

“It’s All About War: Canadian Opinion and the Canadian Approach to International Relations, 1935-1939.”

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A thesis submitted in conformity with the requirements
For the degree of Doctor of Philosophy
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University of Toronto

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ABSTRACT

“It’s All About War: Canadian Opinion and the Canadian Approach to International Relations, 1935-1939.”

Canadians in the 1930s did not appear eager to focus on foreign affairs. The social and economic difficulties caused by the dislocation of the Great Depression meant that international developments often seemed remote and irrelevant. However, despite this focus on domestic issues, many Canadians were concerned with the trend of international events. As a result, the debate regarding the appropriate Canadian response remained an ongoing, if underlying, factor. In addition, the political issues raised by Canadian foreign policy, particularly through the Canadian involvement in the British Commonwealth and the League of Nations, meant the issue could not simply be ignored.

During the later part of the decade, as the possibility of international conflict became ever more likely, increasing numbers of Canadians turned their attention to Canada’s international role. They also turned their attention to what this debate meant in terms of the Canadian sense of identity. These individuals were concerned as well with the response of Canadian public opinion to involvement overseas. This question, of the nature and susceptibility of Canadian public opinion to attempts to direct it, remains an intriguing one. The nature of this response remained open to question, and was the subject of significant debate among Canadian intellectuals, politicians and public figures. In response, a number of individuals and groups, including members of the Canadian press, attempted to influence Canadian public opinion. Many also pressured the Canadian

government, led by William Lyon Mackenzie King's administration, to play a more active role in shaping public opinion. Canadian intellectuals, for instance, influenced by contemporary writings on public opinion, seemed convinced of their natural role as 'shapers' of public opinion, particularly in a time of domestic and international crisis. These assumptions, and the ways in which Canadian public opinion both responded to, and rejected these attempts at direction, provide an interesting window into the question of public opinion, particularly in regards to international events. The debate regarding the Canadian response to the crises of the late 1930s can thus aid in gaining a greater appreciation of how public opinion shifts in response to outside challenges and the attempts to influence its course.

Introduction: The Royal Tour of 1939 and the Canadian Sense of National Identity

The anticipation simmered just below the surface on a fresh May morning in 1939 in Quebec City. Crowds of Quebecers, leavened by a sprinkling of notables from elsewhere in Canada, focused their attention on the quay on the St. Lawrence. In the distance an ocean liner, the *Empress of Australia*, was heaving into sight. This was by itself nothing special: ocean liners were not strangers to the port; but today the *Empress* was carrying special guests. Royalty was coming to town, and not just any royalty – for Quebec had hosted princes and princesses as far back as the 1790s, but the reigning monarch of the British Empire, George VI, and his consort, Queen Elizabeth. This was a first – no reigning British king or queen had ever visited Canada.

The Royal Tour of 1939, the first visit of the reigning sovereign of the British Empire to the ‘senior’ dominion of Canada,¹ had been the focus of in-depth planning on the part of the Canadian government, and of the Canadian people, since the idea of the tour had been advanced by Mackenzie King at the Imperial Conference of 1937. As the yacht ferrying the king and queen made its way -- majestically, in the eyes of the crowd -- from the *Empress* to the quay, Quebec’s citizens would be the first, as the Canadian Press reported, to have the honour of receiving Canada’s king and queen – and the empire’s too, of course. The Canadian press could think of nothing better than to reprint the words of the London *Times*, which concluded that while ‘It comes to them in a sense by geographical accident, but no province of the dominion can show better title than the

¹ Canada’s position as the ‘senior’ dominion had earned it the right, in the views of many Canadian newspapers, of the first visit by the new King. *The Globe*, ‘The Favoured Dominion.’ May 17 1939, 6

right of seniority which belongs to the French-Canadians of Quebec.’² Certainly the crowds that swarmed the Quebec docks seemed to justify that faith.

Ottawa’s *Le Droit* printed a Canadian-derived description of the scene. ‘Sur les hauteurs, 350 pieds au-dessus du niveau de St. Laurent, qui valurent à Québec le nom de ‘Gibraltar de l’Amérique’, les foules se sont massées soit sur le terrasse Dufferin, soit sur les plaines d’Abraham.’³ This report, from CP, did not limit itself to generic descriptions of the crowds and the scene, however. It attempted to link its readers with the crowds on the spot. ‘Parmi les premiers arrivés dans les environs de l’immense hangar, afin de pouvoir assister de près aux cérémonies, se trouvent une famille canadienne-française de Jonquière, village près de Chicoutimi; le père, la mère et les enfants ont voyagé en automobile toute la nuit pour arriver à temps.’⁴

Le Droit had also sent its own special correspondent. Like the CP reporter, he focused mainly on the description of the scene and human interest stories.

Lorsque le paquebot royal s’avance majestueusement en vue de l’Anse au Foulon; la foule était massée [dans] un rang épais tout le long du promontoire qui domine la rive. Les arbres encore dégarnis laissaient apercevoir partout au flanc du coteau de véritable grappe humaine l’aspect mouvant et multicolore. Le spectacle était merveilleux à contempler du quai maritime de l’Anse au Foulon. Toute cette foule s’agita fiévreusement lorsque parue sur le pont, avant même que le paquebot ne fait accosté le couple royale.⁵

The Canadian welcome was enthusiastic and, better, clearly apparent.

On estime à cent mille personnes au moins la foule groupée sur les Plaines au passage de Leurs Majestés. Cette foule était particulièrement compacte autour de la terrasse Grey où le Roi et la Reine doivent recevoir cet après-midi les hommages de vingt-cinq enfants, et dans le voisinage du musée provincial. Des

² The *Times* article concluded that ‘The Canadians will see in George VI the very incarnation of those ideals which have made it possible for two nationalities to dwell...within the confines of a harmonious state.’ *Winnipeg Free Press*, ‘French-Canadian Honour Stressed.’ May 17 1939, 7, and *Le Devoir*, ‘Le ‘Times’ de Londres et les Canadiens français’, May 17 1939, 3

³ *Le Droit*, ‘Québec fait un accueil royal à Leurs Majestés.’ 17 May 1939, 1

⁴ *Ibid.*

⁵ *Le Droit*, ‘L’atmosphère enthousiaste de l’arrivée.’ 17 May 1939, 2

milliers et des milliers de personnes s'attendaient également le passage de Leurs Majestés tout le long de la Grande Allée jusqu'à parlement et en mesure que la cortège avançait les acclamations s'élevaient en salves répétées.⁶

The article continued with a description of the dignity and distinction of the official welcome of the Canadian government, represented by Mackenzie King and Ernest Lapointe, the minister of justice and Member of Parliament for Quebec East. The article continued with a description of 'Le sourire gracieux de la reine [qui] semblait de refléter dans toutes les physionomies. Ce sourire,' the article concluded 'les québécois en conserveront long temps le souvenir.'⁷

It was Montreal's *La Presse*, however, whose coverage in many ways came close to equaling the intensity of emotion that was seen in comparable English Canadian papers. The special coverage of the royal arrival, complete with several large-scale pictures, dominated *La Presse*'s front-page. 'Québec Vit Des Heures Historiques,' it announced. It then continued with a description of the details of the arrival, the official welcome by the Canadian dignitaries and the extent of the welcome given by the Quebec crowds.⁸ Its coverage of the royal arrival at times emphasized an appreciation for the sensitivity shown by the Royal couple for Quebec's differences, while at others simply gave in to the emotion of the moment, themes often present in the same article.⁹ Its correspondent, Jacques Girouard, for example, in his leading article regarding the royal welcome, noted the nature of the King's official speech. The second subtitle of the article informed *La Presse*'s readers that 'Répondant aux vœux qui lui sont offerts au déjeuner officiel, le roi fait un émouvant éloge du Canada et de notre province, en particulier.'

⁶ *Le Droit*, 'L'atmosphère enthousiaste de l'arrivée.' 17 May 1939, 2

⁷ *Ibid.*

⁸ *La Presse*, May 17 1939, 1

⁹ *La Presse*, 'Québec Vit Des Heures Historiques.' May 17 1939, 1

The article continues ‘Leurs Majestés ont conquis les coeurs. Leur jeunesse souriante, leur charmante simplicité leur ouvrent d’emblée une voie à l’affection du peuple.’¹⁰

As with *Le Droit*’s correspondent, Girouard emphasized the size and enthusiasm of the crowd. ‘C’est le peuple lui-même, massé sur le parcours, accroché par grappes au flanc escarpé du Cap Diamant qui par ses acclamations spontanées, manifesta son amour et sa loyauté envers Leurs Majestés.’¹¹ *La Presse* also attempted to humanize its masses with a description of individual Canadians. A picture on the second page, entitled ‘À l’arrivée du roi et de la reine,’ depicted ‘deux jeunes Ecosaises du Québec,’ dressed in traditional costume, anxiously awaiting the arrival of the royal couple, as well as a Miss Rose Brown, 82, who, as the caption pointed out, had travelled ‘1,800 miles’ from her home in Kirkland Lake, Ontario, to witness the morning’s spectacle.¹²

La Presse continued its coverage with two articles, provided by its special correspondent in Quebec. The articles, ‘Hommage profondément ému rendu par la foule,’ and ‘La foule muette, Regardant avec des yeux de rêve,’ in many ways highlighted similar themes. They emphasized the respect and awe displayed by the large Quebec crowds in response to the royal arrival, as well as the sense of anticipation that had built up in the city and the crowd throughout the day.¹³ The second article, the longer of the two, by Ephrem-Réginald Bertrand, did so in more complete terms. Bertrand described how, as the sky cleared, the *Empress of Australia*, ‘beau comme un yacht de plaisance, a glissé tout doucement au pied du Cap Diamant et en face de la Terrasse Dufferin, ce

¹⁰ Ibid.

¹¹ Ibid.

¹² *La Presse*, ‘À l’arrivée du roi et de la reine.’ May 17, 1939, 2. *La Presse*’s calculations seem a little off, unless she unless she went via New York. The real distance between Kirkland Lake and Quebec City would be about 1400 km, or maybe 800 miles.

¹³ ‘Hommage profondément ému rendu par la foule,’ and ‘La foule muette, Regardant avec des yeux de rêve.’ *La Presse*, May 17 1939, 1

matin, entre 9 h. et 9 h. 30...Et soudain,' Bertrand reported, 'comme une vision muette, là-bas, entre les fumées des destroyers, et encore enveloppé d'une brume légère, glissait le paquebot blanc, qui pour être plus petit que l'*Empress*...n'en a pas moins fière allure et y fait songer.'¹⁴

Many Canadian reports tended to linger on the human impact stories associated with the royal arrival. The same was true of the descriptions in the Quebec papers of the King and Queen, which focused on their simplicity, charm, and attractiveness. This was particularly true of Queen Elizabeth, whose popularity was apparent in throughout the coverage of the Canadian tour. *La Presse* ran a small article provided by the CP on the front page describing the first impression made by the Queen on Canadians. It depicted a 'gracieuse femme, simplement vêtue d'un ensemble de lainage gris-perle à revers tuxedo de renard platine et coiffée d'un feutre de même ton, à bord relevé et maintenu par un noeud altier.' Indicative of the trend throughout the tour, the CP article simply states at the end that 'Le roi portait son uniforme d'amiral.'¹⁵ Montreal's *Le Devoir* described the couple in similar terms. However, it went much further in its description of the King, adding that 'Les photos habituelles de la souveraine ne lui rendent pas totalement justice, car son sourire est encore plus charmant que ne la laissent croire les photographies.' *Le Devoir* added, 'Deux moments émouvants de la journée furent aussi la visite des Souverains au stade Delorimier et sur le stade Molson, respectivement garnis d'enfants des écoles catholiques et d'enfants des écoles protestantes. Les parents des princesses

¹⁴ *La Presse*, 'La foule muette, Regardant avec des yeux de rêve.' May 17 1939, 1

¹⁵ *La Presse*, 'Première vision de notre reine.' May 17 1939, 1

Elizabeth et Margaret Rose n'ont pu rester insensibles au cris amicaux de ces petites poitrines.'¹⁶

Le Devoir's coverage of the Royal Tour, as will be seen, although less affected than that of *Le Droit's* or *La Presse's*, did at times demonstrate a significant degree of excitement and enthusiasm. This was apparent in regards to their coverage of the royal visit's arrival in Montreal on the 18th, which was much more detailed than that of the Tour's arrival at Quebec the previous day. *Le Devoir's* correspondent, Lucien Desbiens, had spoken of 'Emotion visible' on the part of the crowds at Quebec on the 17th. His front page article, however, tended to emphasize the elements of pageantry and novelty present in the Royal arrival.¹⁷ In many ways this contrasted with the prominence given by *Le Droit* and *La Presse* to the emotional impact of the arrival on ordinary Canadians.¹⁸

However, *Le Devoir's* coverage of the tour's visit to Montreal on the 18th expressed many of these themes. The front page of *Le Devoir's* May 19th edition was dominated by an in-depth article entitled 'La foule montréalaise acclame et admire les souverains du Canada,' which discussed the experiences of the day before. Les Montréalais se demande ce matin s'ils ne sortent pas d'un rêve de féerie,' *Le Devoir's* correspondent wondered,

Que d'émotions hier, jour de l'Ascension, pendant les heures que Leurs Majestés a passées à Montréal! Heures tumultueuse et brèves! Ils gardent de leurs Souverains de douces images. Pour la masse de gens, qui ont bordé les trottoirs pendant la promenade de leurs augustes visiteurs à travers la ville, ils se rappelleront longtemps ce jeune roi, au teint colouré, au maintien noble dans son uniforme d'amiral, au salut digne et élégant; et cette jeune reine, assise à son côté

¹⁶ *Le Devoir* 'La foule montréalaise acclame et admire les souverains du Canada.' May 19 1939, 1. See also *Le Droit*, 'Bienvenue à nos souverains May 17 1939, 3

¹⁷ *Le Devoir* 'L'arrivée des souverains à Québec ce matin a été d'une émouvante splendeur.' May 17 1939, 1

¹⁸ *Le Droit*, 'Québec fait un accueil royal à Leurs Majestés.' 17 May 1939, 1

dans l'automobile ouverte, petits fleur bleue, délicieuse apparition charme, de grâce, de sourire, de beauté.¹⁹

As with *Le Droit* and *La Presse*, *Le Devoir* dwelt on the description of the day and the nature of the crowd.

Des heures et des heures avant l'heure du passage du roi et de la reine à tel out tel endroit, la foule s'est massées sur le bord de la chassée. Elle a attendu avec impatience, mais tranquille, paisible. Le vent était frais; les hommes portaient leurs paletots, les femmes leurs manteaux et leurs fourrures. Le soleil, toutefois était radieux. Journée idéale, lumineuse et claire, juste assez fraîche pour que personne ne souffrit de la chaleur.²⁰

An element of human interest and pageantry was added to the description provided by *Le Devoir* by its discussion of the participation by Native groups in the celebration of the Royal Tour. 'A deux endroits du parcours royal,' *Le Devoir's* correspondent added, 'les Indiens de Caughnawega [sic] se sont groupés pour rendre hommage aux Souverains; au square Victoria et dans le parterre de lady Roddick, rue Sherbrooke, dans l'ouest de la ville.' (Lady Roddick had donated its gates to McGill on Sherbrooke St.) It concludes by expressing the dignity of their bearing and their approach to the tour, as well as the touch of colour and glamour that their presence provided. 'Les Indiens ont gardé une attitude solennelle, bras croisés. Quelques-uns portaient la costume de la tribu iroquoise.'²¹

In addition to these touches of human interest, these papers also put a great deal of prominence on the constitutional position of the King and his relationship to Canada. *La Presse* on May 17th included a front page article entitled 'Le seul parlement français de l'empire britannique rend des hommages officiels à son roi,' which reported that 'a la réception que lui a faite le gouvernement de Québec au Conseil législatif, Sa Majesté

¹⁹ *Le Devoir* 'La foule montréalaise acclame et admire les souverains du Canada.' May 19 1939, 1

²⁰ Ibid.

²¹ Ibid.

George VI s'est exprimé en français.'²² *Le Droit*, in an article describing the welcome of French Canadians, emphasized that

Nos souverains trouveront ici deux races loyales, l'un par sentiment, l'autre par conviction, mais loyale quand même. Et toutes les deux seront encore plus loyales que leurs droits naturels, historiques et constitutionnels seront d'autant mieux respectés. D'ailleurs, la garantie et le respect de ces droits ne sont-ils pas aujourd'hui le meilleur gage de l'intégrité et de la sécurité de l'Empire?²³

It was *Le Devoir*, however, that expressed these thoughts in the most consistent manner. In its coverage of the 17th, unlike the coverage *Le Droit* or *La Presse*, it did not dwell on the reaction of the Quebec crowds, the welcoming ceremonies put on by the Canadian government, or the personality and appearance of the royal couple. Rather, *Le Devoir* concentrated on the nature of the speeches of welcome, of the King, the Canadian Prime Minister W.L.M. King, Senator Raoul Dandurand, and the Mayor of Montreal, Camillien Houde, from which it quoted at length.²⁴ *Le Devoir*'s coverage of King's speech gave increased weight to his assertion that 'Nous avons parmi nous, dans la personne de Votre Majesté, non seulement le symbole, mais la présence réelle du chef de tout l'Empire.' However, it also included the full text of the speech, in which King included his view of the nature of the Commonwealth. 'Ici également, vous trouverez une famille qui est la vôtre, famille d'origines, de races et de pensées diverses, qui, en une libre association avec les autres membres du Commonwealth, mais également à sa manière, façonne son destin national.'²⁵

²² *La Presse*, 'Le seul parlement français de l'empire britannique rend des hommages officiels à son roi.' May 17 1939, 1

²³ *Le Droit*, 'Bienvenue à nos souverains.' May 17 1939, 3

²⁴ *Le Devoir*, May 17 1939, 'La réponse du Roi à M. King.' 3, 'Nos Souverains à Québec.' 4 'L'adresse du maire de Montréal à nos souverains.' 6 See also 'Le Roi répond en française à M. Duplessis.' 3.

²⁵ *Le Devoir*, 'Nos Souverains à Québec.' May 17 1939, 4

Two editorials printed on the 19th expressed some of the strengths and limitations of the welcome that the King George VI and Queen Elizabeth received in Quebec in particular. *Le Devoir*'s coverage, as mentioned, was perhaps the least enthusiastic of the three French Canadian papers examined. Its editors seemed to have concerns regarding the motivations behind the trip, something seen in its coverage before, during and after the Royal Tour came to Canada.²⁶ However, at the same time, its reportage often demonstrated an appreciation for the royal couple themselves, and, more importantly, their consideration for French Canadian concerns. Nowhere was this more apparent than in their appreciation for the frequency and the fluency with which the royal couple expressed themselves in French, particularly when they were in Quebec. As *Le Devoir* put it on in its editorial on May 19th, these were 'Des paroles que les Canadiens français n'oublieront pas.'²⁷

The success of the Royal Tour in the province of Quebec, as demonstrated by the massive crowds and their enthusiastic reception was not ignored by other Canadian newspapers. The *Winnipeg Free Press* printed a number of editorials informing its readers of the nature of the welcome in French Canada. On May 18th 1939, an editorial entitled 'The King Arrives,' focused on the unifying aspect of the royal visit and the deep and sincere welcome of Canadian society as a whole for the King. 'Never before,' it proclaimed, 'have the rocky shores of the St. Lawrence and the cliffs of the Quebec Citadel resounded to such cheering as yesterday greeted the arrival in Canada of Their

²⁶ This culminated in its editorial as the Royal Tour ended. *Le Devoir*, 'Le roi et la reine nous ont conquis ; mais non pas l'impérialisme.' June 10th 1939, 1

²⁷ *Le Devoir*, 'Grâce et sagesse.' May 19 1939 1 In similar terms, *La Presse*, which was generally much less guarded, on the same day printed an editorial in which it emphasized this theme, concluding that as a result, French Canadians would fulfill Camillien Houde's prediction as Mayor of Montreal that 'nulle part ailleurs, sur la route encore longue qui vous reste à parcourir, Vos Majestés ne pourront rencontrer un accueil plus chaleureux, ni surtout un respect plus sincère.' *La Presse*, 'Apothéose Royale.' May 19 1939, 6

Majesties. Quebec and its people led the welcome which awaits them from coast to coast. The King of Canada,' it concluded, 'walked yesterday, as he walks today, among his own. There can be welcomes elsewhere in Canada equal to his reception in Quebec. None will surpass it.' The editorial continued by expressing its wish that, with the help of the French-speaking citizens of the West, whose 'friendship and comradeship' the *Free Press* appreciated, 'our welcome here next week will rival the loyal demonstrations of Quebec.'²⁸

The editors of the *Free Press* anticipated Canadians on the Prairies would also give a massive welcome for the Royal Tour. That was certainly true. The extent of the welcome that awaited the Royal Tour in the Prairies rivalled that of Quebec City and Montreal, or for that matter, Toronto, Kingston or Ottawa. The most striking day of the tour came on June 3rd 1939, in the small town of Melville, Saskatchewan

The selection of Melville for a stop by the Royal Tour reveals the pull of geography. The town, located southeast of Saskatoon, was a central gathering point between Regina and Winnipeg, for those residents of rural Saskatchewan who had been unable for to make the journey to either Saskatoon or Regina to see the tour. Melville's 4,000 residents, and those, who, for a day contributed to its enormous boost in population, experienced and contributed to a truly a magical late spring day's visit.

H.H. Kritzwiser, the special correspondent of the Regina *Leader-Post*, chronicled the day's events for his paper. His article demonstrated not only the impact of the visit itself, but also the anticipation that the residents felt, and the sense of celebration and occasion associated with the tour. As Kritzwiser reported, the day was a memorable one for Melville, Yorkton, as well as a dozen other towns of north-eastern Saskatchewan.

²⁸ Winnipeg *Free Press*, 'The King Arrives.' May 18 1939, 19

Describing the scene, he emphasized the symbolism of the welcome. 'A grain elevator, symbol of the sinews of the western wheat-lands, formed a gigantic backdrop for the mighty welcome of north-eastern Saskatchewan here Saturday night for King George and Queen Elizabeth.' By seven in the evening, he reported, 'the string of autos making Melville their goal, extended miles out into the country.' In addition, two special trains from the northeast arrived from Kamsack, Canora and Yorkton carrying approximately 3,000. The estimates of the total population in Melville that day ranged from 40, 000 to 60, 000.²⁹ They were drawn from throughout the region, and, as the *Free Press* noted, there were also 'many North and South Dakota cars, [and] many more Manitoba cars besides the thousands from all over Saskatchewan.'³⁰

Kritzwiser emphasized the colour and the pageantry of the day as he described the day as one of 'life, excitement, holiday, fun, winding up with the surge of 40,000 voices as they cheered the royal train on its arrival at 10 o'clock' that evening. He chronicled the way in which the day took on almost the atmosphere of a country fair in anticipation of the arrival of the Royal Tour.

During the day, a sports program held the attention of thousand. There were horse races. There were baseball tournaments, four teams in one competition, 21 in another, in a new sports ground developed and built in a few weeks especially for the royal holiday. About six in the evening, a parade wound its way about Melville's streets. Everybody enjoyed themselves, raced hither and yon to get more than one glimpse. Mounted Policemen struggled vainly to keep lines. The crowds would have none of it. Bands of Kamsack, the Civil Service Band of Yorkton, the Saltcoats Community band, headed by a high-stepping pretty girl, and the Canora Citizen's band, provided lively music. Floats followed, through the decorated streets. An ox-cart, pulled by a patient beast, was in the parade. A float passed by, a whirling top showing pictures of all Britain's monarchs since Victoria.

²⁹ Although Kritzwiser estimated the total population for the day at 40,000, other estimates in the Canadian press ranged as high as 60, 000. Regina *Leader-Post* 'Bold Welcome to King and Queen at Melville.' June 5 1939, 9. H.H. Kritzwiser, Winnipeg *Free Press*, June 5 1939, 'Crowds Jam Melville for Visit.' 20

³⁰ Winnipeg *Free Press*, June 5 1939, 'Crowds Jam Melville for Visit.' 20

‘It was a happy scene,’ he concluded, ‘Children waving flags, the colour of the war veteran’s berets, of the flags, the bunting, all lively in the straw-coloured sunset that waned in the west.’³¹ As an earlier edition of the *Leader-Post* had reported, ‘Even the humblest home sports a few flags in commemoration of the occasion, but the main streets are a blaze of colour with strings of multi-colour lights and the business houses have vied with each other to get the most decorative effect with flags, streamers and bunting.’³²

The size of the crowds meant that it was necessary to ensure a priority of place was given to certain groups. Many of those unable to get reasonable places in the grounds, gathered on the roofs of buildings farther along the tracks. As a result, Kritzwiser reported, the 7,000 to 8,000 school children assembled had the best points of view reserved for them. In addition, the wives of the war veterans had their own section, as did the 140 Boy Scouts present.³³

During their visit to Melville, Their Majesties were accompanied by Mackenzie King and the Minister of Agriculture, James Gardiner, the western representative in the King Cabinet, who was with the Royal Tour during their time in the Prairies. The welcome ceremonies were simple and were quickly accomplished. As the King and Queen arrived, they were met by R.C. Lane, the town administrator, and his wife, who

³¹ H.H. Kritzwiser, Regina *Leader-Post*, June 5 1939, ‘Bold Welcome to King and Queen at Melville.’ 9

³² Regina *Leader-Post*, June 5 1939 ‘Half a Million Province to see King – Excitement for Melville.’ 3. The extent of the welcome that Melville presented for the Royal Tour extended even to stretching the rules of physics. As an article in the *Leader-Post* declared ‘Melville Switches Time, Gets Extra Hour’s Celebration.’ It reported that the town normally operated on Central Standard Time. However, because of the town had a bylaw enforcing a midnight curfew for local business, and because the town management decided that a royal visit was worth celebrating, they decided to switch for the day to Mountain Standard Time. ‘The carnival spirit held until away after midnight as thousands celebrated, following the royal reception and the departure of the royal train. Cars jammed the streets at 1 a.m. Sunday morning as much as at midday.’ An added bonus was the benefits for local businesses. ‘Hotels and cafes were packed for hours, and at meal times hundreds jammed their way into them, demanding meals. Beer parlours had one of the biggest days of business since beer parlours came to Saskatchewan, one being reported as taking in \$600 for the day.’ Regina *Leader-Post*, June 5 1939, ‘Melville Switches Time, Gets Extra Hour’s Celebration.’ 8

³³ H.H. Kritzwiser, Regina *Leader-Post*, June 5 1939, ‘Bold Welcome to King and Queen at Melville.’ 9

presented the Queen with a bouquet of roses. As they ascended the platform built especially for the event, the royal couple was bathed in brilliant lights. They waved their greetings to the cheering crowd, which ‘stretched the width of a city block back into the darkness.’ The crowd only cheered harder as the Queen asked to have the spotlight passed over the crowd so that she could see its extent.³⁴

Kritzwiser’s article also focused on the two groups of particular concern to Canadians in regards to the tour, Canadian veterans and school children. He devoted an entire section to the acknowledgement of these groups by the King and Queen. ‘Waving the little Union Jacks frenziedly’, he reported, ‘the thousands of school children chanted: “We want the Queen.”’ In response, the war veterans soon took up the chant, “We Want the King.”³⁵ When, in response, the royal couple, escorted by local notable, Judge Alexander Ross, moved into the crowd of veterans, the excitement hit a fever pitch. As Kritzwiser described it, in ‘a thrice they were almost buried in the tight jam of veterans.’ As the King and the Queen walked through their ranks, accompanied by the continuing chant of the children, they stopped to speak to four of the veterans, whose gratification, (and local fame), were therefore guaranteed.³⁶

The conversations between the veterans and the King and Queen were also highlighted by the local Canadian press as a demonstration as a link between themselves

³⁴ Ibid.

³⁵ Ibid.

³⁶ Ross was a former brigadier-general in the Great War, and former provincial president of the Canadian Legion, H.H. Kritzwiser, Regina *Leader-Post*, June 5 1939, ‘Bold Welcome to King and Queen at Melville.’ 9 The four men, including a local reporter, Reg Taylor, were the focus of an accompanying article. Taylor, who had served in the artillery, was a member of the Melville *Advance* staff and a *Leader-Post* correspondent. He spoke briefly with Queen Elizabeth. His article was prominently printed in not only the *Leader-Post*, but also the Winnipeg *Free Press* as a demonstration of the interest of the royal couple in local affairs, local Canadians and local veterans. Regina *Leader-Post*, June 5th 1939, ‘Proud Memories of Royal Talks for Four Veterans at Melville.’ 15, Winnipeg *Free Press*, June 5th, 1939 ‘Crowds Jam Melville for Visit.’ 20

and Canadians, as well as with the British people. The report of the Queen's conversation with J. A. Platt, the Canora chief of police, therefore, was of particular interest. Platt had served with the Black Watch, which had, as the article pointed out, the distinction of claiming the Queen as an honorary colonel. The King's conversation with Detective Sergeant N. Brotherton, served to further reinforce the transatlantic connection. Brotherton was a member of the Royal Canadian Mounted police and the youngest regimental Sergeant Major in the Canadian Expeditionary force who had served in Belgium and France and had seen action at the Somme, Vimy and Passchendaele. In response to the King's question regarding his origins, the article reported, he replied that he had been born in Blackpool.³⁷

Equal to the fascination on the part of the Canadian press regarding the royal concern with the local veterans was the ease with which they connected with the local children.³⁸ Kritzwiser's article was consistent, therefore, in highlighting the Queen's interest in 'a youngster in a red coat, sitting high above the crowd on the arm of his father.' In Kritzwiser's article, Percy Clayton Walters, the son of former Mayor Phil Walters, made an attractive and representative figure for the thousands of nameless schoolchildren of which Canadians were so concerned.³⁹ Her Majesty's interest in him, as well as her easy connection with the shy boy, allowed Kritzwiser, as with his colleagues

³⁷ Regina *Leader-Post*, June 5th 1939, 'Proud Memories of Royal Talks for Four Veterans at Melville.' 15

³⁸ Winnipeg *Free Press*, June 5 1939, 'Crowds Jam Melville for Visit.' 20. See also the Toronto *Star*, May 16 1939, 'Hard on the Children.' 4, and the Winnipeg *Free Press*, May 17 1939, 'Their Majesties,' 15 and *La Presse*, March 16 1939, 'L'itinéraire de Leurs Majestés.' 6. The issue of the Dionne Quintuplets and their possible introduction to the royal couple was perhaps an aspect of this. Winnipeg *Free Press*, May 23 1939, 'Five Loyal Subjects due to be Presented to the King and Queen.' 14, and *The Globe*, Letter to the Editor, May 19 1939 'They Can't Have the Quints.', 6 Many of the reports of the tour from various regions of the country focused on the tour's appeal to children. In particular, many of the articles and editorials expressed the concern that the tour be planned to ensure that Canadian children be able to fully experience the tour and the royal presence.

³⁹ H.H. Kritzwiser, Regina *Leader-Post*, June 5 1939, 'Bold Welcome to King and Queen at Melville.' 9

in the French Canadian press before him, to convey a sense of connection on the part of his readers and the Queen, as well as her inherent connection with Canadian values. Every time the Canadian press focused on the royal connection with Canadian children, particularly on the part of Queen Elizabeth, there seemed to be an intangible reminder to Canadians that she too was a mother, although of princesses. In the end, the picture relayed was that of an attractive figure, regal rather than pretentious, who was also concerned with issues of similar concern to Canadian families. The royal family, it was emphasized, focused on the pleasures of family and home.⁴⁰

The *Free Press* stressed that although the scheduled stop in Melville had only been for 10 minutes, the actual visit had lasted well over an hour.⁴¹ As Their Majesties returned again to their railway car, they stood on the rear platform of the car for a few minutes, waving and smiling to the crowd as the fireworks began. The royal couple went inside the car in preparation for departure. However, as Kritzwiser reported, the crowd's patience and persistence was again to be rewarded. 'For 25 minutes, the crowd stayed. They refused to leave. Expectantly, they burst into salvos of cheers. Then, at 10, 45 o'clock, the blue and silver car began to move. As it did, Their Majesties came out again on the platform.'⁴²

The fact that George VI and Queen Elizabeth ventured continually into the large crowd with limited police protection only enhanced the sentiment of royal interest and comfort emphasized by the Canadian press.⁴³ Although the crowd at Melville was

⁴⁰ Toronto *Star*, May 18 1939, 'The Princesses Go to a New School.' 4, and the Ottawa *Journal*, April 22 1939, 1. Similar themes were at times seen in the reports of the King and Queen leading up to their coronation the year before. Ottawa *Journal*, May 12 1937, 'The True Meaning of the Coronation.' 4

⁴¹ WFP, June 5 1939, 'Tumultuous Welcome.' 20

⁴² H.H. Kritzwiser, Regina *Leader-Post*, June 5 1939, 'Bold Welcome to King and Queen at Melville.' 15

⁴³ WFP, June 5 1939, 'Tumultuous Welcome.' 20

overwhelming in size, ‘Every one of the 40,000 or more persons, who packed the grounds, had a chance to see the King and the Queen, some to almost touch them; some to speak to them.’⁴⁴ Despite the size of the crowds, he implies, every individual was able to feel a sense of personal connection with the royal couple. This sense of familiarity was reflected by the fact that the royal couple ventured into the crowd to mingle with the crowd while the Mounties and Scotland Yard detectives watched unconcernedly from a distance.⁴⁵

Kritzwiser’s article had begun with an overall impression of the day, which concluded with burst of poetic oratory regarding the royal departure. As the crowds left, they took with them a magnificent memory – a view that even softened the tremendous cheering and left thousands with a catch in their throats. The King and Queen left them, standing on the rear platform of their train, he in his blue lounge suit, she in her ensemble of blue. Smiling and waving, they stood in the embrace of the satin circle of a big spotlight...Above the train, hung a new eastern moon, as round and golden as a freshly-minted sovereign of the King’s own land. In this setting, as unreal as the high emotion of a play’s end, King George and Queen Elizabeth were lost in the darkness to the east. And hundreds, captured by the beauty of that last and lovely view, smashed police lines and surged up over the railway tracks to gaze after it.⁴⁶

Melville was crowned, ‘the best small town welcome the King and the Queen had got so far.’⁴⁷ The Winnipeg *Free Press* later printed the telegram sent by George VI and received by R.C. Lane, the administrator of Melville, acknowledging the reception. ‘The

⁴⁴ H.H. Kritzwiser, Regina *Leader-Post*, June 5 1939, ‘Bold Welcome to King and Queen at Melville.’ 9

⁴⁵ The *Free Press* this sentiments through in a CP interview with Inspector J. Giles, of Scotland Yard. It emphasized his lack of concern regarding the size of the crowds at Melville and the willingness of the royals to venture into them. The inspector ‘stood calmly by while King George and Queen Elizabeth walked unguarded among 60,000 wildly cheering people milling around the railway station here Saturday night.’ The article stressed that after 12 years on guard to royalty, Giles was a keen judge of a crowd’s temper. He was not ‘a bit afraid with that crowd. They would not let any harm befall Their Majesties.’ Winnipeg *Free Press*, June 5th 1939 ‘Scotland Yard Man Not Alarmed.’, 20

⁴⁶ The royal train and the pilot train stopped just outside of Melville for the night, guarded by the Mounted and railway police. The next morning at 4:30 o’clock, the train started eastward for Winnipeg, the crossing for several miles beyond being guarded by war veterans, to prevent early morning crowds from getting onto the railway right-of-way. H.H. Kritzwiser, Regina *Leader-Post*, June 5 1939, ‘Bold Welcome to King and Queen at Melville.’ 15

⁴⁷ H.H. Kritzwiser, Regina *Leader-Post*, June 5 1939, ‘Bold Welcome to King and Queen at Melville.’ 9

Queen and I,' the telegram read, 'will not easily forget the scene which greeted us at Melville.'⁴⁸

The crowds at Melville, as with the crowds at Quebec and Montreal, had been massive in extent, sincere in their enthusiasm and, as Inspector Giles attested, steadfast in their loyalty. As the *Free Press* editorial of the 17th had hoped, the prairie crowds had outdone themselves in size and fervour.⁴⁹ Its themes, that all Canadians would welcome the royal couple with equal enthusiasm, that the Royal Tour would help reinforce national unity and that the King would be as much at home in Canada as in Britain, were echoed in the editorial of the Regina *Leader-Post*. The receptions for the King and Queen at Biggar, Saskatoon, Watrous and Melville, it stressed, 'found prairie sentiment expressing itself with all that heartiness, even to the point of abandon, that is as an institution in this western land.' The memory of the visit, it concluded, would inspire as much as it would linger. 'There can be no doubt that the royal visit will have created in this country a personal appreciation of the throne of nation and empire as may go so far as to make for a new era in intra-British relationships.' For it was possible that the visit would ultimately encourage a 'greater sense of unity and purpose on the part of the Canadian people themselves.'⁵⁰

The echoes of the *Free Press*' earlier confident declaration that 'The King of Canada walked yesterday, as he walks today, among his own,'⁵¹ seem to linger with any reading of the *Leader-Post*'s editorial. However, in the case of both, it is hard to ignore the nagging suspicion that there were concerns under the surface regarding the nature of

⁴⁸ Winnipeg *Free Press*, June 6th 1939, 'King Expresses Thanks to Melville in Telegram.' 9

⁴⁹ Winnipeg *Free Press*, May 17th 1939, 'The King Arrives.' 19

⁵⁰ Regina *Leader-Post*, June 6th 1939, 'Saskatchewan's Goodbye.' 4

⁵¹ Winnipeg *Free Press* May 17th 1939, 'The King Arrives.' 19

the Canadian welcome. The *Free Press*, it often appeared, was as eager to reinforce national unity as it was to celebrate it, in the wake of the royal visit. Its generous appraisal of the French Canadian welcome to the royal couple exposed a degree of anxiety. 'Deep-toned and heartfelt,' it concluded, 'the cheers came from a people who pridefully say that their claim to the title of 'Canadian' is one that can be nowhere challenged.'⁵² The same was true of the hope expressed by the *Leader-Post* that the visit would 'encourage a greater sense of unity of purpose' in Canada.⁵³ The coverage of the Royal Tour in these editorials reveals as much concern as complacency, as to the state of domestic affairs in Canada. The stress on the unifying force of the royal visit seems to indicate that Canadians indeed, far from agreeing on domestic and international issues, disagreed consistently. Rather the concerns of the Winnipeg *Free Press* and the Regina *Leader-Post* reveal that the 'claim' to the title of 'Canadian' was indeed contentious, and that many Canadians were concerned about national unity in the period surrounding the royal visit of 1939.

The pageantry and the excitement that surrounded the Royal Tour in Quebec and Melville, although set in vastly different contexts, reflected similar themes. In addition it also reassured elements of Canadian society anxious regarding their nation's future. The two elements of Canadian society, it might be surmised, that would be least likely to embrace the King and Queen, were the French Canadians of Quebec and the western

⁵² Ibid.

⁵³ Regina *Leader-Post*, June 6th 1939, 'Saskatchewan's Goodbye.' 4 There were similar themes in many other Canadian editorials. See the *Globe* May 18, 1939, 'Their Majesties Head Canada Towards Unity.' 7

immigrant societies originating from 'alien' cultures whose assimilation many English Canadians had long been concerned about.⁵⁴

However, despite the growing percentage of 'new Canadians' among the population of Western Canada, contemporaries pointed out that Canadians of British descent retained a significant degree of societal influence. H.L. Keenleyside, a member of the Department of External Affairs, passed through the Prairies on his way home to British Columbia on a personal visit during the Munich crisis. He summed up his impressions in a memo to Skelton. Canadians of British origins, he concluded

This group is, of course, prominent in Canadian business and social life, and it is natural that it should be over-represented in our organs of opinion [particularly Canadian newspapers]. In spite of a good many shocks during the recent years - and part since Mr. Chamberlain took office in Great Britain - this element in the population still seems in general to approve of the idea that 'When Britain is at war we all are at war'...Even among the restricted class to which I am refer these theme songs are no longer sung with the old fervour and unhesitant conviction. But in general, they still represent the views of the well-to-do, conservative, Anglophone minority of the west.⁵⁵

The question of the nature of Canada's involvement in the British Commonwealth, particularly in regards to issues of defence and international conflict, had been controversial throughout the decade. Contemporary commentators disagreed as to whether it was likely Canadians outside of Ontario would support Canadian policy

⁵⁴ In 1938, R.A. MacKay and E.B. Rogers concluded that despite the decline in the proportion of the British 'racial stock' in Canada, did not necessarily mean that Canada was becoming less British in culture. Immigrants, they argued, tended to assimilate into British culture. Further, even in the western provinces, where immigration has been the heaviest, there remained a governing class, which was mostly British, which tended to take the leadership roles in the business and professional communities. They also pointed out that some communities, such as the German communities in Ontario and Nova Scotia were practically indistinguishable from their British Canadian neighbours in all except for name. Kritzwiser's coverage of the Royal Tour would seem to indicate that it was these individuals whom MacKay and Rogers had in mind. R.A. MacKay and E.B. Rogers. *Canada Looks Abroad*. (London: 1938), 54

⁵⁵ H.L. Keenleyside, Memoranda to Skelton, October 6 1938, LAC, RG 25, D1 (Department of External Affairs, Undersecretary of State for External Affairs), Vol. 715

should this involvement lead to involvement in another global conflict.⁵⁶ Most likely, they agreed, French Canadians would not. The position of these newer groups in the Prairies, however, was open to question.⁵⁷

It is in this respect that the Royal Tour takes on its central relevance. It was not simply an interlude, an escape from the attention paid to global crises, although there was also an element of escapism in the Canadian embrace of it. It both reflected and would more concretely shape the Canadian sense of identity during the period. As H.V. Nelles has argued, Canadians have often engaged in the art of ‘nation-building’. The Royal Tour, however, is representative of these attempts done in much more urgent and limited terms than seen in the planning of the celebrations of the tercentenary in 1908. In many ways its results were evidence of the ways in which such efforts simultaneously succeeded and failed.

