



## Official Multiculturalism

*In an ideal civilization, nationality as we know it would no longer exist. National sovereignty must ultimately give way to a new unity with its bounds as wide as humanity itself.*

Vincent Massey, *Being Canadian*

Scholars can trace the roots of multiculturalism in Canada far into the past. Canada's aboriginal peoples could be called multicultural, for a deep and rich cultural diversity was a basic fact about their society for centuries or even millennia before the arrival of Europeans, even if theirs was never a single civic society with equality for all. Classical scholars would no doubt want to trace Canadian thinking about diversity back to the ancient Greeks, perhaps focussing on their geographers and anthropologists. Conventional historians might be inclined to go back no further than Samuel de Champlain and his hopes for New France. Still others would stop at Confederation and George Etienne Cartier's great speech on the value of diversity. A few might say that multiculturalism must have British roots, since Great Britain is (or was) a multinational kingdom and empire with excellent progressive credentials. But most would probably say that Pierre Elliott Trudeau was the father of contemporary Canadian multiculturalism, even if some would brush aside his paternity with unsentimental speculation about his low motives. He embraced multiculturalism, they might say, only as a political expedient, "a sop thrown to the ethnics" to dampen their opposition to official bilingualism, when it was becoming a threat,

before the 1972 federal election. For them, Trudeau's official multiculturalism was just a slight twist on the old ethnic politics of food fairs and folk dancing in church basements, a modest extension of the folkloric interest in "the Canadian mosaic" going back to the 1930s, and never meant to have any serious long-term consequences. When Trudeau fathered it, they could say, his mind must have been on other things.

A more balanced view of Canada's official multiculturalism recognizes that it was a key element of the national unity strategy of the government led by Trudeau. Today, it enjoys a prominence and acceptance in Canada that make it unique. It has grown almost imperceptibly out of Canada's liberal democratic political traditions, which are shared with many other countries, but also out of its own historical and geographical circumstances. Official multiculturalism and its closely related Quebec partner, interculturalism, now give Canada a modern national brand or identity, and they therefore provide a focus for Canadian national feelings. Much can be learned about multiculturalism in Canada by tracing the recent history of its official version, which may be familiar to many readers but worth reviewing nonetheless, to avoid the error that so many sophisticated commentators seem prone to fall into, of minimizing the moral and political significance of what Trudeau did.

#### A NATIONAL UNITY STRATEGY

In the early 1960s, Canada's perennial problem of national disunity was becoming more threatening than it had been at any time since the early nineteenth century. Back then, in the 1830s and 1840s, the conflict between Canada's British and French colonists had threatened to spark a disruptive war among the English-speaking inhabitants of North America, as it had in the 1770s. The origin of the problem lay in the French settlement of the St Lawrence valley and Canada's eastern coastline in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, followed by the secession of these territories to Great Britain after its victories in the Seven Years' War (1756–1763). Canada itself had of course begun eons earlier with the shifting of the earth's tectonic plates, the melting of the glaciers, the drying up of Lake Agassiz, and the migration of *Homo sapiens* from their African homeland to every corner of the globe, including Canada's high arctic. The story of modern Canada begins, however, with the Battle of the Plains of Abraham and the establishment of British colonial rule over the formerly French territories in northern North America. This meant the

mixing of British and French colonists and a serious practical problem of accommodation. Would the new colonies be culturally British (or American), that is, English in language, laws, and religion, or would they maintain their French (and Catholic) character under British sovereignty? Variations of this question have been at the heart of Canadian politics ever since.<sup>1</sup> Fifty years ago, a modernizing nationalist movement advocating political independence for Quebec was rapidly gaining support from the province's francophone youth and intellectuals. If successful, it would have meant, if not civil war, at least the disruption of the Canadian economy and the end of the dream of a modern Canadian nation stretching from sea to sea. Yet the government of the day seemed oblivious to the dangers they faced. They seemed to be sleepwalking into a political abyss.

The world was in the throes of decolonization. Great African nations such as Algeria, Kenya, Ghana, Nigeria, and Uganda were shaking off British or French imperial rule, as India and Pakistan had already shown was possible. Minor European powers like Belgium and Portugal were releasing their hold over vast colonial territories. In South Africa, the black nationalist movement that eventually secured the country's freedom was growing in strength and moral authority. The Sharpeville Massacre of 1960 had radicalized moderate leaders such as Nelson Mandela, who helped to found the armed wing of the African National Congress and then to coordinate terrorist strikes against military and government targets. The Chinese, having pushed their Western-backed "nationalists" from the mainland into their Taiwanese retreat (where they oppressed the native-born Taiwanese), were beginning to rival the Russians as a centre of military power and ideological authority, not just in their own region but in the world as a whole. Closer to home, Fidel Castro was showing that even a small Caribbean nation, with the help of a distant great power, could assert its independence against a powerful neighbour. In the United States, the revolt of its black citizens against their historic oppression was slowly gaining the unity and moral grandeur that it had under the inspiring leadership of Martin Luther King and that produced the Civil Rights Acts of 1964 and 1965.

