multiculturalism was to be the main characteristic of Canada's society can be seen most clearly in the creation of the province of Manitoba. The red River community, although relatively small, was a fully civilized community in 1870. But, more importantly, the Red River community was a pluralistic society; its institutions made room for cultural diversity. The Red River community, led by Louis Riel, demanded full jural recognition for its structural pluralism.

The Manitoba Act of 1870 recognized the claims of the communities in Western Canada. This principle of multiculturalism remained an integral feature of the Macdonald government till 1885. In that year Louis Riel's attempt to force Ottawa to extend multiculturalism to the far west ended with his execution. His execution signaled to the French cultural community that the west would be English, that there would be no room for cultural diversity within a federal political order, and that existing cultural differences would be defined as narrowly as possible.

The French leaders made a serious error in judgment by not championing the cause of multiculturalism in the west.²¹ Rather than defending the principle of multiculturalism within a political order, they accepted a territorial definition of cultural diversity.²² Consequently, structural pluralism gave way to a territorially defined biculturalism and binationalism. It was now possible for an aggressive and hostile Ontario to shape the west in its own image.

Many members of the English community welcomed this development because they had never been committed to the principles of multiculturalism. They had always preferred the unitary state and cultural homogeneity. They now saw the opportunity to impose a liberal majoritarian way of life throughout Canada except in Quebec, where they insisted that the privileges of the English minority be safeguarded.

14. Regional definition of culture

²¹ H.B. Neatby, *Laurier and a Liberal Quebec* (Carleton Library, No. 63, 1973), p. 27.

²² Smith, "Metaphor and Nationality," p. 268.

Mercier's *Nationaliste* party accepted this regional definition of culture. Members of the French community not living in Quebec were left to fend for themselves in an English world. This conception of Canada and its cultures was formally endorsed by most of the provinces at a conference called by Mercier in 1887.

A new interpretation of confederation, based on a territorial definition of culture, was adopted by the provinces. The conference formulated the compact theory which stated, in essence, that confederation had been the work of provinces rather than communities. Furthermore, because the provinces had created confederation, they could also change it since the powers held by Ottawa were only delegated powers.

This revolt of the provinces indicated a willingness to dismantle confederation and give greater power to the provinces to shape their own societies without any reference to the principles of multiculturalism. The provinces were supported at the federal level by the Liberal Party. Not surprisingly, the Liberals gained in popularity during the following years and captured power in 1896.

The retreat of French Canada from the national scene coincided with a profound shift in attitudes in Canada. From about 1885 to 1916, the vision of the founding fathers was gradually abandoned. Men no longer dreamed of a community or communities, of a political order open to all. A vision demanding only political allegiance rather than adherence to creeds or doctrines was no longer acceptable.

What happened? I would suggest that the triumph of liberalism, defined as a *worldview* or *view of reality*, led to the erosion of the principles of multiculturalism. The creed of liberalism, shaped by the Industrial Revolution and the writings of Locke, Adam Smith and their successors, held that only the individual was real and that his social order was merely a means to enhance his individuality.²³

²³ Grant, *Lament*, p. 57; Finlay, *North American Triangle*, pp. 174ff; A. Lijphard, "Political Theories and the Exploration of Ethnic Conflict," in *Ethnic Conflict in the western World*, ed. M.J. Esman (1977), p. 53. Note: This

The liberal view made no room for communal or associational relationships; its only concern was to establish and protect individual equality. It adopted a secular religion of material progress – that of getting on in a world of endless opportunities. Progress beckoned the ambitious man who refused to be hindered by a multiplicity of communal relationships. Man must be freed from all restraints. Liberal spokesmen believed that man’s common interests would provide the necessary basis for national unity and economic growth.²⁴

15. Protestants and liberalism

Liberalism received its support not only from the provinces but also from Protestant Christianity. Most of the churches accepted their assigned role in society. They believed that since Canadian society was Christian, there was no need for differentiated structures. They did not seek to transform society, and they certainly had no burning desire to build the Kingdom of God on earth. Canadian Protestants were convinced that “good individuals would create a good society, or at least save themselves from a sinful world.”²⁵

Methodist leaders and other churchmen accepted the liberal creeds of progress, of individual rights and democracy.²⁶ Sectarianism, although rejecting Anglican privilege, also postulated a worldview based on freedom, progress being its norm.²⁷ In other words, Protestant Christianity accepted the liberal doctrines about man and his place in the universe. It also accentuated motives of accomplishment and success and its philosophy of self-help stressed an acquisitive ethic.