Canadians, it seemed, disagreed when it came to defining their national identity. It was how they disagreed that formed the main challenge in framing Canadian international policy during the 1930s. In periods without international crisis, although disagreements might continue under the surface, the lack of urgency meant that the

⁵⁶ H.L. Keenleyside, Memoranda to Skelton, October 6 1938, LAC, RG 25, D1 (Department of External Affairs, Undersecretary of State for External Affairs), Vol. 715

⁵⁷ As Norman Hillmer has pointed out, critics of the ‘new immigration,’ that from non-British sources, were present in the universities and the public service. This was particularly the case, he argued, regarding their concentration in the urban centres and the western provinces and their failure to assimilate. Norman Hillmer, ‘The Second World War as a (Un)National Experience.’ Norman Hillmer et al., eds., *On Guard for Thee: War, Ethnicity and the Canadian State, 1939-1945*, (Canadian Committee for the History of the Second World War, 1988) xiv See also Jonathan Vance’s views on contemporary Canadian views of citizenship. While discussing the experience of a German Canadian sculptor Emmanuel Hahn and his English Canadian wife, Elizabeth Wood, he touches on contemporary views of nationality and citizenship. Hahn’s competence to design a Canadian war memorial was dismissed as a result of his roots. “[N]aturalization of an individual does not make him Canadian in the true sense of the word.’...Hahn was born a German, he would always be a German, and for that reason, he was not capable of working in anything but a Germanic style.” The same was true of Elizabeth Wood, Hahn’s wife. Once she married to Hahn, ‘she had lost the ability or the inclination to create a so-called British design and could only work in a Teutonic style.’ As a result, her ‘century-old British-Canadian roots no longer mattered.’ Jonathan Vance, *Building Canada: People and Projects that Shaped the Nation*. (Toronto: 2006) 288, 290

question could be safely smothered. A war, though, especially one involving Britain, would expose the fault lines of disagreement that existed underneath any discussion of the Canadian identity, and therefore, what role Canada should play internationally.

As Benedict Anderson famously argued, all communities are imagined, or conceived by their members. This provides a means of understanding themselves and their relation to other, equally 'imagined' communities. While the member of even the smallest nation will never know most of their fellow-members, in the minds of each exists the 'image of their communion.'⁵⁸ In other words, the nation is 'conceived as a deep, horizontal comradeship.'⁵⁹

Canadians conceived their society and its international role based on their experiences, generational and geographical, and their shared sense of history and connection. 'Canadians' seemed even more in need of this 'comradeship', given their serious regional, ethnic and religious divisions. The Fathers of Confederation and their successors had built Canada in geographical and political terms. The Canadians of the 1930s, as seen in the editorials of the *Winnipeg Free Press* and the *Regina Leader-Post*, had again to define themselves as a 'nation' in response to both internal and external pressures.

Anthony Smith argued that nationalism gave communities, and individuals, a sense of destiny, of collective faith. It was meant to rescue them from oblivion and allow

⁵⁸ Benedict Anderson *Imagined Communities: Reflections on the Origin and Spread of Nationalism*. (London, 1983), 15

⁵⁹ Anderson, *Imagined Communities*, 16. Anderson's discussion of the power of national anthems is intriguing. He notes that when singing the anthem there is often a feeling that all over the nation others are singing with you. 'If we are aware that others are singing these songs precisely when and as we are, we have no idea who they may be, or even where, out of earshot, they are singing.' Anderson, *Imagined Communities*, 133 Canadians in 1939 in many ways experienced a similar sensation when participating in the mass greetings that greeted the Royal Tour.

them to define their place in the world.⁶⁰ As they reinforced their sense of identity with newly ‘invented’ or re-discovered ‘traditions’, particularly in times of crisis,⁶¹ communities attempted to ensure that government policy fulfilled, as close as possible, their need for cultural, and thus political and economic security. As Ernest Gellner has pointed out, the state, as the protector of culture, played a key role in the formation of nationalist ideology.⁶² Nationalism, as originally defined, focused on progress, where smaller minorities, doomed by the progress of history, were assimilated to larger, more dominant, ethnic groups.⁶³ For Canadians, therefore, nationalism had the potential to divide them, as various communities within the country focused on their differences, be they ethnic, religious and historical.⁶⁴ Both English and French Canadians fought to

⁶⁰ A.D. Smith, *National Identity*, (London, 1991), 161

⁶¹ Eric Hobsbawm and Terrence Ranger, eds. *The Invention of Tradition*. (Cambridge, 1983), 4

⁶² Ernest Gellner, *Nations and Nationalism*. (Oxford, 1983), 110. Gellner disagreed with Smith’s view that nationalism was a representation of the political expression of a dominant *ethnie*, which would shape the boundaries and character of the nation. A.D. Smith, *National Identity*, 39 Rather, Gellner argued that the nationalist phenomenon cannot be fully divorced from the effects of industrialization and urbanization. Since industrial society requires a mobile, literate, ‘culturally standardized and inter-changeable population,’ the state was increasingly took over the education of the population, one which represented the standards of the dominant culture. As a result, the minority cultural group increasingly called for a state of their own to provide them with education and full cultural citizenship. Gellner, *Nations and Nationalism*, 46. As Eric Hobsbawm argued, although a ‘proto-national’ base may contribute to the growth of nationalism, it is not by itself sufficient for the development of nationalist sentiment within the state itself. Nations, he argued, were the result of state formation, rather than the impetus for them. Eric Hobsbawm, *Nations and Nationalism Since 1780: Programme, Myth, Reality*. 2nd Edition. (Cambridge, 1992), 78

⁶³ Hobsbawm, *Nations and Nationalism Since 1780*, 39

⁶⁴ Hobsbawm argued that the presence of transnational religions has limited the use of religion as an identifying factor in the development of nationalism. Rather, he argued, it was used to distinguish practitioners, as seen by the experience of Lithuanians who saw themselves as different from Lutheran Germans, Orthodox Russians among others, but not from the Poles, who were equally Catholic. However, as he point out, the nationalist Irish, who had no neighbours who were not Protestant, were exclusively defined in religious terms. Hobsbawm, *Nations and Nationalism Since 1780*, 69. In related terms, religion and ethnicity seemed to have played complementary roles in the development of French Canadian nationalism thought, as at times they spoke of being swamped in a sea of Protestantism. Max and Monique Nemni, *Young Trudeau: Son of Quebec, Father of Canada, 1919-1944*. Translated by William Johnson. (Toronto, 2006), 64. Nemni is best read in conjunction with John English, *Citizen of the World: The Life of Pierre Elliot Trudeau. Volume I: 1919-1968*. (Toronto, 2006).

ensure that the Canadian federal government guaranteed the primacy, (or in the case of French Canadians, the survival), of their culture with the Canadian political framework.⁶⁵

Canadians therefore often defined their national identity in contradictory terms. English Canadians remained committed to a variant of British imperialism, one combined with a sense of Canadian autonomy. At the same time they saw their position in the North American community as an integral part of their identity. Despite the criticism of many contemporary Canadian intellectuals,⁶⁶ it appears as though they saw this combination as one best suited to their sense of themselves and their place in the international community. The coverage of the Royal Tour thus attempted to reinforce imperialism in Canada, as well as its proud sense of autonomy *and* Anglo-American harmony.

To many English Canadians, imperialism was not an artificial concept in the 1930s. It remained a persistent and genuine factor in Canadians' perceptions of themselves. Newspapers and the Canadian elite reinforced this sense of empire, of belonging to the greatest empire the world had ever seen. Yet propaganda alone, or the endless repetition of patriotic nostrums in schools or through the media or in church, cannot explain imperialism's prevalence and persistence. For many Canadians in the 1930s, particularly English Canadians, imperialism was part of the national style.⁶⁷ As Carl Berger argued Canadian imperialism was not only compatible with Canadian nationalist thought, but it was also elemental to its conception, and to interpretations of Canadian history, character and destiny.⁶⁸ Imperialism 'fused' a number of nationalist

⁶⁵ Ironically, Gellner argued that it is difficult to imagine a political system able to simultaneously to service the needs of two distinct and viable cultures. Gellner, *Nations and Nationalism*, 119

⁶⁶ Arthur Lower, *My First Seventy-Five Years*. (Toronto, 1967), 235

⁶⁷ See Anderson's comment that communities are often 'distinguished...by the style in which they are imagined.' Anderson, *Imagined Communities*, 15

⁶⁸ Carl Berger, *The Sense of Power: Studies in the Ideas of Canadian Imperialism, 1867-1914*. (Toronto, 1970), 3

ideals and addressed so many questions of permanent concern to Canadians. Many of its 'constituent elements' therefore, survived long after the political causes with which they had been associated lost their relevance.'⁶⁹ Even after the experiences of the Great War and the enactment of the Statute of Westminster, it was clear that many Canadians continued to view the incorporation of an imperial connection in Canadian policy as customary and even necessary. As the *Financial Post* commented on July 15th, 1939, 'One of the most striking results of the tour has been the manner in which this quiescent loyalty has been transformed into a deep personal affection.'⁷⁰

As citizens of a small nation with a limited population, limited international importance and an economy beset by the depression, Canadians could take pride in their incorporation within the global framework of the British Empire. They could generalize 'a principle of innate, inherited superiority...based on the vastness of the overseas possession.'⁷¹ As seen, by emphasizing their position as the 'senior' dominion of this global institution, they could claim some of its reflected glory.⁷² This sense of importance was further enhanced by the notion, subscribed to by some, of Canada as the 'linch-pin' between Great Britain and the United States, denoting Canada's special mission within the Empire.⁷³

The sense of Canada's international 'importance' was perhaps comforting given the challenges of the 1930s. These included both domestic and international trials. Author

⁶⁹ Berger, *The Sense of Power*, 265

⁷⁰ *Financial Post*, July 15th, 1939, 'Memorials to Royalty.' 6. The *Financial Post* was suggesting that each community visited by the King and Queen should memorialize the event through 'some visible token'.

⁷¹ Anderson, *Imagined Communities*, 137

⁷² Carl Berger's discussion of turn-of-the-century Canadian imperialism certainly has implications here. Berger, *The Sense of Power*, 3.

⁷³ As Berger argues, this idea continued to appeal to Canadians both before and after the heyday of imperialism. This was enhanced by the sentiment that that American society 'was less stable and ordered' than that of Canada. Berger, *The Sense of Power*, 265

Anthony Jenkinson spent several almost a year traveling in Canada in the mid-1930s. His work, published in 1937, presents an impression of a small population in the grip of a social and economic crisis, something they struggled to resolve. Canadian manufacturers seemed unable to gain access to the world markets during the economic crisis of the 1930s, despite R.B. Bennett's promise to 'blast' their way in, despite his New Deal of 1935, and despite Mackenzie King's enactment of the long-desired policy of free trade in 1935. As well, in western Canada farmers faced the twin problems of drought and falling wheat prices.⁷⁴ At one point in 1932 and 1933, more than one in four Canadians, (26%) was unemployed.⁷⁵

Jenkinson's work also allows a sense of the widely disparate nature of Canadian society. In addition to Canada's small population of ten to twelve million, it was spread over a massive geographical landmass. Jenkinson's experiences in Toronto and Montreal, Canada's urban centers differed widely from what he found on the Prairies,⁷⁶ not to mention Vancouver Island or in what he refers to as a 'New Age Bookstore' in Vancouver.⁷⁷

In the face of these economic and social crises, Canadians struggled to define themselves. As Nelles has demonstrated, the continuing impact of politics can easily be seen in the pageants and festivals that Canadians staged. His conclusions regarding the

⁷⁴ James Gray, *Troublemaker! A Personal History*. (Toronto, 1978), 10

⁷⁵ This did not count the unemployment levels among agricultural workers, which was difficult to quantify. John H. Thompson and Allen Seager, *Canada, 1922-1939: Decades of Discord*. (Toronto, 1985), 350

⁷⁶ Anthony Jenkinson, *Where Seldom a Gun is Heard*. (London, 1937), 86

⁷⁷ Jenkinson described the atmosphere he found in the Vancouver bookstore. Among 'its working-class clientele, one experienced a phenomenon that was deeply moving; the feeling of comradeship that the workers of British Columbia had for their fellow-workers in Europe, in the United States... It was difficult to forget, for instance, the gloom which fell on every one in the Bookshop when a young worker pushed his way in one afternoon and announced: 'Toledo has fallen!' This contrasted with the overall impression given by Jenkinson's work, that of a Canadian society preoccupied with local affairs, particularly the severe social and economic problems caused by the Depression. Jenkinson, *Where Seldom a Gun is Heard*, 86

pageantry of 1908 can easily applied to Canada of 1939. Festivals, he argued, were not an escape from politics, but were indeed framed in political terms. As Ian Radforth argues, these pageants represent an ‘occasion for showcasing and celebrating civic and national values.’⁷⁸ Nelles’ conclusions regarding the role that these pageants played in the formation of the Canadian identity are even more relevant. ‘More often than not,’ Nelles argued, Canadians ‘are plural, and opinion about identity and destiny is divided.’⁷⁹ His argument regarding the ‘negotiated space of repressed differences,’⁸⁰ is as relevant to the Royal Tour of 1939 as to the tercentenary of 1908. ‘Like a stately ritual, national commemoration presented in public view a peculiar kind of politics, with the sharp edges of conflict blunted and differences expressed in polite, coded diminuendo And somewhat surprisingly, a good deal of middle ground did appear. That too revealed something of the future; a willingness to avoid tough choices and live with contradictions.’⁸¹

The problem was that in 1939 international events had progressed to a point where Canadians would not be able to ignore their impact on domestic affairs for much longer. Or, as Nelles argues, it was not that ‘the fantasy ended and history began again. Rather, history, which had been part of this all along, simply continued in a more prosaic way.’⁸² The interlude that Canadians clung to for comfort in the summer of 1939 could

⁷⁸ Radforth’s assessment of the ways in which American journals went about representing their communities during the 1860 visit, as being ‘triumphal in tone, they stressed the positive, downplayed the negative and generalized sweepingly about national and racial characteristics,’ could equally be applied to Canadian reports of the 1939 tour. Ian Radforth, *Royal Spectacle: The 1860 Visit of the Prince of Wales to Canada and the United States*. (Toronto, 2004) 376

⁷⁹ H.V. Nelles, *The Art of Nation-Building: Pageantry and Spectacle in Quebec’s Tercentenary*. (Toronto, 1999) 13

⁸⁰ Nelles, *Nation-Building*, 13

⁸¹ Nelles, *Nation-Building*, 13 As Radforth argues, these themes and their emphasis in reports of royal pageants were not new. In 1860, he points out ‘many reports from Canada represented the prince’s popularity as being a happy sign of the people’s public participation in the political life of the British nation writ large.’ Radforth, *Royal Spectacle*, 13

⁸² Nelles, *Nation-Building*, 319

not be maintained, and the themes that it suppressed but did not ignore eventually had to be addressed in more tangible terms. As Nelles points out, it is impossible not to wonder how ‘this generation of Canadians could not see and deal with their differences, so clearly visible in the symbolism, but so cunningly cloaked in this mask of ceremony and professed amity?’⁸³

As in 1908, it is possible that for those Canadians who embraced the utter enchantment that was the Royal tour, ‘feeling rather than thinking was the surer route to adhesion to an ideal, in this case a bicultural nation within the [modified] British Empire.’⁸⁴ Surely this aspect of nation-building was one of the primary goals of the Royal Tour. The pageantry represented by the tercentenary of 1908 and the royal tours of 1860s and 1939 emphasized similarities, not differences, harmony, not discord. This was seen in the approach to regional and ethnic conflicts, not to mention gender, class and racial inequalities, which, as Ian Radforth argued regarding the earlier Royal Tour of 1860, ‘went unmentioned in a discourse that hid differences in the language of ‘crowds,’ ‘people,’ and ‘community.’’⁸⁵

As Nelles points out, the impact of time has lessened the impact of the pageantry of the period, and our understanding of its relevance. ‘From the uncertainties as well as the overbearing confidences of the late twentieth century,’ he reflects, ‘we look back at the documentary evidence of this event with perhaps some slight condescension. To us it may seem like the springtime of our innocence.’⁸⁶ Even regarding the Royal Tour of 1939, when Canadians were not as innocent as they had been in 1908, the striking fact is

⁸³ Nelles, *Nation-Building*, 319

⁸⁴ Nelles, *Nation-Building*, 87

⁸⁵ Radforth, *Royal Spectacle*, 377

⁸⁶ Nelles, *Nation-Building*, 319

that the pageantry, which seemed to demonstrate the grand, everlasting Empire, could now appear so naïve, even innocent in the end. For Canadians of the period, though, it seems rather that the themes of imperialism, Canadian autonomy within the empire and the personal connection with the royal couple who visited them in 1939 reflected relevant and genuine sentiments.

Canadians seemed to have found comfort in the pageant of national unity, the promise of renewed prosperity, British might, and the evolution of the Empire into a Commonwealth as a unified force for global peace. The appeal of Empire and the ceremonial aspects of the crown only increased during the 1930s, partly as a distraction and partly as a comforting expression of the continuing British power and prestige.⁸⁷ The reception of these rituals by the Dominions and the colonial members of the Empire enhanced the sense of imperial unity, and strength. As George VI put it in his coronation broadcast, it seemed that at that very moment ‘the whole Empire was in very truth gathered with the walls of Westminster Abbey.’⁸⁸ That the world they clung to that summer would shortly be swept away into the horror of the Second World War and the complications of 20th century does not diminish the importance of its impact.

Canadians seemed well aware that their situation was largely determined by, and reflected, global trends. As Robert Bothwell has argued, Canadian politics have often been taken to be ‘a parochial affair,’⁸⁹ and need to be placed in the context of international developments. Canadians monitored them through radio broadcasts,

⁸⁷ David Cannadine, ‘The Context, Performance and Meaning of Ritual: The British Monarch and the “Invention of Tradition”, c. 1820-1977,’ in Hobsbawm and Ranger, eds., *The Invention of Tradition*, 139. Cannadine has also argued that the meaning of these imperial spectacles, including the Coronation and the Royal Tours themselves, might change although the ritual itself remained the same. Cannadine, ‘The Context, Performance and Meaning of Ritual,’ 105

⁸⁸ Cannadine, ‘The Context, Performance and Meaning of Ritual,’ 148

⁸⁹ Robert Bothwell, *The Penguin History of Canada*. (Toronto, 2006), 326

newspapers and film, especially British newsreels and American movies. Nowhere was this more the case than in regards to the international coverage of the Royal Tour, as well as the impact of the tour itself in bringing to the fore the realization of Canada's continuing international position, particularly through its involvement with the British Commonwealth.

Canadians were concerned with international developments, and they debated their consequences for Canada throughout the 1930s. Interventionists, notably the *Free Press*' John W. Dafoe, attempted to convince Canadians of the need to support the League of Nations, and generally to take a more internationalist approach to political and economic issues. As seen in the reaction to the royal couple in 1939, as well as throughout the decade, the second option for Canada, a continuing embrace of imperialism, represented an underlying, all-encompassing and omnipresent factor. Canadians seemed only to disagree on its nature and its future position, rather than its inclusion in Canadian policy. In contrast, non-interventionists, while they admitted that Canadians could not isolate themselves entirely from international developments, wanted to limit the impact of these factors.⁹⁰ This was particularly in response to the question of the impact of Canadian imperialism as provoked by British policy.⁹¹

Canadians as a whole never seemed to have fully embraced any of these options. Their response to the questions raised by the increasing numbers of global controversies remained unclear. An indication of this is that they embraced seemingly contradictory views on international relations and Canada's role. In this regard, Lester B. Pearson's

⁹⁰ David Lenarcic, *Where Angels Feared to Tread: Neutralist and Non-Interventionist Sentiment in Inter-war English Canada*. (York University: Unpublished Ph.D. dissertation. 1990). 8

⁹¹ Lenarcic, *Angels*, 19

letter to O.D. Skelton in the wake of the Munich Agreements deserves to be generously quoted. Pearson, far from an imperialist, wrote

As a Canadian, having seen the disappearance of all post-war hopes of a new international order based on international co-operation and the pacific settlement of disputes, largely because of England's negative and France's positive policy, I am not going to be impressed if next year I am asked to fight because of Tanganyika or Gibraltar. My emotional reaction to the events of the last two months is to become an out and out Canadian isolationist, and yet when I begin to reason it out it isn't as simple as that. In short, I just can't find the answer to a lot of questions. For one thing, critical though I may feel of British policy leading up to the crisis, I can't sincerely quarrel with the decision as ultimately taken, not to fight. That being so, I have no right, I suppose, to assume that the present Government is not as aware of past mistakes and present dangers as I am, and will not take effective steps to right situation. In the second place, would our complete isolation from Europe events (if such a thing were possible) save us from the effects of a British defeat, and, finally, even if it did, could we stand by and watch the triumph of Nazidom, with all it stands for over a Great Britain which, with all her defects, is about the last abode of decency, reason and liberalism on this side of the water?⁹²

This embrace of these seemingly contradictory views, combined with a general reluctance to become involved in another global conflict, shaped the Canadian approach to international affairs. The difficulty of shaping foreign policy while remaining true to these contradictions was apparent.

Some French Canadians were equally conflicted regarding the contradictions in Canadian foreign policy. André Laurendeau, who participated in the nationalist movement during the 1930s, later reflected on the motivations for Canadian participation in the war. Although, he concluded, a minority of English Canadians were also disturbed by the nature of Canadian policy in September of 1939

Mais, quand il s'agit de la vie et de la mort de la Grande-Bretagne, est-ce que cela compte ? Les plus libéraux gronderont pour la forme, les plus passionnés ne s'en rendront même pas compte, exigeant qu'on en fasse toujours davantage, qu'on réduise les récalcitrants au silence, et s'il le faut, qu'on balaye les objections de cette minorité canadienne-française et les promesses que King s'est cru forcé de

⁹² LAC, MG 26, N 1, Pearson Papers, Pearson to Skelton, 4 November 1938

lui consentir. La religion de la guerre pousse dans le cœur de ces hommes de profondes racines. Elle est liée à un puissant complexe de sentiments et d'intérêts. Démocratie, civilisation, *Mother England*, primauté britannique, lutte contre le racisme, solidarité culturelle, tout est mélangé et unanimement – quoique à des degrés divers – aimé, respecté, porté vers l'absolu. Ces sentiments atteindront, durant la guerre, un certain nombre de Canadiens français, surtout chez les officiels ; il arrivera que l'amour de la France les rende plus chaleureux. Mais ils n'animeront jamais la nation.⁹³

Le Devoir's editors shared similar concerns. As the paper's editors had argued in 1936, any connection to European politics would only contaminate Canadian society and undermine its search for stability. Would the admission of thousands of German, Polish and Austrian refugees, 'ou les passions politiques et nationales sont au paroxysme,' really allow Canadians to build a peaceful, prosperous nation where the French and English might work together in avoiding the 'tourbillon du bellicisme européen?'⁹⁴

It was Canadian imperialism which presented the most obvious, and dangerous, example of this trend. A year later *Le Devoir's* editors added,

Ce qu'il y a de vrai là-dedans, c'est que la politique des impérialistes, la politique du salut de l'Empire poursuivi jusqu'en enfer, obligera probablement le Canada à choisir, et très prochainement, entre ses propres intérêts, entre sa vie politique, et le sacrifice sur tous les champs de bataille du monde - sans compter l'enfer - de son or et de ses enfants.⁹⁵

The Conscription Crisis of 1917 had demonstrated that, in Berger's phrase, imperialism could be 'a victim of its own zeal.'⁹⁶ However, for those who concerned with imperialism, it remained a very real force, one potentially damaging to the nature of Canada. While the Canadian experience reinforced the views of contemporary observers,

⁹³ Laurendeau, André. *La Crise de la conscription, 1942*. (Montréal, 1962), 38-39

⁹⁴ *Le Devoir*, 'Portes closes ou portes ouvertes?' March 7 1936 1

⁹⁵ *Le Devoir*, 'Êtes-vous disposé à aller chez le diable - et à vous y battre pour le salut de l'Empire?' May 17 1937, 1

⁹⁶ Berger, *Sense of Power*, 5

that while the peoples of many western democracies would resist another war, in the end, a majority of English Canadians would again be willing to fight for King and Empire.⁹⁷

Any examination of the period, therefore, goes a significant way in dispelling the idea that Canadians were content to ignore international developments. Canadians were not uninterested in the great international questions of their age. However, they were determined, until the choice was forced upon them, to remain uncommitted to issues that were not immediately pressing, and which would distract them from the vital question of survival as a prosperous, relatively united, society. It seems as though Canadians were determined to insulate themselves, and their 'Fireproof' society, (as Senator Raoul Dandurand had pronounced North America at the League in 1928), from the sparks flying from the volatile situation in Europe.

For the most part Canadians also realized the limits of their influence internationally. Their status as the senior dominion in the British Commonwealth of Nations gave them a sense of importance, but it only occasionally disguised the fact that Canada was a small, remote, power, as Bennett once argued.⁹⁸ In the international arena, it was the great powers that determined policy, and small powers such as Canada could only influence the nature of its application.

This sentiment was reinforced by their sense of the continuing Canadian disagreement on the nature of international developments and the most effective Canadian response. The debates in Parliament in 1937 regarding the proposed rise in defence estimates revealed the nature of these disagreements. The opposition in the

⁹⁷ C. P. Stacey, *Canada and the Age of Conflict. A History of Canadian External Affairs. Volume II: The Mackenzie King Era.* (Toronto: 1981), 269

⁹⁸ Bennett to Roberts, December 21 1933, quoted in Robert Bothwell and Norman Hillmer, eds. *The In-Between Time: Canadian External Policy in the 1930s.* (Vancouver, 1975), 112.

House was so sustained that King held a special caucus to ensure party unity. Further, at the end of January the House then debated a CCF motion calling for Canadian neutrality in the case of any war, regardless of the belligerents.⁹⁹

In the same week, Dafoe's *Free Press* published an editorial arguing that the millions spent on armaments as opposed to social welfare measures were the price Britain, and by implication Canada, had to pay for its failure to support the League's policy of collective security during the decade.¹⁰⁰ Meanwhile the *Globe* of Toronto published an editorial attacking those, in the United States and Canada for their failure to more concretely support the British and their attempts to maintain peace in Europe between the twin pressures of communism and fascism.¹⁰¹

It was in the context of these contradictions that the federal government sought to shape its foreign policy. This task became increasingly difficult as the decade continued and international relations increasingly became the politics of confrontation.

⁹⁹ According to the King Diary, when he addressed caucus on January 20, King pointed out 'the desirability of men speaking frankly in caucus, not hesitating to criticize but maintaining a united front in common. Also of moderate views being the only one which could command the support of the country as a whole and serve to keep the Party together.' King Diary, 20 January 1937, LAC, <http://kingcollectionscanada.ca>. See also Neatby for King's leadership style, which stressed collective responsibility once discussion had been exhausted. Blair Neatby in Robert L. McDougall, *Canada's Past and Present: A Dialogue, Our Living Tradition*. (Toronto, 1965) 9. In regards to the larger debate on defence estimates, King continued to stress the party line of Canadian autonomy and national unity. He also argued that the moderate estimates were a bulwark against probable Conservative demands for an extensive building program. King Diary 20 January 1937. The Diary revealed that King had been concerned regarding the C.C.F. motion, (25 January 1937) and was relieved when it was revised to read, 'This House views with grave concern the startling increases of expenditure proposed by the Government for purposes of national armament in contrast with the inadequate provision for the social security of all sections of the Canadian people,' as it did not condemn the armaments in principle and was unlikely to attract the support of any of the Liberal members. Rather, the amendment, in King's mind, acknowledged the necessity of the program, and he was relieved as it allowed the Liberals to focus on this aspect of the debate. He was more concerned, however, that it would be seen as being in the nature of a want of confidence motion, which might be supported by members from Quebec and others. King Diary, 12 February, 1937 See also Ritchie Owendale, *'Appeasement' and the English-Speaking World. Britain, the United States, the Dominions and the Policy of 'Appeasement', 1937-1939*. (Cardiff, 1975) 328.

¹⁰⁰ *Winnipeg Free Press*, April 22 1937, 11. It also published an editorial cartoon deriding the extent of Canadian defence policy as pitiful in a world where defence budgets were measured in billions rather than millions. *Winnipeg Free Press*, March 10th, 1937, 11

¹⁰¹ *Globe*, March 7 1937, 6. See also the editorial protesting the weakening of Imperial ties, *Globe*, April 12th, 1938, 6

Coincidentally these international developments became more controversial as the political leadership changed following the federal election of 1935. Following the Ethiopian crisis, Canadians increasingly faced the reality that they would have to come to a decision on their international role. The electoral victory of the federal Liberals ensured that it became their responsibility, and especially that of their long-standing leader, William Lyon Mackenzie King, to shape Canadian views into a viable policy. While the problems that arose during the King administration, including the international challenges of Manchuria, Ethiopia, Germany and Italy represented to a large degree the continuation of previous problems, the international situation would deteriorate rapidly and dramatically during the period from 1935 to 1939. Canadians and their government could not form a consistent or cohesive approach to these issues other than expressing a desire to limit the impact of international developments, to wrap themselves in the complicated politics of their nation and North America, and to insulate their nation from outside complications.

These seeming inconsistencies in Canadian policy, and in Canadian public opinion, were important in themselves. They in many ways reflected how Canadians looked at international relations, and their views on domestic and international issues. They also bring up questions of the influence of the intellectual community in Canada and the contrast between elite and overall public opinion. Despite the attempts of various Canadian groups to shape public opinion, it remained far from pliable, and committed in many ways to these continuing themes in Canadian policy.

This policy was challenged by the realities of the 1930s, particularly the British connection. It was into this country of contradiction, provincialism and competing

nationalisms that King George the VI and his consort Queen Elizabeth gingerly stepped as they sailed up the St. Lawrence in May of 1939. They were simultaneously the symbols of empire and of nationality. Ultimately, as the Royal Tour demonstrated, Canada's connection to the Empire, and the nature of the international system, meant its involvement in international issues, however much many Canadians might wish to avoid it. The majority of French Canadians seemed to have been reassured by the policies of appeasement and the pledge of no conscription. Canada went to war in 1939 united, at least on the surface. It appears as though the majority of Canadians realized that while the Canadian government had stressed that it would not commit itself in advance, Canada could not avoid involvement in a war that significantly threatened Great Britain. These themes, although not directly addressed in the speeches welcoming the royal couple, were consistently present in the background. The context in which the tour occurred, which could not have been completely anticipated when Mackenzie King proposed it in 1937, meant that it took on added relevance, but also spoke to recurring and underlying themes.

Chapter 2. What Public? The Nature of the Canadian Intellectual Community and the Question of Public Opinion

The 1939 Royal Tour demonstrated both the continuing appeal of imperialism and the impact of public opinion. This issue became increasingly important as the likelihood of Canadian involvement in a European conflict increased following the Munich agreements of October 1938. *But what was public opinion?* It was a relatively new concept in the 1930s, and yet, in a sense, public opinion, vox populi, was familiar to politicians as far back as ancient Athens and the Roman republic. It was like the Roman senator's view of art – he knew what it was, and he knew what he liked (or not). It made politics an art – and good politicians often approached the issue in intuitive rather than in quantitative terms.¹ As O.D. Skelton reluctantly acknowledged to Hume Wrong in March of 1939, 'The plain fact is that if we go into any European war it will be simply and solely on the grounds of racial sympathy with the United Kingdom.'²

Skelton hoped, however, that the public would be able to draw lessons from this experience for the formation of Canadian policy in the future. 'If the next year or so passes without a war,' he continued optimistically, 'I have little doubt that the ripening of public opinion in the assumption of more national responsibility in questions of war as well as in questions of peace will continue at a more rapid pace than in the past ten years.' He implied however, that this promising result would depend on the leadership of those such as himself, Wrong and other members of the Department of External Affairs.

¹ Lester Pearson, for example, expressed his concerns regarding the long-term consequences of the Royal Tour on Canadian public opinion during his correspondence with O.D. Skelton. His letter concludes wryly that 'From reading the Canadian newspapers, I am sure I would be shot as a traitor on sight if I were ever rash enough to give expression to such views in the hearing of my intoxicated countrymen at the present time.' Pearson to Skelton, 9 June 1939, Pearson Papers, LAC MG 26 N1, v. 14

² Skelton to Wrong March 2 1939, Wrong Papers, LAC MG 30 E101, v. 3

Canadians, he stated, would have to be educated to ‘think boldly about Canada's place in the world.’³

Skelton was not the only member of the Department of External Affairs who felt that public opinion could be and should be re-shaped with the proper education. The Canadian intelligentsia sought to ‘educate’ the general population, and justified this leadership by their higher education and greater understanding of contemporary events. This was equally true regarding the question of international events and Canada’s position. Both French⁴ and English⁵ Canadian intellectual communities had long considered the question of intellectual involvement in public debate. Although this concept had been at times controversial,⁶ the idea that intellectuals had the ability to ‘guide’ society on these questions was generally acknowledged.

Societal changes, both generational and demographical, seemed to point to a Canadian public ready to be led. As seen earlier, in October of 1938, H.L. Keenleyside, a departmental official formerly stationed in Japan, embarked on an extensive Canadian lecture tour. ‘The first thing that struck me,’ Keenleyside argued,

was the divergence in the views expressed by the newspapers and those voiced by the people with whom one spoke. I think there can be no doubt that newspapers in western Canada (and probably in the east as well) on such matters as this

³ Skelton to Wrong, March 2 1939, Wrong Papers, LAC MG 30 E101, v. 3

⁴ Catherine Pomeyrols discusses this idea in the context of Julien Benda’s, work of 1927, *La trahison des clercs* during which he argued that ‘le clerc me paraît manquer à sa fonction en descendant sur la place publique [s’il] y descend pour y faire triompher un passion réaliste de classe, de race, ou de nation.’ *Les intellectuels Québécois : formation et engagements, 1919-1939*. (Montreal, 1996), 44. In addition, Donald Horton argues that this sense of leadership was emphasized in the elite classical colleges in Quebec such as St Jean de Brébeuf or Sainte Marie. *André Laurendeau: French Canadian Nationalist, 1912-1968*. (Toronto, 1992), 14

⁵ Scott, *Canada Today: A Study of Her National Interests and National Policy*. Second edition. (Toronto, 1939), 140

⁶ Douglas Owsram, *The Government Generation: Canadian Intellectuals and the State, 1900-1945*. (Toronto, 1986), 167

represent almost exclusively the point of view of the older and more firmly established element of the population which is British in racial origin.⁷

It was their influence, he argued, that encouraged the continuing sentiment that 'When Britain is at war we all are at war.'⁸ The development of a more 'progressive' view of Canadian foreign policy lay with the ethnic minorities in the Prairie Provinces, as well as the younger elements of the population. He reported to Skelton the opinion, expressed by a number of westerners, that

The present mess in Europe is largely due to British politics and it is not up to us to sacrifice another generation of Canadians to try to straighten it out...If there were a real system of collective security opinion Canada should take part but the British Government has destroyed the League and announced the fact with satisfaction. So if Britain and the rest of Europe want to go to Hell let them go - but let us stay out of it and try to maintain some remnants of decency on this continent.⁹

Taking into consideration the West's 'racial' and generational composition, Keenleyside concluded, a Canadian political party who announced a policy of Canadian autonomy would gain widespread support. This would probably include the support of isolationists, proponents of the League, the youth of Canada and the 'non-English'. Presented properly, he argued, (presumably something that could be ensured by incorporating the expertise of the intelligentsia), this might even sway Quebec and some parts of rural Ontario. 'It would, of course, precipitate a bitter fight,' Keenleyside acknowledged. He argued, however, that a nation-wide debate on foreign policy, no

⁷ Memorandum to Skelton by Keenleyside, October 6th 1938, Undersecretary of State for External Affairs, RG 25 D1, LAC v. 715.

⁸ Ibid.

⁹ Ibid.

matter how divisive, might in the end be beneficial. In any case, he asked Skelton 'hasn't the time for such a fight arrived? Or must we go through another World War first?'¹⁰

Through their interpretations of events, therefore, some members of the Canadian intelligentsia saw the possibility of exercising a degree of influence. However, it seems that while they were able to influence some segments of the overall community, public opinion in Canada as a whole proved difficult to shift, at least in the short term. Overall, these intellectual attempts were for the most part successful in influencing those already predisposed to agree with their point of view.

This theory is reinforced when examining the experiences of the Canadian press, both English and French, during the 1930s. In English Canada, John W. Dafoe and the *Winnipeg Free Press* constituted the most forceful and consistent exponent of Canadian internationalism. The *Free Press* in many ways set the tone for the Canadian discussion of these issues, and Dafoe's editorials were widely discussed.¹¹ Despite this influence, however, the evidence suggests that only a small segment of the *Free Press* readers' embraced these views. For the most part it seems as though these readers represented the small minority of Canadians who already agreed with Dafoe's internationalist program.¹² Dafoe's growing frustration, as expressed in his editorials during the decade is perhaps evidence of his realization of his relatively limited influence.¹³

Paul Rutherford argues that editors and journalists in the late nineteenth century employed the language of morality to explain events and to speed understanding: they assumed that happenings could be classified right or wrong, that there was

¹⁰ Ibid.

¹¹ Lower, *My First Seventy-Five Years*, 175, 179 and Ramsay Cook, *The Politics of John W. Dafoe and the Free Press*. (Toronto, 1963), 237

¹² Cook, *Dafoe and the Free Press*, 240

¹³ Patrick Brennan, *Reporting the Nation's Business: Press-Government Relations During the Liberal Years, 1935-1957*. (Toronto, 1994), 31

virtue and vice, fair as well as foul play, truth and falsehood. The news of the world, whether at home or abroad, was replete with lessons about life which the press was duty-bound to elaborate.¹⁴

The language of morality, which they incorporated in their work, was not merely rhetoric. Instead it represented their understanding of the values and interests at stake in shaping public opinion along ‘moral’ lines. Dafoe’s editorials often represented an equal sense of determination to shape public opinion in the ‘correct’ direction.¹⁵

Although Dafoe’s readers remained interested in his views and his prescriptions for an internationalist program, the evidence suggests that they were often unconvinced or uninterested in these policies.¹⁶ It is possible as well that these readers consulted the *Winnipeg Free Press* for reasons other than or in addition to Dafoe’s international policy. As Rutherford argues, the media cannot create opinions that did not already exist. Instead they are most influential in shaping opinion when they reinforced views that already existed, or in shaping perceptions in the long term and in addition to the impact of contemporary events.¹⁷ Editors certainly played a critical role in determining this impact.

¹⁴ Paul Rutherford, *A Victorian Authority: The Daily Press in Late Nineteenth-Century Canada*. (Toronto, 1982), 231

¹⁵ For one example among many, see *Winnipeg Free Press*, ‘What’s the Cheering For?’ September 30 1938, 15. The *Free Press*’ approach to international news was thus different from that of other Canadian papers, such as the *Star* which mixed a degree of escapism, represented by Gordon Sinclair’s articles, with their significant coverage of international developments. See Ross Harkness, *J.E. Atkinson of The Star*. (Toronto, 1963), 248. The implication, of course, was that this direction would be found, with some help from Dafoe and other English Canadian intellectuals, in the Liberal Party of Canada. Dafoe would certainly agree with the editors that Rutherford mentions, who rejected the idea of total press independence. It was necessary to work closely with the established parties, while maintaining some degree of autonomy, to exercise a degree of influence on the shaping of public policy. In the end, as the Montreal *Herald* argued in May of 1879, that it was the highest duty of the party journalist, ‘to elevate the ideas and the tone of his party and to guide it in the ways of progress and purity.’ Rutherford, *Victorian Authority*, 215

¹⁶ Brennan, *Reporting the Nation’s Business*, 31

¹⁷ They did so by setting the agenda, stereotyping, conferring of status, and the introduction of issues into public discussion. Rutherford, *Victorian Authority*, 7. Rutherford’s examination of the populist press of 19th century is reflective in many ways of Benedict Anderson’s views regarding the attempts of some members to shape a community. ‘The *Star* or the *Telegram*... proved adept at exploiting the ideas of nationality and democracy – against French Canadians or Irish Catholics, the British (and later Americans)...to justify popular prejudices. All this served to express class antagonisms (the poor against the rich) and yet emphasize a sense of community (the people or the nation against its enemies). The contradictory blend,

Their role as ‘gatekeepers’, in selecting details and stories they felt would satisfy the tastes of their readers, depended on their ability to sense the trends in their readership and the limits of the readers’ tolerance of conflicting views. No more was this true than regarding the role of editorials, particularly when a majority of a newspaper’s subscribers differed with the views expressed therein.¹⁸ As Ernest May argues, the impact of editorials is almost impossible to measure. However, ‘editorial writers probably moulded opinion no more than they do today, [rather] news columns and editorial pages portrayed drifts of opinion within a community.’¹⁹

As with the Winnipeg *Free Press*, the overall sense is that the editors of Montreal’s *Le Devoir* became increasingly frustrated by the lack of public response. (Of course the *Free Press* had a far larger and more lucrative place in its market, southern Manitoba, than *Le Devoir* did in its – metropolitan Montreal.) It argued for a distinctively French Canadian nationalist agenda, and its increasing frustration was shared to some degree by the larger nationalist movement. Abbé Lionel Groulx’s *action nationale* journal, which had played a significant role in the movement, had received widespread attention in the 1920s, and Groulx himself was a household name. However, by 1928 Groulx had terminated his association with the journal, apparently due its fading influence.²⁰ The crisis caused by the depression had helped reinvigorate his nationalist

perhaps best labelled populist, had proved a fine way to curry the public’s favour.’ Rutherford, *Victorian Authority*, 56. See also Benedict Anderson, *Imagined Communities*.