Canadians were of course deeply affected by all these changes going on around them. Canada had emerged from the horrors of World War II as a significant military power, less damaged internally than it had been by the division between British and French during the First Great War and more confident of its right and ability to pursue an independent course in its foreign relations, as it showed by its stern disapproval of the British and

French invasion of the Suez Canal zone in 1956. Yet in the early 1960s, the government in Ottawa was dominated by ageing politicians with roots in the West and in the more somnolent parts of Ontario and the Maritimes, and it seemed to have no comprehension of what was happening in Quebec. It seemed unable to understand that for Quebec, decolonization could mean national independence.

Nationalism in Quebec goes back to the Conquest or even earlier, to the reaction of "les Canayens" to the shortcomings of French colonial officials and the heroic exploits of mythical figures such as Dollard des Ormeaux, who have been credited with saving the little French colony from savage massacres. National feeling waxed and waned throughout the nineteenth century and necessarily took a "separatist" turn after Confederation in 1867. But separatist inclinations were held in check not just by the skilful manoeuvring of leading federal politicians, such as John A. Macdonald and Wilfrid Laurier, but also by the prestige of Great Britain and the assumption that any open challenge to British authority could provoke a crushing military response. This realistic fear had abated and virtually disappeared by the early 1960s. Given the spirit of the times, the Québécois could reasonably anticipate a peaceful severance of their relations with their English-speaking compatriots, like that of the Norwegians from the Swedes in 1905. And why should they not seek such a severance and the recognition it would bring of their distinctive national identity, based on their own language and culture? Why should they wish to remain in the shadow of "les Anglais," junior partners in a sprawling, nineteenth-century political structure that had lost its old imperial rationale? The Americans next door might be alarmed at first by the collapse of their neighbour's house, but they would quickly appreciate the opportunities it presented for making some good deals, and the compact new nation that would emerge from the wreckage could count on European support, as was shown a few years later when the President of France, General de Gaulle, cried "Vive le Québec libre!" from the balcony of Montreal's city hall. In short, why not join the other new nations in shaking off the shackles of the old empires? If the Kenyans and the Ghanaians could manage it, surely the Québécois could as well.

The hard question facing Quebecers was whether they really wanted to be independent. The province's English community (about 15% of the total) clearly did not want it and would vote against it almost unanimously, when given the chance, a few years later. Recent immigrants from continental Europe—Italians, Greeks, Portuguese, Poles, and so on—were

more divided for a variety of reasons, but on the whole they too clearly favoured the maintenance of Canadian unity. (Naturally enough, they did not identify very strongly with the grievances of the French Canadians for they had grievances of their own against the French, some of them related to the restrictions being put on the admission of their children to English schools.) The French (or Québécois) were the most divided. Which of their historic allegiances would they embrace, their allegiance to a country of "deux nations," French and English, stretching from sea to sea or their allegiance to the historic "nation canadienne," in its homeland, Quebec, with its long history of struggle against the British and the Americans?

It was against this background, in response to the increasing polarization of opinion in Quebec on the question of national unity or national independence, that Pierre Elliott Trudeau stepped forward as the French Canadian champion of Canadian federalism. He had made his loathing of his compatriot's narrow nationalism clear in controversial publications going back a decade, and he had spelled out his more theoretical reasons for rejecting nationalism as a political principle in some widely read articles that will be discussed below. When he entered federal politics in 1965 as a Liberal candidate, he was showing his support for the approach to French-English accommodation that the new Liberal government led by Lester Pearson was beginning to implement. At the heart of that policy was recognition of the French as one of Canada's two founding nations or cultures, British and French, on a footing of equality. Pearson's overarching policy required not just the new national flag that he had proposed in 1963 and that had been adopted (after prolonged, acrimonious debate) in 1965, but also a new language policy that would broaden the guarantees of linguistic equality that had been part of Canadian politics since the 1840s. These guarantees had become part of the constitution of the wider Canadian confederation when it was created by the British North America Act of 1867. Specifically, Section 133 of the BNA Act had stipulated that both French and English could be used in the legislatures and the courts of Canada and Quebec and that the Acts of both governments would be published in both languages. Pearson understood that these narrow guarantees from a century earlier were no longer of much practical significance, given the growth of Canada's population, the expansion of the federal government, and the ongoing changes in transportation and communication that were transforming Canadian society. In the future, French Canadians would have to feel more at home throughout Canada. Venturing outside their own province, they should