Protestant Christianity did not concern itself with minority rights or the status of communities in Canada. The church leaders gladly relegated religious instruction

and subsequent boxes are inserted by J. Boer, the publisher of this online edition, to indicate the importance of the matter at hand.

²⁴ Porter, *Vertical Mosaic*, p. 417.

²⁵ M. Prang, *N.W. Rowell, Ontario Nationalist* (1975), p. 24.

²⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 39.

²⁷ Finlay, *North American Triangle*, pp. 179ff.

to the church and the home. After all, society itself was Christian, regardless of some relatively minor doctrinal differences between the churches. Protestant Christianity had no cultural vision. It accepted cultural Anglicanism without a privileged status for the Church of England. It adopted an Ontarian nationalist view of Canada in which the church's role was to Canadianize and Christianize all people living in Canada.²⁸ The churches were seen as instruments for the assimilation of peoples into a given social order. The churches became staunch advocates of Canadian national unity and the doctrines of anglo-conformity.

16. The school as instrument of cultural conformity

The Manitoba School Question, which dominated Canadian public life during the 1890s, clearly demonstrates this profound shift in Canadian life. The government of Manitoba decided, in the name of national unity, to establish a uniform school system which would provide *all* its citizens with a non-controversial Christianity from which all objectionable elements were removed.²⁹ All Catholic schools and non-English schools were abolished. All citizens of the province were forcibly comprehended within the English community. The school was seen as the means to create a uniform nationality.

In the name of democratic equality, all differences had to be destroyed. This doctrine of equality is, by its very nature, very discriminatory since it is always defined by the culturally dominant group.³⁰ Furthermore, it is always defined in terms of individual or personal status in society without taking into account any communal ties or loyalties.

The events in Manitoba emphasized the central government's inability to protect multiculturalism in Canada.³¹ Indeed, the events underscored the vulnerability of the principles formulated by the founding fathers in 1867. An

²⁸ Prang, *N.W. Rowell*, p. 69.

²⁹ Neatby, *Laurier*, pp. 52ff.

³⁰ D. Smiley, "French-English Relations in Canada and Consociational Democracy," in *Ethnic Conflict in the Western World*, pp. 222-224.

³¹ K. McRae, ed., *Consociational Democracy*, (Carleton Library, No. 79, 1974), p. 257.

old and tired government made a feeble attempt to correct the injustice by introducing remedial legislation. The proposed legislation failed to pass as the result of a carefully orchestrated Liberal filibuster. The federal government refused to exercise its power of disallowance and shifted its responsibility to the courts.³²

The Liberal Party used the occasion to discredit the government. Political expediency and the desire for electoral victory determined Liberal strategy. The election of 1896 gave the victory to Laurier and the Liberal Party. This victory indicated that Canada had accepted the idea of a secular and uniform public life. All differences, whether cultural or religious, were relegated to the private area of life. Canada's political elite had, in effect, decided to deal only with issues on which common agreement was possible, namely, nation-building and economic growth.

17. The Liberal Party and national unity

The Liberal victory determined that cultural diversity would be defined as narrowly as possible. The English provinces, with the blessings of the federal Liberal Party, imposed cultural unity on immigrant groups and indigenous communities alike. The demand for anglo-conformity was clearly expressed in the creation of the provinces of Alberta and Saskatchewan in 1905. The English provinces insisted that Ottawa approve only the claims of the English community in that region. Laurier drafted the enabling legislation in conformity with the demands of the English elite.³³ The need for unity took precedence over the claims of justice for local and native minorities and communities.³⁴

It was Laurier's liberalism that shaped twentieth century Canada. This century belonged not so much to Canada as to the Liberal Party. Except for relatively short and (with historical hindsight) interim Conservative regimes, the Liberal

³² Finlay, *North American Triangle*, p. 254.

³³ Prang, *N.W. Rowell*, p. 61.

³⁴ J. Laxer and R. Laxer, *The Liberal Idea of Canada* (1977), pp. 160, 209.