¹⁸ Rutherford, *Victorian Authority*, 134

¹⁹ Ernest May, *American Imperialism: A Speculative Essay*. (New York, 1968), 37

²⁰ Susan Trofimenkoff, *Action Française: French-Canadian Nationalism in the Twenties*. (Toronto, 1975), 108. In his memoirs Groulx states that he had only committed himself to this journal for ten years and that after this time he had decided to move on. Lionel Groulx, *Mes Memoires. Tome II: 1920-1928*. (Montreal, 1971), 375

program.²¹ The general impression gained by reading *Le Devoir* during the period, however, is that although it was influential, both in the pronunciation of its views and in setting the terms of the debate, it was never as influential in shaping public opinion as it might have hoped.

While English Canadians failed to embrace the call for internationalism expressed so consistently by the *Free Press*, it appears that French Canadians failed to heed *Le Devoir's* calls to limit outside influences. For example, while French Canadian society was generally anti-imperialist, they reacted enthusiastically to the Royal Tour.²² Further, French Canadians, reassured by Mackenzie King's promise of no conscription, generally accepted the declaration of war in 1939, (although with resignation).²³ In addition, French Canadians simply seemed unwilling to give up access to other cultural products such as American film.²⁴ Further, suffering from the depression, they were eager for prosperity and economic development. They were more willing than French Canadian intellectuals to overlook the sources of investment for economic development,²⁵ even when it originated from the United States, Britain, or even English-Canada.²⁶

²¹ Esther Delisle, *The Traitor and the Jew: Anti-Semitism and the Delirium of Extremist Right-Wing Nationalism in French-Canada from 1929-1939*. (Montreal, 1993), 32. *Winnipeg Free Press*, May 18th 1939.

²² *Le Devoir* May 17-18th 1939

²³ This perhaps helps explain the tone of *Le Devoir's* coverage. May 17th to 23rd, 1939 and June 10th 1939

²⁴ Trofimenkoff, *Action Française*, 156, Delisle, *The Traitor and the Jew*, 38. Ironically, as Thompson and Seager point out, English Canadian intellectuals were also concerned about the incredible influence of American media. Thompson and Seager, *Decades of Discord*, 191. Rutherford's recent work provides an intriguing discussion of the use of film during the period by various regimes, including Nazi Germany. He argued that the medium, particularly its visual nature, allowed for a sense of vicarious participation in a great national effort. Paul Rutherford, *Weapons of Mass Persuasion*, 186

²⁵ Delisle, *The Traitor and the Jew*, 114. In fact, the nature of the cultural disparity between French Canadian and American societies may have made the American influence seem less threatening to French Canadian leaders. They were concerned to some extent, however, regarding its long-term impact. Conrad Black, *Duplessis*. (Toronto, 1977), 57

²⁶ Ramsay Cook, *Quebec and the Uses of Nationalism*. Second ed. (Toronto, 1995), 91

Overall, the nature of public opinion in Canada and its influences remains notoriously hard to quantify. This is especially in the case, such as in the 1930s when there were no public opinion polls, and the idea of public opinion was itself a relatively new idea. It seems apparent, however, that contemporaries were both consistently interested in its nature and at the same time failed to fully understand the nature of its formation.²⁷

Their views regarding the role of public opinion in a democratic society were most clearly expressed when they discussed the newest ‘yardstick’ of public opinion, the public opinion poll. The arguments put forth by the Institute of Public Opinion, which produced the Gallup Poll, reflected these conceptions. Although available only in the United States through the 1930s, (Gallup came to Canada in 1941), its rhetoric, and that of its opponents, reflected the contemporary views of democracy.

Gallup and his colleagues argued that their system reflected progressive trends in technology. However, to an even greater degree they emphasized the role that their system could play in the democratic process. It would, they argued, provide an immediate, consistent, and accurate measure of public views, and would return democracy to ‘The People’ in an age of increasing corporate interest. This would allow “the will of the majority of citizens were to become ascertainable at all times.”²⁸ Their voices could now finally be heard over those of ‘The Interests,’ who represented only the

²⁷ This certainly included the members of the Canadian government, such as King, Lapointe and Powers, the opposition parties, as well as the members of the Department of External Affairs. For an example of its impact on the members of the DEA see Keenleyside’s memoirs. Hugh Keenleyside, *Memoirs of Hugh L. Keenleyside. Volume I: Hammer the Golden Day*. (Toronto, 1981).

²⁸ George Gallup and Saul Rae, *The Pulse of Democracy: The Public Opinion Poll and How it Works*. (New York, 1940), 125

powerful few.²⁹ In their 1940 work, *The Pulse of Democracy*, Saul Rae and George H. Gallup argue that

representatives will be better able to represent if they have an accurate measure of the wishes, aspirations, and needs of different groups within the general public...Public opinion surveys will provide legislators with a new instrument for establishing trends of opinions, and minimize the chances of their being fooled by clamouring minorities.³⁰

While historians such as Daniel Robinson have demonstrated how Gallup's rhetoric never matched the early experience of the Gallup poll,³¹ the rhetoric used by the IPO, particularly Gallup's focus on the 'empirical assessment' of the citizen's intelligence, proved appealing to contemporaries.³²

As mentioned, the Gallup poll did not arrive in Canada until 1941. It is interesting however, to consider how the rhetoric used so successfully by the IPO in the United States did not translate completely in Canada. Canadians concerned in policy were interested in public opinion, as seen in the experiences of the civil service mandarins in the Departments of External Affairs and the Finance Department,³³ as well as the interest raised by the war questionnaire and the peace poll of 1934.³⁴ However, while populist ideas were present at time in Canada, they did not play the pivotal role they did in the

²⁹ Ibid., 11

³⁰ Ibid., 266

³¹ Daniel Robinson provides an interesting analysis of Gallup's early history, both in Canada and the United States. His examination of the business, racial, class and gender considerations behind Gallup's focus on 'likely voters' and their impact on the nature of polling in the period, although not directly relevant, still provide an interesting contrast to the populist rhetoric of Rae and Gallup. As a result of these considerations, Robinson argued that 'Gallup's polls, while heralded as a democratic leveller of state and private power, incorporated a sampling design which underrepresented the very constituencies most marginalized in American public life: women, African Americans, and low socio-economic groups.' Robinson, *The Measure of Democracy: Polling, Market Research and Public Life, 1930-1945*. (Toronto, 1999), 41

³² Ibid., 41

³³ David Fransen, 'Unscrewing the Unscrutable.' *The Rowell-Sirois Commission, The Ottawa Bureaucracy and Public Finance Reform, 1935-1941*. (Unpublished Ph.D. Dissertation, University of Toronto, 1984), 454

³⁴ Thomas Socknat, *Witness Against War: Pacifism in Canada, 1900-1945*. (Toronto, 1987), 156

American system. However, their views on the differing nature of Canadian and American democracy ensured that they approached the arrival of the Gallup Poll in Canada with caution.

Canadian journalists focused on the limitations of the new system, perhaps because they were traditionally considered, by themselves and others, as ‘bell-weather’ of public opinion. The nature of their reasoning, however, is also interesting. They showed little indication to embrace the doctrine of *vox populi vox dei*. Canadians, these journalists argued, should embrace Britain’s ‘cautious reserve’ *vis-à-vis* public opinion. As H.T. Stanner, wrote in a *Canadian Business* piece in December 1941, ‘All too frequently it is found that large numbers of people have little or no specific knowledge of defence problems and consequently, are in no position to form a guiding opinion.’³⁵

Canadian politicians in addition, argued that the very philosophical foundation for the principle of polling contradicted the nature of Canadian society. Canadian democratic principles, based on the British system, differed significantly in their mind from their American counterparts. This, they argued, limited the significance of Gallup’s system. Proponents of the Gallup system heavily emphasized the role of populism. In Canada, however, political pundits placed the emphasis was on Parliament, the representatives of ‘the People,’ as the source of democratic legitimacy. C.G. Power in the House of Commons in 1939 reminded his colleagues that their primary duty was to the nation, rather than to their constituents at home ‘who know nothing of the question under discussion.’ The same principle was also seen in regards to Mackenzie King’s governing principle that ‘Parliament will decide.’³⁶

³⁵ Robinson, *The Measure of Democracy*, 90

³⁶ *Ibid.*, 70

Even when public opinion polls began to be widely used, their extent of their usefulness remains subject to a number of qualifications. Page and Shapiro, in their study of the trends in these polls, clearly demonstrate the impact of language and interpretation.³⁷ In addition, May's work reveals the divisive nature of foreign policy debates. 'Apparently with the interests in question those of [the entire nation] as against those of people in some foreign country, the citizen sees less reason to seek middle ground... [As a result,] even informed and interested people may comprehend the issues by association and analogy,' leading them to form strong and one-sided views.³⁸ As Page and Shapiro conclude, poll responses on general sentiments did not necessarily translate into support for related legislative action or governmental policy.³⁹

The glacial nature of change in public opinion is also apparent. Page and Shapiro argue that while public opinion does change, it does so only in small degrees, mainly in terms of six to eight polling percentage points.⁴⁰ Even more interesting, and difficult to define, is how this change occurs. As Ernest May argues, a 'foreign policy public' plays a significant role in shaping public views on international relations. Although only a relatively small segment of the public followed international events they played a disproportionate role in shaping the discussion of international relations. This was largely due, he claims to their social status, the respect given them by their community, and their access to information not readily available. Quoting sociologist Edward A. Ross, May argues that "Every editor, politician, banker, capitalist, railroad president, employer,

³⁷ Although the study refers specifically to American views, it remains useful in discussing the impact of elites in North America shaping opinion. Benjamin Page and Robert Shapiro, *The Rational Public: Fifty Years of Trends in American's Policy Preferences*. (Chicago, 1992), 174

³⁸ May, *American Imperialism*, 23

³⁹ Page and Shapiro, *The Rational Public*, 71

⁴⁰ *Ibid.*, 65

clergyman, or judge has a following with whom his opinion has weight. He, in turn, is likely to have *his* authorities. The anatomy of collective opinion...form[s] a kind of intellectual feudal system.⁴¹

The formation of a consensus was aided, according to May, by the economic and political interests shared by this elite.⁴² In addition, although their predominance could be challenged, their position and access to information from overseas ensured that ‘the establishment could determine collectively the terms on which any for policy debate would be conducted.’ While other segments of the population, such as labour, might attempt to challenge their dominance, ‘the potential following for such would-be leaders within the for policy public could only be small, however, so long as they had no backers with the cachet of success and social status, reputation for good judgment, special knowledge, for experience, and connections in Washington.’⁴³ These qualities encouraged the general public’s reliance on this group’s interpretation of foreign policy.

This influence, however, was subject to limitation. As May argues, the foreign policy public could not radically change the terms of international involvement. Further, given the fluid nature of public opinion, they ‘could know in advance only the extreme limits of what their constituency might approve or disapprove.’⁴⁴ They could not be sure, therefore, of how to significantly shift public opinion on international relations. This included the media attempts to influence opinion, as well as their efforts at ‘education’. Those attempts were further hindered by the technical problem involved in reporting international developments during the period. Information on international events took

⁴¹ May, *American Imperialism*, 29

⁴² *Ibid.*, 29

⁴³ Or in this case, Ottawa or London. *Ibid.*, 82

⁴⁴ *Ibid.*, 83

time cross the oceans to Canada, and wire services did not provide a great deal of copy on these events to Canadian newspapers.⁴⁵

Despite these limitations on the intellectual attempts to affect public opinion, Canadian contemporaries continued to focus on the issue of 'leadership'. As Hugh Keenleyside, a member of the Canadian Department of External Affairs, wrote in his memoirs almost fifty years later,

It is perhaps true that internal stresses within Canada made an enlightened and more positive policy in foreign affairs impossible. But it is at least arguable that if the government had made any serious effort to give leadership in the interpretation of the international scene, the Canadian people, French-speaking and English-speaking alike, might have responded with the humanity and intelligence that marked many other aspects of Canadian life.⁴⁶

It is clear that the King administration was reluctant to provide open leadership in shaping the debate on foreign policy. This was despite evidence that governments in democratic societies, especially during this period of limited international information, could play a significant role in shaping the discussion. Page and Shapiro argue that abrupt opinion changes occur when notable international events are interpreted in a unified, consistent manner by governmental and other elites, including the media.⁴⁷ This is especially due to the government monopoly on overseas information.⁴⁸

A number of contemporary groups did attempt to shape the Canadian approach their foreign policy. Interventionists, including Dafoe, continued their attempts to convince Canadians to support the League of Nations. In contrast, non-interventionists admitted that Canadians could not isolate themselves entirely from international developments, particularly economic ones. However, they argued that Canadian policy

⁴⁵ May, *American Imperialism*, 37

⁴⁶ Keenleyside, *Hammer the Golden Day*, 505

⁴⁷ Page and Shapiro, *The Rational Public*, 279

⁴⁸ *Ibid.*, 282

should be focused on limiting the impact of these factors.⁴⁹ This was particularly in response to the question of the impact of British policy in the Far East and, most especially, Europe.⁵⁰ Finally, imperialism in Canada represented to a larger extent an underlying, all-encompassing and omnipresent factor.

Each of these three main groups experienced similar degrees of frustration in attempting to sway public opinion in their favour. Ironically, they all utilized similar tactics, and shared similar views of public opinion. The question of public opinion had become a central issue during the interwar period, as political thinkers sought to incorporate new concepts of public involvement in policy questions with older ideas of democracy and populism.

As seen, Canadian intellectuals were convinced of the role that they would play in shaping public opinion. However, these attempts were hampered by the often peripheral role that they played in Canadian society, the way public opinion is formed, and the rifts within the intellectual community itself. Nowhere were the divisions in Canadian society more apparent than in the country's intellectual society. This community was limited in size, in both English and French-Canada. English and French Canadian intellectuals were isolated, both from each other and from the larger Canadian community.

The English Canadian intellectual community in particular, was notable by its separateness. The most apparent aspect of was the focus on educational achievements. In an overall population of less than 12 million, a university degree, which was becoming the signal of the intellectual community, was a relative rarity.⁵¹ This was particularly the

⁴⁹ Lenarcic, *Where Angels Feared to Tread*, 8

⁵⁰ *Ibid.*, 19

⁵¹ The *Canada Year Book* of 1938 estimates the population for 1937 at 11, 720 000. *Canada Year Book*, (CYB),1938, 155

case in a society that had suffered greatly from the economic crisis of the decade. During the height of the Depression in 1932 and 1933, over a quarter of Canadians was collecting unemployment. Indeed, the total number of university students formed only a tiny fraction of the community. Almost half of the Canadian population did not finish high school. In 1931, only 46% of 16 year old Canadians were in school.⁵² In the 1935-1936 academic year, Canada's 160 universities and colleges granted 6,772 degrees. Of these, 786 were graduate degrees.⁵³ In contrast, the members of the intellectual community increasingly held graduate degrees and doctorates.⁵⁴

Even before the dislocation of the depression, Canada's population, and therefore the Canadian university establishment, had always been small. The number of university and college teachers hovered somewhere between 2,500 and 3,000 and fewer than 150 were social scientists. In addition, the great majority of academics of whatever discipline did not become involved in the public affairs, which made those who did even more known to each other.⁵⁵

Doug Owram argues that English Canadian intellectuals in the 1930s, influenced by the tradition of reform inherited from their predecessors, and the socio-economic crisis of the depression, increasingly attempted to play a role reforming the injustices in Canadian society. Echoing Skelton's comments to *Wrong*, they focused on their self-professed role of educating and shaping Canadian public opinion. They agreed with the overall sentiment that 'The facts, if properly analyzed and properly interpreted, would

⁵² Thompson and Seager, *Decades of Discord*, 159

⁵³ *Canada Year Book*, 1938, 996-997

⁵⁴ Owram, *The Government Generation*, 145

⁵⁵ *Ibid.*, 143

point toward the proper policies and attitudes.⁵⁶ They argued that their training and expertise, in the social sciences in particular, made them uniquely qualified for this role. This assumption was reinforced by the assumptions of Canadian society, that the new challenges of the period required leadership from experts, whether self-educated or academically trained.⁵⁷ Canadian intellectuals increasingly attempted to position themselves therefore, in the federal government, especially in issues such as social work.⁵⁸

Canadian intellectuals preached Habermas views on the nature of democracy, particularly the nature and quality of debate in democratic societies. This in turn depended on the presence of a number of different factors; the ability of relatively autonomous citizens to access information regarding various issues, their willingness to participate in shaping policy, and perhaps most importantly a commitment to rationality. According to Habermas, in a democratic society, citizens had to be willing to listen to an open exchange of views and judge them on their merit. Canadian intellectuals were also influenced by contemporary views on democracy and public opinion, including some of the most recent works originating in the United States.⁵⁹ Intellectuals concerned with public opinion argued that citizens also had to be able to distinguish between political views and public information, and propaganda, which left unchecked, might well become an instrument for the government to organize public opinion.⁶⁰ As Bruce Kuklick argued,

⁵⁶ Ibid., 154

⁵⁷ Ibid., 122, 137

⁵⁸ Ibid., 123

⁵⁹ See Bruce Kuklick's discussion of Dewey's *The Public and Its Problems* (1927), *The Quest for Certainty*, (1933). Lippmann's *The Phantom Public* (1925) and Lasswell's, *Psychopathology and Politics* (1930). Kuklick, *Blind Oracles: Intellectuals and War from Kennan to Kissinger*. (Princeton, 2006), 9

⁶⁰ Rutherford, *Weapons of Mass Persuasion*, 141

the focus of intellectuals on public opinion reflected their belief that if politics were ‘rational’, the appropriate course would be apparent.⁶¹

This emphasis on rationality and the education of public opinion reflected as well the faith of contemporaries concerned with political thinking in experts to clarify issues and their role in ‘educating’ the public. They argued that the newly professionalized practitioners of the social sciences in particular, (sociology, economics and political sciences), ‘might leverage politics into the realm of the right.’ This was emphasized especially in regards to the question of international affairs.⁶² As John Dewey argued in *The Quest for Certainty* (1929), ‘The human sciences could provide us the wherewithal for making more adequate judgments.’⁶³

The role of the social science ‘expert,’ was hampered by a number of factors, however. This intellectual community, partially due to its small size, was extremely well integrated. This was true, however, only in regards to ethnic boundaries. Members of the English Canadian intellectual community corresponded often, pursued projects in common, and socialized together. These connections had started in school as many had attended the same universities. This was especially true in cases of graduate work, often pursued at institutions abroad. The number of Canadians pursuing graduate degrees was so small that acquaintance would be impossible to avoid.⁶⁴ Within the developing network of intellectuals, positions often overlapped in various societies such as the Canadian Clubs, the Canadian Radio League, the Canadian Institute of International

⁶¹ Kuklick, *Blind Oracles*, 4

⁶² *Ibid.*, 4. As Kuklick demonstrated, at the same time they distanced themselves from people who did not have their credentials but who were interested in similar issues and could ‘benefit from their wisdom – businessmen, social workers, and the bureaucrats of government agencies.’ *Ibid.*, 18

⁶³ *Ibid.*, 9

⁶⁴ The *Canada Year Book* for 1937 lists 1, 645 students enrolled in Graduate Studies. *Canada Year Book*, 977

Affairs, to name but a few. English Canadian intellectuals in the universities also had contacts in the federal bureaucracy, such as the Department of External Affairs, as former colleagues increasingly staffed it.

Individual members of this community were also very well connected with the global intellectual community. Due to their interest in international developments, the connections created by their educational experiences, and the quality of their academic endeavours,⁶⁵ Canadian intellectuals connected with international streams of thought and leading international figures. This sense of international connection was in many ways utterly foreign to Canadians as a whole.⁶⁶ Owram concludes that their education and their university experiences ‘thus provided the elite with a sense of exclusivity and accomplishment that distinguished members from the public at large and from other groups involved in public affairs. This included those based in non-governmental organizations such as the Chamber of Commerce⁶⁷ and the protestant churches.⁶⁸

This included key members of the Canadian press. In particular, a group of young journalists clustered around Dafoe and the *Winnipeg Free Press* in the 1930s were prominent. This included Grant Dexter, and George Ferguson, who had long-standing connections with Vincent Massey, one of the leading power-brokers of the Liberal

⁶⁵ Owram, *Government Generation*, 147

⁶⁶ *Ibid.*

⁶⁷ *Ibid.*, 138

⁶⁸ See Keenleyside’s discussion of the works of missionaries in Asia while he was posted at the embassy in Japan for one example of this sense of detachment. Keenleyside, *Hammer the Golden Day*, 316. The English Canadian intellectual community also included a number of self-educated reformers interested in social and international affairs. Although the pursuit of a university education, particularly graduate work, had become increasingly important for the intellectual community, there did remain room for the self-educated expert, such as Vincent Massey or Charlotte Whitton. Owram, *Government Generation*, XII

party.⁶⁹ The connections forged between these journalists and English Canadian intellectuals became so close that any definition of this community has to include notable journalists and editors.

These contacts were enhanced by those that Dexter and Dafoe forged with the intellectual community in Winnipeg such as Roderick K. Finlayson, E.J. Tarr and the Sanhedrin group. The Sanhedrin, whose name echoed the biblical description of an influential group of elders, whose wisdom was sought by Jewish leaders, provided a link between the intellectual community, notable journalists and key members of the Liberal party.⁷⁰ As the intellectual community attempted to gain a greater share of influence in the shaping of policy during the depression, it found in Dexter and Dafoe, in Owram words, ‘allies who could use publicity and propaganda to encourage movement in new directions.’⁷¹

The French Canadian intellectual community was equally integrated. A parallel to Owram’s study on the English Canadian intellectual community has not yet been published. However, certain themes are clear. Generally, the two main groups of intellectuals in Canada did not consistently overlap. The social and educational connections that bound each group did not exist across them.⁷² Even those intellectuals who attempted to bridge the gap were often uncomfortable with this relationship.⁷³ Overall, this seems to reflect the cultural differences between the two groups. This was

⁶⁹ Dexter, for example, shared similar generational experiences with many of the intellectuals that Owram focuses on, including participation in the Great War and a growing attachment to Canadian nationalism, shared a number of views with this group, as well as a shared sense of purpose. *Ibid.*, 185

⁷⁰ *Ibid.*

⁷¹ *Ibid.*

⁷² See John English biography of Trudeau, *Citizen of the World*. for a discussion of the educational experiences of French Canadian intellectuals.

⁷³ Owram, *Government Generation*, 147, They were also anxious concerning the political implications of too close of a connection, although it seems apparent that the connection was uncomfortable more for cultural rather than political reasons. Lenarcic, *Where Angels Feared to Tread*, 96

enhanced by the fact that the French Canadian intellectual community focused on different issues, reflecting their differing cultural and political concerns.⁷⁴

Their main focus involved the viability of the French Canadian society. French Canadian intellectuals did not form their views in isolation from the culture from which they came. Having been raised in an environment that stressed the values of family, church, (almost all French Canadian intellectuals were Catholic), and rural life, they naturally concentrated on these themes in their own work. Those concerns focused on the contamination of Quebec society by the increasingly influential factors of industrialization, urbanization and modernism.⁷⁵ Traditional French Canadian society was in their view an organic structure that had allowed their culture to survive for centuries in a North America dominated by Anglo-Saxon and Protestant values.⁷⁶ French Canadian nationalists, including the members of the *Action Libérale Nationale*, the *Jeune-Canada* movement and *L'Action nationale* argued that the spread of modern influences, including the centralization of federal power, industrialization and, most insidiously, modern, especially American culture, was eating away at this community from the inside.⁷⁷

⁷⁴ An example of this is seen in the response of French Canadian society to the new political forces represented in the Cooperative Commonwealth Federation and its intellectual core, the League for Social Reconstruction. As Horn has argued, the LSR simply failed to gain many proponents among the French Canadian community, due not only to organizational failures and lacklustre effort, but also due to divergent cultural influences. Michael Horn, *The League for Social Reconstruction: Intellectual Origins of the Democratic Left in Canada, 1930-1942*. (Toronto, 1980), 58. The same is true of the French Canadian response to isolationist groups within English Canada. Unfortunately, there has been little work done in the area, and the main source, David Lenarcic's work *Where Angels Fear to Tread*, is not overly useful. Lenarcic's examination of the relationship of non-interventionists with French Canadians is limited in breadth and depth, as seen by the fact that he doesn't include a single French source. Lenarcic was mainly concerned with the French Canadian nationalist perception that this group was dominated by left-leaning groups. His work is largely limited to Arthur Lower's contacts with federal M.P.s from Quebec after 1937 and with the Scott-Laurendeau attempts in 1939 to agree on a resolution on neutrality.

⁷⁵ Delisle, *The Traitor and the Jew*, 38. See also Cook, *Quebec and the Uses of Nationalism*, 91 and Black, *Duplessis*, 106

⁷⁶ Delisle, *The Traitor and the Jew*, 41. See also Cook, *Quebec and the Uses of Nationalism*, 107

⁷⁷ Delisle, *The Traitor and the Jew*, 61. See also Everett Hughes, *French Canada in Transition*. (Chicago, 1943), 127

As with their English Canadian colleagues, French Canadian intellectuals focused on their role as their society's leaders and on their role in shaping public opinion. They pushed for policies meant to deter these influences, policies of 're-Frenchification' and colonization, of 'achet-chez-nous' and the destruction of the 'Trusts'.⁷⁸ Overall, they wanted to insulate French Canadian society from outside influences that might undermine the organic nature of this society and its cultural values.

These views, combined with a general sense of remoteness from international developments, encouraged the focus on domestic issues and regional views. The Quebec press reported extensively on international political and economic events during the 1930s, a first since the end of the Great War.⁷⁹ However, this interest in foreign developments in some ways only encouraged the insularity of French Canadian nationalists. European developments, reported in the pages of each of these newspapers, reminded French Canadians that peace remained precarious.⁸⁰ The implication was that international conflict threatened the establishment of a strong, autonomous French Canadian society, one which would be able to focus on its cultural interests.

As mentioned, French and English Canadians, even within the intellectual community, for the most part knew each other on only the most superficial levels.⁸¹

Within their own communities, English and French Canadian intellectuals shared ideas

⁷⁸ Delisle, *The Traitor and the Jew*, 95. See also Bernard Vigod, *Quebec Before Duplessis: The Political Career of Louis-Alexandre Taschereau*. (Montreal, 1986), 173, English, *Trudeau*, 42 and Patricia Dirks, *The Failure of l'action liberale nationale*. (Montreal, 1991), 37

⁷⁹ Dominique Marquis, *Un quotidien pour l'Église: L'action catholique, 1910-1940*. (Ottawa, 2004), 125

⁸⁰ Marquis, *L'action catholique*, 125. Marquis' discussion of the transformation of the French Canadian religious press, particular *l'action catholique*, allows her a means of discussing the role that the Catholic Church continued to play in Quebec society. She argued that *l'action catholique* became much more of a mainstream journal by the 1930s, one that could compete with the major, secular, journals. At the same time she focuses on how its editors attempted to remain true to its initial purpose. She argues that it adapted by incorporating new measures of media and secular influences to maintain its position as the social arbiter of Quebec morals, culture, society and religion while maintaining its focus on its own interests. Marquis, *L'action catholique*, 202, 209

⁸¹ Owrarn, *Government Generation*, 154

easily and often. This integration, however, ended at the edge of the ethnic divide. It is possible to argue, though, that despite the wide gulf that separated them, they shared certain assumptions, particularly concerning their role in the Canadian community. This group saw themselves as influential, and to a certain extent, was perceived in that regard by the Canadian community as a whole.

The respective roles of the public and its 'educators' remained a matter of debate through much of the interwar period. While some pundits, such as Lasswell and Lippman, argued for an administrative elite to determine policy for the good of the public at large, others, particularly Dewey, argued that the role of the public was essential. While Lasswell and Lippman to some degree mistrusted the ability of the public to fulfill their role, especially in an age of increased complexity, Dewey argued that if the public did not yet possess the tools to make 'rational' decisions regarding these issues, it was the responsibility of experts to provide these through improved education and access to information. The mandarin class, he argued, should discover and disseminate the knowledge on which policy depended. However, it was democratic debate that determined the nature of policy and the means of its execution, based on the public perception of national needs and interests. Any other system, he argued, would simply result in 'an oligarchy managed in the interest of the few.'⁸²

As Kuklick has argued, the history of the involvement of scholars in the formation of policy provides at best an indication of the constraints of government service and the limitations of human understanding. While academics professed deep understanding of the nature of international events during the twentieth century, he argued, 'they actually groped in the dark.' In any event, their ideas had only a limited impact. The academics he

⁸² Kuklick, *Blind Oracles*, 9

studied served to ‘legitimate but not to energize policies.’ While politicians often wanted ‘impartial advice’ from experts, who themselves genuinely hoped to assist politicians in a realistic and an ethical fashion, the impact of these experts was limited both in impact and importance.⁸³

In addition, while experts had argued since the progressive era in favour of active participation in the formation of politics, their presence in the formation of politics was much more controversial in the 1930s than would be the case during the Cold War. Many influential members of Canadian society, for example, continued to view academics as removed from the everyday concerns of society. As Michiel Horn has argued, members of the Canadian business community in particular, often argued that academics should refrain from commenting on public issues unless they had something ‘useful’ or ‘constructive’ to contribute.⁸⁴ This sentiment, and the fact that those who spoke out often were subject to public abuse, only encouraged the firm conviction within academia that the intellectual community ought to be removed from the cares of the world.⁸⁵ Canadian intellectuals did not work as a unified group to push for the radical reorganization of society. While Doug Owram has argued that the academic community had become much more involved in public issues during the 1930s, particularly due to the social impact of the Great Depression,⁸⁶ he, along with Horn and David Fransen,⁸⁷ all agreed that they had not yet achieved the prominent role in Canadian society that they would in later periods.

While Canadian intellectuals therefore, continued their attempts to influence Canadian public opinion during the 1930s, the extent of their influence is open to

⁸³ Kuklick, *Blind Oracles*, 15

⁸⁴ Horn, *LSR*, 196

⁸⁵ Horn, *LSR*, 196

⁸⁶ Owram, *Government Generation*, 169

⁸⁷ Fransen, *Rowell-Sirois*, 462

question. It is clear they did affect Canadian views. The extent of this influence, however, is both intriguing and difficult to measure.⁸⁸

The changing international situation, however, was as important, if not more so, in shaping views on foreign policy. Page and Shapiro examined how public opinion changed in response to international events. 'In the middle and late 1930s, as the League of Nations proved impotent against the expansion of Hitler and Mussolini, the American public expressed little enthusiasm for Woodrow Wilson's dream of peacekeeping through world organization. In 1935, for example, even in response to a pleasantly worded Roper question ('If war in Europe is averted through the League of Nations, do you believe the United States should join the League?') two-thirds of the public – 66% - said 'no'.⁸⁹

These views shifted in response to the international developments. In the period between February and March 1939, following the German annexation of the remainder of Czechoslovakia, support for selling war materials to England and France in case of war rose sharply. 'During the same period sentiment for selling food to the allies, already embraced by a substantial 76% majority, rose another notch to 82%.⁹⁰

Most probably, as May suggests, only a relatively small proportion of the population was significantly interested in international affairs. The domestic realities in North America, especially the Great Depression, only encouraged this. And yet, opinions on international affairs, however diverse, were widespread among the general population.

⁸⁸ This was only enhanced by the fact that those who disagreed with the intellectual community saw it as cut off from the average Canadian, and in fact, often alien to the interests of their society. As O'ram argues, the public and the politicians who often received the brunt of academic scorn 'looked askance at a pampered class of intellectuals living off tax revenue that seemed determined to destroy the system that allowed them such a privileged position.' When the leader of the Ontario Conservatives George Drew lashed out against the 'parlour pinks who preach Empire disunity from the cloistered protection of jobs which give them all too much time' demonstrated the extent and persistence of these views. O'ram, *Government Generation*, 138

⁸⁹ Page and Shapiro, *The Rational Public*, 215

⁹⁰ *Ibid.*, 184

In fact, the debate over international relations was marked by violent, and often personal, disagreements. As seen earlier, May found that views were held dogmatically, and were highly resistant to change.⁹¹ Issues were simplified and compromises scorned. The use of analogy only encouraged this.⁹²

The nature of public opinion in the 1930s is hard to determine, given the lack of opinion polls, the far from concrete newspaper circulation numbers, and the inability to know the extent of the editorial influence. The experiences of Canadian intellectuals, however, provide an intriguing demonstration of how elites *attempted* to shape public opinion. Walter Lippmann wrote in 1929 that the ‘essence of statesmanship consists in giving the people not what they want but what they will learn to want.’⁹³ His words reflected in many ways, the contemporary views surrounding the concept.

Despite the intelligentsia’s emphasis on its leadership role, an examination of their interaction with Canadian public opinion reveals a pattern of often limited or inconsistent influence. Canadians, including their political leaders, were interested in what the intellectual community had to say, and in their interpretation of contemporary events. However, the fact remains that Canadian intellectuals themselves were often frustrated by the lack of impact their views had in shaping the political discourse or public opinion.⁹⁴ This was particularly the case regarding issues, such as the question of imperialism, where Canadian public opinion proved resistant to change.

In response politicians and intellectuals disagreed on the most effective means of shifting this opinion. For example, both King and the LSR agreed on the detrimental

⁹¹ May, *American Imperialism*, 23

⁹² *Ibid.*, 23

⁹³ Robinson, *Measure of Democracy*, 125

⁹⁴ Lower, *My Seventy-Five Years*, 177, 179, 189, 195

impact of advance Canadian commitment to imperial defence, and of the need to respect public opinion regarding the issue. Their approaches to the question, however, differed. The intellectuals of the LSR wanted public statements. ‘National unity would be better served by frankness than by obfuscation.’⁹⁵ In contrast, King saw clearly the dangers of confronting the deeply embedded strain of Canadian imperialism. His approach to public opinion represented an older tradition, one based on intuition rather than on polling data or political theory.⁹⁶ King’s main focus was keeping the English and French in Canada ‘marching together without the rift of open disagreement.’ Such a policy, intellectuals such as F.R. Scott, a member of the LSR, could not accept. At issue was a question of style. ‘King’s route was the middle way; his tools were obfuscation, persiflage, and behind-the-scenes negotiations that traded concession for limited agreement. Scott was committed to the open forum, the frank discussion of issues and recognition of differences that led to the discovery of shared truth and joint action.’ Although they might, if only reluctantly, later come to see King’s policy of national unity as necessary, at the time, Scott responded to what appeared to be King’s policy – equivocation in the place of policy.⁹⁷

Ian Rutherford, in his discussion of the public debate in the United States regarding the possibility of war with Iraq in 2003 concludes that the result

was not really dialogue, an exchange of views, but a series of clashing monologues...The debate that occurred was mostly in the heads of the journalists and the citizens at the receiving end of all this propaganda.⁹⁸

⁹⁵ Horn, *LSR*, 153

⁹⁶ Fransen, *Rowell-Sirois*, 429

⁹⁷ As Djwa observed, ‘Mackenzie King’s middle way accommodated both extremes without excessively agitating either; that his own idea of an open forum required a relatively sophisticated electorate; that recognizing differences might prove volatile capital in the hands of one’s political opponents – these ideas would not have occurred to Scott.’ Sandra Djwa, *The Politics of the Imagination: A Life of F.R. Scott*. (Toronto, 1987), 180

⁹⁸ Rutherford, *Weapons of Mass Persuasion*, 24

The nature of Canadian public debate during the 1930s, as much as anything, brings this formulation clearly to mind. Canadians during the decade were largely uninterested in understanding divergent views, let alone their context. The historiography of public opinion, especially when contrasted to the views of contemporaries, encourages the conclusion that public opinion shifted slowly in response to international developments that they see as challenging their longstanding, if underlying, interests. It appears that the combination of these two factors, of a foreign policy public, and the impact of changes in the international situation, affected a gradual change in the views of the public as a whole. While the nature of public opinion on international affairs remains difficult to identify, it is this construct that allows for some examination of public opinion during the period.

Chapter 3. National Unity as a Political Issue: Regional Divides, Dominion-Provincial Relations and International Events

Canadian international involvement since 1917 had the potential to be extremely divisive. Canadians, it seems, could neither forget the controversies of the Great War, nor agree on the nature of their international role. Perhaps this is not surprising, given that Canadians generally seemed unable to agree on the nature of Canada domestically. It was a divided country that confronted the great problems of the 1930s, where politicians from the various regions and cultures that made up the country disagreed on the role of the state, the resolution of the economic crisis that came to be known as the Great Depression and the prospect of a Canada that included both political and cultural cooperation between its two largest ethnic groups. An all-encompassing debate on Canada's foreign policy touched the pressure points of many of these issues, and thus was one that any Canadian politician looking to get re-elected approached only gingerly. While imperialism or internationalism might seem to some, particularly in English Canada, of a potentially unifying force, the reality was that the risks often outweighed the potential benefits. The task of governing Canada became increasingly difficult during the decade, and the evident widespread disagreement on international affairs only complicated matters further.

In the 1930s Canada's political foundations seemed to be shaken. Politics, for so long centred on development, abundance and prosperity, fragmented. Canada's traditional parties, the Liberals and the Conservatives, faced increasing challenges from the left and the right. Federal politicians, whether Liberal or Conservative, desperately sought to discover a consensus on what to do about the economy; the last thing they

sought was further division, and yet, just as the Great Depression touched its trough, international affairs came to complicate matters.

At least the Liberals and Conservatives were used to dealing with each other; between the two old parties, familiarity and predictability smoothed over divisions. But in the 1920s and 1930s there were third parties, first the confused Progressives and their offshoots, (beginning with the provincial victory of the United Farmers of Ontario in 1919) then the socialist CCF and the pseudo-scientific Social Crediters. And, of course, Canada was a federation, which gave third parties room to grow in local gardens – the prairies, that hotbed of dissent and difference, and now, in the 1930s, Quebec. Political allegiance had greased the wheels of Canadian government, despite the inevitable conflicts that arise in any system of divided jurisdiction. Now, in the 1930s, different parties meant, in many respects, deeper divisions.

This came to a head most significantly in the politics of the province of Quebec, which in addition dragged in its self-conception as the leader of the French minority in Canada. When Canadians considered the issue of international policy, it was the question of Quebec's reaction, which often raised the most significant concern. The nature of Canada's international position, particularly its connection to Great Britain, only increased these concerns. As the possibilities of conflict on the international scene became increasingly likely, these Canadian ties to Britain became increasingly controversial. Canadians were aware that any conflict involving Britain would necessitate Canadian involvement, if only due to the demands of English Canadians, who maintained a sentimental attachment to the 'motherland'. In contrast, Quebec's leaders consistently

demanding that Canadian policy be shaped to avoid any commitment to Britain's 'imperial' adventures overseas.

Although the federal government had hoped to avoid this debate on international relations, by the end of the decade, Canadians were forced to seriously consider their international options. Canadians' imperialism and their involvement in the League of Nations meant they could not ignore international developments. However, their position in North America and the anxiety of French Canadians ensured that international relations remained an issue of controversy.

Canadians were equally split on domestic policy. Partially as a result of long-standing geographical and economic disparities and partly due to disagreements on how to deal with the current economic crisis, they could not agree on public policy. In June of 1935, Loring Christie, the third-ranking functionary in the Department of the External Affairs, wrote a friend in Great Britain regarding international developments and their implications for Canada. Although much of Christie's letter dealt with British policy regarding European developments, especially the rise of fascist movements, Christie made some intriguing comments regarding internal Canadian developments.

In spite of the time I've spent in these parts my outlook on our Confederation is still, I think, largely that of a Nova Scotian and a Maritimer. When one looks at this central mass which is Quebec and Ontario and realizes how essentially indifferent it must be to the rest of the show and recalls how hard the sledding for the rest often is even under our present institutions, one can imagine how impractical the fascist's dream would be in Canada. His power would have to be based on this central region, but of course the rest simply would not have any of that sort of thing.¹

Christie was referring specifically to the possibility of a coalition government in Canada to deal with the serious economic crisis of the 1930s. His words, however, are in

¹ Loring Christie to H. MacMillan, 12 June 1935, LAC Christie Papers, MG 30, E44, v. 12

many ways reflective of the serious differences that divided the country as a whole, even within the dominant English Canadian community.

Also indicative is a letter from another member of the Department of External Affairs, H.H. Wrong, from Washington to his friend Lester Pearson in London on the subject of division in Canada. Written much later than Christie's, in the context of the imminent war in Europe in March of 1939, Wrong's letter nonetheless echoes many of Christie's themes.

I gather from afar that the background is a serious conflict of opinion within the [federal] Cabinet, which represents a conflict of opinion within the country. All the sectional lines of division in Canada are at present simultaneously very apparent, and the task of governing the country is even more unhappy than usual. Gossip is that no Canadian Cabinet for many years has fought so persistently and rancorously as this one. The external crisis is opening up all the old sores.²

Wrong's letter refers specifically to the conflicts of opinion relating to the European crisis of March of 1939. However, the 'old sores' and the 'sectional lines of division' represented long-standing economic and cultural differences in Canada. The federal Cabinet fought violently amongst themselves in March of 1939, as various federal cabinets had been fighting rancorously since 1930 and before. The members of the Canadian federal cabinet represented different regional groups with very different political, cultural and economic interests. While the external crisis of the late 1930s had brought some of these issues to the fore, these sectional differences had been matters of controversy for quite some time. If anything it was the economic crisis of the 1930s that brought longstanding economic and regional disparities sharply to the surface.