not feel (as they often did) that they were visiting a foreign country (and one, moreover, with an unpleasant superiority complex) nor should the graduates of Quebec's expanding universities feel shut out of attractive careers in the growing federal bureaucracy, just because of their difficulties with English. One of Pearson's first acts as Prime Minister in 1963 had been to appoint a Royal Commission on Bilingualism and Biculturalism (B & B Commission) to study the situation and to recommend policies that would ensure greater equality between Canada's two linguistic communities or "founding races." By 1965, more detailed and comprehensive guarantees of the equality of English and French were beginning to be implemented in the federal bureaucracy, and in 1969, after Pearson had retired and Trudeau had become Prime Minister, the major recommendations of the B & B Commission were the basis for an Official Languages Act that still defines the main elements of Canada's official bilingualism. Trudeau's unwavering defence of this Act against serious and sometime raucous opposition showed his commitment to Canadian unity on the basis of equality between French and English, not just in Ottawa but everywhere in Canada. He struck out on his own, however, in 1971, in his response to some further recommendations of the B & B Commission, which initiated Canada's policy of official multiculturalism.

#### MULTICULTURALISM BECOMES OFFICIAL

Before 1971, multiculturalism was a protest against the central Canadian and Anglocentric perspective exemplified by my presentation so far of the Canadian "national unity" problem. From that perspective, the problem was the growing support among the Québécois for sovereignty or—with a qualification that just made it more menacing—the sovereignty-association proposed in 1968 by René Lévesque and the Parti Québécois. How could the separatists be defeated and national unity maintained? How could French Canadians be persuaded to embrace Canadian federalism? The solution, in outline, was to improve their status within the country by changing its symbols, enhancing its services in French, and increasing the opportunities for francophones in its institutions. But this solution aggravated another problem, for the French were not the only group being oppressed symbolically, linguistically, and economically by English-speaking Canadians of British ancestry: other groups had similar grievances. The French wheel might squeak the loudest, but did it deserve all the grease?

The relevant diversity (and opportunities for oppression) went back to the period before World War I, when much of Western Canada was being settled by migrants from continental Europe. For more than a generation after Confederation, Canada was still essentially a colony of Great Britain in its understanding of itself, and for a long time it recruited immigrants almost exclusively from the British Isles—and lost at least as many emigrants to the United States, during much of this period, as it gained immigrants from elsewhere. A new policy was adopted in 1896, when Wilfrid Laurier became Prime Minister and Clifford Sifton became his Minister of the Interior. Under Sifton's direction, despite some local opposition, vigorous and successful efforts were made to recruit new settlers from the vast agricultural lands of central and eastern Europe ruled by the old Russian, German, and Austro-Hungarian empires. The most important attraction of Canada for these "men in sheepskin coats" was the promise of homesteads on the prairies, and many of them clustered in compact settlements scattered over the plains. One of the key terms associated with Canadian multiculturalism, "the mosaic," was first used in the 1920s and 1930s to describe the resulting patchwork of ethnically and religiously distinct towns and surrounding areas in Manitoba, Saskatchewan, and Alberta.<sup>2</sup> The isolation of these communities made it relatively easy for them to maintain their cultural distinctiveness, while their reliance on agriculture, in the most northerly band of agricultural land on the Great Plains, kept them relatively poor. For a long time, their political influence, especially their involvement in federal politics, was negligible. But by 1963, when the B & B Commission was appointed "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, 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," the non-British and non-French "other ethnic groups" constituted an important "third force," and it was no longer willing to accept the subordinate status in Canada implied by these terms of reference.

The principal spokesman for their opposition to "bilingualism and biculturalism" was Paul Yuzyk, a professor of Slavic history from the University of Manitoba. He had been appointed to the Senate in 1963, the first Senator of Ukrainian origin, by John Diefenbaker. In his maiden speech a year later, Senator Yuzyk spelled out the major reasons for