Party shaped the very character of the Canadian fabric. Its philosophy, assumptions, beliefs, and values were inextricably woven into Canada's public life.

The role and place of the individual, the blessings of progress, the promised millennium became the modern creed. The Liberal Party promised that these blessings would be added to all Canadians, provided they accepted the urgent importance of a united Canada, a Canada in which all fundamental structural differences would remain submerged, or, hopefully, fade away.

18. Economic opportunism

The Liberal victory in 1896 coincided with a period of economic prosperity and the beginning of significant population growth due to immigration. Prosperity created an atmosphere of optimism and gave Canada's elite a sense of power. They believed that their desires would be fulfilled in their pursuit of wealth. Non-economic matters were subordinated to materialistic opportunism. The federal government now existed to make possible the maximum exploitation of Canada's resources.

The west, Quebec and the Maritimes were seen as the economic hinterland serving the metropolitan interests of central Canada. In fact, the prairie provinces were colonial creations of central Canada. To exploit their resources to the full, the Liberal government encouraged large-scale European immigration. Ukrainians, Hutterites, Jews, Dukhobors, and many other groups came to settle in Canada. Many of these communities lived in relative isolation, pursuing their own ways of life and maintaining their own customs and traditions.

Although English became the established language, the schools and churches failed to "Canadianize" the immigrants.³⁵ Canada remained a collectivity of

³⁵ Smith, "Metaphor and Nationality," p. 258.

identities and communities.³⁶ Linguistic uniformity did not lead to cultural uniformity. The immigrants could not be fully assimilated because Canada possessed no ideal national type as the norm for assimilation.³⁷

Neither the federal nor the provincial elite concerned themselves with such cultural matters. The new and local cultural communities were left to fend for themselves in a country dedicated to economic expansion. This concern for economic growth during the Laurier years transformed Canada from an essentially agrarian society into a highly industrialized modern society during the course of the twentieth century.

A casual survey of the liberal tradition from Laurier to Trudeau would quickly reveal the fact that its supporters consistently preached the doctrines of *laissez-faire*. Man, in his unlimited freedom,³⁸ had the right to exploit nature and his social environment in pursuit of his own interests. The only real values were market values; non-economic aspects of life were reduced to market values or simply ignored. Man the individual was reduced to an economic definition in the pursuit of material well-being. Motivated by enlightened self-interest, material well-being would guarantee happiness and the good life.

In order for man to reach his full economic potential, no institution or relationship had any claim on his loyalties. Not surprisingly, the liberal tradition not only ignored intermediary institutions but also minimized the integrity of the national political order.³⁹ The liberals have most effectively betrayed the multicultural vision of the founding fathers. Indeed, with their exclusive concern for individual well-being, the liberals have sought to destroy all intermediary institutions. All that the liberal tradition offered the Canadian peoples was a guarantee of the survival of the individual. It is not too much to say, as Laxer

³⁶ Gagne, "Technology and Canadian Politics," pp. 30-32.

³⁷ Smith, "Metaphor and Nationality," p. 262.

³⁸ Grant, *Lament*, pp. 56-57.

³⁹ Laxer, *The Liberal Idea*, pp. 88, 92.

and Grant have done, that the liberal tradition has sent Canada to the edge of dissolution.⁴⁰

19. Continentalism

Modernization, rooted in this liberal view of reality and its promise of the good life, could only be fully realized within a continentalist framework. The Liberals have always advocated economic interdependence as beneficial, making possible the promised growth and prosperity. It had become the task of these advocates to make this interdependence or, more appropriately, economic domination palatable to the Canadian peoples. Liberal theorists and economists constantly stressed the essential unity of the continent – a view most forcefully articulated in the myth of the undefended border. Cultural distinctions were relegated to the periphery or dismissed; science and industry held out the promise of a single, interdependent international community. In short, the liberal tradition turned Canada into a branch-plant society.⁴¹

Laurier placed Canada's defense under the umbrella of the Monroe Doctrine, King encouraged the Carnegie and Rockefeller foundations to invest in Canadian libraries and universities, and Trudeau approved the Mackenzie delta project. These few examples clearly indicate the anti-nationalist bias of the liberal vision of Canada.