The regions represented by the government of Canada had widely divergent economic destinies. Even during the boom of the 1920s, certain regions of the country

² Pearson Papers, LAC MG 26, N1, v. 17, H. H. Wrong to Pearson, 18 March 1939

benefited a great deal more than others. The Maritimes never overcame the economic stagnation that it fell into after the turn of the century, the western provinces had overextended themselves during the wheat boom of the late 1920s, and the north was underpopulated and underdeveloped.³

Central Canada dominated the political and the economic life of the country. The major manufacturing and banking firms were concentrated in the central provinces. Ontario and Quebec had no control over interest and credit, and the very concept of Central Canada as a region was open to question. The establishments of Toronto and Montreal had been rivals since before Confederation, and in any case, their economic 'might' often did not extend much into the hinterlands of Ontario and Quebec. As well, these assertions ignored the inter-regional divisions present, as farmers, miners and industrialists were often as much at odds in Ontario and Quebec as elsewhere. Western Canadian pundits, however, remained fascinated with the idea that this 'Eastern establishment' determined policies on interest, credit, freight rates and tariffs. Western Canadians resented the economic dominance of Central Canada, particularly its control over issues which intimately affected the western economy. Although Western Canada's resentment of Eastern dominance had been a constant factor in Canadian politics, the economic crisis of the 1930s significantly exacerbated it.

³ See Norrie and O'ram for a complete examination of how economic factors had affected different regions in Canada. Kenneth Norrie and Douglas O'ram, *A History of the Canadian Economy*. (Toronto: 1991). As well, Norman Ward and David Smith's biography of Saskatchewan Premier Jimmy Gardiner provides a striking example of regional differences in his description of Gardiner's move to Ottawa and federal politics in 1936, 'Large though the agricultural belt of Saskatchewan was, it was for the most of the year capable of being covered by automobile. Its population, following similar pursuits, had similar dislikes of tariffs, debts, and high freight rates, all of which could be blamed on central Canada....Saskatchewan was barely five hundred miles from east to west, its main settled area in 1935, considerably less than that.' Norman Ward and David Smith, *Jimmy Gardiner: Relentless Liberal*. (Toronto: 1990), 213

Traditionally, the western Canadian provinces had argued for low tariffs and the prevention of a monopoly in railway building.⁴ Western interests were diversified to some extent, particularly in Manitoba, where there were considerable mining and manufacturing interests, but also in Alberta, which had significant coal deposits. As they were largely producers of natural resources with high transportation costs, however, many in the western provinces saw their prosperity tied to these issues. The issue of interest soon took on new regional implications, to be added to those of tariffs and railways. The federal government, under both Bennett and King, for the most part followed orthodox economics, in which interest rates were allowed to fall until people wanted to hire money again. Many Western Canadian leaders wanted to go beyond this very conservative approach, however. They were concerned that Western farmers, already heavily indebted (to Eastern financial interests, they pointed out) would never be able to recover from the catastrophes of the 1930s unless the federal government stepped in to suspend the charging of interest, particularly on farming mortgages.

In contrast, eastern manufacturers, particularly among the Montreal business community, which had ties to the CPR, wanted an end to the subsidies by the federal government of multiple, unprofitable, rail companies. This was especially the case after the federal government started cutting costs to match the limited revenues of the depression, to streamline transportation in Canada to one railway, to cut costs.⁵ They also wanted to protect their industries through a punitive tariff from the highly competitive

⁴ 'Resolution passed at the Manitoba Federal Liberal and Progressive Convention held at Brandon, June 22nd 1933.' T. A. Crerar Papers Queen's University

⁵ W.C.C. Innes to King, May 23 1935, WLM King Papers, LAC MG 26 J1, V. 206

manufacturers in the United States and Great Britain. The federal government, they argued, was largely supported by the revenue and taxes of eastern manufacturing.⁶

The issue of credit brought these regional disagreements to the fore. Much of the Social Credit movement's rhetoric involved the issue of credit, or more correctly, of interest. The practice of charging interest, often compared to usury, was viewed as arbitrary and unjust. It was just one more way in which the decadent East, especially Toronto and Montreal, lived off the honest labour of western farmers.⁷

The issue became more and more divisive with the onset of the Great Depression in 1930. This coincided first with the rapid drop of wheat prices, and later with the continuous droughts in western Canada. Financial institutions in Canada, most of which were based in the East, refused to limit or cancel the interest charged on western loans. They also refused to listen to calls for a moratorium on foreclosure.⁸ This only encouraged western views that Central Canada's interest in the rest of Canada was limited to the question of profits.

The Social Credit party incorporated these views. After 1935, it formed the provincial government of Alberta, while it remained a regional movement. Their program called for the radical reorganization of financial institutions in Canada. They built on the traditional concerns of Western society, made familiar in the west through the United Farmers political movement. In many ways, it was the members of the United Farmers of Alberta party who had popularized social credit ideas.⁹ Since many of these related to the

⁶ *Financial Post*, December 30th 1933

⁷ James Mallory, *Social Credit and the Federal Power in Canada*. (Toronto: 1954), 7

⁸ *Ibid.*, 96

⁹ Alvin Finkel, *The Social Credit Phenomenon in Alberta*. (Toronto: 1989), 22 Certainly as Finkel argues, although the UFA argued that the actions of the banking establishment were but one facet of the exploitative nature of the capitalist system, they tended to focus on the financial institutions. This both reflected and enhanced the views of their constituents, who viewed themselves as the victims of the

issue of the manipulation of credit and finance, it is not surprising that they would appeal to Albertans and the West generally.

Eastern Canadians had their own perceptions of the nature of Canada. Many members of the Canadian business communities in Toronto or Montreal felt that the West was no longer Canada's modern, advancing frontier, but another drag on the Canadian economy; bankers, for different reasons, came to much the same conclusion. Eastern manufacturers saw western representatives as backward and reflexively defensive, unwilling to see how the development of the Canadian economy was both natural and inevitable.

In response to western calls for the limitation of interest, financial institutions in Eastern Canada argued that this would destroy their fiscal reputation, and unfairly punish their investors. Further, the only way to recover from the economic crisis was for businesses and nations to return to sound business practices, balanced budgets, and 'sound money'.¹⁰ They were willing to work with farmers on an individual basis to postpone the payment of their loans, in order to allow the farmer to remain on the land, but they feared that a blanket policy of forgiving loans or reducing interest would undermine their credibility.¹¹ If the banks and insurance companies deviated from these practices, not only would their credit and investors suffer, so would the country's

monopolies such as the banks and the railways. It also reassured them, since they viewed these issues as redeemable problems, rather than viewing them as irredeemable symptoms of an unworkable system, capitalism.

¹⁰Bruce Hutchison, *The Incredible Canadian: A candid Portrait of Mackenzie King: His Works, His Times, and His Nation*. (New York, 1953), 168. They wanted Canada to stay on the gold standard to prevent the devaluation of the currency.

¹¹ Mallory, *Social Credit*, 96 At times they approached the problem more sympathetically, realizing that the combination of drought and low prices constituted an emergency which threatened the long-term ability of the farmer to pay his obligations. This results in the Farmers' Creditors Arrangement Act of 1934, and the debt adjustment acts of the western provinces.

reputation as a safe place for international investors.¹² This would only mean that the economic crisis would continue as the economy continued to stagnate.

What makes the increasing tensions between Canadian farmers and financial institutions most interesting is how it played into regional disagreements. Since the farmers were identified with the West, and the banking and insurance companies with the East, the conflict increasingly took on the characteristics of a regional, as well as an economic, conflict. It reflected and added to the traditional views of the East exploiting the West economically. It also played well in terms of longstanding views that this economic dominance allowed the East to dominate federal politics. This in turn would allow them to further determine economic policies in Canada.

It was these grievances that were behind King's decision in 1937 to appoint the Rowell-Sirois Commission (The Royal Commission on Dominion-Provincial Relations). Its five commissioners included N.W. Rowell, a prominent, if conservative Liberal from Ontario, Joseph Sirois from Quebec,¹³ R. A. MacKay, Henry Angus, and the noted western editor J. W. Dafoe. Dafoe, the editor of the *Winnipeg Free Press*, one of the most influential newspapers in Canada, was a reformer, but he was not interested in a redistribution of wealth. Further he viewed those who did as irresponsible radicals. As Grant Dexter wrote to George Ferguson, Dafoe found the socialism of the new Cooperative Commonwealth Federation party and its rhetoric disturbing, and was

¹² Financial interests attempted to use this specific argument to convince the Aberhart government in Alberta not to pass a series of bills in 1937 and 1938 on the issue of interest and foreclosure. Mallory, *Social Credit*, 136 – As Mallory points out, this argument failed to convince Social Creditors in general and the Aberhart cabinet in particular. The people affected were largely outside of Alberta. Secondly the cabinet didn't care if their actions made it more difficult for them to borrow in the future. They felt that borrowing was inherently dangerous.

¹³ Joseph Sirois replaced Thibaudeau Rinfret, the original French Canadian representative. John Thompson and Allen Seager, *Canada, 1922-1939: Decades of Discord*. (Toronto: 1985), 293. See also David Fransen, *'Unscrewing the Unscrutable.'*

therefore sceptical of any policy that they advocated. This was partially due to his association of ideas with their most notable advocates.¹⁴ However, Dafoe's participation in the Rowell-Sirois Commission significantly changed his outlook.¹⁵

As James Gray argues, however, Dafoe was inherently a reformer. He was sympathetic towards the plight of less fortunate Canadians, particularly in the peripheral regions. In addition, Dafoe's experience on the Rowell Commission in 1937 and 1938 helped to convince him that too much wealth had been concentrated in Ontario due to its economic dominance and that the standard of living in the Maritimes and the Prairies was a disgrace.¹⁶ Dafoe, and others, felt that the Canadian economy, even in the depths of the depression, could provide a generous standard of living for all Canadians, so long as the problems in the system could be resolved.¹⁷ Dafoe's views were reflective of those of Canadian society in general as the majority of Canadians felt that it was the abuses in capitalism that needed to be eliminated, rather than capitalism itself. The appointment of this Commission was meant to reassure Canadians that there was a way to resolve these longstanding issues in Canada. It was meant to convince Canadians that the Liberal government was working towards a solution to the long-standing economic and geographical disparities in Canada.

The Rowell-Sirois Commission was also meant as a response to the challenges of the CCF and the Social Credit parties who argued that reforming the system was not enough. On the part of the traditional parties, it was Liberal members who were vulnerable to appeals, especially the CCF's proposals, and especially in the western

¹⁴ Gray, *Troublemaker!* 139

¹⁵ Fransen, 'Unscrewing the Unscrutable,' 448

¹⁶ Gray, *Troublemaker!* 139

¹⁷ Cook, *The Politics of John W. Dafoe and the Free Press*, 109

provinces, since the CCF appealed to themes that Liberals embraced and to groups that represented traditional Liberal support.

The two new major parties in Canada, both Social Credit and the CCF, had been originally based in the west. Although the regional basis of the CCF was not as clear that of Social Credit's, much of its support and its views were affected by western concerns. Unlike the Social Credit movement, however, the CCF attempted to demonstrate that its movement, socialist in nature, had universal themes and should have universal appeal.¹⁸ It built on the frustration many Canadians felt over the lack of action to resolve the economic crisis, as well as traditional regional grievances.

Both the Conservatives and Liberals, therefore, found themselves fighting on the federal level with third parties that advocated increasingly radical solutions to the economic crisis. These solutions ranged from the manipulation of credit, increased provincial autonomy and the control of natural resources, to the fundamental reorganization of the Canadian economy. Mackenzie King in particular saw these challenges as a threat not only to his personal position as leader of Canada, but to the position of the Liberal party and the role of the federal government.¹⁹ In addition, he saw these challenges as a threat to the liberal and centralist role of moderate reform to balance the demands of community, individual and corporate interests.²⁰

King knew, however, that a solution to the economic crisis in Canada had to be found. Further, he knew that innovation was unlikely to come from the Canadian business community. From the onset of the depression in 1930, the business community

¹⁸ Kenneth McNaught, *A Prophet in Politics: A Biography of J.S. Woodsworth*. (Toronto, 1959), 66

¹⁹ King Diary, August 23, 1935

²⁰ Although very general, King's views here seem reflective of his early work, *Industry and Humanity: A Study in the Principles Underlying Industrial Reconstruction*. Revised edition. (Toronto, 1935)

in Canada focused on their way to resolve the economic crisis. The means that they prescribed, however, was one unlikely to appeal to Canadians, especially as the years wore on and the promised recovery seemed more and more unlikely.

Clearly Canadian manufacturers knew that there was a serious problem with the economy in Canada. A.K. Cameron, a notable Liberal insider, expressed his continuing concerns regarding the economy, during his ongoing correspondence to T.A. Crerar in Saskatchewan. Cameron was an industrialist based in Montreal who was on intimate terms with all of the leading Liberal figures, and with the leading figures of the industrial community in Canada. Although he was not as familiar with the situation in western Canada, his correspondence with Crerar is revealing in its observations as to how the depression was affecting the central and peripheral regions of Canada. In July 1931, Cameron wrote to Crerar detailing the difficulties that Canadian manufacturing was facing.

Business conditions do not improve in the East. You can almost feel the slump going on. It may be bad with you in the West but there you have only the agricultural condition to deal with. Here we are facing day by day a steady reduction in industrial output. I imagine the average factories of Eastern Canada are not operating on an average of 45%, if this, and in the United States I think the rate is still lower.²¹

While Cameron and other leading Canadian industrialists were aware of the extent of the problem, however, the solutions that they prescribed were far from original. They continued to focus on a return to 'sound' business practices, which included balanced budgets, remaining on the gold standard and the protection of Canadian business through high tariffs. The *Financial Post*, the voice of business in Canada, put it most succinctly in July 1933 when it argued that

²¹ Cameron to Crerar, July 31 1931. LAC, MG 27 III F2, Cameron Papers, v. 34, Cameron-Crerar correspondence, 1931

In the national sphere, balanced budgets, sound finance and similar virtues which go to make for successful operation of private businesses the world over, are some of the things which make for success.²²

The business community would do its part to overcome the economic crisis with sound business practices. They expected in return that the federal government would protect industry by preventing unfair competition from international manufacturers and unreasonable demands on the part of organized labour. The crisis had been caused, in their eyes, by overproduction and overconfidence, and was but a temporary aberration in the normal working of the world's economy.²³ Once these issues had been overcome, mainly through prudent business practices and patience, the economic cycle, having hit the bottom, would again begin to climb.

Certainly, critics roundly condemned the solutions that the business community advanced, and their solutions seemed less and less credible. However, they were not alone in believing that the depression was a part of the natural market cycle. Business pundits throughout the western industrialized world, particularly in the United States, had argued the same program since the depression had started. In addition, their reading of traditional economists, from Adam Smith on, seemed to support this.²⁴ It was only later, with the introduction of Keynesian theory, that the program of reduced budgets and the reliance on the gold standard would be challenged. Even then, the introduction of this theory into economic programs was extremely controversial, and was subject to withering criticisms.²⁵ It was not surprising that Canadian politicians and leaders in the business

²² *Financial Post*, July 15 1933, 'The Conference Blackboard', editorial, 6

²³ *Financial Post* September 16th, 1933, Owram, *The Government Generation*, 205

²⁴ Michael Stewart, *Keynes and After*. Third Edition. (Middlesex, 1986), 107

²⁵ *Financial Post* May 13th 1933, *Macleans* on May 15th, 1934 called for a National government to pursue a policy of balanced budgets to resolve the crisis.

community also sought to maintain control of the economy through practices they argued had served them so well in the past.²⁶

The solutions that the business community prescribed, especially that of ‘balanced budgets’ for the three levels of government, were ones that caused significant problems for the economy and individual Canadians. Not only did the reduction of governmental expenditure often mean the elimination of government jobs and contracts, it also had implications for social welfare.

Outside of the business establishment interest groups were quick to challenge the effectiveness of these measures. The solutions offered ranged. The Social Credit movement in Alberta, which argued, its proponent’s claimed, for a fairer system of national finance.²⁷ The CCF argued for a reorganization of the distribution of wealth in Canada, as did the tiny Canadian Communist party. French Canadian nationalists, represented by the Action Libérale Nationale movement in Quebec argued not only for a fundamental re-organization of Canadian wealth, but also of Canadian society.

The Liberal Party under King sought to placate each of these groups while they pursued a policy that was a great deal less radical than any of those listed above. They

²⁶In addition, the introduction of Keynesian programs required large expenditures, and therefore increased taxation. In a period of economic crisis, the increased taxation of those who were able to contribute to the Canadian economy seemed both unfair and self-defeating. In May of 1935, long before King returned to power, the Chairman of the Commercial Bureau of Canada, wrote him, enclosing a pamphlet entitled “Abolition of the Dominion Income War Tax Act.” ‘We believe the time has come when our budget, Dominion, Provincial and Municipal, must be balanced, not by increased taxation but by drastic reductions in expenditure and a solution found for our Railway problem...we have far too much Government in Canada for ten millions of people of whom less than one-third pay taxes and we are strongly urging the consolidation of the three Prairie Provinces.’ W.C.C. Innes, Chairman, the Commercial Bureau of Canada to King, May 23 1935, King Papers LAC MG 26, J1, v. 206

²⁷ Finkel, *The Social Credit Phenomenon in Alberta*, 212. These solutions, although they seemed radical to many Canadians, were tame compared to the ideas originating in the United States. There, pundits such as Dr. Francis Townsend advocated federal pensions of \$150 for all those over 60. His program was based on the argument that this money would not only provide for the elderly, but also pump needed purchasing power into the economy. Arthur Schlesinger, *The Age of Roosevelt. Volume III: The Politics of Upheaval*, 31. See Schlesinger for a comprehensive, and colourful, account of the Townsend movement. Schlesinger, *The Politics of Upheaval*, 29-41

also incorporated some aspects of other programs, particularly those of the CCF. They argued that these policies were, in fact, traditional Liberal themes. King was particularly effective at co-opting CCF policies,²⁸ perhaps because he truly believed that the Liberal party, and he himself, were the most persistent, and effective, champion of the less-fortunate.

In regards to the issue of the Canadian economy as a whole, however, the Liberals were surprisingly consistent in their focus on a policy of free trade. As Cameron wrote King in 1931,

The paralysis of world trade by the disruption of exchange intensified by innumerable tariffs...seems to me is leading steadily to the breakdown of international trade. If I may offer you a few suggestions for your Winnipeg speech I think it would be, first, on the tariff a clear-cut pronouncement that the Liberal policy would be that we would return to the tariff as it was when we left office... I doubt if there is any other national unit in the world that requires markets more than Canada does.²⁹

King, at least publicly, maintained that it was a policy of free trade that would provide the solution to the present economic crisis, a safe and relatively unspecific prescription. The establishment of imperial trading blocs had prevented the natural progress of world trade, which in turn led to the disruption in the world economy. If the international economic system was returned to its previous balance through a return to freer trade, the situation would improve, particularly in the case of Canada. The program had the added value in that it will prevent conflicts between nations over captured markets.³⁰ In 1931 this did not have the same priority in King's thinking as it would have later. King was aware, however, that the practicality of this program was slight.

²⁸ Charles Power, ed. N. Ward, *A Party Politician: The Memoirs of Chubby Power*. (Toronto, 1966), 279

²⁹ Copy of Cameron's letter to King, January 4 1931, LAC MG27 III, F2, v. 34

³⁰ Norman Hillmer, 'The Pursuit of Peace.' in John English and J.O. Stubbs, eds. *Mackenzie King: Widening the Debate*. (Toronto, 1977), 151

Nevertheless, free trade remains one of the central themes in King's (and the Liberals') focus, if only due to the fact that they seemed unable to come up with a practical alternative.

Before and after they were elected in October 1935, the Liberals had to deal with the question of the massive number of unemployed in Canada. For the most part they concentrated on the traditional policy of minor social programs, and more significantly, giving money directly to the provinces and municipalities who dealt with the unemployed. It was on this issue, more than any other, that the Liberals were vulnerable to the CCF in the matter of liberal support and the appearance of action. As Cameron wrote to King in late 1932,

To my way of thinking, this question of unemployment and unemployment relief is far and away of more immediate importance than these trade agreements, the railroad problem or any other consideration of the moment. Unfortunately for the Liberal party, the impression seems to be spreading among the people generally that the Liberal party and the Liberal leaders are unwilling to make a fight on this question and as a result anything that is being done today is being done by Mr. Woodsworth and his supporters.³¹

This, then, represented the ultimate danger to the Liberal party from of the CCF. The socialist party, under the leadership of J.S. Woodsworth, gave the appearance of new political ideas for new political times. They appeared to Canadians to be much more willing than the more traditional Conservative and Liberal parties, financed by the moneyed interests of the East, to implement a policy of change.³² In a period when economic stagnation seemed to be the new normal, the CCF presented itself as an effective alternative. Further, the CCF appealed to left-leaning Liberal voters, and if enough of them heeded it, it would split the centre from the left in Canada and deliver the

³¹ Cameron to King, 8 November 1932, LAC MG 27 III, F2, v. 22

³² Clarke to King, J.S. Woodsworth, R. B. Bennett, July 4th 1931, King Papers LAC MG 26 JI, v. 184

country to the Conservatives.³³ By promising programs that were 'Liberal' in nature, but which went beyond the Liberal proposals in rapid implementation and progressiveness, the CCF would co-opt Liberal support. In contrast, Conservative voters, scared by the CCF's socialist agenda, would remain within the Tory fold.³⁴

The Liberals, therefore, approached the issue of the CCF much more cautiously than the Conservatives. They had to ensure that the Liberal platform was more progressive and distinctive from that of the CCF. At the same time, the Liberals could not appear to be eager in attacking the CCF too harshly, as its policies and programs often resembled their own. Vincent Massey, the President of the National Liberal Federation, wrote to King in 1933, regarding this issue.

I am greatly disturbed by the interpretation which the Press has given to the Debate on Thursday on Woodsworth's Resolution. The impression which the public will receive is that both Conservatives and Liberals united in attacking the C.C.F. in more or less the same terms and for the same motives. This plays directly into the hands of those people who maintain that there is no difference between the two old parties...The line which our men should have taken, as I know you will agree, is that we sympathize with the sincerity of the protest represented by the C.C.F. and we agree with them that conditions are sufficient grave to justify them in making such a protest, but that we honestly disagree with the proposals for a solution which are made, and have our own measures to submit...It's all right for them to be rude to the C.C.F. but we can't afford to be.³⁵

King and the Liberals argued that the CCF proposals for social welfare were in fact liberal in nature. It was also important that the Liberals presented their proposals as proactive. This was an important consideration given both the momentum of the CCF, and that of the Bennett government following the announcement of the New Deal program of 1935. O.D. Skelton, Undersecretary of State for External Affairs, while expressly non-partisan, was unable to contain his concern over the effect of their program

³³ Power, *Party Politician*, 221

³⁴ *Ibid.*, 148

³⁵ Massey to King, 11 February 1933, King Papers LAC MG 26 JI, v.197

on the political situation in Canada. In his notes on the implications of Bennett's New Deal, he argues,

They have given the government the initiative for the moment, distracted attention from the record of the past four years, given the public the idea that the Liberal party lacks a constructive policy, heartened the Tories, tempted some advanced Liberal, caught many C.C.F. Many of the specific proposals cannot be attacked in principle... They cannot all be dismissed as promises and bluff... The first and obvious line of rebuttal is to call their sincerity in question - red herrings - touching spectacle of death-bed repentance - inconsistent with policy and pronouncement of previous sessions... Liberalism is ever the party of progress, of trust in the people, [of] faith in the common man, respect for human freedom, for personality, [and of the] desire to create opportunity for everyone. At times this may mean destroying barriers and class privilege, at times the setting up of cooperative or state aid to give the common man a chance.³⁶

The issue of momentum was one that continued to concern Liberal organizers. There was speculation as early as 1933 that the Conservatives would be calling an early election, and the Liberals were confident regarding their chances,³⁷ particularly given the rapid disintegration of the Conservative party.³⁸ This disintegration only increased with the split in the Conservative caucus through the formation of H.H. Stevens' Reformation Party. However, as Reg Whitaker demonstrates in his remarkable study of party policy during the period, the Liberals had to be credited for ensuring that their party and campaign was well organized and addressed the issue of the CCF.³⁹ The Liberals were able, at least temporarily, to overcome the divisions within the party to defeat the Bennett

³⁶ 'Jottings on the New Deal,' January 12 1934, Skelton Papers, LAC, MG 30 D33, v. 11. An outspoken Albertan Liberal, Joseph A. Clarke, addressed King in similar terms while detailing his concern regarding the state of liberalism in Alberta. 'Only yesterday, in the House here, after sitting for 10 months, with absolute proof of enough to defeat the Brownlee Gov, in two weeks, and taking no action whatsoever on the matter, the Lib LINED UP to reduce a SMALL vote for Town Planning, and if the Liberals should not be the leaders in all such movements as town planning, better housing, and consideration for those who are not able to live in palaces, and parks, or play grounds, etc... then I mistake the purpose of Liberalism...' . Joseph A. Clarke to King, 12 March 31, King Papers LAC MG 26 JI, v. 184

³⁷ Power to E.M. MacDonald, Feb 28 1935. Power's confidence in the results of the coming election infuses the entire letter.

³⁸ Hutchison, *The Incredible Canadian*, 194

³⁹ Reginald Whitaker, *The Government Party: Organizing and financing the Liberal Party of Canada, 1930-1958*. (Toronto, 1977), 83

administration.⁴⁰ They were not simply the lucky recipients of the disintegration of the Conservative party, but also worked effectively to convince Canadians that the Liberal party would be the most successful in implementing policies to govern Canada.

It is the Liberal electoral victory of 1935 which demonstrates their success in addressing the issue of the CCF. Despite the appeal of the CCF, the Liberals were able to convince the electorate in Canada that it was they that would best be able to respond to these challenges. They were able to demonstrate that they presented a viable option that Canadians of all classes and all regions would feel comfortable in supporting. As a result, they would be able to form a stable majority capable of dealing with the economic crisis in Canada.⁴¹ Particularly after the summer conference of 1932,⁴² they were able to present themselves as having an effective program to address these issues. It was this, in addition to the division of the Conservative party and the frustration that many Canadians felt for it, that led to the massive Liberal electoral victory in 1935.

Despite the Liberals' ability to overcome division on the federal level, there remained significant division in the Canadian political scene. This division was reflected in the rise of regional third parties, in particular Quebec's Union Nationale government, elected in 1936 under Duplessis. In addition to Quebec, however, the provincial administrations of Ontario and Alberta directly challenged federal prerogatives and programs. This came out in a number of issues throughout the decade and in their refusal to cooperate with the federal government's Rowell-Sirois Commission. The divisions on

⁴⁰ Whitaker provides an interesting discussion of this and the internal party diplomacy that King and other leading Liberals practiced to bring provincial Liberals, even those they despised, onside. One example is that of the Liberal Premier of British Columbia, T.D. Pattullo, and the nature of the Liberal party within that province. Whitaker, *The Government Party*, 371.

⁴¹ *Ibid.*, 84

⁴² *Ibid.*, 41

the federal political scene also perhaps indicate the continuing Liberal pre-occupation with 'safe', central, conservative prescriptions for both domestic and international problems.

These three provinces had significantly different interests and cultural views. However, they often used the same language in confronting the federal government and appealing to the public. In addition they often focused on similar issues, particularly the issue of autonomy and the control of resources by the federal government and corporate interests or 'trusts'.⁴³ In 1937, the Albertan government refused to give evidence before the Rowell-Sirois Commission. It instead prepared *The Case for Alberta*, a lengthy justification for its position. The brief was addressed 'to the Sovereign People of Canada and their Governments.'⁴⁴ It was a sentiment with which the premiers of both Ontario and Quebec would have heartily agreed.

It was Alberta, however, that represented the earliest serious provincial challenge to the federal prerogative. Following the election of William 'Bible Bill' Aberhart and the Social Credit party in the 1935 election these challenges became increasingly serious. The success of the Social Credit party, even at the provincial level was both a shock and a challenge to the federal government, as it was to Canadian society as a whole. No one had forecasted that a movement that argued for the radical reorganization of the financial system in Canada would be able to gain power. Although it was clear soon after the formation of the Social Credit party that was extraordinarily popular, no one had forecast

⁴³ John Saywell, *'Just Call Me Mitch': The Life of Mitchell F. Hepburn*. (Toronto, 1991), 235

⁴⁴ Mallory, *Social Credit*, 179

that the party would be able to defeat the heavily entrenched United Farmers of Alberta party, or even of the provincial CCF.⁴⁵

As mentioned, although the CCF viewed itself as a party with universal appeal to Canadians, the Social Credit movement was largely regional. The Canadian branch *was* part of an international movement and regarded itself as such, particularly in the early period, when its leaders stressed the connection to the movement's British roots, as reflected by its founder, Major Douglas. In addition, the party's leaders hoped that the movement's appeal would spread, first through the prairies (in 1934-5 they focused on expanding into Saskatchewan), and then throughout Canada. The party's ultimate strength, however, was found in the province of Alberta, hardest hit of all the provinces by the economic situation after 1930.⁴⁶ After the Aberhart government was elected, they confronted the federal government both as a regional movement and through the specific challenges launched by the Albertan government.

Although the Social Credit had originally rejected the use of the traditional grievances of western Canada such as tariffs and railway rates, they increasingly incorporated these older grievances into their concerns over the policies of financial institutions.⁴⁷ As mentioned, the fact that these financial institutions were overwhelmingly headquartered in Montreal and Toronto only encouraged the existing view that Western Canada was continually exploited by the Eastern Canadian establishment. As Alvin Finkel argues, the ultimate example was the argument of many,

⁴⁵ *La Presse*, June 8th 1935, King Diary, August 23, 1935

⁴⁶ The extremely high tariff barriers and the rapidly dropping price of wheat prices on the international market was but the external facet that added to the devastation that Albertan farmers faced in regards to the long-lasting drought that hit the prairies in 1932. These factors together exacerbated the extremely precarious financial situation they faced, even before the depression, due to expansion into unsustainable areas and the reckless approval of extensive credit by local banks. Norrie and Owsram, *Canadian Economy*, 460

⁴⁷ Finkel, *Social Credit in Alberta*, 38

including Aberhart, that it was necessary for the provincial government to enact social credit.⁴⁸ While the regulation of currency and credit might be in the jurisdiction of the federal government, it was unlikely that a federal government amenable to Albertan needs would be elected in the near future. This was but yet another example of the ways in which the regional disparities in Canada manifested themselves. The Social Credit movement thus represented a challenge to the federal government in a number of ways.

Alberta openly challenged federal authority. It passed a number of bills meant to rectify the inherent problems in the practice of lending by financial institutions. Not only did it challenge the federal control of currency with its introduction of script, but also challenged its control on monetary policy. The legislative package culminated with three acts; The Home Owner's Security Act of 1937, The Debt Adjustment Act of 1937 and The 1938 Security Tax Act. These acts specifically prohibited the foreclosure of properties on the part of banks and lending institutions. There was a great deal of speculation concerning the potential repudiation of these acts by the Minister of Justice, Ernest Lapointe. Throughout Canada, newspapers speculated on whether or not the King government would announce the disallowance of these Acts, and more significantly, when.⁴⁹

Although the King government was eager to prevent the enactment of these bills, they were careful to ensure that their actions did not encourage the movement in other ways. In particular, the federal government was careful not to disallow the Albertan legislation until after the provincial election in Saskatchewan in 1938. The Social Credit party was challenging the Liberal administration's lead in the Saskatchewan election, and

⁴⁸ Ibid.

⁴⁹ *Globe* September 16, 1938

the King government wanted to be careful not to give them any additional aid.⁵⁰ As a result, Lapointe did not disallow either The Home Security Act or The Tax Security Act until 1939.⁵¹ He decided that the courts themselves would strike down the Debt Adjustment Act, which they did on March 21, 1939.⁵² The strategy was successful, and the Liberals won the provincial election in Saskatchewan in 1938.

King's administration was concerned about the challenge by the Albertan government. At the same time, however, after Aberhart's election, the possibility of conflict was not unexpected. King never warmed to Aberhart, and he categorically refused to bring an Albertan representative into his cabinet.⁵³ However, it was the provincial government of Ontario that presented the most surprising challenge to the King government. Further, it was the actions of the Premier of Ontario, Mitch Hepburn, including his personal attacks on King, which roused King to an incoherent rage.

Although Ontario had elected a Liberal government in 1934, in fact one that had helped significantly in the Liberal victory in the federal election of the following year, relations between the two governments were soon acrimonious. Hepburn not only challenged federal authority in a number of areas, but as a Liberal he challenged King's position as leader of the party. This culminated in Hepburn's direct challenge to King's leadership with his declaration that he was no longer a 'King Liberal' in 1937.

⁵⁰ Mallory, *Social Credit*, 107

⁵¹ Lapointe papers, confidential memoranda, June 15th, 1938. The Ministry of Justice, according to a confidential memorandum of June 15, 1938, had decided to disallow the two acts on the basis that the Constitution did not allow one province to tax or discriminate against the citizens of other provinces. Mallory, *Social Credit*, 112

⁵² Mallory, *Social Credit*, 115

⁵³ Whitaker, *The Government Party*, 88. However, while King found Aberhart irritating and irrational, he did not seem to be personally offended by his actions. When the Lieutenant-Governor of Alberta refused to issue Aberhart an invitation to the tea in honour of Their Majesties held in the Legislative Building during the Royal Tour of 1939, King found the Aberhart family outside in the corridor. King ensured that they participated. King Diary, June 2nd 1939

As contemporaries such as Chubby Power have noted, King's position as leader of the Liberal party was based largely on respect for his political abilities rather than on personal loyalty.⁵⁴ The cumulative effects of the electoral defeat in 1930 and the Beauharnois scandal of 1931 undermined his position significantly. As Cameron reported to Crerar in 1931,

Bennett's retort to King last evening about sums up the general opinion here, i.e., that if King did not know where the campaign funds were coming from, he should have known. Generally speaking this investigation will hurt King terribly. As you know, he has never been a popular figure and he lacks the support of those enthusiasms that emanate from supporters who rally to a Leader because of his personality.⁵⁵

King's reputation recovered due largely to the victory in the federal election of 1935. However, his position as Liberal leader was increasingly undermined by Hepburn's actions. Hepburn was the premier of the nation's largest and richest province and after he had been elected in 1934, the Ontario Liberals under his leadership had contributed significantly to the Liberal success in 1935. For these and other reasons, Hepburn viewed himself as King's natural successor. In contrast to King, Hepburn was charismatic, articulate and outspoken. He was widely popular in Ontario and throughout English-Canada. He had the appeal of a natural leader and was at ease with both political insiders and audiences. Unfortunately his personality, a main part of his political appeal, was also a detriment during his administration. His behaviour was mercurial, contradictory and inconsistent.⁵⁶ King held him at arm's length,⁵⁷ and as a result, Hepburn was increasingly alienated by King's refusal to incorporate his views on federal policy.

⁵⁴ Power to Henry Johnson, January 14 1935, Charles Power papers, Queen's University. See also Hutchison, 7

⁵⁵ Cameron to Crerar, July 31 1931, Cameron Papers, LAC MG 27 III F2, v. 34

⁵⁶ Saywell, *'Just Call Me Mitch'*, 532. His portrayal is unquestionably sympathetic, making him at times unwilling to examine the failures in Hepburn's later political career.

The conflict between Toronto and Ottawa split Liberals in Ontario,⁵⁸ and to a certain extent in Eastern Canada. The open split between the King and Hepburn factions within the Liberal party was widely reported throughout Canada, especially by journalists in Ottawa. As Grant Dexter of the *Winnipeg Free Press* reported, the split continued even after the outbreak of the Second World War. In October 1939 he reported that Hepburn 'has not abated one jot his enmity to King and the government...As evidence of King's complete unfitness for the job, Mitch said that, at a great sacrifice to himself, he told King he would withdraw his opposition to the St Lawrence Waterway and let it go ahead. King said he would think it over. Imagine - says Mitch - think it over!'⁵⁹

Hepburn's increasingly erratic behaviour culminated in his open challenge in the provincial legislature to King's war policy in 1939. Despite numerous attempts by King and others to bring Hepburn back into the fold after 1937,⁶⁰ he persisted in challenging the authority of the federal government in a number of areas. His attacks on King and the federal government, although often personal, were also reflective of the differing interests of the two governments.

As Dexter's report indicated, there were a number of issues on which the interests of the federal and provincial government differed. Not the least of these was the issue of the development of the St. Lawrence Seaway to aid in the production of hydro electrical

⁵⁷ In his diary entry for November 5th 1935, King records that Hepburn had confirmed reports that he intended to retire, King notes triumphantly that he knew that he would never last. Further, even though it was currently hard to find true leaders in Ontario, King thought that Hepburn's retirement would be all to the best, as the best politicians were 'men of character.' King Diary of November 5th 1935. This proved to be premature, however.

⁵⁸ Frank Shinkar, Windsor to King, August, 1937, King Papers LAC, MG 26 JI, v.242

⁵⁹ Dexter to Ferguson, October 14 1939, Grant Dexter Papers, Queen's University

⁶⁰ Included among Cameron's papers in the National Archives is a copy of a letter, never sent, that Cameron had written to both King and Hepburn in December of 1938. Cameron urges the two party leaders to come together to prevent a split in the party. At the same time, he argues that this conflict can be used to good effect, by convincing liberals of the vitality of the government through the opening up the discussion of party policy. Cameron to King, 23 December 1938. Cameron Papers, LAC MG27 III, F2, v. 25

power. The federal government had been attempting to reach an agreement with Ontario for several years. Canada and the United States had reached an agreement as early as 1932 for the exportation of the power that would result from such a project. The terms of the agreement were especially beneficial to Canada, as it would involve the United States in the development of the St Lawrence Seaway, while at the same time providing a ready, and rapidly expanding market.⁶¹ The Ontario government, in contrast, was not eager to allow for the development of the project. There was an abundance of power in Ontario during the 1930s and they were concerned that an increased supply would only lead to a deterioration of the price. Ontarian officials were also cautious due to their fears that American companies would eventually dominate both the project and the market for electricity in Central Canada.⁶² However the federal government was insistent and another agreement was signed with the Americans in 1937. Hepburn's government continued its objections, and the project did not proceed until 1941.

The conflict regarding the St. Lawrence Seaway represented a serious clash in the interests on the part of the two governments. In contrast, the other main clash between the Ontario and Dominion governments, the strike by the unionized workers at the Ford plant in Oshawa, Ontario, in 1937, represented a clash both of personalities and approach.

In the spring of 1937 the Committee for Industrial Organization, (CIO) which represented the Ford employees, staged a sit-down strike in Oshawa.⁶³ Hepburn, with the support of Ford management, was eager to break the workers, and the union. The CIO represented to Hepburn an unreasonable intrusion into the natural balance between the

⁶¹ H.V. Nelles provides an interesting examination of this conflict. H.V. Nelles' *The Politics of Development: Forest, Mines & Hydro-electric Power in Ontario, 1849-1941*. (Toronto, 1974) 483-87.

⁶² *Ibid.*, 483.

⁶³ When it was expelled from the American Federation of Labour that year, it promptly renamed itself the Congress of Industrial Organizations. Thompson and Seager, *Decades of Discord*, 288

workers and their employer, particularly since the organization was based in the United States. He viewed their demands as unreasonable given the benefits that Ford had given the workers.⁶⁴ The CIO, on the other hand, and those throughout Canada in favour of the right to unionize, argued that Ford was obligated to negotiate with the elected representatives of the workers themselves, rather than the union organized by Ford management.⁶⁵

Hepburn argued that the strike was illegal, and that it represented a danger to the public. The Ontarian government deployed a large police presence, and asked the federal government to augment the number of federal police present.⁶⁶ Lapointe, the Minister of Justice, agreed, and sent a hundred members of the RCMP to Oshawa on April 10th, for use by the provincial government.⁶⁷ When Hepburn telegraphed urgently for more men Lapointe responded that he did not see the need as yet, but would consider the request.⁶⁸ Hepburn's telegraph in return is a remarkable example of both his view of the federal government's 'vacillating attitude' and his complete unwillingness to allow any questioning of his authority.⁶⁹

Although the incident was widely, and negatively, reported in the national media, there is evidence that Hepburn's actions were popular in large segments of Ontario. It was certainly popular with the Canadian industrial and manufacturing community, as Cameron emphasized in his letter to Crerar detailing the incident. Discussing the implications for a potential provincial election in Ontario in 1937, Cameron, a supporter

⁶⁴ Saywell, *'Just Call Me Mitch'*, 533

⁶⁵ Statement, April 19 1937. Provisional Executive of Cooperative Commonwealth Youth to Hepburn, Lapointe, David Croll, the *Toronto Star*, the *Toronto Telegram*, the *Globe*, *Windsor Star* and *Oshawa Times*. Lapointe Papers, LAC MG 27 B10, v. 27

⁶⁶ Seager and Thompson, *Decades of Discord*, 289

⁶⁷ Telegram, Lapointe to Hepburn, April 14, 1937

⁶⁸ Ibid.

⁶⁹ Hepburn to Lapointe, April 15th, 1937. Lapointe Papers, LAC MG 27 B10, v. 27

of King, reported that Hepburn's popularity had increased significantly through his actions.