rejecting a simply dualistic view of Canada.<sup>3</sup> He endorsed the aim of “ensuring full equality of rights for all Canadian citizens, wherever they were born,” but he pointed out that Canada was no longer in fact a nation of only *two* peoples, the British and the French. They might be “senior partners” (56) deserving some special consideration, he allowed, but since Confederation, the “complexion” of the country had changed “from paramountly British-French, with a substratum of Indian and Eskimo cultures, to multicultural, with the immigration of many European and some Asiatic peoples” (51). This “third element” was 26% of the total population, according to the latest census, and it was especially important—roughly half of the total—in the three prairie provinces, where the “other ethnic groups” could claim to be “founding races”—“bringing civilization to vast areas hitherto uninhabited”—with as much justification as the British and the French (52). So the word “bicultural” was a misnomer, Senator Yuzyk declared. “In reality Canada never was bicultural; the Indians and Eskimos have been with us throughout our history; the British group is multicultural—English, Scots, Irish, Welsh; and with the settling of other ethnic groups, which now make up almost one-third of the population, Canada has become multicultural in fact” (54). Nor did “biculturalism” properly express the real aspirations of most Canadians, the Senator declared, since it would not be consistent with full democracy and the equality of all citizens. “It is my belief that our citizens desire an all-embracing Canadian identity which will include all the elements of our population and emphasize unity” (54). Such unity, he argued, need not be threatened by diversity, for the diversity of cultures could contribute to the development of a richer “general Canadian culture” (55) based on “the principle of Confederation,” namely, “the unique principle of unity in continuing diversity,” which was originally applied only in the political sphere, but which could now be extended to the cultural sphere. Like the English and the French, the other cultural groups should be accorded the status of “co-partners” with “the right to perpetuate their mother tongues and cultures” through appropriate instruction in schools and universities. Textbooks should recognize the contributions of all the elements of the Canadian population; radio and television broadcasting should be used to promote their harmony; commemorative stamps should be issued to honour their most outstanding members; and the discriminatory attitudes blocking the appointment of their most talented individuals to high office should be removed. Going further, Senator Yuzyk said that Canada’s success in developing its unique principle of “unity in continuing diversity”



could serve as a precedent or model for other states that were facing similar problems of diversity. "It will be Canada's contribution to the world," he declared. "In Canada we have the world in miniature. World peace and order could be achieved if the principles of unity in continuing diversity, brotherhood, compromise and the recognition of the freedom and dignity of individuals and nations are honestly applied" (57). As "a Christian and democratic nation," based upon belief in "the Fatherhood of God" and "the brotherhood of man," Canadians are also committed to "the brotherhood of peoples and nations," Senator Yuzyk concluded.

His was a dissenting voice, however, even though he was appealing to principles and aspirations that were widely held by Canadians at large as well as by their politicians, editorialists, and academics.<sup>4</sup> Some of his suggestions would later be endorsed by the B & B Commission, when it turned its attention to "the cultural contribution of the other ethnic groups." But the burning question in 1964 was how to accommodate the French in Quebec. In a "Preliminary Report" issued in 1965, the commissioners warned that "Canada, without being fully conscious of the fact, is passing through the greatest crisis in its history." The following year, the Liberal government of Jean Lesage was voted out of office in Quebec and the more nationalist Union Nationale returned to power under the leadership of Daniel Johnson, proclaiming "égalité ou indépendance." In 1967, there was General de Gaulle's cry of "Vive le Québec libre!" and the split within the Liberal party of Quebec that produced the Mouvement Souveraineté-Association, the first of the independence movements with a credible, established leader, René Lévesque, and the potential to make "separatism" part of the political mainstream, as was shown a year later with the founding of the Parti Québécois. Suddenly there was the possibility of a separatist government in Quebec in the foreseeable future. Would Pierre Trudeau—who had become Prime Minister of Canada in 1968 with support from some who counted on him to "put Quebec in its place"—preside over the dissolution of the country?

As Minister of Justice, the cabinet position he had been given by Pearson in 1967, Trudeau had forcefully opposed the growing clamour for changes in the constitution that would give Quebec a "special status" with greater autonomy. He proposed instead an entrenched bill of rights that would bind both levels of government. Many Canadians first became aware of his surprisingly hard line on the question of national unity when he coolly and clearly (and courageously) confronted the Premier of Quebec, Daniel Johnson, in a televised federal-provincial constitutional

conference in February 1968. In April, he won the leadership of the Liberal party and became Prime Minister after a whirlwind leadership campaign and an astonishing victory over more cautious and conventional candidates with much longer histories and deeper roots in the party. In the general election of June 25, 1968, a day after facing down rock- and bottle-throwing separatist demonstrators at the St-Jean Baptiste day parade in Montreal, he won the first Liberal majority since 1953 and a mandate to defend Canadian unity while pursuing his vision of a "Just Society." This famous slogan faded in appeal during his early years as Prime Minister, however, for little could be done to realize the expectations it had raised, and the problem of national unity was becoming more and more acute and commanding greater and greater attention, particularly after the kidnapping of a British diplomat, James Cross, and the murder of a Quebec cabinet minister, Pierre Laporte, by members of the FLQ (the Front de Libération du Québec, imitating the Algerian FLN) in October, 1970.

