The Challenge of Ethnic Conflict

CANADA: FROM BILINGUALISM TO MULTICULTURALISM

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Mass migration has created Canada's problems of ethnic conflict and accommodation, as it has those of the United States. From the seventeenth century to the present, large numbers of Europeans have migrated to the New World, displacing its aboriginal inhabitants and thus creating a more or less cohesive native or indigenous minority. Migrants from Africa and Asia—forced in the past, voluntary more recently—have added other ethnic minorities distinguished by "visible" or "racial" differences. The numerically dominant European population is itself, of course, ethnically divided—in the Canadian case, primarily between the English and the French, but secondarily between the older migrants from Northern Europe and the more recent "New Canadians" from Southern and Eastern Europe.

Canada's parliamentary democratic institutions have been successful so far at managing the tensions associated with these divisions, and Canadians are rightly proud of their success. Indeed, one common purpose or ambition of Canadians—beyond simply consuming the fruits of the highest technology applied to the most abundant natural resources—is to show the world how to manage ethnic conflict, so as to avoid the horrors of the past century. But Canada's status as a model of skillful management is threatened by the growing racial tensions in Canada's large cities and by the separatist movement among French-speakers in Quebec. To understand the lessons that Canada may have to teach, one must begin by noting the historical and institutional background to the current situation.

The golden age of ethnic accommodation in Canada lasted a little over a century, from the 1840s to the 1950s. The most important

division during this period, as more recently, was the division between English and French.

Modern Canada is the result of the sudden, trans-Atlantic imperial expansion of the British and French peoples, resulting in a series of clashes between their empires throughout the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries. Canada took form as a result of "The Conquest" (of the French by British forces under General James Wolfe in 1759) and then the northward migration of British Loyalists who opposed the American Revolution two decades later. Two groups of colonists, one English-speaking and Protestant, the other French-speaking and Roman Catholic, but both defined in part by their opposition to the American colonists to the south, came together under the sovereignty of the British Crown.

The nature of British rule in Canada—its monarchical and confessional character—was at odds with the liberal and democratic tendencies of the age. The Catholic clergy in Quebec and the Tory Loyalists and officials elsewhere checked these tendencies for a time, but no such feeble dikes could long withstand the flood.

The Rebellions of 1837 marked the end of the attempt to give the Canadian colonies "balanced" constitutions with established churches. An investigation was conducted by a leading British politician, Lord Durham, whose report advocated "responsible government" (i.e., local democratic self-government within a quasi-federal imperial structure) and "assimilation" (i.e., the absorption of the French population within a commercial society of a modern English or American character).

In the Province of Canada (meaning what are now Ontario and Quebec), responsible government was achieved in 1848 by an alliance between English and French "moderate reformers" who rejected "assimilation" by restoring the official use of French in the legislature. Over the following decade, these politicians and others like them worked out practical arrangements—with respect to the sharing of power, the role of the churches, landholding, schools and universities—that are still the basis for Canadian life. They relied upon two main devices, federalism and "brokerage" (or multiethnic) parties, to overcome English-French rivalry.

Even before the drafting and adoption of a written federal constitution (the British North America Act of 1867), they practiced an informal federalism involving dual ministries and separate legislation for the English-Protestant and French-Catholic parts of a formally united province. In 1867, the enactment of Confederation divided Canada into Ontario and Quebec and joined these new provinces to the Maritime Provinces and British Columbia, under a written federal division of powers. Canada counts its birthdays from 1867, but from the perspective of central Canada, that year has about the same significance as 1789 (rather than 1776) in American history: it was more a confirmation and consolidation than a "founding."

Table 1 — Home Language by Province, 1991

HOME LANGUAGE	QUEBEC	NEW BRUNSWICK	REST OF CANADA	TOTAL
English	11%	68%	88%	68%
French	83	31	2	23
Other	6	1	10	9
(Total =)	(6.8M)	(0.7M)	(19.5M)	(27.0M)

SOURCE: Statistics Canada, *Home Language and Mother Tongue*, 1991 Census of Canada, Catalogue Number 93-317, Table 1.