The pursuit of material progress fundamentally altered the nature of Canadian politics and the role of the state. Political parties sought power in order to use the state and its institutions to advance and promote economic growth. It seems that nearly every election since 1896 was reduced to "bread-and-butter" issues, that is, an appeal to the enlightened self-interest of the voters. Consequently, politics could no longer tolerate debate on fundamental principles; it could only concern itself with the interests of individuals and economic groups.

⁴⁰*Ibid.*, p. 223; Grant, *Lament*, p. 54.

⁴¹Laxer, *The Liberal Idea*, p. 21; Grant, *Lament*, p.40.

The twentieth century political tradition no longer dealt with principal differences but concerned itself with reconciling “the ordinary citizen to the power of large institutions” by promising him the benefits of material progress.⁴² This promise meant that twentieth century political parties had to be all things to all men, making them appear opportunistic and unprincipled. The parties became the engines “of social cohesion and consensus politics.”⁴³

20. Politics of consensus

Consensus politics, as practiced in Canada from Laurier to Trudeau, condemned conflict between political parties and stressed the need for unity and compromise. After all, men are basically reasonable and generous! This emphasis on compromise – in reality meaning integration, comprehension, or, most frequently, unity – led to brokerage politics, reconciling powerful economic, regional and institutional interests.

In these multi-interest parties, whether Liberal, Conservative or N.D.P., it was generally the economic elite that determined the nature of the political decisions.⁴⁴ Such was the case when the Laurier government established close relationships with railway and banking interests. Railways became politics, and when they went bankrupt in 1917, the government came to the rescue. Other examples which could be mentioned are the pipeline of 1956 and the response of the Pearson government to finance Minister Gordon’s economic proposals in 1963.⁴⁵

Although Canadian political parties catered to these powerful economic interests, they did not forget the ordinary people. During the post-World War I years, Canada had become a turbulent and agitated society threatened by class conflict, radical politics and cultural discontent. The One Big Union movement, the Winnipeg Strike, farmer unrest, and separatist demands in Quebec all

⁴² Laxer, *The Liberal Idea*, p. 216.

⁴³ *Ibid.*, p. 65.

⁴⁴ Porter, *Vertical Mosaic*, p. 375.

⁴⁵ D. Creighton, *Canada’s First Century* (1970), pp. 334-335.

expressed dissatisfaction with the existing political order. Most of these protest movements did not challenge the fundamental liberal doctrine of material progress; they merely disagreed on the means of fulfilling its promise. Their proposals were a means for the ordinary people to catch up with the liberal world.⁴⁶

The government's response to these protest movements clearly indicated what Canada's elite meant by politics of consensus. It was clear that the politics of consensus or compromise meant, in reality, the need to make minimal concessions and thus co-opt opposition and protest movements. In other words, dissent was built into the political system, keeping the political fabric intact. Following the Winnipeg Strike, the government introduced collective bargaining, Quebec welcomed King's diplomatic isolation from Europe, and the farmers obtained an adjustment of the tariff policy.

Politics of concession became the key characteristic of political life down to the present day. Concessional tactics were used as a means to avoid controversy, to keep the task of government as limited as possible, and, if necessary, silence the persistent demands of individuals, groups or communities. After repeated attacks by the forerunners of the C.C.F. in Parliament, King finally introduced the old age pension in 1926.

During the years of the Depression, King did nothing. He hoped to ride out the storm by relying on the conventional processes of a free economy to restore social and economic harmony. His famous five cent speech declared that the government had no responsibility to provide relief to bankrupt provinces and unemployed labor.

It was not until the coming of third party movements in the west that King's Liberal government initiated a social policy aimed at the destruction of the political left and right at the federal level. The government extended credit to the farmers and accepted the idea of a wheat board and other public bodies regulating transportation and communications. Having met and silenced the

⁴⁶ Grant, *Lament*, p. 58.

demands of protest movements, King's government "settled down into a state of satisfied immobility."⁴⁷

21. Liberalism and social legislation

In order to head off the growing protests from both ends of the political spectrum, successive Liberal governments introduced hospital insurance, baby bonuses, medicare, the Canada Pension Plan, some minor restraints on foreign investment, equalization plans to help poorer provinces, and other programs.⁴⁸

These policies and programs underscore the nature of brokerage politics and the concessional tactics employed by the Liberal Party.