For several years, these dramatic events overshadowed the questions raised by Canada's multicultural diversity. But after the fourth volume of the final report of the B & B Commission, *The Cultural Contribution of the Other Ethnic Groups*, was published in April 1970, they could no longer be ignored. The volume offered a wealth of information about Canada's ethnic diversity and made 16 rather modest recommendations. None of these recommendations were very controversial, but they required a formal response from the federal government. After a delay of 18 months, on October 8, 1971, Trudeau made a carefully prepared statement in the House of Commons that marks the beginning of Canada's official multiculturalism.<sup>5</sup>

The government, Trudeau said, had accepted all of the commission's recommendations regarding matters within the federal domain, and it urged the provincial governments and universities to accept those addressed to them, because it shared the view of the commission that Canada's rich tradition of cultural diversity is a heritage to treasure, not a weakness to be overcome by policies of assimilation. Indeed, it would be wrong, Trudeau said, for the government to favour the English and French cultures while neglecting or undermining other cultures, for Canada is not a nation in the ethnic or cultural sense. "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" (8545). Moreover,

Trudeau said, a meaningful national unity must be based upon secure personal identities, for they provide the foundations from which respect for others can develop and "discriminatory attitudes and cultural jealousies" can be broken down. "A policy of multiculturalism within a bilingual framework commends itself to the government as most suitable means of assuring the cultural freedom of Canadians," Trudeau concluded (8545).

What would this new formula, which went well beyond the Royal Commission's recommendations, mean in practice? Basically, he explained, it would mean "the conscious support of individual freedom of choice" (8546). Individuals must be free to be themselves, no matter whether that would mean maintaining their allegiance to a minority culture or adhering to that of the majority or perhaps practising some form of cultural mixing and matching: individuals must be free to make their own cultural choices. But the individual's freedom of choice could not itself be left to chance, that is, to the uncoordinated results of the free choices of all other individuals, for then it might lead to the erosion of the cultural diversity that made meaningful choices possible for the individual. In a supplementary document that Trudeau tabled, the threat was attributed to the emergence of a mass society "in which mass produced culture and entertainment and large impersonal institutions threaten to denature and depersonalize man" (8580). Much contemporary social unrest, the document suggests, can be traced to this development, for mass society denies individuals the sense of belonging they need. To be sure, ethnic groups are not the only means by which this need can be satisfied, but ethnic pluralism can counter the homogenization and depersonalization of mass society, Trudeau suggested. "Vibrant ethnic groups can give Canadians of the second, third, and subsequent generations a feeling that they are connected with tradition and with human experience in various parts of the world and different periods of time" (8580). In short, as Trudeau said in his parliamentary statement, the government accepted the contention of the minority cultural communities, endorsed by the B & B Commission, that they too, like the English and the French, "are essential elements in Canada and deserve government assistance in order to contribute to regional and national life in ways that derive from their heritage yet are distinctively Canadian" (8545-8546).

Trudeau then very briefly indicated four ways in which the government intended to assist minority cultural communities. First, it would offer some financial support to "all Canadian cultural groups that have demonstrated a desire and effort to continue to develop a capacity to grow and contribute to Canada, and a clear need for assistance, the small and weak

groups no less than the strong and highly organized." Second, it would help those who were exposed to discrimination because of their cultural characteristics "to overcome cultural barriers to full participation in Canadian society." Third, it would promote "creative encounters and interchange among all Canadian cultural groups in the interest of national unity." Finally, it would assist "immigrants to acquire at least one of Canada's official languages in order to become full participants in Canadian society" (8546). Only the first of these measures, financial support for minority cultural groups, had any "preservative" potential with respect to cultural diversity. The second and third forms of assistance were evidently intended to promote social integration and possible cultural fusion or even assimilation, while the fourth form of support, official language instruction, offered a choice of linguistic assimilations and was justified by the observation that "the individual's freedom would be hampered if he were locked for life within a particular cultural compartment by the accident of birth or language" (8545).

In the supplementary document that Trudeau tabled, two common misconceptions were addressed. The first was the idea that ethnic loyalties detract from wider loyalties to community and country, as if there were a fixed fund of loyalty to be distributed between claimants rather than a capacity to identify with others that grows as people become more secure in their own identities. "Canadian identity will not be undermined by multiculturalism," the document declares. "Indeed, we believe that cultural pluralism is the very essence of Canadian identity. Every ethnic group has the right to preserve and develop its own culture and values within the Canadian context. To say we have two official languages is not to say that we have two official cultures, and no particular culture is more 'official' than another" (8580-8581).

The second misconception, according to the tabled document, was the common assumption that language and culture are interdependent—an assumption suggested indeed by the name and terms of reference of the B & B Commission. Any serious multiculturalism, one might conclude, would necessarily entail some form of multilingualism, to the possible detriment of official bilingualism. The document confronts this problem head-on, declaring that there is a distinction between language and culture that needs to be better defined, because "biculturalism does not properly describe our society; multiculturalism is more accurate" (8581). The Official Languages Act does not restrict the use of other languages, it points out, nor should the recognition of these other languages weaken

the position of Canada's two official languages, which the government was committed to supporting.<sup>6</sup> These claims will cease to be controversial, the document concludes, once the needed clarification of the distinction between language and culture has been worked out.