Public opinion has hardened very perceptively in his support and it is arguable that if he calls the election now and makes his campaign on maintenance of law and order and against the C.I.O. and Sit-Down Strikes, this may offset the school problem. [Hepburn's program to authorize property taxation to support catholic schools in certain regions.] In my judgment it is too early to predict what will happen in the case of election but the feeling seems to be he would go back but with a very strongly reduced majority. I am not at all so sure that this is so.⁷⁰

The differing approaches to the CIO strike at Oshawa on the part of the King and Hepburn governments continued to dominate their relations. Hepburn regarded the federal reaction to Oshawa as both hesitant and intrusive.⁷¹ He argued that the strike was an affair of internal concern for Ontario, and the federal government should have followed the provincial government's lead. He felt that Lapointe's telegram undermined his authority. Hepburn remained bitter regarding the action of the federal government for the remainder of his career. He was specifically resented Lapointe's refusal to comply immediately with his request for a larger federal police presence, for the remainder of his political career.⁷²

The incident and Hepburn's reaction was representative of his overall relationship with, and views of, the King government. Both were Liberal administration which normally meant a much more cooperative relationship. Hepburn, however, continually attacked the Liberals in Ottawa, especially after the incident in Oshawa, as overly

⁷⁰ Cameron's letter is an interesting reflection of the views of the industrial community, as despite his antipathy to Hepburn style and action, he cannot help but feel satisfied with the results that Hepburn's actions have created. Cameron ends his letter stating that 'My own feeling is that Hepburn's action has consider dampened the attitude of the leaders of the C.I.O. as to other strikes, and, of course, this is all to the good.' May 1st 1937, Cameron to Crerar, v. 34

⁷¹ Hepburn was never afraid of contradiction. Seager and Thompson, *Decades of Discord*, 290

⁷² *Ibid.*, 297

cautious, meddlesome and without principle.⁷³ This pattern continued until 1938 when Hepburn threatened to throw his support to one of the third parties or even the Ontario Conservative Party.⁷⁴ It was this opening that allowed King to confront him openly. Liberals throughout Ontario were not prepared to take the feud to that extent. This incident, and his actions in 1939, decimated Hepburn's credibility.⁷⁵ He never regained his earlier status.

Hepburn had considerable problems of his own, (acknowledged by the media and by the King government).⁷⁶ However, his refusal to work with the federal government and his inconsistent behaviour after 1937, undermined his reputation with the Canadian establishment and the Canadian public. They were particularly concerned in the spring and summer of 1937 when his rhetoric and his inconsistent habits increased dramatically. His friendship with the Premier of Quebec, Maurice Duplessis, only increased this concern. It was the Governor-General, John Buchan, Lord Tweedsmuir, who summarized the situation in the clearest terms when in a private letter to King in June 1937 he reported to King regarding the friendship.

There is no doubt about the close alliance between Hepburn and Duplessis - a kinship of temperament rather than of policy. Between them I thought they might do a great deal of mischief, but am beginning now to think that they will defeat themselves. I, of course, have no politics, but I profess to believe in liberalism (with a small 'l'), and their creed is its negation. I don't think they will do any real harm to the fundamental liberalism of the Dominion; indeed, I think their extravagance will revive the sound elements in Canadian opinion.⁷⁷

⁷³ *Globe*, March 6th, 1939. See the biography of the *Star*'s editor, J. E. Atkinson written by Harkness, *Atkinson of The Star*. (Toronto, 1963).

⁷⁴ Seager and Thompson, *Decades of Discord*, 299

⁷⁵ *Ibid.*

⁷⁶ At the time he was elected, Ontario newspapers, particularly the Liberal ones, devoted a fair amount of space to a discussion of these issues. 'Fair Play for Mr. Hepburn', *Globe* July 5 1934, 6 See also Saywell, 'Just Call Me Mitch', 532-33, in which he gives a fair, if somewhat sympathetic, assessment of Hepburn's legacy.

⁷⁷ Tweedsmuir to King, 14 June 1937, King Papers, LAC, MG 26 J1, v. 243

Duplessis and Hepburn, and the provinces they represented, had a number of conflicting interests. Despite the friendship between the leaders, the famous ‘alliance’ amounted to very little other than to increase the frustration of those, such as King, Lapointe, Tweedsmuir, and Power, who were eager to maintain some element of unity in Canadian society.

Duplessis and Hepburn, however, had a number of issues in common, in regards to their personalities, style of government, and their views of the federal government. They could agree, most of all, that the federal government had intruded too far into areas of provincial jurisdiction.⁷⁸ Hepburn came to this conclusion through instinct, partially due to his personal dislike of King and partially through his independent nature.

Duplessis, in contrast, was ultimately acting in concert with a long history of Quebec premiers who argued that provincial autonomy was a necessity for the provinces, and of Quebec in particular.⁷⁹ Duplessis’ personality and style of government contributed to this conflict with Ottawa. In the end, however, it was a conflict that was based upon his view of Quebec’s interests. Duplessis, whose political style and personality was similar to Hepburn’s, was harder, more ruthless, and ultimately, more effective, in manipulating the political situation in Quebec and Canada to maintain power and to advance the interests of his province.

The Quebec political situation was one that neither English Canadian society nor its politicians understood. To some extent it was not one that they sought to understand. English Canadians intellectuals in particular were more than eager to seek easy

⁷⁸ H. B. Neatby, *William Lyon Mackenzie King. Volume III: The Prism of Unity, 1932-1939.* (Toronto: 1976), 177

⁷⁹ Robert Rumilly, *Henri Bourassa.* (Quebec, 2000), 150. This is a reprint of Rumilly’s original work, *Henri Bourassa; la vie publique d’un grand Canadien.* (Montreal, Éditions Chantecler, 1953)

explanations for events in Quebec. Their response to French Canadian nationalism, Taschereau's resignation in 1936, and the enactment of the Padlock law, provide clear examples of this.

This reaction was not surprising given the volatile nature of Quebec provincial politics after 1934. The aging Liberal regime under Louis-Alexandre Taschereau, in power since the 1890s, sat like an increasingly tottering colossus over the Quebec legislature. After its success in the election of 1935, it was increasingly attacked from all sides. The debates in the assembly were increasingly violent and focused on societal issues which differed significantly from those in the rest of Canada.

However, the leadership of the federal Liberal party sought to deal with the Quebec administration as one among many. Despite their concerns, the Taschereau administration was to be supported since it was a Liberal one, at least on the surface. Liberal policymakers, such as Charles (Chubby) Power, were delegated to provide organizational and strategic advice in the elections of 1931 and 1935.⁸⁰ When Taschereau tried to retain Power as a permanent consultant by announcing his appointment in the papers, Power sent him a firm letter reminding him of the terms of his contract.⁸¹ Although he does not mention it in his letter, Power made it clear in other correspondence that he viewed the regime with distaste.⁸² Other English Canadian Liberals shared this distaste, for similar reasons. As Cameron had noted in regard to the election of 1931,

⁸⁰Power's reasoning is clear in a memorandum concerning the correspondence with a fellow Liberal, C.N. Senior. The federal Liberals had contributed significantly to the provincial victory. 'If you ask why they took off their coats, the only answer I can make is that it was a case of self-preservation, and of saving the Party throughout the Dominion...to prevent Bennett from obtaining complete control over the destiny of Canada, and it is quite possible that he would have been able to fasten on Power with a far more secure hold than he has since... Just imagine Bennett's satellites in control of the whole Province's patronage, and in Quebec, it is far greater than that of the Federal Government.' Response to Senior's letter of August 13 1934, Charles Power Papers, Queen's University

⁸¹ August 15 1934, Power to Taschereau, Power Papers, Queen's University

⁸² Response to Senior's letter of August 13 1934, Power papers, Queen's University

‘The Taschereau Government is going to the province three weeks from Monday. I think Taschereau will be returned, but I would not bet five cents on the result of the election. If there was a decent alternative Government available, I think he and his Associates would be wiped off the face of the map.’⁸³

The federal Liberals had significant reasons for supporting the Taschereau administration. Control of the Quebec provincial administration meant control of the second largest system of patronage in Canada.⁸⁴ As Crerar would later write to King in July of 1939, the federal Liberals had no real organization in Quebec, and were dependent on that of their provincial counterparts.⁸⁵ In Canada, the control of patronage meant the ability to ensure loyalty amongst supporters, to strengthen party unity and increase party morale.⁸⁶ It was the basis of the party machine. The Liberals could not afford to allow the Conservatives to gain control of this element in Quebec. This fact had led to the dispatch of Power to Quebec during the elections of 1931 and 1935, and the desperate attempts of the federal Liberals to maintain party unity in Quebec.⁸⁷

The maintenance of a strong party machine meant success in elections through public events, and most importantly, through the deliverance of votes. While Canadian parties in the 1930s no longer practiced the blatant buying of votes as had their predecessors, they nonetheless needed a party machine. It ensured successful public

⁸³ Cameron to Crerar, July 31, 1931, Cameron Papers, LAC, MG27 III F2, v. 34

⁸⁴ Response to Senior’s letter of August 13 1934 Power Papers, Queen’s University

⁸⁵ Crerar to King, July 25 1939, in T.A. Crerar papers, Queen’s University

⁸⁶ Cameron’s correspondence with Jacob Nicol regarding Charles Stone, a Liberal supporter, provides an interesting example of patronage at work. Stone was a merchant at Sherbrooke who had run afoul of the liquor laws in Quebec. Cameron wanted Nicol to speak the presiding judge, as the local MP had informed Cameron that it was a trumped up charge due to Stone’s well-known Liberal connections. Cameron to Jacob Nicol, Sherbrooke, Quebec, 19 September 1938, Jacob responded that Cameron should look for other connections, not because of any reluctance to participate in patronage, but due to the fact that Jacob had no influence with the presiding judge. Jacob Nicol to Cameron, 21 September 1938, LAC MG27 III F2 v. 25

⁸⁷ Power to C.N. Senior, December 15 1935, Power Papers, Queen’s University

events where speakers whipped up local support with partisan rhetoric and, at times, copious amounts of booze.⁸⁸ It was also instrumental during elections through its arrangements of transportation and other logistical support when the voters went to the polls.⁸⁹

Clearly, the federal Liberals had good reason to support the Taschereau government. This support, however, had its limitations, particularly after the election of 1935. Although Taschereau had won a majority in the 1935 election, his popularity had never been high, and it was clear from that his political strength was ebbing. After 1935 the provincial Liberals were increasingly divided on the way to deal with the economic crisis. After August of 1935, a growing group of younger, rebellious Quebec Liberals, who would become the core of the Action libérale nationale movement, continued to openly question the government policies.

Federal politicians in the Liberal party, particularly Ernest Lapointe and Chubby Power, were increasingly concerned about the drift in Quebec politics. As the 1930s wore on, the question of Quebec's reaction to events became more and more important. The economic crisis seemed never-ending and the trend in international relations was increasingly confrontational. King had made it clear that he would depend on Lapointe's assessment of Quebec, what they would accept and, more especially, what they would not, regarding international commitments.⁹⁰

In February 1936, Power addressed a gathering at the University of Toronto. Power spoke in the context of the rise of a splinter group within the provincial Liberals,

⁸⁸ Power, *A Party Politician*, 22. Whitaker, *The Government Party*, xxii.

⁸⁹ Power, *A Party Politician*, 22.

⁹⁰It is perhaps easy to criticize King for his reluctance to even attempt to understand French Canada, given the complexity of Canadian society, but it is difficult to see how anyone, except perhaps the remarkable Chubby Power or Ernest Lapointe, to understand *one* of Canada's major ethnic groups, let alone two.

the ALN and the concerns of English Canadians regarding their nationalism. Power, more than any of his contemporaries, clearly understood and articulated the underlying factors that formed the background for the ALN's nationalism. His speech is remarkable in this regard and deserves to be quoted at length.

In my opinion, though it is covered with a veneer of nationalism, the movement is purely economic, and is in line with the trend of modern political thought in other Provinces. A few years ago, the young French-Canadian, cultured, highly educated, by a system, were I not at the Toronto University, I would say was the best in Canada, found themselves turned out of their classical colleges and their Universities, ready to face the World, but with nowhere to go and none of their race in the key position of commerce, industry or finance... [most]probably because the original capital used to develop the Province was in the hands of the English and other British races, ten years ago the young French-Canadian if he wished to enter on a career in the field of banking found that he had to apply to a Gordon, or a Wilson; if he wished to devote his energies to assisting in the power development of the Province, he must necessary be a protégé of a Holt, or a Norris; if the exploitation of the immense and exceedingly valuable forest industry interested him, he must first find favour in the eyes of a Price, or a Graustein. Naturally, very naturally, he said to himself: This is the land which belonged to my ancestors and should belong to me. There is something wrong with a system which places the entire wealth, natural and potential of our Province in the hands of a few, a very few, and these persons not indigenous to the soil. The result was that within a short space of time there developed amongst the young men of the Province, students, lawyers, doctors, engineers, the most intense feeling of Nationalism. Why, said they, should we be hewers of wood and drawers of water in our land? Why should we be forced to cringe and crawl before foreigners in order to obtain the right to earn a mere subsistence in the land of our birth?...I have the right to the same treatment as my fellow in Ontario, British Columbia, and Alberta. To those who have exploited him, who have schemed and profited, this nationalism may be alarming but to the forward-looking of other Provinces, probably for a longer period aware of economic forces, of tariffs, of external trade, of Social services, of labor legislation, of regulation, of monopoly, there can be no other reaction than that they welcome almost a newcomer to their ranks, one who will bring strength to Liberal thought, and Liberal action throughout the Dominion...He will not hurt you, he will help you. Give him his rights, he will respect yours. Let him be your partner, he will carry his load and more.⁹¹

⁹¹ The note attached seems to indicate that Paul Gouin was going to do a translation for him, but never seemed to have happened. Speech by the Honourable C.G. Power Toronto University, 26 February, 1936, Gouin Papers, LAC MG 27 III DI v. 14

Power was eager to reassure English Canadians that the development of this nationalism was both reasonable and in line with trends throughout Canada as a whole. However, he and other federal Liberals were deeply concerned about its results, particularly that of splintering the provincial Liberals with the rise of the ALN movement. They believed that the leaders of the rebel faction were sincere in their disgust with the corruption of the Taschereau regime,⁹² and they did not, therefore, believe that these leaders could be co-opted by traditional means.⁹³

For several years, Liberals in Ottawa watched these developments closely. This culminated in their attempts in 1934 and 1935 to bring the two sides together. Power met with the leaders of this movement, including Paul Gouin, and reported their demands both to Taschereau and the King Liberals.⁹⁴ Power further reported that he saw no reasonable or effective way to bring these sides together, and that in his opinion, the most the federal administration could do was maintain a cautious eye on the situation.⁹⁵ The ALN was particularly dissatisfied with the slow tide of reform, the close connections with outside industry and the policy of ‘business as usual.’⁹⁶

English Canadians both in the Liberal party and elsewhere were concerned regarding the program supported by French Canadian nationalists and the ALN. The leaders of this movement, particularly its intellectual founder, Abbé Groulx, wanted to reorder society, based on an idealized view of Quebec’s past.⁹⁷ They argued that French

⁹² Response to Senior’s letter of August 13 1934, Power Papers, Queen’s University. Dirks, *ALN*, 47

⁹³ These measures normally included the appointment of dissidents to positions within the government. Aug 14 1934, Cameron to Crerar, Dirks, *ALN*, 63

⁹⁴ The nature of these demands was not those that Taschereau would, or even could, accept, as they included the appointment of both Gouin and Duplessis to the provincial cabinet. Power to C.N. Senior, December 15 1935, Power Papers, Queen’s University

⁹⁵ Response to Senior’s letter of August 13 1934, Power Papers, Queen’s University

⁹⁶ *Le Devoir*, August 19th, 1935

⁹⁷ Ronald Rudin, *Making History in Twentieth Century Quebec*. (Toronto, 1997), 17

Canadians had wandered from their roots, from a balanced society based on self-sufficiency, the use of the French language, and the spiritual direction of the clergy.⁹⁸

Even when dealing with similar problems, such as the Depression, French Canadian politicians advocated radically different solutions. As with English Canadians, they advocated the limitation of government spending and the protection of industries from overseas competition.⁹⁹ At the same time, however, they also advocated provincial and municipal control of natural resources and manufacturing, particularly hydro-electrical power,¹⁰⁰ and a focus on a more self-sufficient, (and on the part of some) an agrarian, society.¹⁰¹ They were also particularly interested in the issue of education and the spread of the French language.¹⁰² As Power argued, French Canadian nationalists thus presented a program that dealt with issues of economics, international relations, and societal values as part of a whole.

Groulx and other French Canadian nationalists clearly had a vision of how their society should be ordered. It was not a vision that provided a honourable role for politicians, particularly those who had left the province to make the short but complicated trek to Ottawa. Many nationalists argued that contact with outside societies led to contamination of Quebec's 'purer' society,¹⁰³ and it was participation in federal politics which represented the most dangerous aspect of this. No one outside of Quebec could

⁹⁸ Dirks, *ALN*, X, 66

⁹⁹ Robert Rumilly, *Histoire de la province de Québec. Tome XXXII: La depression*. (Montreal, 1959), 120

¹⁰⁰ *Le Devoir*, August 19 1935, 'L'action liberale nationale dénonce les trusts.' 1. See also Dirks 37

¹⁰¹ *Le Devoir* published editorials urging the Quebec administration to take over unused lands held by forestry companies and grant them to dispossessed farmers and their landless sons. *Le Devoir* March 21 1933, 1, *Le Devoir*, March 22 1934, 1 See also Conrad Black, *Duplessis*. (Toronto, 1977), 53

¹⁰² Gouin's correspondence with C.R. Garceau, a member of the Railway Commission of Canada and a friend of Gouin's father, is unique in fully discussing a number of Gouin's views on these issues and will be more fully examined in later chapters. 1er Juin, 1938, FH Garceau, C.R. to Gouin. Gouin Papers, LAC MG27 III DI v. 3

¹⁰³ Groulx, *Mes Memoires. Tome II*, 120.

possibly understand French Canadian society, and this came to include French Canadian politicians who had spent a significant period of time outside of Quebec.¹⁰⁴ French Canadian nationalists argued that, even within Quebec, the two traditional parties were firmly under the establishment's control. This establishment, they felt was controlled and largely made up by groups that did not originate or belong to 'traditional' Quebec society.¹⁰⁵

Despite the seemingly indestructible nature of the Liberal colossus, the cracks in the regime were wide enough for a politician of sufficient skill to manipulate and exploit. Duplessis, the leader of the Conservative party in Quebec, was a master manipulator of Quebec politics, and soon took advantage of this opportunity.¹⁰⁶ Duplessis was not shy in courting the ALN and its leader, Paul Gouin.¹⁰⁷

As the Liberals in Ottawa had foreseen, the appearance of Gouin and the ALN meant the end of politics as 'business as usual.' The ALN and Duplessis soon formed a coalition party, with the attractive name of 'Union Nationale'. Starting in 1935, the movement consistently hammered the Liberals with accusations of corruption, the inability to deal with the economic and social crisis, and perhaps most tellingly, of lacking a proactive vision of the future of French Canadian society.¹⁰⁸ The ALN contributed significantly to the defeat of the Liberals in the election in August 1936. Gouin soon grew to regret his alliance with Duplessis, particularly after Duplessis

¹⁰⁴ Groulx specifically mentions Taschereau in Groulx, *Mes Memoires. Tome II*, 140. See also 'Siegfried's Canadian Judgment.' *Winnipeg Free Press*, August 19th 1937, 13

¹⁰⁵ This seems to have been particularly the case with the English-speaking community in Quebec. George Ignatieff, *The Making of a Peacemonger*. (Toronto, 1985) 47, which was increasingly coming to prominence in the thought of French Canadian nationalists. Rumilly, *Bourassa*, 719

¹⁰⁶ Dirks, *ALN*, X, 93

¹⁰⁷ Duplessis, (the groom), meets up with Gouin, (the bride) at her home, surrounded by her family, including Gouin, Hamel, etc. Gouin papers, LAC MG 27 III D1, v. 19. See also Dirks, *ALN*, 84

¹⁰⁸ Dirks, *ALN*, 58 and Vigod, *Quebec Before Duplessis*, 241. For Duplessis' role see Black, *Duplessis*, 87

successfully manoeuvred him out of any position of power in the provincial administration.¹⁰⁹ Within a year Duplessis's hold on Quebec was apparently unshakeable.

The King government, which included Lapointe, watched developments in Quebec City with increasing concern. It was apparent that Duplessis appealed, at least rhetorically, to French Canadian nationalist thought, which included a consistent, and vocal, rejection of participation in international affairs, particularly imperial ones. An effective Canadian international policy required at least the assent of the majority of Canadians. Otherwise, the Liberals in Ottawa would soon find themselves out of office. This was particularly true of the national unity questions. Canadians outside of Quebec could disagree on the role of the state, economic policy and dominion-provincial relations without necessarily disagreeing on the possibility of a future for Canada, either as a political unit or as part of the British Empire. It was not entirely clear that the same was true following the wave of French Canadian nationalism that Duplessis rode into office. In addition, not only did the prospect of international involvement lead to disruptive, never-ending and increasingly extreme debates on the nature of Canada, it also distracted Canadian policymakers from the problems abroad. It was not surprising, therefore, that outside observers at times found it difficult to see coherence in Canadian foreign policy.

The Liberals in Ottawa thus had reason to be concerned regarding Quebec's potential reaction to international events. Lapointe argued more and more forcefully that the situation in Quebec was one that could not be predicted.¹¹⁰ Any commitment to

¹⁰⁹ Harvey to Gouin, 16 July 1936, Gouin Papers MG 27 III, D1, v. 44

¹¹⁰ These contradictions are apparent through an examination of Lapointe's mail. His files are full with individual letters dealing with communism, fascism, the possibility of war and the reaction to the Spanish Civil War. Lapointe papers, LAC MG 27 III B10, v. 16, 22, 23

international action, in particular one that would involve the British Empire, would be met with scepticism, or more likely, violently rejected.

As Lita-Rose Betcherman argues, Lapointe was clearly concerned about Abbé Lionel Groulx's actions and the appeal of his nationalism. As he wrote to Charles Dunning on 20 February 1936,

You may have read reports of lectures by such a man as Abbé Groulx who openly advocates the creation of a distinct state of Quebec because of the alleged unfairness with which our Province had been treated under the present system of Confederation. This I am afraid makes a strong appeal to the young men of Quebec and I hope my friends will strengthen my hands of those who are fighting and will fight against any such doctrine.¹¹¹

Many contemporary critics, and some historians, have argued that Lapointe overestimated the nature of the French Canadian problem, in particular in regard to his actions surrounding the Riddell crisis of 1935.¹¹² This has echoed traditional criticisms that King overestimated the difficulty of pursuing international policy that would not undermine national unity.¹¹³ It seems likely, however, that Lapointe was correct in his concerns. The ideology of French Canadian nationalism and its significant appeal to large segments of French Canadian society was central to the question of Canada's international role. Politicians in Quebec, particularly Duplessis, capitalized on the nationalist movement. The movement will be much more fully discussed in a later chapter on intellectual movements in and views of, Canada, but its political implications were equally important. The rise of French Canadian nationalism and the victory of Duplessis in 1936 ensured that the federal government had to be especially careful

¹¹¹ Quoted in Lita-Rose Betcherman, *Ernest Lapointe: Mackenzie King's Great Quebec Lieutenant*. (Toronto, 2002), 212. A complete and credible biography of Lapointe has yet to be written, and given the limited nature of Lapointe's papers that are available, it is unlikely that this will ever be possible. It is difficult to know what Lapointe was thinking on a number of issues, but Betcherman's conclusions here are interesting.

¹¹² James Eayrs, *In Defence of Canada: Appeasement and Rearmament*. (Toronto, 1965), 4

¹¹³ Hutchison, *The Incredible Canadian*, 22, and Eayrs, *Appeasement and Rearmament*, 25

regarding its handling of the dominion-provincial relations. This was particularly in their attempts to find an acceptable form for amending the Canadian Constitution in response to the Statute of Westminster of 1931,¹¹⁴ and in their approach to the question of Canada's international role.

French Canadians obviously were not imperialist. They were also not in favour of intervening in international affairs under the aegis of the League of Nations. They argued that there was no threat to Canada that was not connected to British imperialism.¹¹⁵ Overall, they were the strongest segment of Canadian society in favour of isolationism. They argued that Canada was best served by attention to Canadian needs and that they alone were loyal to Canada.

As was to be expected, most English Canadians rejected this approach, and argued for a stronger commitment to either an imperial foreign policy, or, to a lesser extent, collective security. To some extent these two policies could be combined, and thus interventionists in the name of collective security and those in favour of increased imperial commitment often agreed on policies. Although they often seemed to pursue similar policies, their motivations and views were significantly different. Despite their similarities, however, French Canadians often viewed the two groups as two parts of a whole.¹¹⁶

Imperialism in Canada was certainly far from an anachronism, no matter the views of some members of the Department of External Affairs. Large segments of English-speaking Canadians, including some ethnic minorities, continued to view

¹¹⁴ *Le Devoir*, March 6th 1936. See also Cook, *Dafoe*, 218

¹¹⁵ *Le Devoir*, October 11th 1935

¹¹⁶ *Le Devoir*, October 11th, 1935

Canada's natural place as being part of the British Empire.¹¹⁷ The appeal of the imperial connection went beyond mere sentiment. The enactment of the Statute of Westminster in 1931 passed without comment on the part of most Canadians. Even Canadian newspapers did not devote a great deal of attention to the ways in which the Statute changed the Canadian constitution.¹¹⁸ In addition, Canadians who were interested continued to argue that Canada could be autonomous and remain an integral part of the British Empire.¹¹⁹ A natural response on the part of the imperialists in response to the economic crisis was to look for imperial solutions to the crisis. They focused particularly on the policy of imperial preference.

After the Conservatives took power in August of 1930 Bennett's administration tried a number of measures to alleviate the economic crisis. In addition to social welfare measures, Bennett also attempted to address problems affecting the Canadian economy in the international economic system. As the Canadian economy was overwhelmingly dependent on the exportation of natural resources, the massive increase in tariff barriers, was one of the major reason for the continuing stagnation of the Canadian economy.¹²⁰ After Bennett's plan of 'blasting' his way into international markets through the imposition of artificially high tariffs failed, Bennett sought an imperial solution to the Canadian search for markets.

¹¹⁷ Canadian imperialists were not shy in declaring for the 'British Empire', even after the change in official terminology following the Great War. The concept of a British Empire seemed to appeal to ordinary Canadians in a way that the 'British Commonwealth of Nations' never could. It also appealed to a number of prominent Canadian politicians, including Meighen, Bennett and even, at times, King. See Roger Graham's biography of Arthur Meighen, *Arthur Meighen* 198. Bennett's imperialism is discussed in Thompson and Seager, *Decades of Discord*, 305, while Neatby discusses King's, *William Lyon Mackenzie King. Volume II: The Lonely Heights, 1924-1932*, 177 and *The Prism of Unity, 1932-1939*, 171.

¹¹⁸ December 9 1936, *Winnipeg Free Press*

¹¹⁹ May 17 1939, *Winnipeg Free Press*

¹²⁰ Norrie and Owrarn, *Canadian Economy*, 470

In 1932 an imperial conference was held in Ottawa to discuss the possibility of the formation of an imperial trading bloc. In the sweltering heat of an Ottawa summer, representatives tried to hammer together an agreement that would give preferential treatment to goods, primary and secondary, produced in the British Commonwealth and Empire. The ways in which sentimental and political imperialism played into the economics of imperialism is brought vividly to life through the words of Hector Charlesworth, at the time the President of the Canadian Broadcast Corporation,

London in its vastness is accustomed to such events. But a similar spectacle transferred to a small and beautiful capital in a new land took on larger aspects and longer perspectives. Here were delegates from the banks of the Zambesi, and the Ganges, the Shannon and the Thames; men born and bred under the Southern Cross and the North Star; men who had traversed all the seven seas, who knew the hot plains of the Australian interior; the lovely waters and mountains of NZ; the kopjes of South Africa; the teeming cities of India; the pastoral vistas of the British Isles; men of many racial stocks and many religious faith. As I saw this assemblage rise with solemn quietude to affirm their loyalty to the sovereign of GB, India, the Commonwealth of Nation, and scores of scattered colonies, I would not help thinking, what an ever-potent factor in the affairs of this terrestrial sphere the British Empire is...It was an assemblage devoted to the pursuits of peace, seeking an alleviation in part at least, of existing distresses – and in 1932 these distresses were even more acute than they are to-day.¹²¹

Bennett proved to be an able negotiator, but his hard-nosed tactics and posturing undermined both his reputation and that of Canada.¹²² In addition, as the British were well aware, the extension of imperial preference would most likely only prolong the worldwide depression, without going far to resolve Canada's problems. The Agreements limited Canada's ability to trade with the United States, already a concern even before

¹²¹ Hector Charlesworth, *I'm Telling You: Being the Further Candid Chronicles of Hector Charlesworth*. (Toronto, 1937), 152

¹²² King to Roy, 20 August, 1932, King Papers, MG 26 J1, v. 192

1932.¹²³ It also limited the expansion of Canada's international trade.¹²⁴ They were willing to participate in the Conference and extend trading privileges to the imperial members in order to maintain the approval of the Commonwealth countries, particularly the Dominions such as Canada,¹²⁵ but they clearly foresaw the problems with imperial preference.¹²⁶

Bennett, however, was insistent in his demands for an extension of imperial preference, for political as well economic reasons. Both politically and personally, Bennett felt tremendous pressure to revitalize the Canadian economy.¹²⁷ Canadian producers of timber, wheat, coal and other natural products were particularly angry about the dumping of Russian products on the British market.¹²⁸ Not only did they feel that members of the British Empire should support each other, but the fact that the Soviet Union was communist only added to their resentment.¹²⁹ Bennett succeeded in negotiation an agreement that granted significant concessions to Canadian natural producers, in return for only very limited concessions to British manufacturers.¹³⁰ On the surface therefore, the Conservatives could argue that Bennett's experiment had been a success.

Bennett's imperial gambit, and particularly his aggressive approach, played well in Canada. A muscular, assertive approach to foreign policy often does – unless or until

¹²³ Ian Drummond and Norman Hillmer, *Negotiating Freer Trade: The United Kingdom, the United States, Canada and the Trade Agreements of 1938*. (Waterloo, 1989), 8. In many ways Canada and the United States were competitors in the sale of primary materials, and this, in addition to the Smoot-Hawley tariffs and the ones that followed in 1931 and 1932 only added to the restrictions on Canadian-American trade even before the Ottawa Agreements.

¹²⁴ *Ibid.*, 13

¹²⁵ Robert Holland, *Britain and the Commonwealth Alliance, 1918-1939*. (London, 1981) 143

¹²⁶ *Ibid.*, 136-137

¹²⁷ Dexter to J. W. Dafoe, October 16 1932, Grant Dexter Papers, Queen's University

¹²⁸ Charlesworth, *I'm Telling You*, 163, Quebec, which is both a producer of a number of these products and was deeply anti-communist, was a strong proponent of this argument.

¹²⁹ Rumily, *Histoire de la province de Québec, Tome XXXII*, 120

¹³⁰ Thompson and Seager, *Decades of Discord*, 220

the consequences become apparent. In Bennett's case, he was fortunate that the British – his targets during the 1932 Imperial Economic Conference in Ottawa – needed him at least much as he needed them, and arguably more. The Canadians benefited from the British determination to solidify the imperial connection, for economic as well as political reasons.¹³¹

The successful negotiation of the Ottawa Agreements, Bennett's supporters argued, meant that Bennett was determined to put Canada's needs first.¹³² It also provided the appearance of action, of momentum, something that was clearly missing in the Liberal approach to the onset of the Depression in 1930. Bennett, it seemed, was making things happen, and was attempting new solutions, new approaches, to the economic problems that Canada faced. Although the benefits of the Ottawa Agreements were open to question, even at the time, Canadian politicians found it difficult to ignore the political pressure that favoured the development of imperial preference.¹³³ With the country's economy stagnating, Bennett's action and approach seemed fresh and innovative.

Although Conservative newspapers in Canada were pushed the positive aspects of the agreement directly following the conclusion of the Ottawa Agreements in 1932,¹³⁴ many Canadians, especially in the Liberal party, continued to be very critical. This criticism only increased as the long-term impact of the agreements proved to be

¹³¹ Drummond and Hillmer, *Negotiating Freer Trade*, 17. The British were eager to ensure Commonwealth solidarity for political reasons as well as economic reasons. Politically, this solidarity, if only in appearance, would work to deter international conflict, and would also be useful in times of war.

¹³² The argument that Canada could not wait for the slow process of parliamentary government was one that Bennett used a great deal in the first years of his administration. Power, *Party Politician*, 265-266

¹³³ Drummond and Hillmer, *Negotiating Freer Trade*, 17. Unfortunately, the Canadian government also found it difficult to ignore American annoyance regarding the Agreements, directed as much against Canada as towards the United Kingdom.

¹³⁴ *Globe* March 10 1933, 4, *Globe* July 5 1934, 6

meagre.¹³⁵ Further, the Liberals argued that it was only the enactment of free trade that would lead to the successful revitalization of the Canadian economy. As the Canadian economy was largely based on the export of natural resources, it was hurt significantly by the erection of extremely high tariffs.

The enactment of the Ottawa Agreements, the Liberals argued, only continued this process, encouraging the erection of other tariff combinations.¹³⁶ Instead of encouraging the development of a number of regional and colonial trading blocks they argued for a negotiated return to lower tariff barriers worldwide, particularly with Canada's natural trading partners, the United States and Great Britain.¹³⁷ Further, they argued that the Ottawa Conference alienated their most significant trading partner, the Americans, who were greatly concerned with the possibility of the creation of a powerful Commonwealth trading block.¹³⁸

Despite Bennett's best intentions, therefore, it had to be clear that Canada's long-term interests were being neglected. Neither the American or British governments were satisfied with the negotiations or the agreements themselves. The ultimate rejection of the agreements came in 1935 and 1938. Canada signed a free trade agreement with the United States and then a trilateral agreement including Great Britain. For those in Canada who had always argued that an imperial federation was both an inappropriate and an ineffective solution to Canada's problems, the failure of the Ottawa Agreements was but the final sign.

¹³⁵ Thompson and Seager, *Decades of Discord*, 221

¹³⁶ Cameron to King, January 4 1931, Cameron Papers MG 27 III F2, v. 34, King to McGeer, 29 May 1934, MG 26 JI, v. 201

¹³⁷ Dexter to Dafoe, July 2 1932, Dexter Papers, Queen's University

¹³⁸ *Ibid.*

The issue of an imperial foreign policy became increasingly controversial as the issue of an imperial trading policy became less relevant. The issue of imperial trade and foreign policy continued to be linked, as A.J. Smith, a Liberal from Vancouver wrote King in 1935. Referring to the issue of imperial preference, Smith wrote: 'I would like to ask why that nation [Britain] should be given preferential treatment in Canada in return for dubious and highly competitive concessions in Britain? This has always appeared to me as foolish sentiment and engendering a dangerous European war alliance certain to drag Canada into Britain's world entanglements.'¹³⁹

However, it seems apparent that imperialism in Canada continued to be popular among large segments of Canadians. Its proponents were willing, if not at times eager, to aid Britain in regards to international conflicts. Many argued for a policy of unified foreign policy for the Empire.¹⁴⁰ While Canadian autonomy appealed to Canadians, (at least according to newspaper's reaction to King's pronouncement that Parliament will decide)¹⁴¹, their instinctive reaction was to go to Britain's aid. Often these two sentiments were equally popular, or even linked.¹⁴² Despite the elimination of tangible political links between the two governments, (other than the monarchy), the majority of Canadians could not resist the call of the British connection.

This was a growing sense of nationalism on the part of some Canadians, including a large number of officials in the Department of External Affairs. This group included the undersecretary of the department, O.D. Skelton. Skelton, Loring Christie, and Lester Pearson, who viewed the idea of a unified imperial foreign policy as impractical,

¹³⁹ A.J. Smith, Vancouver to King, June 3 1935, King Papers, LAC MG 26 J1, v. 229

¹⁴⁰ *Ottawa Journal*, February 17th 1937, *Toronto Star* June 27, 1935

¹⁴¹ May 17 1939, *Winnipeg Free Press*

¹⁴² April 1 1934, *Macleans*

anachronistic, and inappropriate. It undermined Canada's national interests.¹⁴³ There were also some, like King, who, (although they could not escape the emotional connection to Britain), saw the emphasis on Canadian autonomy as a policy alternative to imperialism.¹⁴⁴

For the most part, however, they realized the strength of imperial sentiment in Canada, (and even to some respect within the department itself)¹⁴⁵. Pearson refers to the continuing imperial sentiment in his letters home from London,¹⁴⁶ as does Skelton in his private correspondence.¹⁴⁷ They realized that their policies and that of the Canadian government internationally, had to respect the strength of imperial sentiment.

There were also those who argued that the only way for Canadians to avoid participating in another war was to support the League of Nations. This reflected the views of a small segment of Canadians. Overall, Canadians viewed the League, as did King, as an agent of conciliation and negotiation, rather than as one of collective

¹⁴³ 'Imperial Economic Conference of 1930.' Skelton Papers, LAC MG 30 D33, v. 4

¹⁴⁴ Skelton was the clearest case of this sentiment. He argued it consistently when discussing international relations with King. 'Canada and the Polish War.' Skelton Papers, LAC MG 30 D33, v. 5. Pearson was never comfortable with his instinctive isolationism, either during the period or after. See Pearson's later views on Canadian isolationism, 'Reflections on Inter-war Canadian Foreign Policy.' Christie Papers, LAC MG 30 E44, v. 29. Loring Christie is an interesting case, as his isolationist viewpoint comes out at least partially to his rejection of his earlier embracing of imperialism. In 1924, Loring wrote 'Out of my own experience I am not prepared to say the British Empire is a dream; indeed I have seen many signs that lead me to the view that the experiment with luck might just come off; and so I suppose my conservative instincts lay it upon me to stick to the cards as dealt by the past and to play them out.' Christie to O. M. Biggar, December 18 1924, MG 30 E 44, v. 10

¹⁴⁵ J.L. Granatstein, *Man of Influence: Norman A. Robertson and Canadian Statecraft, 1929-1968*. (Toronto, 1981), 128

¹⁴⁶ Pearson to Skelton, 9 June 1939, Pearson Papers, LAC MG 26 N1, v. 14

¹⁴⁷ Skelton was well aware of the strength of imperialist sentiment in Canada and its strength amongst Canada's most prominent members. Memorandum to Skelton by Keenleyside, October 6th 1938, Undersecretary of State for External Affairs, LAC RG 25 D1, v. 715. Christie seemed less willing to acknowledge the continuing imperial sentiment in Canada, as his Note on the Canadian Position in the Event of a German-Czech Conflict Involving Great Britain, September 8 1938, indicates. Christie Papers, LAC MG 30 E44, v. 29. It is this that perhaps leads to the perceptive comment by H.D.G. Crerar in his letter to Pearson in London that 'Christie is very able - but all brain and no feeling - as a result I think that his political conclusions miss the probabilities at times.' H.D.G. Crerar to Pearson May 5, 1938, Pearson Papers, LAC MG 26 N1, v. 3

security.¹⁴⁸ An overwhelming number of Canadians outside of Quebec supported the League, but only in regards to the conditions and limitations that they placed upon it. The small minority that did argue for a strong policy for support of collective security, however, was a vocal and articulate one and had to be respected.¹⁴⁹ They pushed for a more consistent policy of federal support for collective security. They pushed for a stronger Canadian policy of support for the League, and for an increased presence overseas.

At the same time, however, it appears that Canadian politicians, including King, seemed to have realized that there was a great deal of resistance to the idea of Canadian international involvement. This was true not only regarding Quebec, but also due to the national resistance to the possibility of Canadian possibility in another European war.¹⁵⁰ As discussed later, the memory of the Great War, continued to influence Canadian views of foreign policy throughout the period. As Jonathan Vance argues, although Canadians were proud of their contributions to the Great War, they still felt that the war was caused by factors that had little relevance to their lives.¹⁵¹ In addition, some Canadians agreed with the belief that all wars were caused by militarism, armament manufacturers or European rivalries.¹⁵² They were determined not to repeat their wartime experience.