The social (or geopolitical) basis for Canadian federalism has been the vastness of the country and the location and concentration of French-speakers within it. Quebec and New Brunswick have been their homelands, where they constitute an overwhelming majority and a substantial minority, respectively. Outside of these two provinces, the French have always been few in number—about 2 percent of the population in the most recent census, judging by the language respondents reported using at home (see Table 1). Only in the so-called "bilingual belt" (a band running roughly from Sudbury, Ontario, through Ottawa and Montreal into the Eastern Townships, with an extension in the Acadian part of New Brunswick) have the two populations met in large numbers on a daily basis.

The geographical separation of the two populations has encouraged the development of "two solitudes" socially and "brokerage" or "elite accommodation" politically. The first important multiethnic party was the midnineteenth-century alliance of "moderate reformers" mentioned above. It was followed by the Liberal-Conservative party of John A. Macdonald and George Etienne Cartier, which was the heart of the "great coalition" that brought about Confederation. The Progressive Conservative party now in power is descended from it. Why did such parties develop and take root? There is no discounting the importance of particular leaders, but there were also favorable circumstances, including the internal divisions within both the English and French communities. For many years both were deeply divided by questions of democracy and authority, so that each of the conflicting groups tended to look to the other community for political allies.

Ethnic conflict did not disappear during the "golden age." The French nursed their grievances as a conquered and oppressed minority—but prospered and reproduced nonetheless. The English took quiet (sometimes not so quiet) pride in their status as conquerors whose Empire was carrying "the white man's burden" of civilizing "backward races." But their own religious diversity, and the rough balance of forces in the country as a whole, encouraged tolerance and

accommodation. Tempers flared from time to time over issues having to do with the Church in Quebec (the Jesuit Estates problem); the settlement of the Western territories (the Riel Rebellions and the Manitoba and North-West schools questions); and Canadian participation in Great Britain's wars (the conscription crises). But never in this period did English-French conflict seriously threaten lives, property, or the existence of the country.

How is this success to be explained? Several conditions, in addition to those associated with federalism and brokerage, deserve brief mention. Relative numbers, for example, have been important: both the English and the French populations have grown rapidly (the former mainly through immigration and assimilation, the latter through natural increase), but the ratio between them remained stable at about 2 to 1 for most of the period in question. The differences between the two groups have always involved language, laws, religion, history, and culture or education, but until recently the religious difference was generally considered most important, and it was kept out of politics (more or less) by certain basic similarities between the English and French populations as well as by a liberal policy of neutrality. More generally, the liberalism of the period before World War II meant a small, "negative" state with limited social responsibilities, and therefore not much for the two groups to quarrel about that the government controlled directly. A common enemy—the Americans—kept them aware of their value to each other. The prestige of the United Kingdom, when it was at the zenith of its power, appeased French resentment about having been conquered and made it easier for English Canadians to be generous.

Finally, it seems clear that the rejection of "assimilation" in the 1840s and earlier was a key to peaceful relations between the English and the French. Assimilation is admittedly hard to define, and it is unclear exactly what Durham meant when he used the term, but it was profoundly threatening and offensive to French Canadians. No doubt many English Canadians have looked forward to the eventual absorption of the French within a vast English-speaking throng, but most have avoided talking openly about "assimilation." The politicians learned early to conduct their relations on the assumption that both "races" are permanent features of the universe, like the sun and the moon. Had they not done so, there is little reason to believe that Canada, as a country uniting English and French territories, would exist today.

The Challenge of Separatism

A new phase of English-French relations began a little over a generation ago with the election of a Conservative federal government that lacked strong support in Quebec and then a Liberal provincial

government in Quebec dedicated to reform. "Separatism," whose roots can be traced as far back in French-Canadian history as one wants, began to be widely discussed, and "nationalism" changed its character. Language displaced religion in the definition of the French-Canadian "race." Social progress, not salvation, became its goal. Nationalists no longer spoke of their compatriots as a minority, "French Canadians," who were dispersed across the country and whose "minority rights" needed protection, but rather as a majority, *les Québécois*, exploited by foreign capitalists and oppressed by Anglo-American cultural imperialism. Feared by businessmen, this new French-Canadian nationalism evoked considerable sympathy from English Canadian journalists and intellectuals, though perhaps more in Toronto than in Montreal.

It was a time of rapid social change. Television, the pill, and mass foreign travel were undermining the old social order. Immigration was changing the character of Canada's large cities, and in Montreal in particular, there were some bitter confrontations between immigrants, who wanted their children schooled in English, and the French. (A rapidly falling birthrate among the French made the linguistic assimilation of immigrants more important than it had been in the past.) Anticolonialism abroad and the civil rights movement in the United States gave Quebeckers (and Canadians generally) a model of nationalism not tainted by Hitler.