The distinction in question has never been worked out, despite the passage of almost 50 years since Trudeau's statement in Parliament, and perhaps it can never be worked out in a generally satisfactory way. Consequently, the relation between multiculturalism and bilingualism, both equally "official," remains a point of tension.

Responsibility for implementing the new policy was given to the Citizenship Branch of the Secretary of State, an agency that had been established a generation earlier, during World War II, to develop programmes promoting the social (and military) integration of minority ethnic groups by supporting some of their strictly "cultural" activities. In the 1970s and later, the federal government spent much more—at a minimum, several times more—promoting bilingualism than it spent on multiculturalism, which has always been a minuscule item in federal budgets.<sup>7</sup> Almost two decades passed before the new national formula ("multiculturalism within a bilingual framework") and the aspirations associated with it became part of Canadian statute law, with the passage in 1985 of a Multiculturalism Act that created some well-defined but very limited obligations.<sup>8</sup> From 1991 to 1993, multiculturalism had its own cabinet minister and ministry; after 1993, it was housed in the superministry of Canadian Heritage, whose larger responsibilities included bilingualism and amateur sport and fitness; in 2008, it was put under the umbrella of Citizenship and Immigration Canada (more recently called Immigration, Refugees and Citizenship Canada); and since 2015, it has again been the responsibility of the Department of Canadian Heritage.

### EARLY REACTIONS

Trudeau's 1971 statement in Parliament was formally a positive official response to the recommendations of the Royal Commission on Bilingualism and Biculturalism, which had been appointed eight years earlier and which had submitted the final volume of its final report 18 months earlier. In fact, Trudeau's statement was in effect a rejection of the commission's terms of reference and a denial of the conception of Canadian dualism that it had been appointed to promote. The immediate and virtually unanimous reaction in Quebec was cautiously negative. The following

month, Robert Bourassa, the Premier of Quebec, sent Trudeau a letter, carefully spelling out his reservations about the new policy, and it was soon followed by a number of equally unfavourable responses from leading editorialists and academics.<sup>9</sup> From a Quebec perspective, multiculturalism was (and remains) the antithesis of dualism, symbolizing a rejection of the “national” aspirations of the Québécois and indeed of francophones elsewhere in Canada, who were henceforth to enjoy no special status, becoming, from the standpoint of “culture,” just another minority like all the others. The resulting distaste for “multiculturalism” in Quebec, together with Quebec’s need for something similar, since it too, like the rest of Canada, is a culturally plural liberal society receiving immigrants from every part of the world, eventually resulted in its own policies for immigrant reception and integration being called “interculturalism,” of which more will be said later.

In the rest of Canada, Trudeau’s statement attracted less attention, and while the response was generally more positive than in Quebec, it was also more cynical.<sup>10</sup> The new policy was just a ruse to win votes for a few Liberal candidates in an upcoming federal election, many suspected. Some Liberal politicians and their “rainmakers,” whose only real interest was holding on to power and whose main problem at the time was the growing separatist movement in Quebec, thought that they could shore up their support in the Western provinces by “throwing a sop to the ethnics.” A “sophisticated” account of multiculturalism as nothing more than smoke and mirrors—“symbolic politics,” lacking any real substance—became popular. Official multiculturalism was really just “a slush fund to buy ethnic votes,” according to one such cynic.<sup>11</sup>

These early reactions to official multiculturalism reveal a still common tendency to define it narrowly and to minimize its significance. Seen from a greater distance and in a clearer light, however, the particular circumstances of its origins fade from view and its larger overall purpose can be more clearly discerned. The multiculturalism of the 1970s designed to appeal to established European-origin minorities gave way in the early 1980s to a new emphasis on combating racism, as the problems presented by Canada’s more recent immigrants from “non-traditional sources” became more worrisome than those associated with its older, largely assimilated immigrant communities. In the early 1990s, the emphasis in official statements shifted again, in the wake of the failure of the Meech Lake Accord and the revival of separatist forces in Quebec. In 1997, a “strategic review” of multicultural programmes gave them, as their primary

responsibility, the uncontroversial goal of fostering good citizenship. The reset button was pressed again following the federal election of 2006, which returned the Conservative party to power with a strong desire to impose its political priorities—citizenship and integration over rights and diversity—on a bureaucracy with its own sense of mission. Some may be tempted to conclude that official multiculturalism is now just a relic of the 1970s. In a larger sense, however, multiculturalism has steadily grown in importance as a new definition of the Canadian identity—“the very essence of the Canadian identity”—not because of the actions of a few bureaucrats charged with spending paltry sums to enhance the status of a few favoured ethnic groups or to encourage Canadians to vote and to recycle, but because of the changes in Canada’s population and its system of government that can be associated with Trudeau’s landmark statement in 1971.<sup>12</sup>