¹⁴⁸ Donald Page is one of the few historians who have dealt specifically with the issue of Canadian views of the League. His dissertation is problematic, but it still addresses a number of interesting issues. Donald Page, *Canadians and the League of Nations Before the Manchurian Crisis*. (Ph.D. Thesis, University of Toronto, 1972), 190

¹⁴⁹ David Bercuson's biography of Brooke Claxton discusses some of the inner workings of the League of Nations Society. D. J. Bercuson, *True Patriot: The Life of Brooke Claxton, 1896-1960*. (Toronto, 1993), 85. See also Stacey, *Canada and the Age of Conflict*, 165

¹⁵⁰ It is the memory of the Great War that would haunt Meighen's political career. Roger Graham, *Arthur Meighen. Volume II: And Fortune Fled*, (Toronto: 1962), 191

¹⁵¹ Jonathan Vance, *Death So Noble: Memory, Meaning and the First World War*. (Vancouver, 1997), 7

¹⁵² Ida K. Stewart to King, July 14th, 1936, King Papers, LAC MG 26 JI, v. 229

It was also true that American isolationism had some impact on Canadian views. As H.F. Angus argued, it should not be assumed that Canadian isolationism was simply a recent importation from across the border, as it did have independent historical and cultural roots.¹⁵³ Canadians and Americans, though, did seem to share some views on international relations. As will be discussed in later chapters, Canadians shared the view prevalent in the United States that North American societies had few interests in Europe.¹⁵⁴ They agreed with the Americans that Canadians and Americans shared certain cultural values and interests due to their position in the Western Hemisphere. Again, as Angus argued in 1938, Canadian-American friendship was

in the main the result of the century of easy intercourse which has been made possible by geographical propinquity, a common language, and a century of peace. It grew up when Canadian nationalism was hardly existent as a force or resistance, and before the modern press, the motion pictures, and radio programs had exerted their influence.¹⁵⁵

Despite the attempts of vested interests in Canada to shore up support for Canadian nationalism or British imperialism, he argued, the similarities between Canada and the United States were in fact more significant than their differences.¹⁵⁶

In contrast, many Canadians were afraid that overseas involvement, whether in the British Commonwealth or the League of Nations, would lead to Canadian involvement in another war. In addition, given the serious internal problems that Canadians faced during the period, many argued that they should not be distracted by

¹⁵³ H.F. Angus, ed. *Canada and Her Great Neighbour: Sociological Surveys of Opinions and Attitudes in Canada Concerning the United States*. (Toronto, 1938), 264

¹⁵⁴ Hutchison, *The Incredible Canadian*, 313

¹⁵⁵ Angus, *Canada and Her Great Neighbour*, 104. As A. J. Smith continued in his letter to King of June 3rd 1935, I have maintained for many years that Canada's destiny is in North America - that we should not be concerned with Britain's entanglements. Our living standards and those of the United States conform more closely than those of any two countries in the world; we have far more in common there than with Great Britain. A.J. Smith, Vancouver to King, June 3 1935, King Papers LAC MG 26 J1, v. 229

¹⁵⁶ Angus, *Canada and Her Great Neighbour*, 225

overseas events.¹⁵⁷ To many Canadians, their involvement in these conflicts was both dangerous and not their concern. As R.A. MacKay and E.B. Rogers argued these three policies, imperialism, internationalism and isolationism should not be seen as mutually exclusive, as they often overlapped. They pointed out that even Canadians who had made up their minds, cannot be ‘pigeon-holed’ on the contrary, they argued, ‘the various schools of thought shade imperceptibly into one another.’¹⁵⁸

A reflection of the limited appeal of overseas commitment to Canadians was the negative reaction to the very small commitments that King made to national defence. The British had begun to re-arm in 1934, and the contribution of the Commonwealth was a key consideration. During the next five years they found the process of negotiating with King to expand co-operation in munitions production and defence planning extremely frustrating.¹⁵⁹ Certainly, as contemporaries such as Bruce Hutchison argued, the amount that the Canadian government spent on defence expenditures in the years directly preceding the war was very limited. Hutchison argued that, ‘If he [King] had felt war was coming he should have instead insisted on stronger policies or resigned, and then, doubtless, returned triumphantly from the wilderness latter as Churchill did. He was not dishonest in his calculations. He was entirely mistaken.’¹⁶⁰ Hutchison felt that King should have been aware of the danger that Hitler in particular posed to the international community. He implied that King’s policies of limited liability and his concern with

¹⁵⁷ Seager and Thompson, *Decades of Discord*, 38

¹⁵⁸ R. A. MacKay and E.B. Rogers, *Canada Looks Abroad*. (London, 1938), 250

¹⁵⁹ J.L. Granatstein and Robert Bothwell, “ ‘A Self-Evident National Duty’: Canadian Foreign Policy, 1935-1939,” *Journal of Imperial and Commonwealth History* 3, 2 (January 1975), 218

¹⁶⁰ Hutchison, *The Incredible Canadian*, 227 It is hard to imagine a situation more unlikely than King acting in a similar manner as Winston Churchill during the 1930s. The idea of King standing on an abstract principle to the detriment of his political career, to the extent that he would be forced into the ‘political wilderness.’ It is also hard to imagine a scenario where King would return triumphantly at the start of the war. Hutchison is arguing for a policy that would make him more comfortable with King’s legacy, rather than one based on a credible reading the Canadian political scene, or of King’s leadership or personality.

limiting the discussion of international affairs hurt the development of the Canadian and international response to the challenge that fascism posed.

However, Hutchison significantly underplayed the violent reaction that even this small program provoked.¹⁶¹ Along with Chubby Power, (not to mention Lapointe, and probably, most other Quebec MPs), King was concerned about the reaction of Quebec.¹⁶² Further he admitted to the Liberal caucus that he found the prospect of rearming distasteful, if necessary.¹⁶³ In the end, King managed to convince first the Cabinet and then the Liberal caucus of the need to begin a limited plan of rearmament. Still, the House of Commons debate on the question illustrated the limited support for the program. The CCF reaction to the announcement of the program reflected the concerns of their members regarding militarism,¹⁶⁴ and French Canadians attacked any armament program as inherently imperialist.¹⁶⁵ The House of Commons debates on the defence estimates that took place in the winter of 1937 saw the majority of the opposition members, with the notable exception of the Conservatives, come together to attack the Liberals for their rearmament program.¹⁶⁶ At the same time, it also witnessed the singular phenomenon of Liberal backbenchers from Quebec who, despite the earlier unanimity in

¹⁶¹ The government proposed that Canadian defence expenditures be raised from twenty million in 1936 to thirty-six in 1937. Neatby, *The Prism of Unity*, 190. This was actually far short of the proposals of the Canadian Chiefs of Staff for sixty-five millions. Neatby, *The Prism of Unity*, 183

¹⁶² *Ibid.*, 183

¹⁶³ *Ibid.*, 190

¹⁶⁴ Nicholas Mansergh, *Survey of British Commonwealth Affairs: Problems of External Policy, 1931-39*. (London, 1952), 121 and Holland, *The Commonwealth Alliance*, 28. It was clear that Holland did not completely understand the nature of opinion in Canada, as he argues that the truest expression of isolationism in Canada was found in the mid-west, based on the strength of the CCF in the region.

¹⁶⁵ *Le Devoir*, March 30th 1936

¹⁶⁶ Neatby, *The Prism of Unity*, 190. The Conservative Party had attacked the Liberals in the past for failing to contribute to Imperial defence or to sufficiently ensure Canada's defence. H.B. Neatby, 'Mackenzie King and the Historians.' in *Widening the Debate*, 11, and 'Spending Billions in Preparation for War.' *Winnipeg Free Press*, May 15th, 1936. During the debate they were strangely silent, and this tactic, meant to embarrass the Liberals by leaving them open to the attacks of the CCF, and the Quebec backbenchers in particular, was certainly effective. Neatby, *The Prism of Unity*, 193.

the Liberal caucus, rose to publicly attack the Liberal program.¹⁶⁷ It truly was a case of both sides against the middle.

It was this combination of opinions that made the Canadian involvement in the British Commonwealth, and equally, the League of Nations, controversial. Canadians had three options internationally, imperialism, isolationism and interventionism. They could not agree on any of these. As the 1930s wore on, it was apparent that they would have to.

In the end, as C.P. Stacey eloquently demonstrates, while Canada's participation in the Second World War was in its long-term interests, the country participated in the war due to its imperial connection.¹⁶⁸ It was clear that the imperial connection had not been completely dissolved, and that the silent majority of English-speaking Canadians insisted on a contribution to Britain's defence. Canadians were not unaffected by domestic and American isolationism, and although there was a segment of Canadian society that was attracted to the idea of collective security as represented by the League of Nations. However, it appears as though it was British imperialism that continued to appeal to the majority of Canadians outside of Quebec.

This does not mean that isolationism and internationalism were not equally representative of Canadian society in the 1930s. A large number of Canadians seemed to have sincerely believed in the appropriateness for Canada of all these policies, and at times, with more than one. The ultimate decision to support Great Britain after 1939 did not negate their sincere belief in isolationism or internationalism. Nor did it indicate that the eventual success of imperialists in Canada was inevitable. In the following chapters, the support for these movements and how they interacted both with each other and how

¹⁶⁷ Neatby, *The Prism of Unity*, 191

¹⁶⁸ Stacey, *Canada and the Age of Conflict*, v. II, 269

they reflected aspects of Canadian society will be examined. It is important to consider how the domestic realities in Canada affected these policies and their appeal.

Chapter 4. The Two Solitudes: Intellectual Opinion in Canada

As seen earlier, Canadian intellectual opinion was defined by the presence of two main groups, English and French. Canadian intellectuals formed tight social and education links within these groups. This separated them both from average Canadians and from their colleagues in the contrasting community. In 1937, following his return from Europe, André Laurendeau was determined to enter ‘en dialogue avec le Canada anglais. Une fois revenue à Montréal’, he later wrote, ‘je constatai que dans ma propre ville, où les Anglo-canadiens étaient pourtant plusieurs centaines de milliers, c’était difficile tant les deux groupes vivaient à l’écart l’un de l’autre.’¹ As with their larger communities, English and French Canadian intellectuals lived in different worlds, and differed on their interpretation of domestic and international events. While the ethnic divide was significant, there were also notable differences of opinion among the intellectuals. As a result, it is often difficult to discern a cohesive approach to foreign affairs on the part of either group. It is necessary to examine the nature of these views here before examining their impact on Canadian public opinion and their views on either domestic or international events.

Canadians received their information from different sources, concentrated on different issues and drew widely divergent conclusions on the nature of Canadian society and its international role. The intellectual community in Canada disagreed on the proper approach regarding Europe, the League of Nations, the United States and, most notably, Great Britain. Although the appeal of imperialism had faded somewhat since the end of the Great War, it continued to resonate with some elements of the Canadian community.

¹ Laurendeau, *La crise de la conscription*, 1942, 22

Canada's place in the Commonwealth gave Canadians a sense of importance and represented the potential of effective international cooperation. In contrast, to others Canadian imperialism provoked memories of Great War conflicts and the suppression of 'true' Canadian interests. The conflict over imperialism touched the nerve over the intellectual disagreement over Canada's international role.

In general, Canadians differed in their approach to the fascist and communist challenges of the 1930s. These views changed gradually over time, but certain themes were apparent when looking at the period as a whole. Their differences reflected in many ways their divergent views on the nature of Canada itself. In addition, while there were individual Canadians, such as King, Lapointe, Dafoe, and even Gouin, who realized the extent of the division in Canada, they proved unable, or perhaps even unwilling, (in the case of Gouin) to bridge it.

Defining the Canadian intellectual community in the 1930s is as difficult as disentangling the various threads of opinion it expressed. How, first of all, should it be defined? The limits of the intellectual community were ill-defined, and the nature of its membership was unclear. This is most apparent when looking at certain individuals involved in politics and journalism.² Even if they would not be considered part of the intellectual community by historical standards, they saw themselves in that light, and to some degree were seen in that way by outsiders. The most useful grouping, therefore, would include the educated if not the learned professions. The definition of education, in a country where the university-trained were still a tiny minority, would need to include

² Examples would include Vincent Massey and Grant Dexter of the *Winnipeg Free Press*. Claude Bissell, for example, in his biography of Vincent Massey, has argued that although not an intellectual, Massey should be considered as an intellectual figure as well as a diplomatic and political one. Claude Bissell, *The Imperial Canadian: Vincent Massey in Office*. (Toronto, 1986) x

training on the job as well as formal university study. Such a definition would snag journalists, newspaper editors and owners, some lawyers, as well as academics, religious ministers, politicians and members of the department of External Affairs.³ Even such a broad definition, however, does not fully address the nature of the community. Individual Canadians, outside of these categories, or who straddled a number of them, were still accepted by the intellectual community as a whole.⁴ These were people who tended, in English or French, to read the same things, and to consult each other, although, as noted, there were limits to this exchange.

The information they consulted was also diverse. There was, first of all, the language barrier. Tracing reading habits is difficult. Obviously many English Canadians read French, and vice-versa. But if we consider what one young very bilingual French Canadian, Pierre Trudeau, read during the 1930s and early 1940s, we discover an almost insuperable barrier between French and English, down at least to his departure for Harvard in 1944.⁵ Canadian intellectuals of either English or French allegiance corresponded with colleagues travelling overseas, as well as with their contacts in the diplomatic and political communities. They read foreign periodicals, and lined up for American Sunday papers at their local hotel newsstands. (The London Times and other overseas papers would be received weeks old, and were best consulted in libraries.) Fortunately there was the new technology of radio which also played a role in shaping their views on foreign policy, and gave a certain immediacy or urgency to their debates,

³Doug Owsam, in his work, *The Government Generation*, addressed the question of defining this community, although his work largely concentrates on the period of following the Second World War. Still, his work is useful in addressing the overall question of the membership of this community.

⁴ Again, the role of the self-educated expert, such as Vincent Massey or Charlotte Whitton, perhaps hints at the example of this phenomenon. Owsam, *Government Generation*, XII

⁵ See English, *Citizen of the World*, 108-109

and a much greater store of information than would have been available in 1914 over the telegraph and in the newsrooms of Canada's newspapers. The Canadian intellectual community watched and contributed to wider political debates on international relations, including those in Great Britain and the United States. The main sources for information on international affairs, however, continued to be personal contact with Canadian politicians and diplomats in the Ottawa-Montreal-Toronto triangle, and Canadian newspapers.

These developments in technology were important for their enhancement of older means of gathering information on contemporary events. In particular, the rapidity of the transmission of information as a result of radio technology enhanced the sense of connection to events. This technology was rapidly embraced by national leaders, politicians, advertisers, and, not surprisingly, charlatans.⁶ It was also increasingly used to advance political agendas, especially by younger politicians. The leader of Quebec's ALN, Paul Gouin, delivered a large number of radio addresses. His personal papers are full of actual and proposed programs. It was one of the main ways, for example, in which he sought to convince Quebec voters that Duplessis and his associates had co-opted the *action liberale national* movement after 1935.⁷

Gouin was not alone in his attempt to use the radio for political purposes. The Social Credit party in Alberta made extensive use of radio. This included the popular 'Men from Mars' program. Radio programs were a significant in their attempts to

⁶ Paul Rutherford, *Weapons of Mass Persuasion: Marketing the War Against Iraq*. (Toronto, 2004), 13 Rutherford's short discussion of the ways that the Nazis used the radio before turning to the more effective medium of television is also interesting. Rutherford, *Weapons of Mass Persuasion*, 186. See also Michael Nolan, *Alan Plaunt and the Early days of CBC Radio*. (Toronto, 1986), 136; and Charlesworth's memoirs, *I'm Telling You*.

⁷ Dirks, *ALN*, 113

convince Albertans that the application of Social Credit policies were important, practical, and needed to be applied immediately.⁸ The Conservatives and the Liberals also took advantage of the new technology in electoral campaigns. Mackenzie King, for example, addressed Canadians on general Liberal policies,⁹ his participation in imperial conferences¹⁰ and problems the federal Liberals had with Mitch Hepburn.¹¹

The new technology also allowed for the rapid transmission of outside cultural and political influences. The geographical proximity of Canada to American broadcasting represented one more way that American cultural and political ideas influenced Canadian society. The same was true of the other new technology, American movies, although determining their influence was also far from simple. As H.F. Angus argued, ‘Side by side with the direct and obvious results of advertising American goods, popularizing American styles of beauty and of voice, and habituating the peoples of the countries to witnessing the same type of entertainment.’¹² To some extent they also encouraged some contempt for American society, although this was probably, he argued, no stronger than the protests which also occurred in the United States. The difference, he argued, was that in Canada it could take a form ‘of nationalist protest and give comfort to the sense of moral or even cultural superiority.’¹³

The transmission of ideas from the United States partially explains the resemblances in North American views of international relations, although this was

⁸ John Irving, *The Social Credit Movement in Alberta*. (Toronto, 1959), 111

⁹ ‘Re-assert of Personal Liberties,’ Excerpt from King’s Radio Broadcast, August 2 1935, King Papers, LAC MG 26, J4 v. 156

¹⁰ Frank Shinkar, Windsor to King, August, 1937, King Papers, LAC MG 26, J1 v. 242

¹¹ Charlesworth, *I’m Telling You*, 70. The potential effectiveness of radio technology for political purposes was realized. When Hector Charlesworth was appointed head of the Canadian Broadcasting Corporation, he was subject to extreme scrutiny. He states in his memoirs that ‘French Canada was rather apprehensive in my case that Mr. Bennett had selected, ‘a cold Orangiste from Toronto.’

¹² Angus, *Canada and Her Great Neighbour*, 140

¹³ *Ibid.*

significantly more true for English Canadian society rather than in Quebec. The influence of American culture on Canadian society meant that the language they used to express their views was often similar to that used by American intellectuals.¹⁴ This is despite the fact that the cultural underpinnings of these views were significantly different.

The influence of American views, long evident in Canadian publications, was even more apparent in regards to the new radio medium. Father Charles Coughlin, who hosted a weekly radio show on religious and social issues, was widely popular in Canada. (Coughlin had been born in Canada, though that was a fact that Canadians increasingly preferred to forget.) His 1932 Sunday sermons advocating the nationalization of credit and a federally controlled central bank influenced large numbers of Canadians, including Mitch Hepburn.¹⁵ By the mid-1930s Coughlin was a political force to be reckoned with. His ideas were increasingly influential in both the United States and Canada. To his ideas on credit and money he added theories on international relations. Coughlin's opposition to any American involvement in European politics in the 1930s was instrumental in spreading support for the isolationism movement.¹⁶

The popularity of Coughlin's program is also significant as an indication of the influence of American cultural and political ideas in Canada. Cultural similarities across the border guaranteed that similar if not identical ideas would spread easily through American and English Canadian intellectual circles.¹⁷ American literature had always

¹⁴ For an interesting example of this difference, see 'Border Without Bayonets', by Jack Alexander, the opening article in the January 6th, 1940 edition of the *Saturday Evening Post*. The sense of North American moral superiority and remoteness from European problems is clearly there, indicative of many of the views Canadians shared with Americans. At the same time, however, it is expressed in terms that would have made it clear to Canadians that it was written from an American perspective. Alexander, Jack. 'Border Without Bayonets.' *Saturday Evening Post*, Vol. 212, no. 28, (January 6 1940), 9-10

¹⁵ Saywell, 'Just Call Me Mitch', 532

¹⁶ Arthur Schlesinger, *The Age of Roosevelt, Volume III: The Politics of Upheaval*. (Boston, 1958), 19

¹⁷ MacKay and Rogers, *Canada Looks Abroad*, 122

been extremely popular in Canada. Observers had noted their appeal in Canada had been noted as early as the turn of the century. Often, they argued, Canadians were more familiar with American authors than British ones.¹⁸ The circulation numbers of American periodicals in Canada that contemporary observers noted do seem to indicate that these periodicals were ever increasing in popularity.¹⁹ American literary works were extremely popular in Canada, as were American periodicals.²⁰ Even if read in vastly different contexts, these spread the discussion concerning international relations, and the tone in which this discussion was held.²¹

For Canada's "foreign policy public" (to use Ernest May's formulation) the most notable source of information on international developments continued to be Canadian newspapers. Newspapers in the 1930s were numerous and extensively read. Their editorial policies and news coverage were more diverse than contemporary papers. They were more directly associated with the traditional political parties. As seen, more than simply reporting the news to Canadians, they attempted to shape the way their readers responded to events and allowed them to connect to the wider world. Canadians were often pre-occupied with national, if not regional and local, issues. Finally newspapers represented a source of entertainment and escapism, as much as information, to Canadians in the 1930s.²²

Newspapers therefore represented one of the main sources of information on international affairs for Canadians. In addition, newspaper editors and journalists

¹⁸ Allan Smith, *Canada: An American Nation? Essays on Continentalism, Identity, and the Canadian Frame of Mind*. (Montreal & Kingston, 1994), 31-32

¹⁹ Angus, *Canada and Her Great Neighbour*, 163

²⁰ Thompson and Seager, *Decades of Discord*, 169

²¹ Angus, *Canada and Her Great Neighbour*, 198

²² The popularity of Gordon Sinclair's international adventures as reported in the *Toronto Star* certainly represented the appeal of media as escapism. See also Sinclair's biography for a further development of this theme. Gordon Sinclair, *Will the Real Gordon Sinclair Please Sit Down?* (Toronto, 1975).

represented a significant strand of the intellectual community. These individuals had access to a great deal of information regarding international developments. Many were actively engaged in discussing international developments, although the depth of this interest varied from paper to paper.²³

The Canadian newspaper most associated with international affairs was the *Winnipeg Free Press*. The *Free Press* was in many ways a regional and local paper.²⁴ However, its editor, John W. Dafoe, consistently advocated a greater focus on international affairs and a policy of stronger Canadian support to the League of Nations. He also argued for the development of a policy more reflective of Canada's position as what he referred to as a 'North American democracy', as it shared with the United States similar ideas of democracy, social obligations and institutions.²⁵ This position meant that Canada could work as a partner, however junior, to the United States in playing a decisive role in establishing collective security.²⁶ It continued to devote an extraordinary amount of attention to issues regarding the British Commonwealth, the international situation, and especially, the League, particularly in regards to Dafoe's editorials.

The impact of the *Winnipeg Free Press*, Dafoe's views, and those of newspapers in general on public opinion, will be discussed in a later chapter. In regard to intellectual opinion, however, Dafoe's views are important. Although his views on international

²³ For an example of this see Dexter to Ferguson, April 10 1937, in the Dexter papers.

²⁴ The structure of the *Winnipeg Free Press* in itself provides a means of understanding the 1930s. The front page was a mixture of the most noteworthy national, local and international developments. It was then followed by a full-page advertisement for national and local manufacturers. The third page continued the discussion of the most significant national, local and international developments. Local issues dominated the following four or five pages, followed by three or four pages of societal news. (They are, incidentally, delightful.) The editorial page was usually page 11 or 13, depending on the amount of advertising and local news included. The editorial page was followed by several pages of business news. This comprised the first section. The second section included sports news, feature articles and various additions, including several more pages of advertisements. In addition, every Saturday, a page was given over to the printing of the 'Views of *Free Press* Readers,' or letters to the editor.

²⁵ John W. Dafoe, *Canada: An American Nation*. (New York, 1935), 5

²⁶ *Ibid.*, 127

relations were respected and influential, only a minority of Canadians supported his internationalism.²⁷

Some analysts, such as MacKay and Rogers, argued that Canada stood to gain considerably from the establishment of a collective security system. Still, they conceded that its small size and the division in domestic opinion meant it was unlikely to find leadership for this policy. In addition, regarding the collective security system as a whole, they acknowledged that the signs were not promising.

These are years of disappointment and disillusionment, even of despair. The tentative collective system, which gave such high hope to many of the generation who knew by personal or vicarious experience the catastrophes of war, has not withstood the pressure of events.²⁸

It was apparent, however, that they still had hopes for the future of the system. 'Though dormant, the League survives...Even an equilibrium of armed exhaustion would afford a breathing space in which perhaps the League system might be revived.'²⁹ For Canada, though, even this positive outcome, had dangerous implications for the ability of Canadians to determine their policy. 'Canada would then be faced with the old questions of the contribution she was prepared to make, and the risks she was prepared to run, in attempting once again the establishment of peace by collective means.'³⁰

In 1937, Escott Reid, the national Secretary of the Canadian Institute of International Affairs, published an article on the nature of King's policy. Reid was considered one of the leading thinkers on the Canadian approach to international affairs, although his connections to the C.C.F. and his advocacy of Canadian neutralism

²⁷ Correspondence with Dafoe runs throughout the political papers of all involved, from King, to Skelton, Cameron Papers, LAC, MG 27 III F2

²⁸ Mackay and Rogers, *Canada Looks Abroad*, 324

²⁹ Ibid.

³⁰ Ibid.

concerned a number of his supporters in the CIIA.³¹ He had published a number of articles on Canadian domestic and international policy,³² but it was his article in January 1937 which was the most well-known. Reid's examination of King's policy was so conclusive that it was referred to in the House of Parliament,³³ and King himself mentioned it in his diary.³⁴

Reid's article focused on seven key points; national unity; the focus on the United States and Great Britain; the 'back seat' policy for the League of Nations; an acknowledgement that Canada was under no obligation to engage in military or economic sanctions, as part of either the League or the British Commonwealth; and the continuing policy that 'Parliament will decide.'³⁵ Reid concluded that for a complete picture King would 'have to emulate President Wilson and give us a fourteen-point programme,' as for each point there remained a major question unresolved. On the other hand, as Reid concluded,

But if Mr. King were to give unambiguous answers to the seven questions he has left unanswered, he would raise a tremendous political storm in Canada. Parties would split. Passions would be aroused. The national unity of Canada would be subjected to severe strains. If war should break out, such a crisis will probably be inevitable. It is human not to wish to hasten the arrival of the inevitable, if the inevitable is unpleasant – and perhaps dangerous.³⁶

It was the policies of 'national unity' and 'no commitments' which underpinned Canadian policy, not collective security. English Canadian intellectuals to some degree

³¹ J.L. Granatstein, *The Ottawa Men*. (Toronto, 1998), 240

³² See Reid, 'Canada and This Next War.' *Canadian Forum*, XIV (March 1934), 207-209; Reid Papers, Writings #9, 'Canada and the Ethiopian Crisis.' August 26 1934, and the chapter on foreign Policy in the CCF's *Social Planning for Canada*, which Reid co-authored, for a few examples of his views on foreign policy. *Social Planning for Canada*, LSR Research Committee, (Toronto, 1935)

³³ House of Commons Debates, 19 February 1937

³⁴ King Diary, 7 February. 1937

³⁵ Escott Reid, 'Canada and the Threat of War.' *University of Toronto Quarterly*, vol. VI, (January 1937), 242-52

³⁶ *Ibid.*, 243

had become disillusioned with the League by 1935.³⁷ A number had had concerns since its inception,³⁸ as had some members of the Canadian press.³⁹ In addition, as will be seen many shared a sense of detachment from Europe similar to the views of some Americans and French Canadians. In addition, some English Canadians agreed with the argument that the Treaty of Versailles was unjust and that the League itself was unjust as it was dominated by the victors of the Great War.⁴⁰

This change was largely the result of the pressure of events. While support had been limited, Canadians seemed to have been in favour of the League since its inception in 1919, as representative of the best hope for a stable international system in Europe. To be sure, the League of Nations Society in Canada remained small, and despite the enthusiasm that attended its establishment of its branches, it lacked consistent support during the interwar period.⁴¹ This was primarily due to the Canadian concerns with the implications of the so-called 'keystone' of the League Covenant, Article X. This was of course an old Canadian bugaboo, and Mackenzie King in particular never failed to denounce it, first in private, but in the late 1930s, in public.⁴²

Even those who supported the League seemed to have had concerns about its composition and structure. They were concerned with the League's lack of universality,

³⁷ Richard Veatch, *Canada and the League of Nations*. (Toronto, 1975), 142, 163. See also C.H. Cahan to King, 28 August 1936, King Papers, LAC MG 26 J1, v. 214

³⁸ Donald Story, *Canada's Covenant: The Bennett Government, the League of Nations and Collective Security, 1930-1935*. (Unpublished Ph.D. dissertation, University of Toronto, 1976), 2

³⁹*Ibid.*, 14

⁴⁰ Gwendolyn Carter, *The British Commonwealth and International Security: The Role of the Dominions, 1919-1939*. (Toronto, 1947), 210

⁴¹ Page, *Canadians and the League of Nations Before the Manchurian Crisis*, 190. Page argues that Bennett differed only from King in his approach to the League in his emphasis regarding the League. He argues that historians had misread King's commitment to the League by ignoring the aspects of conciliation and negotiation. However, his argument often seems to focus on details rather than themes. Neatby also provides an interesting analysis of the Canadian approach to the League in the 1935 period when it was viewed largely in terms of prestige and autonomy. Neatby, *The Prism of Unity, 1932-1939*, 136

⁴² King's Speech to League of Nations, September 29th 1936 in Rogers and MacKay, *Canada Looks Abroad*, 363-69

its failure to deal more effectively with the internal issues faced by its members and international economic conflicts. Overt support for the league was more often found on the Left, although even then, it was far from universal. A motion on the floor of the House of Commons in February of 1936 called for a new Canadian policy concerning the League. The League should actively push its members to disarm, move towards open diplomacy, and should cancel treaties not in accord with the Covenant. This would include the revision of the peace treaties to 'apply the principles of international justice to the solution of these economic, territorial and racial problems, most frequently the cause of international disputes'. The League should also prohibit 'unilateral agreements and unilateral mobilization' likely to undermine its effectiveness in establishing conditions of peace.⁴³

This motion, with its advocacy of closer support of the League, was considered by Canadian politicians to represent the wishes of only a small minority of Canadians, even in English Canada.⁴⁴ The *Financial Post* had earlier expressed its concerns in October of 1935 following the start of the Ethiopian crisis.

Highbrow advisers of the international debating society known as the League of Nations are insisting...that Canada should at once assure the war advocates in England that Canadians are always with them...Have they tried to picture the sufferings, the sorrows that would come to so many Canadians homes directly and indirectly, the great increase in wasteful taxation that would affect every Canadian, especially the less prosperous?...How many of those who have been encouraging war will insist on going into the front line trenches themselves?⁴⁵

⁴³ Christie's Response Re: Mr. Douglas' Motion on the League of Nations. Christie Papers, LAC MG 20 E44, v. 12

⁴⁴ Eayrs, *Appeasement and Rearmament*, 29. See also King Papers, Vol. 184, pg 157180 Joseph A. Clarke to King, 12 March 31 The motion certainly did not find universal favour in the Department of External Affairs. Loring Christie, the department's brilliant if eccentric Counsellor, argued that Canadian leaders should acknowledge the futility of sanctions that did not address the underlying causes of war. Christie's Response Re: Mr. Douglas' Motion on the League of Nations. Christie Papers, LAC MG 20 E44, v. 12

⁴⁵The *Financial Post*, October 5 1935, 1 'Politicians Would Again Involve Us in War of No Interest to Us.'

This limited support shrank after the League failed to deal effectively with the crisis. The response of Canadian university students to the peace poll of 1934 indicated that large segments of Canadians supported the general peace movement, disarmament and the League.⁴⁶ The question of how to respond to the fascist challenges to the internationalism during the later 1930s, though, meant that these assumptions were increasingly put to the challenge.⁴⁷ If as it seemed most English Canadians agreed by 1938⁴⁸ that the League was ineffective, then these problems should be addressed. As the *Winnipeg Free Press* argued in the editorial cartoon of September 29th, 1938, it was necessary to bring the Canadian ship of state back on course, to reform the system, in order to refocus on a system of collective security.⁴⁹

The concerns of English Canadian intellectuals regarding the League were perhaps enhanced by their perceptions of European society. One of the few issues on which English and French Canadians agreed was the instability of the European political system. They were reluctant to be drawn into conflicts that they saw as being of little vital interest,⁵⁰ and saw European politics as representative of the instability of its approach to international affairs in general.⁵¹

Some Canadian intellectuals argued that the political problems in Europe were caused by an inability to resolve issues, particularly economic competition. This had led

⁴⁶ Socknat, *Witness Against War*, 156

⁴⁷ *Ibid.*, 175

⁴⁸ This included the Canadian delegates to the League. Wrong to Skelton, March 21 1938, Wrong Papers, LAC, MG 30 E101, v. 3. See also Christie to Lothian, Extract from letter to Lord Lothian, October 20 1936, Christie Papers, LAC MG 30 E44, v. 27 He refers to the impracticality of the League by 1936. He had always been ambivalent at best, something expressed by his statement that 'perhaps this is academic; perhaps you can't drop it; perhaps you are already hooked by the League nexus and other writings and incantations.'

⁴⁹ *Winnipeg Free Press*, September 29 1938

⁵⁰ Crerar to Cameron, February 16 1934, Cameron Papers, LAC MG 27 III F2, v. 34

⁵¹ Cameron to King, 10 November 1936, Cameron Papers, LAC MG 27 III F2, v. 22

both to an unstable political system, and to the Great Depression itself. As, Hume Wrong, a member of the Department of External Affairs (and a former university lecturer), wrote in 1934, 'It is becoming fairly certain that a satisfactory restoration of international trade - except possibly in munitions and raw materials for munitions - is not at all likely to be achieved until progress is made towards the solution of the major political problems of Europe and the Far East.'⁵²

An overview of Canadian opinion leaves the impression that Canadian intellectuals, especially towards the end of the 1930s, felt that European civilization was doomed. They appreciated the culture and the leadership that European civilizations had provided in the past.⁵³ However, they increasingly felt that the sectional and ideological problems that plagued the old continent would eventually lead to its destruction.

European societies, either through war or through their embrace of totalitarian movements, would be altered beyond description or destroyed. They would cease to be the beacon of light and civilization that had been the case previously. Canadians should therefore shut their ears to their calls for aid in once again 'saving democracy.' As Frank Underhill, disillusioned by the course of international politics and the ineffectiveness of the League, once famously declared, 'All these European troubles are not worth the bones of a Toronto grenadier.'⁵⁴

This view intensified as the likelihood of war increased. Brooke Claxton, a Montreal lawyer, wrote Lester Pearson in 1939 to smooth the way for the visit of his law partner, Hugh H. Turnbull, to Europe. Turnbull, accompanied by his wife and his mother-

⁵² Draft Memorandum probably written by Wrong, May 14 1934. Wrong Papers, LAC MG 30 E101, v. 3

⁵³ Claxton to Pearson, 19 May 1939, Pearson Papers, LAC MG 26, N1, v. 2

⁵⁴ Rogers and MacKay, *Canada Looks Abroad*, 269

in-law, were 'making a quick trip to Europe to see it before it is blown up.'⁵⁵ Claxton had an advantage. He read extensively and occasionally spoke on international affairs. He was a prominent member of the CIIA, a university lecturer (in law at McGill), and had, therefore, strong personal connections to those few Canadians who were professionally concerned with the drift to war in Europe. Yet when we examine those less advantageously placed, the result is much the same.

What a happy contrast these English Canadian intellectuals found when their eyes turned to North America. They argued that the Canadian-American border had been 'undefended' for over a hundred years, that issues were resolved through arbitration and negotiation, and that Canadians and Americans worked peacefully together to build peace and prosperity in North America.⁵⁶ They contrasted this 'North American approach' to international relations with the constant tension found in European politics. In August 1936, the President of the British League of Nations Society, Lord Robert Cecil, invited King to prepare an article for use by his society. This would 'draw a picture of the comparative safety of the disarmed nations which live on the two sides of the St. Lawrence, and of the nations which live on the two sides of the armed and fortified Rhine.'⁵⁷ His letter draws perfectly on the rhetoric of a 'North American approach' to international relations used at great length by Canadian statesmen.

⁵⁵Claxton to Pearson, 19 May 1939, Pearson Papers, LAC MG 26, N1, v. 2. Pearson responded in June that the Turnbulls seemed to have appreciated 'the privilege of having a look at European civilization before it disappears!' Pearson to Claxton, 15 June 1939, Pearson Papers, LAC MG 26, N1, v. 2

⁵⁶A letter from Cameron to King in November of 1936 captures these themes clearly. 'The countries of Europe cannot save themselves and whatever the future may bring, they are not in any mood at the moment to be shown the way of salvation by others. We are lucky we are living three thousand miles away from them.' Cameron to King, 10 November 1936, Cameron Papers, LAC, MG 27 III, v. 22. See also October 8 1938 *The Financial Post* for a Canadian assessment of the Munich agreement that shared these views.

⁵⁷[Viscount] Lord Robert Cecil to King, 5 August, 1936, King Papers, LAC MG 26 J1, v. 214. King in his reply points out the problems with this approach. 'I am inclined to feel as so much has already been said upon [this theme] by Canadian speakers in Geneva, that European delegates have come to resent its being

The Canadian argument for a 'North American' style of diplomacy reflected the view that Canada and the United States shared similar cultural, political and economic foundations. It also reflected the view that North Americans generally resolved issues through peaceful means of negotiation and arbitration.⁵⁸ These themes expressed themselves in a number of unexpected ways. For example, in January of 1936, an old friend of ALN leader Paul Gouin, Roger Vaillancourt, delivered a speech in Montreal to an American audience, encouraging them to travel to, and invest in, Quebec. He forwarded a copy of his speech to Gouin.

And if, next summer, an American dreadnought should fire a broadside on the citadel of Quebec [as a salute] a like answer might come from the officer commanding that there was no powder in the magazine, or that the gun had been mislaid because the Lieutenant-Governor's grandson had been using it as a toy a few days before. For it is impossible for us to admit that there could be any possible cause of hostility between us and the United States with whom we have been living side by side in peace for more than a century.⁵⁹

The Canadian preference for Anglo-American 'harmony' in international affairs probably reflected their overall sense of familiarity with the United States. 'It is not surprising,' John Bartlett Brebner wrote in 1935, reflecting on the 1921 Imperial Conference, 'that Canadian interests and policies revealed themselves to be quite similar

raised. The comparison between the two countries on the banks of the St. Lawrence, one overpowering in number and, incidentally, very heavily armed, and the other one-twelfth its size, and the two nations on the Rhine fairly evenly balanced, is not one that will wholly stand analysis.' King to Cecil, 23 September 1936, King Papers, LAC MG 26 J1, v. 214. See also Holland, *Britain and the Commonwealth Alliance*, 171. See also Michael Howard's discussion of the British strategic considerations, particularly the conflict between British imperial commitments and the preservation of the balance of power in Europe. He also discussed the philosophical views behind this conflict, particularly the views British officials held of European politics and their relationship with the leaders of the Dominions and India. Michael Howard, *The Continental Commitment*. (London, 1972), 173

⁵⁸ The calls for other nations to adopt a 'North American' approach to international relations continued despite the reminders of some Canadian intellectuals that institutions such as the International Joint Commission (which Canadians often referred to in self-congratulatory terms) worked in the context of North American cultural similarities rather than superior North American morals. Curtis, G.F. *Peaceful Adjustment of International Disputes in the Pacific*. Report of the Proceedings of the Third Study Conference, Canadian Institute of International Affairs, Ottawa, 23-24 May 1936, (Toronto, 1936), 29

⁵⁹ Gouin to Roger Vaillancourt, February 3 1936, Gouin Papers, LAC MG 27 III, D1, v. 5

to the interests and policies of the United States, for they sprang from a North Americanism whose roots in time and experience were of equal depth in the two nations.’⁶⁰ In addition, American leaders, especially Franklin Delano Roosevelt, were very popular throughout Canada. Canadians followed his political career closely and they were fascinated by both his personality and his politics.⁶¹

Canadians were concerned by some political developments in the United States. There were also some concerns regarding the ‘moral’ influences emanating from the United States, although this seemed to have had a limited impact on Canadian intellectuals.⁶² The New Deal was far from universally popular in Canada.⁶³ As one English Canadian intellectual put it, ‘Inconsistency operating with unfortunate results on the international situation was seen as a feature of American efforts to bring about domestic recovery. The attempt to make a *volte face* in major policies involved startling contradictions; and the fact that domestic policies were undertaken without regard to their international implications added to the friction.’⁶⁴ The *Winnipeg Free Press*,

⁶⁰ Brebner, J. B. ‘Canada, the Anglo-Japanese Alliance and the Washington Conference.’ *Political Science Quarterly*, March 1935

⁶¹ Roosevelt’s spirit was invoked prominently in a Quebec campaign ad for Liberals in 1935. The Liberals contrasted the dictatorial approach of Bennett and Hitler with the democratic approach of King and Roosevelt. Hitler et Bennett, *La Fédération Libérale Nationale du Canada*, March 1935, (Campaign ad), King Papers, LAC MG 26, J4, v. 154. Roosevelt was also often referenced in English Canadian newspapers. *Financial Post*, March 13, 1933, 6; the *Toronto Star*, November 19, 1935, 4; *Ottawa Journal*, April 21, 1936, 6; *Macleans*, September 15, 1938, 4. Obviously, however, the extent of this support fluctuated in response to events, depending on the progress of the New Deal, and seen also in regards to the controversy regarding the ‘packing’ of the American Supreme court. *The Toronto Star*, August 18 1934, 6; the *Toronto Star* February 8, 1937, 6.

⁶² Angus, *Canada and Her Great Neighbour*, 345

⁶³ In 1933, the *Financial Post* was clearly ambivalent. It concluded that ‘The loss of personal liberty under the New Deal [has been] glossed over. Says Senator Carter Glass, famous Virginian Democrat, “which do you value more, your liberty or material prosperity?” This is wrapping up Socialism in gilt paper.’ However, it is optimistic in its conclusion that the ‘Socialist government of President Roosevelt aims at State control of private enterprise; not at State ownership. It aims at as large a measure of dictatorship as it can get, but it knows its dictative powers are ephemeral.’ *The Financial Post*, September 16 1933 – *The World At Large: Socialism and Liberty in England and the United States*, Floyd Chambers, 6

⁶⁴ Curtis, *Peaceful Adjustment of International Disputes in the Pacific*, 19

although cautiously sympathetic during the first months of the program, became increasingly critical.

Can an economic society exist half planned and half free? This would be one way of asking whether Mr. Roosevelt can exist...After six months the United States stands in a strange twilight zone, midway between economic freedom and economic planning...Mr. Roosevelt's half-way house to Socialism, the control of production without an attempt to make it dovetail into consumption, loses the advantages of free initiative and growing output without gaining the advantages of automatic distribution and security for everyone, supposing these to be attainable.⁶⁵

In addition, Canadian and American societies were significantly different, culturally and politically, and Canadian opinion-makers did not see the program as option for Canada,⁶⁶ as evident by the negative reaction to Bennett's more limited program introduced in 1934.⁶⁷ Canadians businessmen, and their American counterparts, might have been more likely to embrace the New Deal if it had been more consistently effective in resolving the nation's economic problems.⁶⁸

As with their French Canadian colleagues, some English Canadian intellectuals often had concerns regarding the impact of American economic and cultural influences on Canada.⁶⁹ The overwhelming presence of American ideas and products, in addition to the perception that they dictated the pace of industrialization and commercialization in Canada, was of concern.⁷⁰ F.R. Scott, in his work *Canada Today*, published in 1939, reflected that

Thus does the United States press upon Canada in a way that Great Britain cannot, and though the British traditions continue, and provide a kind of

⁶⁵ Winnipeg *Free Press*, 13 October 1934

⁶⁶ Angus, *Canada's Great Neighbour*, 307

⁶⁷ Thompson and Seager, *Decades of Discord*, 264

⁶⁸ Crerar to Cameron, 15 June 1937

⁶⁹ Angus, *Canada and Her Great Neighbour*, 354

⁷⁰ Scott, *Canada Today*, 75. See also MacKay and Rogers, *Canada Looks Abroad*, 278

psychological counterweight which is very powerful, the other influence is the more insistent. The Commonwealth provides the Sunday religion, North America the week-day habits, of Canadians.⁷¹

What seemed to have concerned Canadians most, however, was American foreign policy. Few Canadians could be isolationist in the American sense. To be so would be to adopt American nationalism, a practical impossibility. So Canadians grasped at straws – from FDR, from anglophiles in the United States – at the hope that the Americans would eventually come around.⁷² As F.H. Soward noted shortly after the outbreak of war in Europe, ‘As was inevitable, more than one Canadian offered a challenge to the United States, the product of hope rather than faith, that it should live up to its unavoidable role as a great power, and assume a position of leadership in the struggle against aggressors.’⁷³

Canadians had long been concerned with American isolationism, particularly in the American legislature. When Senator Hiram Borah reacted negatively to the suggestion that President Roosevelt might mediate the 1938 Czechoslovakian conflict, the *Winnipeg Free Press* could barely maintain its composure.