French Canadians in Quebec, it soon became plain, would no longer accept just being "tolerated" on their provincial "reserve." Some, who called themselves *Québécois*, wanted *indépendance* so that they could be a "normal society" with a French majority and progressive social policies. Others defended federalism, but on the condition that it better recognize the equality of French and English, despite their unequal numbers. By the time of Canada's centenary in 1967, these two options, *égalité ou indépendance*, had come to dominate politics in Quebec.

Since the early 1960s, the problem of Quebec separatism has dominated federal politics as well. The federal government's basic response to it was fixed in 1963 by the appointment of a royal commission "to inquire into and report upon the existing state of bilingualism and biculturalism in Canada and to recommend what steps should be taken to develop the Canadian Confederation on the basis of an equal partnership between the two founding races . . ." The language was archaic, but the basic idea was new: equality of English and French to be symbolized by the equal status of the English and French languages in federal government institutions, as well as by equal support for the cultural activities of English and French Canadians.

Pierre Elliott Trudeau, who became Canada's prime minister at the head of the Liberal Party in 1968, represented in his own person and lineage the ideals of bilingualism and biculturalism. In 1969 his

government passed an Official Languages Act, which made Canada "officially bilingual." The Act aimed to defuse separatism by elevating the status of French, and thus of French Canadians, within the federal government. It affirmed the right of all Canadians to receive services from the federal government "in the official language of their choice." To provide these services, bilingual civil servants had to be hired (the Act was a kind of affirmative action program for French Canadians) and unilingual ones had to be made bilingual (for the better part of a decade, many civil servants, most of them "anglophones," spent many hours a week attending language classes).

While Canada was becoming more bilingual, however, Quebec was becoming less so. The separatist forces in Quebec had been united in 1968 behind a new provincial party, the Parti Québécois (PQ), with an ambiguous platform, "sovereignty-association," and an attractive leader, René Lévesque. The PQ came to power in Quebec in 1976, and the following year it passed its own "official languages act," the Charte de la Langue Française, which lowered the official status of English in Quebec.[1]

The PQ had won power on a promise to hold a referendum on independence before trying to declare it. In 1980 the referendum was held, and the sovereignty option clearly lost, with only 40 percent of Quebeckers favoring it, as against 60 percent opposed. No one will ever know what exactly would have happened had the PQ won its referendum—what kind of negotiations about "sovereignty" and "association" would have ensued—but one thing was clear by 1980: the political class of English Canada had decided to abide by the results of such a referendum. If most Quebeckers wanted independence, better to let them have it than to use force to try to keep Quebec within the federal structure. In fact, of course, the federalists won the referendum, and separatism vanished from the political agenda.

The Issue of Constitutional Reform

In the struggle against it, Trudeau had given Quebeckers "bilingualism" and he had promised them "constitutional reform": it was to be their reward for voting *non*. But the amendments eventually adopted were not at all what a succession of Quebec provincial governments, federalist as well as separatist, had been demanding for 20 years. In 1982, Trudeau succeeded in entrenching a Charter of Rights and Freedoms in the constitution, greatly increasing the scope for judicial review by the federally appointed judiciary and thus limiting the powers of both the federal and provincial governments. Indeed, Sections 2 and 23 of this Charter began the process of vetoing important parts of Quebec's Charte de la Langue Française. The government of Quebec (still in the hands of the PQ) had refused to approve the proposed

amendments, but after some legal and political wrangling, it had been decided that their approval was not required.

Trudeau's Charter has been a surprising popular success in English Canada. It appeals to individualist and populist sentiments as well as to belief in expertise. Many Canadians evidently regard judges not just as legal oracles, but as tribunes of the people.

The reaction of Quebec's French Canadians is harder to describe. Individualism, populism, and belief in expertise are undoubtedly important among them as well, but they tend to see the Charter of Rights as something that Trudeau and English Canada have imposed on Quebec, and which shifts power to the federal government. According to the view represented by Trudeau, this should not be a problem. Since Quebec never really had a veto, it could not be deprived of one, and the Québécois would gradually forget the anger they felt upon suddenly discovering this lack in 1982, if the politicians would cease stirring the embers of their resentment. The problem is that political gains can be made by appealing to Quebec's injured pride. This was shown in the federal election of 1984 and more recently by the sudden rise since 1990 of a new separatist *federal* party, the Bloc Québécois.