### NOTES

1. For an overview of Canada’s history highlighting the elements important for an understanding of multiculturalism, see Peter Russell, *Canada’s Odyssey: A Country Based on Incomplete Conquests* (University of Toronto Press, 2017). One chapter of the book (Chap. 13) deals with the origins and development of multiculturalism as an official policy.
2. See Victoria Hayward, *Romantic Canada* (Toronto: Macmillan, 1922), a traveller’s account with photographs, for an early description of the prairie cultural patchwork. The mosaic metaphor was popularized by John Murray Gibbons, *The Canadian Mosaic: The Making of a Northern Nation* (Toronto: McClelland & Stewart, 1938), a large and expensively produced volume celebrating the cultural diversity of the Canadian population, with separate chapters devoted to extolling the histories and cultural achievements of 25 different national-origin groups in Canada, all of them European. Gibbons presents Canada as a tolerant and harmonious “sanctuary for displaced Europeans.” The presence of some more exotic migrants (Armenians, Lebanese, Chinese, Indians, Japanese, etc.) is noted from time to time, but they were too small to qualify as tiles in the mosaic, nor did the native peoples on their reserves qualify.
3. The speech is in Senate of Canada, *Debates*, 1964–1965, pp. 50–58. The speech was published separately, *Senator Yuzyk’s Maiden Speech* (Winnipeg: Ukrainian Voice, 1964), and widely circulated.
4. Perhaps the most noteworthy of the early advocates of Canadian cultural diversity was Watson Kirkconnell, whose prodigious knowledge of foreign languages and literatures made him an ideal cultural ambassador,

but whose cosmopolitanism was shadowed by his Christian evangelism and his tendency to side with some nationalities (e.g., Poles and Ukrainians) in their grievances against others (e.g., Germans and Russians). The first clear, comprehensive, egalitarian cosmopolitan sketch of a multicultural identity for Canada that I know of is Roy A. Matthews, "Canada, 'The International Nation'," *Queen's Quarterly*, 72 (Autumn 1965), 499–523. This remarkable article proposes "an exciting experiment" that would lead others "to look to Canada as an inspiration in the search for universal peace and human brotherhood." The heart of the experiment, the author explains, would be finding "a way to broaden and 'modernize' the concept of bilingualism and biculturalism, and of the political system that reflects our national diversity, by making Canada into an international state in which English and French would be the principal elements in a many-faceted structure embodying something of *all* languages and cultures" (523 and 513, emphasis in the original). Matthews does not use the word "multiculturalism" and does not refer to either Senator Yuzyk or Pierre Trudeau, but he was presumably aware of the background to his proposal.

5. Trudeau's statement and the explanatory document he tabled at that time are in House of Commons, *Debates* (3rd Session, 28th Parliament), VIII, 8545–8546 and 8580–8585.
6. The problem was apparent more than 50 years ago to Roy Matthews (see above), who suggested "making Canada into an international state in which English and French would be the principal elements in a many-faceted structure embodying something of *all* languages and cultures" (513). This theoretical ideal would require, he thought, the recognition of "a few major languages ... in the federal government, and in such useful places as the railways, airlines and so on" (514). In Volume I of the final report of the Royal Commission on Bilingualism and Biculturalism, *The Official Languages* (Ottawa, 1967), there is a lengthy Separate Statement (pp. 155–169), written by one of the commissioners, J. B. Rudnyckyj, disputing the assumption that "bilingualism" must mean English and French bilingualism and recommending official financial and other support for "regional" minority languages such as Ukrainian.
7. Federal spending on bilingualism and multiculturalism is very hard to determine, for the amounts shown for these programmes in the public accounts include only some unknown fractions of the total costs, which are spread across many of the departments of government and appear under many different headings. (A cursory examination of the 2018 federal budgetary documents reveals the existence of a Public Service Centre for Diversity, Inclusion and Wellness under the Treasury Board of Canada Secretariat and a Centre for Gender, Diversity and Inclusion