Senator Borah can see nothing in the Czechoslovakian situation but a purely European crisis which is not the remotest concern of the American people...As he looks at the world today and the still more terrifying prospect of tomorrow, is it possible that no sense of his responsibility for these conditions cross his mind?⁷⁴

Many English Canadian intellectuals argued for a policy of cooperation on the part of the ‘Atlantic powers.’ British and American interests, they argued, were inherently compatible. The representatives of the two strongest democratic powers, working in tandem, would be able to ensure peace. Not only were they natural partners but they shared similar values of democracy, and peace, and trade. An increased sense of

⁷¹ Ibid., 109

⁷² Memorandum, March 22, 1939, Christie Papers, LAC, MG30 E 44, v. 27

⁷³ MacKay and Roger, *Canada Looks Abroad*, 135

⁷⁴ *Winnipeg Free Press*, September 23 1938. See also, King Papers, LAC MG 26, J4, v. 174

shared responsibility would develop from this friendship and would encourage 'the two greatest powers on earth to work for a common ideal, a world of peace. Friendship is and must remain the greatest bulwark of English-speaking freedom... Through friendship comes peace.'⁷⁵ This unity would serve to deter other nations from acting aggressively. Further, it would encourage the economic recovery, as Anglo-American friendship meant increased economic cooperation.⁷⁶ As a result, these English Canadian intellectuals overwhelmingly approved of any indication of Anglo-American unity.⁷⁷ This included the Americans interest in the British monarchy during the Coronation of 1937, and the Royal Visit in 1939.⁷⁸

Canada could have its own contribution to ideas of Anglo-American harmony.

This is the linch pin theme. The idea of Canada acting as an 'interpreter' between Britain

⁷⁵ *Globe*, June 10 1939, 6 Philippe Roy wrote King from Europe and reflected that 'my confidence would be very much accentuated if President Roosevelt would join England and France more openly and more actively in their efforts to bring about a more conciliatory way of establishing Peace in Europe.' Roy to King, 20 January 1937, King Papers, LAC, MG 26, J1, v. 241. At least one American cabinet minister was determined to resist the Royal approach. Harold Ickes, the Minister of Interior referred to the 'formal doings in morning coat and silk hat at the British Embassy, milling about with a lot of uninteresting, climbing, and supercilious people.' He did at least admit that the visit accomplished its goal of creating positive feeling in the United States towards Britain. Harold Ickes, *The Secret Diary of Harold L. Ickes. Volume II: The Secret Struggle, 1936-1939*. (New York, 1954), 643

⁷⁶ *Globe*, May 19 1939

⁷⁷ The vision of a peace enacted through Anglo-American harmony was also appealing to Canadian internationalists. As a result, Canada could have a separate relationship with the United States, without causing strain on its ties to the Empire. At the same time, Britain could have a relationship with Europe separate from its imperial position, Holland, *Britain and the Commonwealth Alliance*, 173. These views were also expressed on the part of other Dominions, as evidenced in the speech of Field Marshal Smuts, to the Royal Institute on International Affairs in London, in 1934. 'The Dominions,' he said, 'have even stronger affiliation towards the United States than Great Britain has. There is a commonality of outlook, of interests, and perhaps of ultimate destiny between the Dominions and the U.S.A. which in essence is only the first and the most important of them. Through the Dominions, British policy is ultimately tied up with the United States much more closely than appears on the surface. That fundamental affinity, coming from the past, stretching to the future, is, or must be, the real foundation of all British foreign policy. . . Any policy which ignores it, or runs counter to it, is calculated to have a disruptive effect on the Commonwealth as a whole.' André Siegfried, *Canada: An International Power*. London: 1937 [1949]), 265

⁷⁸ *Ottawa Journal*, May 13 1937, 'Our Neighbours and The Coronation', 8. See also *Macleans*, November 1, 1935, *Macleans* September 15th 1939, *La Presse*, May 30 1939, *Winnipeg Free Press*, June 9, 12, 1939, *Globe* May 19, June 8, June 10, 1939

and the United States was first raised by H.B. Gates in 1872,⁷⁹ and it continued to appeal to certain segments of Canadian intellectual thought. Vincent Massey, the future High Commissioner to Great Britain was not alone when he wrote King in 1934 that

What particularly disturbed me was the widening rift between the United States and Britain in their respective attitudes towards the far-eastern crisis. Here, it seemed to me, was a rare opportunity for Canadian statesmanship to play its classical role of bringing Britain and America together again in the common cause of a just peace.⁸⁰

The appeal of the theory was far from universal, and certain contemporaries pointed out that it had significant difficulties, as flattering as it 'may be to the national ego'.⁸¹ The role of mediator between Britain and the United States was not without its challenges. The first was the fact that this role often seemed to exist only in the minds of Canadian intellectuals. As well, the Canadian position next to the United States allowed for a close view of its isolationism. Despite this, Angus pointed out that there was no comprehensive discussion of Canadian-American relations in the House of Commons,

the fragmentary character of the discussion on the minor controversies which arise from year to year; the constant attempt to appeal to popular sentiment inclined to view the United States with suspicion; the occasional note of bitterness; and, perhaps, one should add the low general level of the debating, even when Canada's foremost politicians participated in the discussion.⁸²

They did seem aware, though, that Americans were unwilling to engage in a larger or more 'constructive' internationalism, despite the expressions of goodwill and desire for international peace. As the *Winnipeg Free Press* noted in September of 1938,

⁷⁹ H.B. Gates, *The Dominion of Canada*. (1872)

⁸⁰ Letter to Mackenzie King, September 29, 1934 in Vincent Massey, *What Past is Prologue. The Memoirs of the Right Honourable Vincent Massey*. (Toronto, 1963), 207. See also Arthur Lower, *Canada and the Far East, 1940*. (New York, 1941), 97; *Winnipeg Free Press*, August 20 1938.

⁸¹ MacKay and Rogers, *Canada Looks Abroad*, 135. See also the Dexter Diaries, March 1 1938, Grant Dexter Papers, Queen's University

⁸² Angus, *Canada's Great Neighbour*, 339

In London the belief is that 'a moral alliance' exists between the United States and Britain and France. In Washington, the emphasis lies on the fact that no matter what friendly speeches have been made, the United States has not sacrificed in any way its independence of action.⁸³

Criticism of the United States was present in periodicals, although in newspapers rather than serious reviews.⁸⁴ In contrast to the issue of Canadian-American relations, though, English Canadian intellectuals were more conflicted on the value of the connection with the British Commonwealth. While they were often concerned with the problems this connection caused, and with some aspects of British policy, they often seemed to have retained their attachment to British history, culture and society.⁸⁵ Many English Canadian intellectuals were not entirely comfortable with the British connection. They were often concerned with elements of British policy⁸⁶ and were at times unexpectedly uncomfortable while visiting Great Britain or when encountering Britons in Canada. André Siegfried, following his travels in Canada reflected on the English Canadian views of recent English immigrants to Canada.

⁸³ Winnipeg *Free Press*, 'Where Does the U.S. Stand?' September 10 1938, 17 There were other challenges to the Canadian perception of their role as mediator to the Anglo-Saxon powers. Grant Dexter reported from Britain in 1938 on the problems of being in the middle. 'The Americans suffer from an excess of courtesy; they do not tell the British what the people at home are thinking about such things as the Eden resignation. And the British are too polite to say what most Brits think about America. A Canadian hears both sides. One is continually having to defend America to the British and interpret the British (or try to) to the Americans...' Dexter Diaries, 1938 March 1 1938. See also Holland, *Britain and the Commonwealth Alliance*, 155

⁸⁴ Angus points to two factors to explain the lack of criticism of the United States in serious Canadian periodicals, that they were reluctant to alienate their readers, and that they wanted to be taken seriously. Attacks on American society, politics, or policy, he argues, would be seen as undermining their objectivity and leave them open to charges that they were more interested in anti-Americanism than building up Canadian nationalism. Angus, *Canada and Her Great Neighbour*, 360-361.

⁸⁵ See MacKay and Rogers' discussion of the Canadian advocates of a 'British Front Policy', and their conclusion that for many, 'the British Commonwealth is the bulwark of civilization in a world fast deteriorating into barbarism. Especially it is regarded as the bulwark of democracy and liberty.' MacKay and Rogers, *Canada Looks Abroad*, 287

⁸⁶ 'J.W. Dafoe, who in a letter of 21 July 1936 to N.W. Rowell condemned 'the obvious sympathy for Nazi-ism and Fascism that has taken possession of a very large section of what might be called the governing group of England which is growing daily now that France is swinging left and thus getting closer to Moscow.' Escott Reid, *Radical Mandarin: The Memoirs of Escott Reid*. (Toronto, 1989), 121

We must admit that he does not like them and is always running them down. They are, he says, proud, disdainful, intimidating, and incomprehensible. They are not good mixers, they do not become assimilated, and they are not the right 'temperature'. In short, these brothers are strangers to each other, and the English Canadian is much more at ease with the American.⁸⁷

In addition, a number of English Canadian intellectuals worried over the never-ending calls of Canadian imperialists to support Britain without question. MacKay and Rogers, for instance, concluded that only a public declaration of Canadian neutrality would have to occur well in advance of international conflict. This alone could counteract the

existing presumption among other British peoples that Canada could be counted on for aid, to counteract the existing tradition in English-speaking Canada of imperial solidarity in the even of war and to provide real assurance that a state at war with other parts of the Commonwealth would not at the outset treat Canada as a belligerent.⁸⁸

Since the enactment of the Statute of Westminster in 1931, Canadians had argued that Canadian autonomy and the British connection could both be maintained. In this they continued the optimistic approach of British and Dominion statesmen who in 1917, 1926 and 1931 continued to praise the Commonwealth as a permanent alliance that would allow both equality and unity and a model for successful international cooperation.⁸⁹ The

⁸⁷ Siegfried, *Canada*, 206. For a fascinating example see Grant Dexter to Ferguson, which might be subtitled, 'A Colonial in London.' Dexter, who was far from an imperialist, was sent to London by the Winnipeg *Free Press* in 1936. He is working through the offices of the Manchurian *Guardian*. His letter to Ferguson reveals his misery and the culture shock he experiences, regarding specifically the prices, the climate, and especially the attitudes of his co-workers. The class system, the indifference to Canadians and other colonials and the unthinking belief that Canadian should defend the motherland continued to disturb Dexter, despite his acknowledgement of the value of the experience.

⁸⁸ MacKay and Rogers, *Canada Looks Abroad*, 272. In light of these concerns, see also Pearson to Skelton, 4 Nov. 1938

⁸⁹ For example, see the views expressed by British Commonwealth leaders as reported by W.K. Hancock in his work from 1937. Hancock. *Survey of British Commonwealth Affairs*. 2 vols, (London, 1937), 1-5. See Nicholas Mansergh's discussion of the development thought regarding the evolution of the Commonwealth relationship in his revision of Hancock's work. In particular, he argues that the Balfour Report published in 1926 enabled the discussion of the nature of the Commonwealth since it defined the context – common allegiance to the Crown. Nicholas Mansergh, *Survey of British Commonwealth Affairs: Problems of External Policy, 1931-1939*. (London, 1952), 28. The controversial issue through the interwar period, he

same was true of English Canadian newspapers.⁹⁰ British and Dominion officials accepted the principle of devolved parliamentary sovereignty in exchange for an indivisible monarchy.⁹¹ The Irish republican movement under Eamon de Valera provided the first challenge to this unwritten agreement in 1932. Edward VIII's abdication provided a second.

Canadians seemed to have been both shocked and dismayed when the news of the King's relationship with Wallis Simpson broke in the international press in December of 1936. When Edward declined to renounce Simpson, and decided instead to abdicate in order to marry her, Canadian newspapers, (or the very least their editors), were appalled.⁹² Although they supported the King, they agreed that a marriage between the King and Simpson could not be entertained. The *Winnipeg Free Press* agreed with the views of the British and Dominion governments and argued

that whoever marries the King must be Queen...Throughout the crisis, emphasis has been placed on the views of the dominions...Their unanimity in condemning the proposed marriage is emphasized. This is a vital factor in the attitude of the British government, the press and the public. The King is recognized as the sole link between the United Kingdom and the Dominions which it is of paramount importance not to weaken.⁹³

The abdication crisis had threatened the stability of the Commonwealth as well as British prestige. It called into question the most recognizable, most central link between

argues, was the question of who controlled defence and diplomatic policy for the Commonwealth. Mansergh, *British Commonwealth Affairs*, 29

⁹⁰ 'The Favoured Dominion.' *The Globe and Mail*, May 17, 1939, 6

⁹¹ Holland argues that after 1926 British officials and politicians were willing to allow the unravelling of the political links that bound the Commonwealth as long as the dominions were willing to recognize the principle of the single kingship. Holland, *Britain and the Commonwealth*, 61.

⁹² A later chapter will deal with the reaction of the Canadian public. *Ottawa Journal* December 11 1936, 6, Crerar to Cameron, 15 June 1937 See also the views of the *Winnipeg Free Press* regarding the monarchy and George V. *Winnipeg Free Press*, June 25 1936

⁹³ Grant Dexter, *Winnipeg Free Press*, 'Voluntary Abdication of King Edward Looms Near - Only Strong Pressure from Many Quarters Halted Action, December 5 1936 1; Crerar to Cameron, 15 June 1937, Cameron Papers, LAC, MG 27 III F2, v. 34

Great Britain and the Dominions. In contrast, the peaceful and immediate, if shocking, resolution of the crisis through Edward's abdication and the anointment of his brother as King George the VI, clearly reinforced Britain's position.⁹⁴ The coronation and the Imperial Conference of May 1937 were meant to demonstrate the solidarity and unity of the Commonwealth.

It was clear that imperial sentiment would continue to be a major factor in Canadian politics. Canadian autonomy might be necessary and even popular.⁹⁵ Canadian ambivalence regarding Britain's future was simply not possible. As Siegfried reflected

we must be careful here – this Canadian who does not like the English loves England, and, moreover, he clings to the British tie, to the British connection. In his case this sentiment has nothing incompatible with his Canadian independence. The laws which hold the British family together are mysterious. One can love one's family, even be devoted to it, without liking every one of its members.⁹⁶

The focus on self-government and on the Westminster system as representative of the best way to guard Canadian interests, including those of the French Canadian minority, supports the conclusion that imperialism in the 1930s was based on the consent, if a grudging one, of the majority of the Canadian population.⁹⁷ Many English Canadian intellectuals also conceded that the maintenance of a strong Britain was essential for Canadian interests.⁹⁸ In addition, English Canadian intellectuals feared that any

⁹⁴ Crerar to Cameron, 15 June 1937, Cameron Papers, LAC, MG 27 III F2, v. 34 ; King to Tweedsmuir, July 10 1937, King Papers, LAC, MG 26, J1, v. 243; The Rt. Hon. Viscount Greenwood, 23 January 1937 to King, King Papers, LAC, MG 26, J1, v. 233 His letter contains a fascinating discussion of the debate concerning and of the enactment of the Abdication Bill. The German ambassador, for example, was clearly amazed by the calm and deliberate way in which the British disposed of one king and anointed another. Greenwood concludes by arguing that 'I think this is a very good example of the mental inability of foreigners to understand us and our system of Government.'

⁹⁵ Skelton Papers, MG 30, D33, v. 4

⁹⁶ Siegfried, *Canada*, 206

⁹⁷ Mansergh, *Survey of Commonwealth Affairs*, 244

⁹⁸ Dexter to George Ferguson, November 23 1938. Dexter reviewed the economic links between Canada, the United States and Britain and concludes, 'If I could believe that we could survive as a free country, along with the US, in such a world, I would favour neutrality...But I do not believe that either the United

declarations of Canadian autonomy or premature announcements of the nature of its actions in the event of a European war would only encourage those who sought to pursue expansionist policies.⁹⁹

It was also clear that, as F.H. Soward argued, 'in general the spirit of appeasement lasted longer in Canada than in Britain.' He also pointed out that whereas before Munich, there were three main groups of opinion in Canada 'imperialist, collectivist, and isolationist...today there are only two groups,' those who supported a policy of support for Britain and those who supported a policy of isolation or 'Canadian nationalist'. Of these, 'only one of them is willing to intervene in Europe.'¹⁰⁰

MacKay and Rogers were careful to point out the differing nature of Canadian isolationism. While it was 'in many respects similar to the American policy of 'no entangling alliances' due to the physical distance from Europe and Asia and the need to balance competing opinion groups. The Canadian situation differed, however, due the Canadian membership in both the League and the British Commonwealth of Nation.

The terms of membership of both these associations are rather indefinite but both contemplate at least the possibility of mutual assistance by members in the event of one of their number being seriously endangered. The ever-recurring problem for Canada is the reconciliation of autonomy and freedom of action with members in these two associations. In fair weather the problem may seem to be of mere academic interest, but when international storms arise it becomes acute.¹⁰¹

The British connection, and the appeal of imperialism in Canada, touched on the most significant divergence and their approach to foreign affairs. This conflict

States or Canada could survive as free countries.' Dexter Papers, Queen's University For an earlier, more complete examination of Canadian trade with Britain see Skelton Papers, MG 30, D33, v. 4

⁹⁹ Mackay and Rogers, *Canada Looks Abroad*, 285-287

¹⁰⁰ Certainly, Canadian support for appeasement did not necessarily lead to the conclusion that the Dominions were responsible for the British pursuit of this policy. As Skelton argued during the period, British officials used this support as justification for policies previously decided upon. F.H. Soward, *The Department of External Affairs and Canadian Autonomy*. (Ottawa, 1956), 117

¹⁰¹ MacKay and Rogers, *Canada Looks Abroad*, 256

underscored the debate on Canadian policy. The cultural and intellectual split between French and English Canada paralleled the political one. The larger issue of whether members on either side of the divide understood its nature, or even sought to understand each other, was more open to question. The attempts made were often superficial, as evidenced by the *Winnipeg Free Press*' editorial of September 15th 1938. It reported 'the striking statements' by prominent French Canadians, on the urgent need of Canadian unity.¹⁰² English Canadians should therefore ignore the rumours of French Canadian nationalism and separatism.¹⁰³

For English Canadians, the nature and views of the French Canadian intellectual community were far from clear. For example, in spite of evidence to the contrary, (particularly the experiences of the Great War),¹⁰⁴ many English Canadians continued to assume that French Canadians had a close connection or deep affection for France.¹⁰⁵ As with the English Canadian connection to Britain, the truth was far more complicated. Many French Canadians remained attracted to France. Indeed, many members of the French Canadian elite had always looked to France as a source of language, culture, and history.¹⁰⁶ It was also clear that certain members of French Canadian intellectual

¹⁰² *Winnipeg Free Press* September 15 1938. John W. Dafoe recognized that he did not understand French Canada. This was perhaps because of the lingering memories of the bitter fight of 1917 when he had urged conscription. See also the following article in the *Ottawa Journal* June 12 1936, 6 'For the young Liberal rebels who have brought this revolution, this is not an election; it is a crusade...What is L' action Liberale Nationale?...There are those who speak of it as a Fascist party, as a French Republican party, as a Catholic party. They are descriptions without warrant. True it may be that within the group...are those who call for such things...but no sign comes that the chiefs of the party subscribe to such doctrines...Youth, after all, must have its rhetorical fling. And it may well be, too that change of Government would be good for Quebec. Forty years is a long time for one regime to hold power.'

¹⁰³ *Winnipeg Free Press* September 15 1938

¹⁰⁴ Robert Rumilly, *Histoire de la province de Québec. Tome XXXII: La depression*, (Montreal, 1959), 164

¹⁰⁵ MacKay and Rogers, *Canada Looks Abroad*, 207

¹⁰⁶ Robert de Roquebrune, transl. Felix Walter, *Testament of My Childhood*. (Toronto, 1958), 50

community, particularly among the nationalist community looked to similar movements in France for guidance and inspiration.¹⁰⁷

G rard Pelletier later alluded to the specific significance of France for many young French Canadian intellectuals of the era.

How can one say in a few words what an obsessive desire we had, almost all of us, from our very childhood onward: to leave Quebec, to leave Canada, to leave America itself. To leave! For us, there was not the slightest hesitation as to where to go. We knew New York, some of us had pressed on as far as South America or at least to Mexico, but our intellectual pole was located across the Atlantic, in France. I have often wondered about the reason for the strange power of this attraction. Were we giving in to a kind of sentimental nostalgia, or a blind atavistic instinct? [Finally, he wondered, was] it the real France that fascinated us, or merely a dream country secreted during the confinement of the thirties within the barbed wire of the depression or the war?¹⁰⁸

Despite the surface similarities to French culture, the Franco-Quebecois connection remained tenuous. French Canadian nationalists incorporated specific aspects of French political ideology based only on their own particular interests. France *could* provide cultural, intellectual, and religious sustenance to the mission of French Canada. Many agreed with Andr  Siegfried's view that 'there are in France living springs of intellectual inspiration from which the young country should not deprive itself.'¹⁰⁹ However, as Siegfried concluded, it was often 'the French of France, and not the English, who are foreigners to them.'¹¹⁰ This was mainly the result of the divergence in French and Quebec society since the 'break' of 1763, shortly followed by the French Revolution and the ultimate establishment of the French republic. To the conservative elite of

¹⁰⁷ Trofimenkoff, *Action Franaise*, 26

¹⁰⁸ Quoted in Donald Horton, *Andr  Laurendeau: French Canadian Nationalist, 1912-1968*. Toronto, 1992), 49

¹⁰⁹ Siegfried, *Canada*, 238

¹¹⁰ Siegfried, *Canada*, 215

Quebec, heavily influenced by the clergy and by a vision of an idealized, agricultural, Catholic, French Canada, France often appeared radical and alien.

The influence of French political thought was most apparent on right-wing Quebec society, specifically on movements such as Lionel Groulx's *L'Action nationale*, which incorporated some aspects of French conservative thought. Even these influences were often modified to fit the French Canadian cultural landscape. Many French Canadian nationalists carefully pointed out that their views were French Canadian, not French. The same was true of their rejection of controversial and questionable aspects of French thought, such as those advanced by Maurice Bârres and Charles Maurras,¹¹¹ (previously rejected by church authorities and seen as dangerously monarchist).¹¹² André Laurendeau in particular warned of substituting one colonialism, that of Britain, for a return of another, that of France. A nationalism that focused on the connection to France could 'never be an indigenous development. It could never spring from the country itself...It would be an anachronism, taking account of neither space nor time.' Ultimately, he concluded, 'Our destiny must be played out in North America.'¹¹³ France, and the original *l'Action française*, therefore, often served less as an inspiration than as a confirmation of the views of those in Quebec.¹¹⁴

This caution was encouraged by trends within France itself. French Canadian intellectuals were often concerned about the drift in French politics and society.¹¹⁵ For

¹¹¹ While this could clearly be supported when looking at Bourassa, the argument was much more difficult to make when examining the works of Groulx. Michael Oliver, *The Passionate Debate: The Social and Political Ideas of Quebec Nationalism, 1920-1945*. (Montreal, 1991), 82.

¹¹² Horton, *André Laurendeau*, 10

¹¹³ *Notre Nationalisme*. Tracts des Jeune-Canada, no. 5 (Montreal 1935): 35-51 in *The Essential Laurendeau*, Ramsay Cook, and Michael Behiels, eds. *The Essential Laurendeau*. (Toronto, 1976), 43

¹¹⁴ Trofimenkoff, *Action Française*, 26

¹¹⁵ See *Le Devoir*, March. 29, 1930, July 26, 1934, November 18, 1933, November 9, 1934, April 1, 1935. *La Presse*, June 11 1935, September, 27, 1938.

example, *Le Devoir*'s editors were clearly concerned by the instability of French politics.¹¹⁶ They were disturbed by the growing influence of the socialist and communist parties, culminating in the election of Léon Blum in 1936.¹¹⁷ They were also disturbed by the increasingly violent conflicts between proponents of communism, socialism and fascism.¹¹⁸ The same was true of the older generation of nationalists, such as Henri Bourassa. Bourassa's overall impressions of France were clearly conflicted. He seemed to have been torn between his attraction to the sense of community and history that France represented and his growing concern regarding the influence of socialist factions.¹¹⁹ He was not alone in these concerns. During his sojourn in French Laurendeau's French Canadian sponsors became concerned that he might be drawn to socialist views present in French intellectual thought, and encouraged him to focus on Catholic intellectual thought, particularly the concept of personalism.¹²⁰ As well, Robert Rumilly once argued that Senator Raoul Dandurand had been compromised by his long international, cosmopolitan career, specifically by his associations with Frenchmen who held dangerously radical views.¹²¹

¹¹⁶ See *Le Devoir*, March 29, 1930, Dec 16, 1933, March 21, 1934, November 4, 1934, May 16, 1935, May 31, 1935, and May 4, 1936. *L'action nationale*, March 1934, April 1938.

¹¹⁷ *Le Devoir*, May 5th 1936

¹¹⁸ *L'action nationale*, January 1938, October 1938.

¹¹⁹ See his 'Impression d'Europe,' published in *Le Devoir* in 1938.

¹²⁰ Personalism argued that Western civilization was at a crisis point and that the depression signalled the collapse of the liberal-bourgeois order. While it rejected both communist and fascist extremes, they admired the populist, revolutionary spirit of the communist and yearned to bring about a Christian renaissance that might exert a similar appeal in placing primary emphasis on the spiritual liberation of the individual. "It mirrored the desperate efforts of intellectuals in the early nineteen-thirties to navigate a 'third way' between capitalism and communism." Horton, *André Laurendeau*, 53-54

¹²¹ Rumilly, *Histoire de la province de Québec, Tome XXXVI: L'Autonomie provinciale*. (Montreal, 1965), 253 Dandurand's enthusiastic reception of the Royal Tour only increased Rumilly's disdain, as he argues his political interests cause him to overcome his republicanism and turn ultra-loyalist in Canada. Rumilly *Histoire de la province de Québec, Tome XXXVIII: La guerre de 1939-1945*. (Montreal, 1968), 11. These views paralleled the concerns that Groulx had expressed regarding secular trends in French society during his visits to France in 1904. Groulx, *Mes Mémoires. Tome I: 1878-1920*. (Montreal, 1970), 165-67

Nevertheless, it is clear that the French Canadian intellectual community had been influenced by French intellectual thought. Rather than incorporating these views without alteration, though, French Canadian intellectuals were selective in judging which aspects of French thought were appropriate, and useful, to the situation in Quebec, and of their interpretation of its future.¹²² Laurendeau, for example, on his return from France, attempted to infuse his nationalism with a greater detail of progressive and liberal ideals, such as anti-materialism, to more fully address the socio-economic problems present in Quebec society.¹²³ As historians such as Pomeyrols and Horton have argued, he then used these concepts to reinforce his pre-existing views, particularly his nationalism.¹²⁴

Further, as contact with French intellectual thought increased, so did their awareness of uniqueness of their own community.¹²⁵ In 1963, long after his return from France, André Laurendeau spoke of a 'syndrome' affecting those French Canadian intellectuals who had returned from Europe. While some had come to see their experience abroad as a vacation from the provincialism, and some had never felt comfortable,¹²⁶ once home they found it equally hard to re- adapt.

¹²² Pomeyrols, *Les intellectuels Québécois*, 16

¹²³ Pomeyrols, *Les intellectuels Québécois*, 451. Laurendeau came to agree with the analysis of French critics, for example, that his work *Notre nationalisme* was deficient in social thought – how could it be otherwise, he concluded, when the Catholic Church in Quebec, which had provided so much inspiration, was so hypocritically tied to the exploitative, industrial bourgeoisie? Horton, *André Laurendeau*, 57. Ironically, however, Laurendeau does not fully address the limitations in his understanding of economic theory originating from his days in Quebec's classical colleges. Horton, *André Laurendeau*, 59

¹²⁴ Pomeyrols and Horton disagree, however, as to the extent of Laurendeau's attachment to progressive ideas, although they both agree that Laurendeau was heavily influenced by personalist thought. Pomeyrols argues that Laurendeau incorporated the techniques of progressive thought only to reinforce his nationalism, while Horton argues that the influence of his nationalist mentors and the Quebec climate as the war approach acted as a temporary brake on his progressive ideas, which would be reinvigorated by his experiences during the war with the Bloc Populaire. See Pomeyrols, *Les intellectuels Québécois*, 451 and Horton *André Laurendeau*, 231.

¹²⁵ Pomeyrols, *Les intellectuels Québécois* 174. For examples though the inter-war period, see Pomeyrols, *Les intellectuels Québécois*, 51

¹²⁶ Laurendeau's experiences abroad combined aspects of both these experiences. His education had ill-prepared him to converse with French intellectual society which possessed general cultural literacy that he

Dans ces villes de haute culture...vous vous sentez d'abord un petit provincial. Les exigences et les barèmes changent...Il y a autour de vous une abondance de vie intellectuelle et artistique...Soudain, vous vous rendez compte que vous êtes entré dans cette vie plus intense. Intellectuellement, vous participez à cette société mieux structurée, tellement plus riches que la vôtre, où des milliers de travailleurs de l'esprit s'appuient les uns sur les autres, à ce vaste mouvement qui ne s'arrête jamais et qui commence à vous porter.¹²⁷

This sense of provincialism was enhanced by the limitations of the small intellectual community within Canada, and more specifically within Quebec itself.

Francois Hertel commented in 1936 on the lack of intellectual opportunities in Quebec.

[N]ous manquons de professions qu j'appellerais intellectuelles. L'écrivain qui vit de sa plume, le véritable journaliste même, le professeur laïque d'enseignement secondaire n'existent guère qu'à l'état d'exceptions rarissimes...Je sais tels jeunes gens qui aimeraient se faire une carrière dans l'enseignement des lettres par exemple...Que vont-ils faire? Des avocats comme tout le monde...L'écrivain crève. Cependant, le livre canadien commence à se populariser.¹²⁸

Even more than the question of French influence, the impact of American views on French Canadian society is difficult to determine. French Canadian nationalists mainly focused on the threat posed by the connection to Britain and the pressure of English Canada. Following his tour of Canada, Siegfried had contended that, for the future survival of a distinctive French Canadian society, 'the real danger lies not so much in Anglicization as in Americanization.'¹²⁹ Yet these concerns regarding the impact of American cultural and economic influences on Canada were apparently a shock to André Laurendeau as late as the latter's sojourn to France in 1935-36.¹³⁰ To some degree this

did not possess. He was also uncomfortable at times with the Parisian accent, and the patronizing attitude of his French hosts. Horton, *André Laurendeau*, 50-51

¹²⁷ Laurendeau, *La crise de la conscription*, 139-43

¹²⁸ F. Hertel 'Essai sur l'inquiétude des jeunes. IV' *L'action nationale*, VII, (March 1936), 162-175

¹²⁹ Siegfried, *Canada*, 73. The editorial, 'Siegfried's Canadian Judgments' in the *Winnipeg Free Press*, August 19, 1937, 13, notes Dr. Siegfried's warning that 'a French state on the St. Lawrence is visionary and that the union of Canada with the United States would mean the destruction of the present none too effective defences against Americanization.' See also Siegfried, 'Canada's Foreign Policy', *Financial Post*, January 16, 1937, 6.

¹³⁰ Horton, *André Laurendeau*, 59

was unexpected, given the emphasis on the part of the right and the progressive left on anti-materialism,¹³¹ their concerns regarding the nature of industrialization,¹³² and the nationalist disdain for both democracy and liberalism.¹³³ Nevertheless, it seems that the continuing focus on the cultural threat posed by the English Canadian majority, and the events of the Great War, in addition to the lack of education regarding economic forces in Quebec's classical colleges, encouraged the French Canadian elite to ignore the new problem of American economic imperialism.¹³⁴

Still, the growing American investment in Quebec, and the industrialization and urbanization with which they associated it, disturbed many French Canadians.¹³⁵ The same was true of the spread of American cultural influences. The fact that French Canadians were equally attracted as their English counterparts to the new American media of filmmaking was particularly disturbing as nationalists saw American films as a transmitter of values alien to Quebec society and which would lead to its contamination by secular values.¹³⁶ The same was true of the new American dances, (such as the Charleston, forbidden by Archbishop Villeneuve of Quebec), radio broadcasts, the automobile, and other aspects of American material culture first introduced to Quebec during the growth in the consumer economy during the 1920s.¹³⁷ Ironically, some nationalists such as Laurendeau participated actively in this consumer economy during their youth in the boom of the 1920s, but with the socio-economic crisis brought on by

¹³¹ Pomeyrols, *Les intellectuels Québécois*, 451

¹³² Mason Wade, *The French Canadians, 1760-1967. Volume II: 1911-1967*. Revised edition. (Toronto, 1968), 864

¹³³ Oliver, *The Passionate Debate*, 46

¹³⁴ Wade, *The French Canadians*, 781

¹³⁵ Horton, *André Laurendeau*, 59

¹³⁶ The fact that many American movie producers were Jewish probably added to these concerns. Trofimenkoff, *Action Française*, 79

¹³⁷ Horton, *André Laurendeau*, 28.

the depression, he became increasingly critical of American material culture as a threat to French Canadian survival.¹³⁸

French Canadian nationalists increasingly focused on the problem of American consumer culture and American investment as the 1930s, progressed, particularly due to the depression and the growing American cultural presence. The fact that the average French Canadian generally welcomed American investment as a means of gaining greater economic opportunity, only increased nationalist concerns.¹³⁹ Increasingly, as with English Canadians, they see this American presence as a challenge to the establishment of a nationality. They increasingly associate the American cultural presence both with materialism and the issue of modernity,¹⁴⁰ which they linked to progressive, potentially radical, thought. The rejection of international unions, for example, seems to have been based both on their 'communistic' ideology, and the possibility that 'alien' ideas would invade the province and disturb the religious and political ideas of the populace.¹⁴¹

The United States represented to many the hub of democracy, a system that was fundamentally associated with both capitalism and Protestantism. Although all members of the French Canadian intellectual community did not share these views,¹⁴² overall they argued that it was impossible to incorporate some American influences without

¹³⁸ Ibid.

¹³⁹ Wade, *The French Canadians* 781

¹⁴⁰ Address given at Quebec by Cardinal Villeneuve on January 8 1934 in Siegfried, *Canada*, 223

¹⁴¹ Scott, *Canada Today*, 75. A letter to *Le Jour* in September of 1937 argues that by their silence, Hamel, Droin, Grégoire and other reformers were allowing Duplessis to label the unions as communist agitators. See also Pomeyrols, *Les intellectuels Québécois*, 42

¹⁴² See Jean-Charles Harvey's tribute to American democracy in September of 1937. *Le Jour* 'Le Triomphe d'une démocratie', 16 September 1937, 5. Harvey, at the same time an outsider and a noticeable figure within this community, was often a target for nationalist attacks, as seen for example, by Rumilly's inclusion of him in his denunciation of 'les adversaires militants de la loi du Cadenas.' In the province of Quebec, Rumilly contended, these were found primarily 'parmi les avocats Israélites, parmi les chefs du syndicalisme international et parmi les amis de Jean-Charles Harvey, bref, dans les milieux de saveur radicale et anti-cléricale, pour ne pas dire maçonnique.' Rumilly *Histoire de la province de Québec, Tome XXXVII: Premier gouvernement Duplessis*. (Paris, 1966), 33

embracing the whole.¹⁴³ As T.D. Bouchard, a vocal opponent of the nationalists, observed, nationalist arguments focused on French Canadian vigilance, in order to ensure that American economic influences, linked at the core to an English-speaking, Anglo-Saxon, Protestant culture, did not take root in Quebec.¹⁴⁴ They pointed to the experiences of French communities in Ontario, Acadia and the United States as examples of what resulted when a people lost their culture.¹⁴⁵ The papers of Roger Duhamel, who with Laurendeau was later involved in the youth nationalist movement, *les Jeune-Canada*,¹⁴⁶ perhaps hints at the ways in which these ideas came to be expressed in the classical colleges. Duhamel's notes on the American presence concluded that the question revolved around the attempts of an ordered, older civilization to deal with

la vague tumultueuse de l'américanisme, formé d'un sang bouillant mais indiscipliné, d'un idéal prosaïque, arrogant dans son ignorance, édifice à la charpente immense et hardie, construit sur les sables mouvants de la carence intellectuelle.¹⁴⁷

¹⁴³ T.D. Bouchard, *Mémoires. Tome III : Quarante Ans dans la tourmente politico-religieuse*. (Montreal, 1960), 135

¹⁴⁴ Bouchard, *Mémoires. Tome III*, 126. Bouchard argued out that the nationalist focus on the old myth of a Faustian deal with the English Canadian devil – a higher standard of living in return for the rejection of the French language and Catholic faith – clouded out the real reason for the limited French Canadian success in the new industrial age, namely an education system ill prepared to deal with new economic realities. Bouchard, *Mémoires, Tome III*, 135. F.R. Scott also points to the Padlock Act and the growing censorship of films and literature as means of preventing the invasion of outside ideas, particularly 'communitic' ones, into Quebec. Scott, *Canada Today*, 75

¹⁴⁵ Rumilly, *Histoire de la province de Québec, Tome XXXII: La dépression*, 138, *Le Devoir*, April 13, 1931, April 15, 1931, February 20 1933, July 22 1937; *La Presse*, October 27, 1932, December 28, 1936

¹⁴⁶ The *Jeune-Canada* movement in some ways could perhaps provide an interesting exception to the general rule as argued by Louise Bienvenue, of youth nationalist movements in Quebec who struggled to achieve both their objectives and autonomy from their 'parent' organizations. Louise Bienvenue, *Quand la jeunesse entre en scène: L'action catholique avant la Révolution tranquille*. (Montreal, 2003), 27.

However, the movement faded in the middle of the decade. Its increasingly controversial pronouncement limited its attempt to attain mainstream support, it became increasingly difficult for members of the clergy to support it openly, and its proponents moved on to other projects, personal and professional. In addition, Laurendeau struggled to overcome the interference of Abbé Groulx. Horton, *André Laurendeau*, 44-45

¹⁴⁷ Quoted in Pomeyrols, *Les intellectuels Québécois*, 348

The fear of a small French Canadian community, swamped by both the growing population of English North America and their economic presence,¹⁴⁸ perhaps also contributed to the overwhelming emphasis on provincial autonomy.¹⁴⁹ It also contributed to caution regarding the incorporation of American influences into French Canadian intellectual thought. Many individuals of this community were raised with distrust for the Americans, who were, in Wade's evocative phrase, 'painted as materialistic slaves of the almighty dollar and ruthless assimilators of other peoples to their own mediocrity and cultural sterility.'¹⁵⁰

Some trends in American thinking did correspond with the views of French Canadian nationalists. Isolationist rhetoric was prevalent in French Canada. As a result, as the decade progressed, American isolationism often reinforced traditional French Canadian isolationism, and the new nationalist leaders adopted Henri Bourassa's tactics of quoting British and American public figures in order to embarrass Canadian leaders in the federal government.¹⁵¹ Bourassa himself argued that Canada should define its own policy in relation to its position in North America and its relation to both Canada and Great Britain, while emphasizing that Canada had no interest in participating in overseas wars.¹⁵² While Bourassa conceded, however, that Canada had an interest in working for international peace,¹⁵³ his nationalist counterparts were much more cautious.

¹⁴⁸ According to Siegfried, since French Canadians formed 30 percent of the Canadian population, they were confident in their ability to stave off any attempts at assimilation. Their position in North America as a whole, though, was far from secure, as, even with the Franco-Americans, they amount to only 3 percent of the population, or 5 million out of a total population of 150 million. Siegfried, *Canada*, 73

¹⁴⁹ Rumilly *Histoire de la province de Québec, Tome XXXV, Chute de Taschereau*. (Montreal, 1963), 93

¹⁵⁰ Wade, *The French Canadians*, 912

¹⁵¹ *Ibid.*, 781

¹⁵² Bourassa, House of Commons, April 1 1935

¹⁵³ *Ibid.*

As Catherine Pomeyrols argues, therefore, despite the historiography of a closed society during the interwar period, French Canadian intellectuals were aware of international intellectual trends. They did not ignore them, but they did not fully incorporate them either.¹⁵⁴ Rather they were selective in which ones they chose to incorporate, as French Canadian nationalists in particular chose to open themselves to intellectual currents which best suited their interests. For the most these were catholic, right wing, totalitarian, maurassien, racist, and largely anti-materialistic.¹⁵⁵ They did seem concerned about how international developments would affect their society. In addition, they often focused on international missionary work, the impact of Catholics, developing international conflicts between Japan and China,¹⁵⁶ and the position of French culture and language.¹⁵⁷ The issue of most concern, though, was that of the avoidance of being drawn into international conflicts involving the League and the British Commonwealth.¹⁵⁸

As with their American counterparts, isolationists in Quebec focused on the lack of direct threats to their country and the distance between North America and Europe or Asia, both in the nature of their societies and in their political ideologies. French Canadian nationalists were for the most part pre-occupied with French Canadian problems rather than international ones. Their continuing concerns regarding Canadian

¹⁵⁴ Pomeyrols, *Les intellectuels Québécois* 447 As Trofimenkoff argues, when a source of inspiration, be it France, the United States or Henri Bourassa, challenged or rejected their views, it was discarded. In other words, 'the *Action française* pruned itself constantly in its own image.' Trofimenkoff, *Action Française*, 7. See also English, *Citizen of the World*, 40

¹⁵⁵ Pomeyrols, *Les intellectuels Québécois*, 450

¹⁵⁶ *Le Devoir*, April 21 1930, 3. This was particularly a result of the presence of French Canadian missionaries in the Far East. *Le Devoir*, February 19 1930,4. Rumilly also emphasizes the importance of Catholic missions to Quebec. Rumilly, *Histoire de la province de Québec, Tome XXXII : La dépression*, 204

¹⁵⁷ *Le Devoir*, April 21 1930, 3, *L'action nationale*, February 1934

¹⁵⁸ Response to Question by Gouin, March 10 1939, Gouin Papers, LAC MG 27 III D1, v. 19; *La Presse*, June 20 1935. F.R. Scott to Gouin, March 7 1939. Gouin Papers, LAC MG 27 III D1, v. 7 ; Rumilly, *Histoire de la province de Québec, Tome XXXVI : L'Autonomie provinciale*, 63

involvement in imperial and European affairs made the sentiment appealing in Quebec throughout the 1930s.