In 1984 Brian Mulroney, a bilingual Quebecker of Irish descent at the head of the federal Conservative Party, managed to win most of Quebec's seats (and thus a huge majority in the House of Commons) by promising further constitutional amendments that would restore Quebec's veto and win its formal approval of the changes made in 1982. Between 1987 and 1990 he came extremely close to resolving the problem (and perhaps creating further problems, as his critics contended) through a package of amendments known as "the Meech Lake accord." This package won the enthusiastic support of the government of Quebec (now Liberal and federalist), but it required the approval of all the other provincial legislatures within three years, and both Newfoundland and Manitoba (in keeping with broad popular sentiment) chose to demur.

The failure of Meech Lake in mid-1990 brought the separatist movement in Quebec back to life and seemed to leave Canada on the brink of dissolution. Over the next two years, a frantic process of intergovernmental negotiations and popular consultations produced "the Charlottetown agreement," a bloated, ill-defined package of proposed constitutional and other amendments which, among other things, recognized that Canada's native peoples have an "inherent right of self-government." The agreement was put to Canadians for approval in principle in a series of referenda in October 1992, but despite a massive propaganda campaign by business and government, it was decisively rejected, both in Quebec ("not enough for Quebec") and in the rest of Canada ("too much for Quebec").

The summer of 1993 finds Canada in a kind of interregnum. Few seem content with "the constitution," but all are tired of talking about

it. The economy is mired in the worst depression since the 1930s. The Conservatives in Ottawa have been setting record lows in the polls, but they have a bright new leader in British Columbia's Kim Campbell. A federal election must be held this fall. With three or four important parties competing in almost every (single-member simple plurality) constituency, only the politicians are claiming to know who will emerge victorious.

Multiculturalism

Canada's problems of ethnic conflict and accommodation have been discussed so far as if all Canadians were either English or French and as if the only real problem of Canadian politics were the relation between these two groups. Such assumptions are at best half truths. In fact, Canadians of British and French origin represent only about two-thirds of the total Canadian population, and Canada's multiculturalism may be far more important, as a contribution to political theory or the political arts, than anything connected with its dualism.

Canada's population has more or less doubled every 40 years since Confederation. In the early decades, most of the growth due to immigration was the result of immigration from the British Isles. At the turn of the century, immigrants from other European countries began to arrive in significant numbers, and during the 20 years following World War II, they counted for about six of every ten immigrants to Canada. For the past 20 years, however, Asia has been the most important source of immigrants, with significant numbers also coming from Africa and the Caribbean. These flows explain not just the appearance of "visible minorities" in Canada's cities, but a relative decline of the "two founding races" and a growing predominance of English over French. These changes are the most important factors conditioning Canada's recent ethnic politics.

Precise statistics on ethnicity are difficult to compile, since many people do not fit simple ethnic categories.[2] Many are the products of marriages that leave them with no clear ethnic identity, or with one they wish to shed. Ethnicity is like much else: people often think of themselves quite differently from how they are thought of by others. An ethnic-origin census of the Canadian population at the present time would, however, reveal a breakdown like the following:[3] British 37 percent, French 27 percent, Other Europeans 25 percent, Asians and Africans 8 percent, and Native Peoples 3 percent. Clearly the "Other European" "third force" is now almost as large as the French component of the population, and the old 2 to 1 ratio of English to French is either not attained or greatly exceeded, depending upon how all the "others" are classified. A good reason for considering most of them "English" is apparent from the census statistics on language. If all

those who report speaking English at home are compared with those who report speaking French, the ratio is now about 3 to 1 (see Table 1 above).

The political significance of the changes under way first became apparent a generation ago, with the appointment of the Royal Commission on Bilingualism and Biculturalism mentioned above. Many Canadians objected to the basic idea of "bilingualism and biculturalism": if this dualism were carried to its logical conclusion, they argued, then the English and the French would acquire a special status in Canada, and the other ethnic groups would be relegated to "second-class citizenship." The government of the day, sensitive to this objection, directed the commission to recommend measures "to develop the Canadian Confederation on the basis of an equal partnership between the two founding races," but with the crucial qualification, "taking into account the contribution made by the other ethnic groups to the cultural enrichment of Canada and the measures that should be taken to safeguard that contribution." Two of the ten commissioners it appointed were "ethnic" Canadians (i.e., of neither British nor French ethnic origin).