Statistics under Statistics Canada.) But both official bilingualism and official multiculturalism are officially the responsibility of the Department of Canadian Heritage, and the figures shown for it in the Public Accounts of Canada for 2018 provide a good indication of relative magnitudes. The amount shown for “Official Languages” is CAN\$ 364.3M; the comparable amount for “Attachment to Canada” (the closest approximation to “multiculturalism” in the current terminology) is CAN\$ 196.6M. These numbers, which may seem large at first glance, are only tiny fractions of total federal spending, which was estimated for 2018 to be about CAN\$ 338.5B. Thus, “Attachment” accounted for only about 0.06% of total federal spending (or 6¢ out of every \$100.00) in 2018, and it was a small fraction (5%) even of the total spending of the Department of Canadian Heritage. The Department’s grants for “community based initiatives” in support of multiculturalism, which sometimes attract a lot of negative attention in the press (as money wasted buying “ethnic votes”), amount to about CAN\$ 5M annually or about 0.0015% of federal spending (or about 1½¢ out of every \$1000). In short, no reasonable person will think that the major issues raised by official multiculturalism have to do with its direct dollar costs. For a detailed analysis of the grants made to community groups in the name of multiculturalism between 1983 and 2002, see Marie McAndrew et al., “From Heritage Languages to Institutional Change: An Analysis of the Nature of Organizations and Projects Funded by the Canadian Multiculturalism Program (1983–2002),” *Canadian Ethnic Studies*, 40:3 (2008), 149–169. For a less detailed analysis of programmes and their costs during the early years of both bilingualism and multiculturalism, see Leslie A. Pal, *Interests of State: The Politics of Language, Multiculturalism, and Feminism in Canada* (McGill-Queen’s University Press, 1993). Finally, it is worth noting that total *corporate* spending on diversity training, although it would be extremely hard to determine, probably dwarfs the spending by all governments, federal, provincial, and municipal, on multiculturalism.

8. Canadian Multiculturalism Act (R.S.C., 1985, c. 24 (4th Supp.), assented to July 21, 1988). The Act’s one specific requirement is that the responsible minister report annually to Parliament on the operation of the Act for the previous fiscal year. Otherwise the obligations it imposes are much less clear, for example, Sec. 5(1)(e): “encourage the preservation, enhancement, sharing and evolving expression of the multicultural heritage of Canada,” and Sec. 5(1)(h): “provide support to individuals, groups or organizations for the purpose of preserving, enhancing and promoting multiculturalism in Canada.” How exactly the responsible officials are to

do this, within the modest budgets they are given, is left for them to decide. Cf. Russell, *Canada's Odyssey*, 343: "The Canadian Multiculturalism Act was passed in July 1988 under the Mulroney government. Multiculturalism does not rate a line in Brian Mulroney's voluminous 1100-word memoir. And no wonder! The Act is basically a little piece of rah-rah symbolism. It does not require anyone to do anything or prohibit anyone from doing anything, nor does it authorize funding for any specific program or group." The book in question is a 1121-page memoir. Russell's broader and more disputable point is that "as concrete public policy ... there is very little to Canada's policy of multiculturalism," which raises a question about the exact meaning of "concrete."

9. For Bourassa's letter to Trudeau, see *Immigration and the Rise of Multiculturalism*, ed. Howard Palmer (Toronto: Copp Clark, 1975), 151-152. See also Kenneth McRoberts, *Misconceiving Canada: The Struggle for National Unity* (Toronto: Oxford University Press, 1997), 129-130. This exceptionally good book provides the most thorough, detailed, and revealing analysis of language and cultural politics in Canada from Confederation to the time of its publication.
10. The most remarkable example of the relative indifference to multiculturalism in English Canada was Trudeau's reception at the annual congress of Ukrainian Canadian associations, the day after his long-awaited statement in Parliament. On October 9, 1971, having flown the previous day from Ottawa to Winnipeg, he addressed the assembled delegates, probably expecting them to greet him with lusty applause for having just done what the leaders of the Ukrainian community such as Senator Yuzyk had been demanding for years. Newspaper reports of the occasion suggest, however, that his audience had already moved on to some fresh concerns, specifically, the meeting that Trudeau was scheduled to have with the Soviet leader, Leonid Brezhnev, the following month. The delegates seemed to have been more interested in pressing him to press Brezhnev to free the Ukrainians in Ukraine than in applauding him for having just enhanced their freedom in Canada.
11. Richard Gwyn, *The Northern Magus* (Toronto: McClelland & Stewart, 1980), 139. Fifteen years later, Gwyn published a more insightful book, *Nationalism without Walls: The Unbearable Lightness of Being Canadian* (Toronto: McClelland & Stewart, 1995), but because of its neglect of multiculturalism, the book as a whole does not live up to the promise of its title.
12. As noted earlier, "policy" with respect to multiculturalism has a variety of meanings and extends far beyond the 16 formal recommendations of the B & B Commission and the four points highlighted in Trudeau's 1971 statement. Cf. Keith Banting and Will Kymlicka, "Canadian Multiculturalism:



Global Anxieties and Local Debates,” *British Journal of Canadian Studies*, 23:1 (2010), 52: “Multiculturalism policies have permeated Canadian public life, with ripple effects far removed from their original home in one branch of the federal government. The 1971 federal statement on multiculturalism has initiated a long march through institutions at all levels of Canadian society.”