These many concessions gave the Canadian people a vested interest in maintaining the status quo of the liberal society. The defeat of the Diefenbaker government in 1963 was an electoral affirmation of the liberal democratic society shaped and directed by the Liberal Party since the time of Laurier.

The liberal tradition, with its emphasis on material progress and individual happiness, successfully excluded non-economic issues from its purview until the late 1950s and 1960s. Modernization, as guided by a liberal state, had dissolved many of the traditional social relationships and loyalties.

By the early 1960s, many people looked to the state to provide an integrative framework for society. Material prosperity and the promise of personal happiness had enticed many individuals to forego their place and status in their unique groups, communities, or voluntary associations. Those who could not, or would not, be integrated were relegated to the periphery of Canadian social life.

Communities such as the Hutterites, Dukhobors, Inuits, and others could safely be ignored, especially since they had turned their backs on the twentieth century doctrines of progress and prosperity. They willingly accepted a

⁴⁷ Creighton, *First Century*, p. 191.

⁴⁸ Laxer, *The Liberal Idea*, p. 22.

subordinate position by their refusal to be assimilated into the liberal democratic society.

Many commentators operate on the assumption that modernization will lead to homogenization and a lessening of conflict.⁴⁹ They also assume that the process is irreversible and must, in time, lead to the complete eradication of diversity. Grant, in his *Lament for a Nation*, has concluded that modernization has made “all local cultures anachronistic.”⁵⁰ Opposition to this modern civilization will, by its very nature, be merely a “shadowy voice” so faint as to be totally irrelevant.⁵¹

It seems to me that Grant’s obituary is somewhat premature, and any notion of inevitability must be taken with serious reservations. I do not minimize the cultural power of the modernizing process, based on a system of values and beliefs, but I would suggest that we wait before joining Grant in his lament for a nostalgic past.

22. Modernization failed to assimilate

Before we sit down in sackcloth and ashes, we should ask ourselves why there is so much ethnic or cultural conflict in our Western civilization. Many of the modern industrialized states are confronted by cultural groups demanding recognition of their uniqueness.⁵² It seems that modernization has failed to destroy communal identities; instead modernization has stimulated demands for distinctive communities.

The twentieth century can equally be described as a quest for community, with ethnicity its mobilizing principle. Modernization tends to intensify a sense of uniqueness, of particularity. It has also increased an awareness of vulnerability,

⁴⁹Lijphart, “Political Theories,” p. 47.

⁵⁰ Grant, *Lament*, p. 54.

⁵¹*Ibid.*, p. 72.

⁵² W. Connor, “Nation-Building or Nation-Destroying?” *World Politics*, Vol. XXIV, No. 3 (April 1972), p. 327.

of being ruled by foreigners.⁵³ In many cases, cultural groups are demanding to be masters in their own houses, without any interference from a “foreign” political order.

The quest for community and the search for a meaningful alternative to liberal individualism has also dominated the debate in Canada. Modernization has intensified provincial, religious and ethnic cleavages in Canada. Modernization has failed to create a homogenous national culture; it has been unable to formulate a set of values and beliefs acceptable to all Canadians.⁵⁴ The liberal politics of concessions has failed to integrate or comprehend communal interests. These interests could not be fully represented because of the liberal emphasis on commonality rather than on fundamental differences.⁵⁵ In many parts of Canada, communal institutions and values have remained strong, for example, in western Canada where Jews, Ukrainians, Hutterites, and others have retained their distinctiveness.⁵⁶ Since World War II, the hierarchy of Porter’s vertical mosaic has been crumbling. The communities have rejected their subordinate status, and at the same time they have refused to be assimilated. They want far more than just an ethnic identity; they demand full structural recognition of their unique way of life. These demands have become a source of profound discontent.⁵⁷

23. Regional discontent

Another source of conflict and discontent is regionalism.⁵⁸ The provinces have become increasingly powerful because they control the mineral resources, population, transportation systems, and social services. Such control prevents

⁵³ A.K. Davis, “Canadian Society and History as Hinterland versus Metropolis,” in *Canadian Society; Pluralism, Change, and Conflict*, ed. R.J. Ossenberg (1971), p. 29; S. Clarkson, “A Programme for Binational Development,” in *Nationalism in Canada*, p. 136; also R.A. Nisbet, *The Quest for Community* (1952m 1976); N.M.J. Esman ed., *Ethnic Conflict in the western World* (1977).