In 1971 Prime Minister Trudeau, responding on behalf of his government to the publication of the fourth volume of the commission's report (which dealt with "The Cultural Contribution of the Other Ethnic Groups"), read into it a compromise that the commissioners themselves had been unable to agree upon: two official languages, but no official cultures, with all cultures to be treated equally in so far as culture can be separated from language and from the maintenance of the overall Canadian way of life, which was not in question. The key passage in his brief statement to the House of Commons was:

> It was the view of the royal commission, shared by the government and, I am sure, by all Canadians, that there cannot be one cultural policy for Canadians of British and French origin, another for the original peoples and yet a third for all others. For although there are two official languages, there is no official culture, nor does any ethnic group take precedence over any other. No citizen or group of citizens is other than Canadian, and all should be treated fairly.[4]

This historic compromise ("multiculturalism within a bilingual framework") entailed a patchwork of new policies. Some were designed to encourage cultural retention by minority ethnic groups (i.e., to inhibit or oppose assimilation); others, which promoted contact and opposed discrimination, aimed to encourage social integration (despite its tendency to increase assimilation); and still others tried to hasten linguistic assimilation by subsidizing the learning of the official languages by recent immigrants.

Official "multiculturalism," despite its suffix, does not refer to any coherent theory or set of principles. Rather, the term denotes a hodgepodge of policies and practices. It is, in a sense, just the application to the other ethnic groups of the basic approach taken so far in dealing with French-English conflict: uphold individual rights; avoid talking about "assimilation," except to decry it; and find ways of symbolizing the equality of numerically unequal groups, without abandoning majority rule. The only real principle discernible underneath all this is that of liberal tolerance or neutrality. Neutrality must now be achieved, however, by a "positive" state, not by keeping "hands off" the social or cultural sphere, but by putting "hands on" (through posters, subsidies, grants, human rights commissions, employment equity programs, broadcasting licenses, and the like) in a fair or equal way.

Multiculturalism has been embraced by most English-speaking Canadians, not just by those whose status was boosted by the proclamation of their equality to the "founding races." The reasons for this are a bit difficult to discern, for they involve both noble motives and others less readily avowed. Generally speaking, Canadians wish to set a good example regarding the just accommodation of ethnic differences in the "global village." By virtue of their history, they are inclined to adopt an approach ("the mosaic") that differs slightly from that of their southern neighbors ("the melting pot"). In recent years, heavy immigration from "nontraditional sources" has been providing the raw materials for a social experiment to test the superiority of the Canadian approach. This immigration has tended to boost the price of urban land and reduce labor costs, which has added to its appeal, and that of multiculturalism, for important segments of the population. As well, the experiment satisfies (at least temporarily) the longstanding Canadian desire to be different from the United States—to be a distinct society with better customs and values. In 1971, multiculturalism appealed to a common tendency and desire to see Canada as a more "European" country than the United States—more progressive, socialist, tolerant, diverse, stylish, and sophisticated (as Trudeau was more "European" than President Nixon).

Multiculturalism appeals to the common understanding of freedom as choice. The architects of multiculturalism appear to have envisioned a society in which individuals would be free to be whatever they wanted to be culturally. They would not be expected to adhere to the customs and values of their own ethnic group, nor would they feel any pressure to conform to those of the majority. They would not suffer discrimination at the hands of the dominant group (or groups) because of their cultural traits (apart from language and education), nor would they be vulnerable to the antipathy of their ethnic compatriots for failing to adhere to their ancestral traditions. They would be free to practice their own culture or to deviate from it and practice that of

another group—or to "mix and match"—with only their own individual preferences to guide them. Ethnicity and culture, traditionally regarded as matters of fate, would become matters of choice.

Official multiculturalism, like the immigration policies that underlie it, is a long-range policy with delayed effects. Opinion about it may change as the public becomes more aware of the full scope of the diversity hidden under the term "culture" and the difficulties likely to be encountered trying to protect and enhance individual rights while proclaiming equal respect for all cultures.

One immediate practical effect of multiculturalism has been to complicate English-French relations. The principle that all ethnic groups are equal clashes with the principle that the two largest are; the French, as the weaker of the two large groups, detect in the proclaimed equality of all a demotion in status. For reasons already indicated, French Canadians tend to prefer a "bicultural" to a "multicultural" definition of Canada, though their opposition to the latter tends to be expressed cautiously, since the values or ideals of multiculturalism (diversity, peace, nondiscrimination, etc.) are embraced as wholeheartedly by French as by English Canadians.[5] Opposition tends to be expressed as support for Quebec's independence, or by asking why the English should not be on the same footing as, say, the Chinese in a multicultural Quebec, rather than the French enjoying equality with the Ukrainians and Jamaicans in a multicultural Canada?

On the English side of Canadian society, multiculturalism provides a new rationale for old complaints about Quebec's retrogressive and xenophobic tendencies, as became clear in the controversies surrounding the Meech Lake and Charlottetown accords. Ethnic Canadians tended to oppose Quebec's demands, but more importantly, their presence and official status meant that English Canadians generally could in good conscience, for the best of motives, oppose concessions that would have the effect of elevating French Canadians above other minorities. By what right, many asked, should French Canadians (or Quebec) be any more equal (or "distinct") than any other ethnic group (or province)? Some reasoned that the French-English problem, given its deep historical roots, must belong to a former age; new Canadians have no interest in these old quarrels, which will gradually fade away as the number of Canadians who are neither English nor French, and who have other priorities, increases.

The Native Peoples

The most interesting of the groups whose status is affected by official multiculturalism are the native peoples. They represent only a small fraction of the Canadian population, but their numbers have been growing rapidly in recent decades. A century ago there were only about

100,000 Canadian Indians, Métis (people of mixed Indian and European blood), and Inuit, and most of them lived in remote areas. Today there are considerably more than half a million, and many have migrated to the large cities of southern Canada. In the past their most serious problems were the threats to their health from malnutrition and the infectious diseases brought by Europeans; today they suffer from the destruction of their traditional ways of life and the violence, diseases, and accidents associated with alcohol abuse. Long marginalized because of the alleged inferiority of their "primitive" cultures, they now have powerful ammunition in their struggle for equality.

The native peoples differ from other oppressed or marginalized minorities because of their attachment to the land and their status as its first occupants. The territories rightly theirs have not, however, been clearly defined by treaties or legislation. Twenty years ago a complicated process for resolving conflicting land claims was begun; it will require at least another twenty years for its completion. Not just in the far north, but in southern Canada as well, huge tracts of land are in dispute, and it is no longer clear by what right the ancestors of today's "white" Canadians occupied the "New World" generations ago.[6]

One particularly ominous development has been growing uncertainty about the real boundaries of Quebec, should it attempt (following a victory by the separatist PQ) to declare its independence. At the time of the referendum in 1980, Canada's political class was agreed that "Quebec" meant the territory shown on the maps used in schools and sold in service stations. But arguments can be made both for expanding Quebec's territory greatly (for example, by incorporating Labrador) and for contracting it even more drastically (by returning it to its boundaries of 1898 or 1867). Quebec's old dispute with Newfoundland over Labrador is dormant. The issue has not been formally resolved, but serious claims are unlikely to be made in any foreseeable future. Contraction is another matter. In recent years, maps showing the province's old boundaries have received significant attention in the English-Canadian media. And because of Quebec's poor relations with the native peoples on its present territory, Quebec's separation from Canada might well trigger a process by which the native peoples in the North try to separate from the newly independent nation, in order to remain part of Canada. How the relevant governments—including the American—would react in such a situation is impossible to predict.

The Canadian Dilemma

For more than two hundred years, peaceful and reasonably friendly relations have been maintained between the English and the French in Canada, despite their traditional rivalry and their religious and linguistic differences. Only one reason for this modest success bears repetition.

The politically dominant group, the English, have always shrunk from "assimilation" as a way of dealing with the French. Many of them have no doubt hoped that "society" would eventually produce a uniformity of language and culture that "the state" dared not try to impose, but their leaders have always publicly recognized ethnic diversity.

The conditions for the accommodation of English and French have, of course, changed as the scale of economic life has grown, as new groups have appeared, as population has shifted from the countryside to the cities, as great corporations and bureaucracies have come into being, and as ideas of cultural equality and national liberation have gained adherents. The language policies adopted by the federal and Quebec governments in the 1960s and 1970s were responses to these changing conditions. Perhaps neither of them was the right response.[7] It is also possible, though more difficult, to argue that both were appropriate.