⁵⁴ Gagne, “Technology and Canadian Politics,” p. 29.

⁵⁵ McRae, *Consociational Democracy*, p. 249.

⁵⁶ Gagne, “Technology and Canadian Politics,” p. 38.

⁵⁷ J.T. Woods, “A Cultural Approach to Canadian Independence,” in *Nationalism, Technology and the Future of Canada*, p. 86.

⁵⁸ M. Watkins, “Technology and Nationalism,” in *Nationalism in Canada*, p. 294.

centralization at the federal level.⁵⁹ The provinces are extremely jealous of their prerogatives and refuse to allow interference from Ottawa.

Federal-provincial conferences do little to lessen conflict; in fact, such meetings tend to heighten provincial claims of uniqueness and underscore their self-proclaimed status as co-equals of Ottawa. Brokerage politics has not been very successful in dealing with regional demands and aspirations.

The challenge of communal and regional discontent, as well as the pervasive influence of the U.S.A., may well be the salvation of Canada.⁶⁰ The Canadian people are confronted by a most serious problem or challenge: either to allow gradual continental absorption or explain *why* Canada should remain independent.

I believe that if Canadians do not reject the political immobility of the Trudeau era, then the choice will have been made. His rigid defense of the constitutional and political status quo will only lead to further alienation and increase the serious strains already present in the social fabric. The Trudeau regime has refused to acknowledge the reality of grievances articulated by many groups, classes and communities. The Liberal government is prepared to pay the price of affluent continentalism at the expense of communal relationships and institutions.

24. The present political order rejects cultural diversity

It should be obvious by now that the political order, as presently constituted in Canada, cannot really represent the existing cultural diversity; in fact, it barely tolerates its existence. It still demands that Canadians “overcome the myths, prejudices and ignorance separating them and put the development of a great nation above all other considerations.” The conclusion of the Bilingualism and Biculturalism Commission seems to echo the statement of Creighton who insists

⁵⁹ A. Dubue, “The decline of Confederation and the New Nationalism,” in *Nationalism in Canada*, p. 121.

⁶⁰Davis, “Canadian Society,” p. 24; Smith, “Metaphor and Nationality,” pp. 263ff.

that the founding fathers did not intend to perpetuate cultural diversity but to establish a united nation.⁶¹ It is not uncommon to describe opponents of national unity as dogmatic, rigid, and a positive threat to political unity.⁶²

To elevate political unity to a quasi-religious level is to remove it from the realm of debate and to require mere assent from the people. Such tactics must be resisted because Canada cannot afford ideological Canadianism and its demands of unreserved loyalty. A meaningful debate must assume that the existing order is not an unalterable arrangement. A fundamental ideological debate is possible – and should be encouraged – because Canada has retained its old world cultural roots; the old world philosophic heritage is still a formative influence in Canada today.⁶³ This heritage should be exploited to the full as a means to provide answers to the pressing problem facing all Canadians.

Such a debate must focus its attention on the authority and task of the state in a multicultural society. The state must create public legal space for individuals and communities to enable them to fulfill their particular tasks. The recognition of this structured pluralism must take place at both the federal and provincial levels.

In order for these communities to flourish, the state must be prepared to give up the necessary powers and limit its own task to defining the boundaries within which individuals, communities and associations can fully express themselves. The acceptance of this pluralistic principle will guarantee an open society, a society in which each way of life, however defined by a given community, can come to a full cultural expression. Structural pluralism will make it impossible for any institution – religious, educational, economic, political – to wield a power monopoly, since each community will have the opportunity to establish those institutions which it requires.

In short, Canada must restore the original vision of its founding fathers and accept – indeed encourage – diversity. If Canada refuses to accept structural

⁶¹ Creighton, *First Century*, p. 12.

⁶² Neatby, *Laurier*, p. xiv.

⁶³ Woods, "A Cultural Approach," p. 84

pluralism, then the only alternative is to embrace cultural homogeneity and affluent continentalism.