In 1971 Pierre Trudeau applied the putative lessons of Canada's English-French experience to the new problems posed by the growing numbers and political importance of "ethnic" Canadians. At first his "official multiculturalism" was just a slogan and a hope—a political gambit embodied in a patchwork of minor policies that had little practical effect. The relevant groups were European minorities whose cultures did not differ profoundly from the common culture of English and French Canadians, and whose numbers, actually and potentially, were small. Their religious differences, which paralleled those of English and French Canadians, had already been accommodated. The rhetoric of multiculturalism, extreme as it may have sounded, referred only to elusive and somewhat trivialized "identities" symbolized by differences in crafts, cuisine, and folkdancing.

It is another matter to employ the same rhetoric in a context of rapidly growing "Third World" minorities and an increasingly restive native population. Canadians have hardly begun the daunting business of thinking through what cultural equality might mean beyond the realm of the innocuously folkloric—with respect to serious questions surrounding dress, education, employment, family law (or customs), foreign policy, genital modifications, gerrymandering, jury selection, medical care, and public holidays, for example.

Many Canadians are now uneasy about the apparent implications of multiculturalism in this new context. They wonder if their country might have bitten off more than it can chew by encouraging immigration while abjuring assimilation. Would it not be wiser, they ask, to put more emphasis on common values and the *Canadian* identity? The difficulty is to spell out those common values that define the Canadian identity—without invoking multiculturalism. Canada has no founding documents that proclaim familiar, universally valid truths. The country has always had a more "ethnic" character than the United States. It began as a union of British and French, and it now seems committed

to searching for *its* universally valid truths where perhaps none are to be found, in the portentous but vague rhetoric of ethnic accommodation.

Perhaps future Canadians will look back on the past 20 or 30 years as the dawn of a new golden age of accommodation in which Canadians, despite their growing differences of race, religion, language, culture, and ancestry, learned to deal fairly and sensitively with each other as parts of a multicultural "just society." Canada's success so far has bred a certain complacency among most of her people. If we succeeded in the past, they ask, why not in the future? But the conditions that facilitated accommodation in the past have pretty much disappeared, and the country faces new and more complex challenges.

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Ethnic diversity no longer has a clear territorial pattern. Most of it is in the cities, where people of widely different backgrounds live in close proximity to one another. Racism is now more important than religious intolerance, though the occasions for the latter form of bigotry have certainly not disappeared. Federalism is no longer as clear a remedy for conflict as it used to be. Indeed, by giving power to local majorities, as against widely dispersed but sizeable minorities, federalism may just add to the problems of accommodation.

Trudeau's 1982 Charter of Rights has given ethnic accommodation a legal dimension, making it the business of judges. Perhaps it will benefit from their prestige, though it may suffer from their rhetoric of rights and their natural tendency to take a legalistic approach to political problems. "Whatever judges may lack in political astuteness or suppleness," one may surmise Trudeau thought, "they are better insulated than politicians from majority passions and they have more authority, so the compromises they impose are more likely to be accepted." It is a theory that will be tested with the passing of time.

Canada's multiethnic "brokerage" parties are in difficulty. They are challenged externally by new parties—such as Reform in the West and the Bloc Québécois in Quebec—that make no pretense of trying to bridge English-French (or any other important ethnic) differences. Internally, they have been weakened by a growing number of bitter "nomination fights": rivals for a party's nomination mobilize their own ethnic compatriots to pack the local nomination meeting, and the result is an unseemly clash of ethnic groups. Regardless of who wins, the party (as broker) loses. Tinkering with the electoral system in order to introduce an element of proportional representation might temporarily help to alleviate these difficulties, but in the long run it might only

aggravate them by encouraging the growth of small, ethnically exclusive parties.

The political scene is now changing in Canada. Campaigning has begun for the upcoming federal election. For the next several months, questions of leadership and the economy promise to dominate political discussion. Kim Campbell seems to be having some success restoring the Conservative party's popularity, but in Quebec, support for the Bloc Québécois remains strong. The election, while it will undoubtedly have a cathartic effect in the country, may produce a stalemate in Ottawa and (for the first time) a significant separatist presence in the House of Commons. The government of Quebec is also approaching the end of its mandate. Its premier, Robert Bourassa, is in poor health. His Liberal party, which has defended federalism in Quebec for the past 25 years, has nonetheless alienated much of its anglophone support, and it could split between nationalists and federalists in the attempt to choose his successor. Practical politicians must try to predict the unpredictable; academic observers can note the long-term decline in the commitment of Canadians to federalism and English-French brokerage, as other problems of ethnic accommodation have become more pressing.

NOTES

I wish to thank Stefan Dupré for his comments on an earlier version of this essay. Any remaining errors of fact or judgment are mine alone.

1. Three years earlier, Bill 22, a somewhat less stringent and provocative language law, had been passed by the previous Liberal government under Robert Bourassa. It made Quebec "officially unilingual" and required the children of immigrants to attend French schools.

2. If Canada's population grows as fast in the next 60 years as it has in the past 120, and if most of the increase is due to immigration, and if most of the immigrants come from Asia, then about half the Canadian population will be Asian by the middle of the next century. Current projections anticipate lower rates of population growth, but there is no good reason—given Canada's empty spaces and the power of capitalism to create jobs—why it should not be higher. The political support for increased immigration from any source tends to grow with the numbers from that source. Cf. Economic Council of Canada, *Economic and Social Impacts of Immigration* (Ottawa: Supply and Services Canada, 1991), and Daniel Stoffman, *Toward a More Realistic Immigration Policy for Canada* (Montreal: C. D. Howe Institute, 1993).

3. The following statistics have been compiled from the responses to the ethnic origin question in the 1991 census, which allowed multiple responses, including "Canadian." Statistics Canada, *Ethnic Origin*, 1991 Census of Canada, Catalogue 93-315 (Ottawa: Industry, Science and Technology Canada, 1993), Tables 1A and 2A. Respondents who gave multiple responses have been distributed among the simpler categories according to the relative frequencies of such responses.

4. Trudeau's short speech and a longer document which was tabled at the same time ("Federal Government's Response to Book IV of the Report of the Royal Commission on Bilingualism and Biculturalism") are in House of Commons, *Debates*, 1971, VIII, 8545-46 and 8580-85. Trudeau's speech is reprinted in Howard Palmer, ed. *Immigration and the Rise of Multiculturalism* (Toronto: Copp Clark, 1975), 135-37, and in H.D. Forbes, ed. *Canadian Political Thought* (Toronto: Oxford University Press, 1985), 349-51.

5. Quebec, like several of the other provinces, has an official multiculturalism of its own. The difficulty, as explained by a leading Canadian social scientist, is that multiculturalism involves "a rewriting of Canadian history," and such "symbolic innovations" generally require a reallocation of status among social groups. "This reallocation is itself a source of tension and conflict which needs to be managed if the eventual result is not to be the opposite of what is desired." Raymond Breton, "Multiculturalism and Canadian Nation-Building," in Alan Cairns and Cynthia Williams, eds., *The Politics of Gender, Ethnicity and Language*, Macdonald Commission Studies No. 34 (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1986), 61-2. Cf. Economic Council of Canada, *Economic and Social Impacts of Immigration*, 115 and 125: "The climate of public opinion in Quebec differs from that in the other provinces. . . . [The recognition that Quebec could not assimilate into its traditional culture all the immigrants it believes are needed for its economic development] did not come easily to the majority of Francophones in Quebec, many of whom believe that being a Quebecker requires support for, and affirmation of, the French culture."

6. A current dispute in the courts (*Delgamuukw v. The Queen*) involves ownership and jurisdiction over 58,000 square kilometers of northwestern British Columbia—an area three times greater than Massachusetts, almost twice as large as Belgium, or 50 percent greater than Switzerland. Algonquin Park, a tract of land more than twice the size of Rhode Island and just a couple of hours north of Toronto, is the focus of another dispute. Hundreds of smaller disputes, some involving slivers of land no bigger than Manhattan, are also being decided.

7. For a clear presentation of a sensible case against Trudeau's policy of official bilingualism, see Kenneth McRoberts, "Making Canada Bilingual: Illusions and Delusions of Federal Language Policy," in David P. Shugarman and Reg Whitaker, eds., *Federalism and Political Community: Essays in Honour of Donald Smiley* (Peterborough: Broadview Press, 1989).