French Canadians turned their focus inward as the economic crisis worsened. The societal and economic crisis caused by the depression represented their central concern,¹⁵⁹ one enhanced by the continuing conflict between the provincial and federal administrations regarding the extent and the control of federal aid.¹⁶⁰ The key question appropriated by nationalists in Quebec was the control of the economy and natural resources, such as hydroelectric power, by outsiders, both American and English Canadian.¹⁶¹ Economically, they were also concerned about the actions of organized labour.¹⁶² The interest in social questions extended to the federal debate on the liberalization of divorce,¹⁶³ the proposed adoption of a Canadian constitution in response to the Statute of Westminster,¹⁶⁴ the nationalization of radio broadcasting,¹⁶⁵ and the vitality of the French language and French Canadian society.¹⁶⁶

As a result, as seen earlier, the political scene in Quebec was significantly impacted by the rise of nationalism, and the development of new political groups, especially the *action libérale nationale* which focused on regional and ethnic grievances. They also seemed especially concerned as the decade progressed with the thought of

¹⁵⁹ See also Gouin's correspondence with Stella Semple. Stella G. Semple, President of *Le Cercle du Terre* to Gouin, February 17 1937, March 1 1934, Gouin Papers, LAC MG 27 III D1, v. 7; Semple to Gouin. Gouin is a member of Committee sur la Colonisation. This was despite the fact that many of the lands targeted were marginal, at best, and that the unemployed in question often had little farming experience. Maurice Tellier to Gouin, October 12th 1935 Gouin Papers, LAC MG 27 III D1, v. 7

¹⁶⁰ Rumilly, *Histoire de la province de Québec, Tome XXXIII : La plaie du chômage*. (Montreal, 1962), 75

¹⁶¹ Rumilly, *Histoire de la province de Québec, Tome XXXV : Chute de Taschereau*, 66

¹⁶² Rumilly, *Histoire de la province de Québec, Tome XXXIII : La plaie de chômage*, 110

¹⁶³ *Le Devoir*, March 29th, 1930, 1. This question was controversial as nationalists argued it went against Catholic principles and destabilized Canadian society by destroying the family. They also saw it as foreign to Canadian values. Gouin to Semple, January 1 1934, Helene Turgeon to Gouin, June 7 1937, Gouin Papers, LAC MG 27 III D1, v. 7

¹⁶⁴ *Le Devoir*, March 6 1936, 1, 'A propos de la réforme de la Constitution.'

¹⁶⁵ Rumilly, *Histoire de la province de Québec, Tome XXXIII : La plaie de chômage*, 75

¹⁶⁶ *Le Devoir*, April 11 1933. See also Trofimenkoff, *Action Française*, 6

Canadian involvement overseas. However, while it is clear that these groups disagreed with the establishment on any number of issues, it was the *approach* of the older political regime which often led to the most noticeable response on the part of these newer political groups. The depression turned the attention of this younger generation of French Canadian nationalists to socio-economic issues, which differed significantly from the approach of Bourassa and others,¹⁶⁷ who had long focused on Canada as a political entity. As a result, Bourassa and others argued French Canada had both to develop as a society and come to a successful accord with the English Canadian majority.

It often seemed as if the concept of a *modus vivendi*, or *bonne entente*, between the two main political factors in Canada, was a key difference in the divide, (which was in many ways generational), that split the French Canadian intellectual community. Siegfried, who argued that French and English coexisted through their decision to embrace a '*modus vivendi* without cordiality,'¹⁶⁸ observed that the Federal political leaders, who played their part in the government of the Dominion, embraced the Canadian political system, but even their patriotism 'comes from the brain rather than from the heart.'¹⁶⁹ The average French Canadian, and even such local leaders as the lesser clergy and members of parliament, might concede that the attitude of their leaders was probably justified. In their day to day experience, though, they focused on the necessity of defending French Canada against English Canadian encroachment, of making no concessions, and of 'jealously avoiding anything that might resemble a

¹⁶⁷ Scott, *Canada Today*, 75

¹⁶⁸ Siegfried, *Canada*, 224. And yet, Siegfried concluded 'in spite of their persistent reticence, the *modus vivendi* works well enough, because the two races are obliged to exist side by side, and because in the end they begin to appreciate the estimable qualities that each possess.' Siegfried, *Canada*, 225

¹⁶⁹ Siegfried, *Canada*, 226

compromise.’¹⁷⁰ Nowhere did this seem more the case when examining the approach of both groups to the question of imperialism and Canadian international involvement.

The question of the relationship between the English and French in Canada changed as Canadian intellectual groups underwent both generational and ideological changes. The French Canadian youth who began to emerge in the 1930s were encouraged during their stay in the classical colleges and the universities both to embrace the newer, Groulxiste, trends in nationalist thinking, (which emphasized Quebec’s position as a community apart)¹⁷¹ and to consider themselves as the future leaders of their society.¹⁷² The socio-economic crisis of the depression hit this generation hard,¹⁷³ as they found themselves released from their classical colleges with little economic prospects. As a result they blamed both the current political establishment and the outside actors whose interests this establishment represented.¹⁷⁴ As one representative of this generation put it in 1935,

Si on jette un regard sur ces jeunes qui, en plein désarroi, craintifs, hésitants, gravissent tristement la pente de la vie, on ne peut s’empêcher de sympathiser avec eux; en pleine possession de toutes leurs énergies physiques et morales; il se sentaient bâillonnés, fixés à terre par un poids trop lourd.¹⁷⁵

Nationalism seemed to have been especially popular among younger French Canadians.¹⁷⁶ It represented not only economic resentments but also fears over the vitality of French Canada as a community.¹⁷⁷ The ‘génération de la crise’ distinguished

¹⁷⁰ Siegfried, *Canada*, 221

¹⁷¹ Pomeyrols, *Les intellectuels Québécois*, 221-223

¹⁷² Horton, *André Laurendeau*, 14

¹⁷³ Wade, *The French Canadians*, 903

¹⁷⁴ Horton, *André Laurendeau*, 38

¹⁷⁵ Jean-Paul Des Châtelets, ‘L’abandon des jeunes. Pêché des gouvernements.’ *Jeunesse*, 32, 2, novembre 1935, 3, quoted in Bienvenue, *Quand la jeunesse entre en scène*, 74

¹⁷⁶ Trofimenkoff, *Action Française*, 7

¹⁷⁷ *Le Devoir*, November 11 1933, 8 ‘Chez les ‘Jeune-Canada’, *L’action nationale*, January 1934,

itself in its challenge to authority, and its embrace of new solutions such as personalism and the third way as a means of steering clear of both capitalism nor totalitarianism.¹⁷⁸ They also agree with the ideas of those, such as Groulx, that the crisis was as much due to the lack of moral fibre of French Canadians themselves.¹⁷⁹ The solution must therefore be found in the reform of this society, which has been lulled by bourgeois conformism, the subservience to the capitalist system and the democratic system itself. This reform must entail in their view, the rejection of individualism, scientific rationalism and, perhaps most importantly, materialism.¹⁸⁰ As André Laurendeau argued, ‘Un Canadien français qui le serait à fond n’aurait point besoin de se fouetter pour agir en Canadien français. On agit selon son cœur et son esprit. Que l’âme soit vraiment française: les actes suivront.’¹⁸¹

The correspondence of the leader of the ALN, Paul Gouin with F.H.Garceau, an old friend of Honoré Mercier, is intriguing in this regard. Garceau had initiated the correspondence in 1938. He assured Gouin that he represented the most promising French Canadian leader of the new generation. An old friend of Gouin’s grandfather, Garceau wrote to advise Gouin that the inflammatory rhetoric used by the ALN would only undermine Quebec’s credibility and precipitate a conflict with English Canada.¹⁸² For Garceau, if not for Gouin, Canada as a whole remained a political, if not cultural, reality. Therefore, it was necessary to find a way to make that reality work.

¹⁷⁸ Pomeyrols, *Les intellectuels Québécois*, 65, Bienvenue, *Quand la jeunesse entre en scène*, 73

¹⁷⁹ Groulx, *Mes Mémoires, Tome III: 1926-1939*, 260. Rumilly, *Histoire de la province de Québec, Tome III : La plaie de chômage*, 109. See also Gérard Bouchard, *Les Deux Chanoines: contradictions et ambivalence dans la pensée de Lionel Groulx*. (Quebec, 2003), 39. Bienvenue, *Quand la jeunesse entre en scène*, 70, Trofimenkoff, *Action Française*, 49

¹⁸⁰ Pomeyrols, *Les intellectuels Québécois*, 65

¹⁸¹ André Laurendeau, *Le Semeur*, November 1934 in Pomeyrols, *Les intellectuels Québécois*, 174

¹⁸² FH Garceau, C.R. to Gouin, June 1 1938. Garceau, was a federal politician, and was at the time a member of the Railway Commission of Canada. Gouin Papers, LAC MG 27 III DI, v. 1 3

This conception of Canada as a political entity, even if not as a cultural one, was not one which nationalists found attractive. The democratic process, which seemed to emphasize short-run stability at the cost of progress towards an ultimate goal, had a distasteful association with materialist pragmatism.¹⁸³ The manifesto of the group l'Action Catholique de Jeune Canada, for example, declared their vow to 'toujours mettre les intérêts de la foi catholique et de la race canadienne-française au-dessus des intérêts d'un parti politique quelconque.'¹⁸⁴ The ultimate example might be, in their mind, the acquiescence of French Canadians in Ottawa to the continuing imperialist connection, which threatened not only the 'soul' of French Canada but also its viability as a society.

Nationalist ideas had a great deal of appeal in Quebec. In particular, they stressed the lack of a pan-Canadian identity. They also emphasized the reformation of economics and their society along corporatist lines, the role of the elite, both secular and religious, and autonomy if not separation from Canada as a whole.¹⁸⁵ Laurendeau's work, *Notre Nationalism*, published in 1935, concluded that 'There is no such thing as a Canadian nation. In this country, men of different ethnic backgrounds co-exist within a single state, bound by economic ties which are strong simply because they are to everyone's advantage.'¹⁸⁶ Their calls for autonomy and provincial equality appealed as a means of ensuring the survival of the French Canadian culture in the face of a North America dominated by the Anglo-Saxon culture.

Among the most extreme of this group, some came to embrace the idea of a divine mission for the French Canadian people in relation of the idea of their role as a

¹⁸³ Oliver, *Passionate Debate* 93

¹⁸⁴ Quoted in Pomeyrols, *Les intellectuels Québécois*, 174, See also *l'Union Nationale*, April 1935

¹⁸⁵ Wade, *The French Canadians*, 903

¹⁸⁶ *Notre Nationalisme*. Tracts des Jeune-Canada, no. 5 (Montreal 1935): 35-51 in *The Essential Laurendeau*, 43. See also Siegfried, *Canada*, 228.

model community in the St. Lawrence Valley which would eventually expand to include other French communities in the American continent, including those in Acadia, New England and Louisiana.¹⁸⁷ When the United States shattered under the pressure of all those ethnicities within a single state, and ‘all those social diseases (the lack of religion, the practical materialism of the mass of people)’ Laurendeau argued, then, at that moment, ‘our long-desired country, this potential strength which we are struggling to establish, will emerge at last from the land of desires.’¹⁸⁸

The most important means of preserving French Canadian culture, they argued, was the preservation of the French language.¹⁸⁹ The question of bilingualism was often debated within the French Canadian intellectual community. The prospect of French Canadians learning English in any large numbers was distressing to many French Canadian nationalists. They argued that bilingualism not only increased the deterioration of the quality of French being spoken in Quebec,¹⁹⁰ but also led to the future assimilation of French Canadian society to English methods and English attitudes.¹⁹¹ Garceau,

¹⁸⁷ Pomeyrols, *Les intellectuels Québécois*, 422

¹⁸⁸ *Notre Nationalisme*. Tracts des Jeune-Canada, no. 5 (Montreal 1935): 35-51 in *The Essential Laurendeau*, 46-47

¹⁸⁹ *Le Devoir*, April 13 1933, 1. They argued that should French Canadians become bilingual they would only encourage English Canadians to interact them in English, which would lead to the end of French Canadian culture. The same was true of an understanding of Quebec’s history. Garceau wrote in January of 1938 that ‘Il est beau qu’Henri VIII était méchant roi, que Louis XIV était tout resplendissant; il est beau de connaître les causes et les effets de la révolution française, de savoir des paroles historiques...mais il vaut encore infiniment mieux de connaître Champlain, Laval, la rébellion de 1837, d’être au courant de l’histoire de notre peuple, de son évolution...le premier pas vers l’unité nationale, c’est le nationalisation...de notre enseignement.’ *Vers l’unité nationale*, Gouin Papers, LAC, MG 72 III D1, v. 18

¹⁹⁰ Groulx, *Mes Mémoires, Tome II: 1920-1928*, 15. Bouchard mentioned this view, and indicated the impact of this argument as nationalist attacks meant he was self-conscious regarding the quality of his French throughout his life. Bouchard, *Mes Mémoires. Tome III*, 143

¹⁹¹ Laurendeau, ‘Manifeste des Jeune-Canada,’ *L’action nationale*, 1, no. 2 (February 1933), quoted in *The Essential Laurendeau*, 35. Harvey in contrast, arguing that French Canadians will be able to improve their standards of living and maintain their culture through higher education, among which he includes the learning of English. *Le Jour*, September 16 1937, 1

although not a nationalist, still touched on the heart of the issue when he wrote that the French language was the primary way

pour faire rayonner ses pensées, ses idées, et elle ne valent à ce point de vue qu'autant qu'elle est comprise par le plus grand nombre... Remarquez bien que je veux que le français reste notre langue, notre moyen premier de culture mais non pas notre unique moyen d'exercer notre influence, de rayonner.¹⁹²

There were limitations to this nationalist appeal. Jean-Charles Harvey had resisted the trends in French Canadian nationalist thought since the early 1930s, and his 1934 work, *Les demi-civilisés*, had been banned by church authorities. Beginning in 1937, his publication *Le Jour*, advanced the cause of democracy, internationalism, liberalism, bilingualism and participation in the industrial economy.¹⁹³ In addition, many members of the older French Canadian intellectual community retained their attachment to the pragmatic nationalism of Henri Bourassa, which emphasized the necessity of working with English Canadians and perhaps even the development of a pan-Canadian sentiment. While a proponent of autonomy for Quebec and a Canadian nationalism based in North America, he did not believe in the more radical aspects of the newer nationalist program, particularly those aspects which favoured separatism.¹⁹⁴

Perhaps because Bourassa had always been involved with federal politics, he was comfortable with the necessity of compromise and negotiation with English Canadians.¹⁹⁵ As the decade wore on, though his presence was less felt as a factor in Quebec politics,

¹⁹² FH Garceau, C.R. to Gouin, June 1, 1938. Gouin Papers, LAC MG27-III DI v. 3. Garceau was a member of the Railway Commission of Canada. See also Trofimenkoff, *Action Française*, 49

¹⁹³ Yves Lavertu, *Jean-Charles Harvey: Le Combattant*. (Montreal, 2000), 127

¹⁹⁴ Cook, *Canada, Quebec and the Uses of Nationalism*, 216. Bourassa was not alone, as many members of the upper French Canadian clergy, including Cardinal Villeneuve, were also disturbed by the new virulence in the nationalist program. Tweedsmuir to King, 3 July 1937, King Papers, LAC MG 26, J1, v. 243

¹⁹⁵ Oliver, *Passionate Debate* 209

(he left *Le Devoir* in 1932 and lost his federal seat in 1935).¹⁹⁶ He spoke out against both anti-Semitism,¹⁹⁷ and separatism,¹⁹⁸ which further separated him from the younger generation. Bourassa increasingly focused on Catholic issues during the decade, internationally as well as within Quebec.¹⁹⁹

In the summer of 1938, Henri Bourassa undertook a lengthy visit to Europe. That summer he published a series of articles in the paper recording his impressions of Europe. Although the new movements in French Canadian nationalism did not fully embrace his guidance,²⁰⁰ he was still a prominent figure in Quebec politics and intellectual community.²⁰¹ Bourassa's observations following his trip to Europe indicated the ways in which French Canadians were interested in international developments. Outsiders often saw Quebec as isolationist, uninterested in global affairs,²⁰² but this was far from the case. The difference concerned their perception of which developments were important, and their interpretations of them.

Bourassa's impressions of France in particular only enhanced the sense of distance that French Canadians felt regarding the former 'patrie' itself. His impressions were generally favourable. He argued that the majority of its people were hard working, honest, and most importantly, had retained their Catholic faith. He argued that the anti-clericalism of the French Revolution and the 19th century was a thing of the past. The

¹⁹⁶ See Rumilly's interpretation of Bourassa's defeat in 1935, which he attributes largely to his unwillingness to participate in patronage activities, something his opponent uses successfully against him. Rumilly, *Histoire de la province de Québec, Tome XXXV: Chute de Taschereau*, 27

¹⁹⁷ Lita-Rose Betcherman, *The Swastika and the Maple Leaf. Fascist Movements in Canada in the Thirties*. (Toronto, 1975), 40

¹⁹⁸ Bourassa was attacked in l'Union Nationale in May of 1935 for this attack of what he saw as extreme tendencies in nationalist thought. *L'Union nationale*, May 1935. Cook, *Canada, Quebec and the Uses of Nationalism*, 216

¹⁹⁹ Rumilly, *Histoire de la province de Québec, Tome XXXII: La dépression*, 159

²⁰⁰ Rumilly, *Histoire de la province de Québec, Tome XXXV: Chute de Taschereau*, 27

²⁰¹ Rumilly, *Histoire de la province de Québec, Tome XXXII: La dépression*, 159

²⁰² J.B. Brebner, *North Atlantic Triangle: The Interplay of Canada, the United States and Great Britain*. (New Haven, 1945), 326

French had largely returned to the guidance of their clergy, as seen in the strength of the Catholic unions.²⁰³ At the same time, Bourassa clearly had concerns. The presence in France of influential socialist and communist movements, which he felt were dominated by the Soviet Union, worried him. The general strike of 1936, while it demonstrated that the French continued to look to the clergy for guidance, also demonstrated the strength of the unions and the extent of communist sympathies.²⁰⁴

Bourassa was also concerned with French involvement in European politics, their imperialism and their search for security from a resurgent Germany.²⁰⁵ France and Great Britain were clearly the dominating powers at the League through the period, and Bourassa was not alone in fearing that the League was designed as a means of protecting their imperial interests.²⁰⁶ In addition, many Canadian intellectuals, both English and French, blamed the obsessive French search for security in the face of German reconstruction for the failure of the League and the instability in Europe.²⁰⁷

A number of French Canadian intellectuals were less concerned with the League's idealism and more with the cynicism they perceived in its principals. Montreal's orthodox *La Presse* held views of the League that were ambivalent at best.²⁰⁸ *Le Devoir's* opinion of the collective security was decidedly negative. *Le Devoir's* editor Omer H roux published an article in October 1935 in response to the Italian invasion of Ethiopia. He saw the League as a mask for British attempts to protect its strategic

²⁰³ Henri Bourassa 'Impressions d'Europe.' *Le Devoir*, July 17 1938, 1

²⁰⁴ Henri Bourassa 'Impressions d'Europe.' *Le Devoir* July 16 1938,1

²⁰⁵ Henri Bourassa 'Impressions d'Europe.' *Le Devoir* July 23 1938, 1

²⁰⁶ *Le Devoir*, March 6 1931, 1. *L'action nationale*, February 1934

²⁰⁷ Pearson, quoted in Story, 100. See also Bennett to Roberts, December 21 1933. *Le Devoir*, November 18 1933, *Le Devoir*, April 1 1935, Oct. 18, 1935, March 14, 1938; *La Presse*, June 14, 1935, September 7 1938.

²⁰⁸ *La Presse*, June 8 1935, May 8 1936

interests in Africa.²⁰⁹ In addition, the very nature of the League was dangerous for Canada. Economic sanctions would lead to military sanctions and finally a war to protect British interests. Any enactment of sanctions by the League would involve Britain, and would draw in the English-speaking majority in Canada.²¹⁰ Canadians should therefore take a firm policy of non-intervention towards the League. Canadian policy should be 'not one man, not one dollar.'²¹¹

This theme had been hammered into readers of *Le Devoir* throughout the 1930s. As early as 1932, in the context of the first open conflict between Japan and China, *Le Devoir's* editors had expressed their opposition to the League. Canadian participation in the League and its reliance upon it to ensure peace was both dangerous and unpractical. The Great Powers, especially Britain, would use the League to advance their own interests, while the smaller powers, such as China, focused on the League for their own purposes.²¹² French Canadian intellectuals apparently failed to connect to the League even as an organization focused on negotiation and conciliation. Their participation in the League of Nations Society was limited and the League itself lacked editorial support in Quebec.

Bourassa, for example, argued that attempts to keep Germany from achieving reasonable national goals such as an *Anschluss* with Austria had only increased the instability of the region. Hitler's actions in taking Austria were brutal and illegal, but the

²⁰⁹ *Le Devoir* October 11 1935, 1 'La 'Société des Nations" intervint.' This explains the draft caricature in Gouin's papers entitled 'La véritable Colombe de la Paix'. The peace dove is a monstrous money bag folded to look like the body of the dove, with the feet, tail and a tiny beak attached. It held a tiny, pitiful, decayed olive branch with almost no leaves. Gouin Papers, LAC, MG 27 III D1, v. 19

²¹⁰ *Le Devoir*, March 20 1939, 1. 'Voulez-vous la guerre?' See also Wade, *The French Canadians*, 839.

²¹¹ *Le Devoir* October 11 1935, 1 'La 'Société des Nations" intervint.' Interestingly, Héroux makes no assessment of French policy in his editorial, although it was a frequent topic in *Le Devoir*, including an editorial the following week. *Le Devoir*, October 18, 1935.

²¹² *Le Devoir*, January 16 1932, 1. 'Lettre d'Europe - La guerre de Mandchourie.'

end *Anschluss* was inevitable.²¹³ The framers of the Treaty of Versailles had unwisely attempted to prevent the reunification of the German people. The Treaty itself appears to have been as unpopular with French Canadian nationalists as well as English Canadian reformers. This was clearly seen in Bourassa's slightly premature obituary for Czechoslovakia.²¹⁴ Bourassa, at least, did not sympathize with Hitler, and he did not agree with the nature of the Germany that Hitler was building.²¹⁵ However, at least implicitly, he seemed to have put the blame on the League, and the dominant powers in Europe, including France, for the rise of militarism in Germany.

The ambivalence regarding the League on the part of French Canadian intellectuals was clear. It seemed to have been based on their fears of involvement in European wars, the injustice they saw in the Treaty of Versailles, and their distrust of European politics. At times some also argued that European society had failed to fully incorporate the leadership of the Pope.²¹⁶

Even more than among their English Canadian counterparts, French Canadian intellectuals seemed to have been unsure regarding Europe's future. Other than Italy, which they saw as having the benefit of both of the Pope's leadership²¹⁷ and Mussolini's reforms,²¹⁸ Europe seemed decadent, secular and alien. Rumilly went as far as to argue

²¹³ Henri Bourassa 'Impressions d'Europe.' *Le Devoir*, July 23 1938,1

²¹⁴ Henri Bourassa 'Impressions d'Europe.' *Le Devoir*, July 26 1938,1

²¹⁵ Henri Bourassa 'Impressions d'Europe.' *Le Devoir*, July 28 1938,1

²¹⁶ Henri Bourassa *Le Devoir*, February 6, 1 'Pie XI - Reflexions et voeux d'anniversaire.' It was the League's assertion of universalism which caused criticism in some Catholic circles. See Paul Martin's recollections on the Church and the League of Nations. Martin Papers, LAC MG 32 B12 v. 351. This was largely a continuation of older concerns regarding the League. As Vatican representative Mgr. Andrea Cassulo pronounced in Ottawa in 1928, 'La première Société des Nations, c'est l'Eglise, et lorsque l'assemblée de Genève est basée sur les principes de charité et de justice, les catholiques doivent y apporter le concours de leur zèle et leur intelligence. Car l'Eglise veut voir ces peuples travailler la main dans la main, car elle a pour mission d'apporter au monde la paix de Jésus-Christ.' Quoted in Page, *Canadians and the League of Nations*, 373

²¹⁷ Henri Bourassa *Le Devoir*, February 6, 1 'Pie XI - Réflexions et voeux d'anniversaire.'

²¹⁸ Bienvenue, *Quand la jeunesse entre en scène*, 120. Interview with Jacques Monet, November 16 2005

that the British proponents of immigration to Canada in the early part of the decade were concerned with the issue as a means of counterbalancing the high birthrate of French-Canadians.²¹⁹ The topic became increasingly controversial as the number of refugees from Europe grew,²²⁰ In response, *Le Devoir* asked,

Croit-on qu'a laisser pénétrer ici par milliers des proscrits d'Allemagne, de Pologne, d'Autriche...le Canada travaillerait au maintien, chez lui, de la paix et de l'harmonie et éviterait de se fie happer par le tourbillon du bellicisme européen? ...alors quel besoin avons-nous de nouveaux individus inassimilables, n'ayant rien de commun avec la masse des Canadiens, tant de langue anglaise que française?²²¹

Canadians, they argued, should focus on their future in North America. *Le Devoir*, for example, argued in July of 1938 that English Canadians had yet to learn that Canada was autonomous. They mournfully concluded that at the very least the next war, which seemed all but inevitable, would teach English Canadians that Canada's future lay in the development of an autonomous, North American, nation.²²² French Canadian concerns

²¹⁹ Rumilly, *Histoire de la province de Québec, Tome XXXVII: Premier gouvernement Duplessis*, 113

²²⁰ Ibid.

²²¹ *Le Devoir*, March 7 1936, August 2 1938, September 6 1935. This was particularly apparent in regard to Jewish immigration to Canada. Many French Canadian nationalists had consistently used the small Jewish community in Quebec as a convenient scapegoat for Quebec's economic problems. They saw the Jewish presence as a source of contamination and economic domination, and perceived Jews as the ultimate outsiders whose influence true French Canadian patriots must always be wary. For a demonstration of how these themes were interwoven by fascists in French Canada, see the coverage in *le Miroir*, *le Patriote* and *le fasciste canadien*, papers successively founded and edited by Adrien Arcand. This was true even more than the nationalist fears of English Canadian influence and the spread of English Canadian ideas. English, *Citizen of the World*, 42. Any increase in the quotas for Jewish immigration, even for humanitarian reasons, was inherently dangerous. Emile Benoît, *Le Devoir*, March 20 1936, 1 'La question juive - Combien nous est-il venu d'immigrants juifs depuis deux ans?'. As Irving Abella and Harold Trooper point out, anti-Semitism was prevalent in Canada, and they argue 'if it possible to overemphasize the extent of anti-Semitism in Canada at this time, it is not possible to ignore it.' Irving Abella and Harold Trooper, *None is Too Many: Canada and the Jews of Europe, 1939-1948*. 3rd Edition. (2000), 51. However, they also indicated that the main, although not the only, political reason that King continued to allow the restriction of Jewish immigration was his concern with the French Canadian reaction. Abella and Trooper, *None is Too Many*, 50

²²² *Le Devoir*, July 4 1938, 1. Canadian re-armament, as seen in the previous chapter, was a continuing concern for French Canadians. See also *Le Devoir*, March 30 1936 'Dépenses fédérales – Pourquoi Ottawa achète-t-il des avions de guerre?' Further, they argued that any re-armament was undertaken with British cooperation to encourage the potential Canadian involvement in imperial defence. See also *Le Devoir*, September 27 1935, 1

were clearest in an article by *Le Devoir* entitled, 'Êtes-vous disposé à aller chez le diable - et à vous y battre pour le salut de l'Empire?' in May of 1937. Referring to an article in the *Toronto Star* which argued that 'WE WOULD FIGHT IN HELL TO SAVE THE EMPIRE.'²²³ In response, *Le Devoir* concluded that

On est tenté d'éclater de rire devant ces choses. On aurait tort, car ce n'est après tout que la reprise des clichés de 1914 to make the world safe for democracy, etc. Ce qu'il y a de vrai là-dedans, c'est que la politique des impérialistes, la politique du salut de l'Empire poursuivi jusqu'en enfer, obligera probablement le Canada à choisir...entre ses propres intérêts, entre sa vie politique, et le sacrifice sur tous les champs de bataille du monde - sans compter l'enfer - de son or et de ses enfants. Pour nous, le choix est simple: au-dessous de ce qu'on appelle les intérêts de l'Empire, nous mettons les inserts de notre seule patrie, le Canada. Et nous ne sommes pas fâché que le *Star* vienne ainsi nous rappeler que le choix, le dur et nécessaire choix, peut être choix de demain.²²⁴

Le Devoir was willing to admit the disturbing nature of the fascist governments,²²⁵ and that, overall, British 'oppression' had not totally stifled French Canada. This did not mean that Canadians should join in a crusade to protect British interests in Europe. The same was true of its global interests as represented by the League.

Even a casual reading of Quebec newspapers, especially *Le Devoir*, demonstrated the concern that French Canadians had regarding the spread of communism. Its editors attempted to prevent the showing of films by socialist groups,²²⁶ the publication of socialist materials,²²⁷ and the entry into Canada of known socialist figures.²²⁸ The ultimate demonstration of anti-communism in Quebec was the enactment of the 'Loi de

²²³ *Toronto Star* May 14th 1937

²²⁴ *Le Devoir*, 'Êtes-vous disposé à aller chez le diable - et à vous y battre pour le salut de l'Empire ?' May 17, 1937, 1, 'Londres n'a...que des intérêts éternels.' , July 20, 1935, 1

²²⁵ *Le Devoir*, October 28 1937, 1, *Le Devoir*, December 18 1937, 1

²²⁶ *Le Devoir* November 30 1934, 'Des catholiques réussissent à empêcher la projection d'un film antireligieux à Landerneau.' 1 See also the coverage in *L'action nationale*, February 1934, October 1934, January 1937, November 1937, January 1938 among others.

²²⁷ Lapointe to Abbé G. Lindsay, April 7 1937, Lapointe Papers, LAC, MG 27 III B 10, v. 16

²²⁸ Anatole Vanier to Lapointe, 22 October 19 1936, Lapointe Papers, LAC, MG 27 III B 10, v. 16

Cadenas' or 'Padlock Law', enacted by Duplessis' government in 1937, which allowed for the police closure of any structure, private or public, used to hold communist meetings.

It was also clear from any reading of English Canadian periodicals that there was not a great deal of support for communism in Canada.²²⁹ However, they objected to the enactment of Duplessis' law on the basis that it violated traditional Canadian, or British, democratic values. Not only did English Canadian intellectuals distrust the law in general, but they also saw it as a means for the Quebec provincial government to arbitrarily prosecute any opponents to its regime. They often pointed to its vague definition of 'communism'.²³⁰ Newspaper reports of the enforcement of the statute only increased these fears.²³¹

The enactment of the Padlock law in 1937 resulted in widespread criticism in the English Canadian press. They were already concerned about internal developments in Canada that seemed to point at the development of totalitarianism tendencies, fascist or communist. This included Hepburn's actions at Oshawa of that year, the presence of nativist fascist and communist groups, and the actions of certain ethnic minorities in Western Canada.²³² They were also concerned by the Albertan government's

²²⁹ *Financial Post*, December 14 1935, 6, 'Communist Students.' See also *Winnipeg Free Press*, December 4 1936, 3. 'I was a Communist Agitator by Ex-Radical.' The subtitle reads, 'Author Describes How Stalin, Russian Dictator, Permitted Hitler to Take Command of Germany, Rather Than Foment a Revolution to Thwart Him, and Reveals How the Author's Outspokenness Caused Him to Be Expelled from the Party.'

²³⁰ Notes on the Padlock Law, JW Pickersgill April 19 1938, King Papers, LAC MG 26, J4, v. 195

²³¹ J. Armitage Ewing to Lapointe, March 22 1939, Lapointe Papers, LAC, MG 27 III, B10, v. 16; Notes on the Padlock Law, JW Pickersgill April 19 1938, King Papers, LAC MG 26, J4, v. 195

²³² *Weekly Review of External Affairs*, March 4 1939, 'Ukrainian Agitation in Europe and Canada,' King Papers, LAC, MG 26, v. 159; Of course, the limited nature of their impact at the moment was clear to the federal government. As the anonymous writer of the review put it, 'Just now their chief activity seems to be passing resolutions for the independence of the Ukraine and sending them to the Prime Minister of Canada.' However, the department of external affairs remained interested in the question of the long-term impact of this agitation. See also Crerar to Cameron, February 26 1934, Cameron Papers, LAC, MG 27 III, F3, v. 34

announcement in July of 1938 that it intended to enact similar legislation to combat the growth of fascism.²³³

English Canadians increasingly focused on the spread of fascism in Germany and central Europe. The enactment of the Padlock law in Quebec and the strength of the Aberhart regime in Alberta convinced many English Canadians that totalitarianism was on the rise in Canada, whatever its nature. As Mason Wade argued, English Canadians were increasingly convinced that ‘clerical fascists’ dominated Quebec.²³⁴ This sentiment was only enhanced by French Canadian support for fascist dictators in Italy, Spain and Portugal.

In contrast, French Canadians retained their focus on international communism. The sympathy that some English Canadian newspapers and groups expressed for the Spanish Republicans, for example, only reinforced the view of many that English Canada could not see the serious danger that international communism represented.²³⁵ Certainly Canadian politicians were aware of these trends in French Canadian opinion. The Canadian government maintained a hands-off approach to the visit of Norman Bethune in 1937, and refused, despite substantial English Canadian pressure, to disallow the Padlock Law.

²³³ ‘Memorandum for the Prime Minister: Re: Padlock Law for Alberta,’ July 13 1938, J. W. Pickering, King Papers, LAC MG 26, J4, v.199. Some English Canadian intellectuals, including some civil servants in Ottawa, argued that the elements in Quebec who supported Duplessis were not likely to support the federal government in any case. In contrast, a disallowance of the Padlock law would encourage liberal supporters in the province. Further, the Liberals’ eventual decision not to disallow the Padlock Law would hurt Liberal support in the West as it would encouraged those who argued that the federal government ‘pandered’ to Quebec and discriminated against Alberta. ‘Notes on the Padlock Law,’ J.W. Pickersgill April 19 1938, King Papers, LAC MG 26, J4, v.199. Of course, ironically, the fact the federal government had appeared to be considering disallowance only encouraged those in Quebec who argued that they could not be trusted to look after French Canadian interests and values. Lapointe to Abbé G. Lindsay, April 7 1937, Lapointe Papers, LAC, MG 27 III B 10, v. 16

²³⁴ Wade, *The French Canadians*, 837

²³⁵ *Ibid.*

Although observers such as Siegfried acknowledged that Canadian consciousness was growing, even if only in terms of political interest, he continued to define Canadian society as a '*modus vivendi* without cordiality.'²³⁶ Divisions remained. French and English-speaking intellectuals focused on different issues when they examined international development. They disagreed on the issue of the League of Nations, the United States and the connection to Britain. They especially disagreed on which international phenomenon, fascism or communism, posed a larger threat to Canada. Although there were divisions within the two communities themselves, at times on these very issues, the divisions *between* the two groups were significantly more important. Again, to quote Siegfried, in a period of 'political and economic calm the spirit of mutual non-interference permits each group to pursue its separate path with little disturbance, but every crisis reveals how wide is the gulf between them.'²³⁷

International events in Europe and the Far East were geographically remote and seemingly impossible to resolve. Perhaps, as the *Ottawa Journal* expressed, the Canadian viewpoint on international developments in the simplest terms. In October of 1936, its editorial on the growth in international fascist and communist movements argued for 'A Plague on Both Their Blouses.'²³⁸ Canada was a small power, and isolated from the main areas of conflict. There seemed to be no reason why they should be responsible for finding solutions to international problems that had eluded the major powers.²³⁹ In any

²³⁶ Siegfried, *Canada*, 247

²³⁷ Scott argued that Siegfried's observation was not altogether true, 'for there are groups in the upper levels of professional and business life who know and respect each other; but it describes well enough the relations of the mass of each population, between whom is an almost impenetrable wall built of religion, race, language, education, history, geography and simple ignorance of one another's point of view.' Scott, *Canada Today*, 25

²³⁸ *Ottawa Journal* October 7 1936, 6 'A Plague on Both Their Blouses.'

²³⁹ Gregory Johnson points to the reaction to the Cahan speech as an indication of unforeseen results when small powers attempt to change the system. Johnson, *North Pacific Triangle? The Impact of the Far East*

case, as MacKay and Rogers wondered, if there was anything that Canada could do in the near future 'to re-establish [peace] on a firm foundation.'²⁴⁰

This disconnect from international questions was probably the only thing that Canadian intellectuals from either side of the divide could have agreed on. The divisions within the Canadian intellectual community, and the sense of its remoteness from Canadian society as a whole, meant that its influence was never as significant as they might have wished, particularly on the most controversial question, that of Canada's international role.

on Canada and its Relations with the United States and Great Britain, 1937-1948. (Unpublished Ph.D. dissertation, York University, 1989), 49.

²⁴⁰ Mackay and Rogers were speaking specifically regarding the war in the East, but the general impression that Canada's position would have any impact was present in their interpretation of the international situation as a whole. Mackay and Rogers, *Canada Looks Abroad*, 168

Chapter 5. A Rational Public? The Intellectual Attempt to ‘Shape’ Opinion and Canadian Reactions

From an outside perspective, Canadian opinion in the 1930s appeared unchanged. At most the argument can be made that subtle shifts had taken place in public perceptions of international relations. The nature and extent of these changes is open to question. The same is true of the ultimate impact of these intellectual voices. Certainly, Canadians went to war in 1939 as a relatively united force, if a reluctant one, but whether their comparatively greater acceptance of international involvement following the war was a result of their wartime experiences or the impact of the intellectual voices during the period is difficult to measure. Despite the attempts of the Canadian intellectuals as seen previously, Canadian public opinion seemed to reshape itself independently, slowly, reluctantly, in the face of events. Over the course of the decade it is possible to see some evidence of the influence of these voices, in letters to the editors, the correspondence with political leaders and the reports of contemporaries. These changes, however, are open to interpretation, and it is often difficult to determine how they were influenced, and how serious a historical interpretation should be based on them.

In the 1930s Canadians did not shy away from expressing their views. They were remarkably comfortable in addressing their concerns to Canadian editors and Canadian political leaders. This interaction demonstrated the ways in which Canadians proved resistant to attempts by these groups to shape their views. Nowhere is this more apparent than in the reaction of Canadians to the views expressed in their newspapers, especially in the cases of the two most opinionated organs, The Winnipeg *Free Press* and Montreal's *Le Devoir*. These papers in many ways represented the polarity of opinion in

Canada. The *Free Press* was the most vocal proponent of internationalism and support for the League of Nations, while *Le Devoir* was the most known, (and had the highest circulation numbers) of any of publications advocating French Canadian nationalism. Moreover, they were widely read and the opinions of their contributors and editors were widely discussed. Contemporaries such as H.F. Angus argued that they both reinforced and reflected popular opinion.¹ But it is safe to say that their positions on international relations were only accepted by a small segment of Canadian public opinion. As a result, the editors of these newspapers, Dafoe, Bourassa, Héroux and others, were increasingly frustrated by the failure of these attempts. This interaction demonstrated the limitations of the Canadian elites in their attempts to shape opinion.

Canadian newspapers were among the most influential voices in discussing Canadian foreign policy. They were not alone. Non-governmental groups, such as the Protestant churches and the League of Nations Society, also attempted to influence Canadian views. The Protestant churches continued to play a significant role in the interwar peace movement. However, they seemed unable to make the transition from their earlier focus on social reform and a general support for the League of Nations.² In addition, their earlier vocal support for the Great War had at least partially undermined their credibility. Perhaps more damaging, however, had been the transition from a society that focused on the guidance of the churches to one that focused increasingly on the

¹ Angus discussed the role of newspapers specifically in regards to the United States. 'It is not important, for our purposes whether these popular beliefs are true or false. People do believe that Americans are boastful, that American economic policy is based on a cynical disregard of obvious facts, that prohibition was a foolish experiment conducted with mediocre honesty, that crime and vice are carried to excesses in the United States. And they believe these things because the newspapers repeat them.' Angus, *Canada and Her Great Neighbour*, 270

² Page, *Canadian and the League of Nations*, 368. Page argues that while the establishments of the branches of this Society were greeted by great enthusiasm, it failed to establish a consistent base of support. Page, *Canadians and the League of Nations*, 190, 201

guidance of secular movements and ‘experts.’³ Gradually church groups were incorporated in larger associations, such as the League of Nations Society, and became part of the overall movement in favour of internationalism and collective security.⁴

Canadian newspapers were divided in their approach to national and international developments. Their responses to these developments were reflective of their focus, the ethnicity of their publishers and editors, and their intended audience. English Canadian newspapers in general supported the League of Nations throughout the decade, although their definition of the League’s purpose varied from paper to paper and from year to year.⁵ The *Financial Post* concentrated on business news, the *Winnipeg Free Press* supported internationalism, and *Le Devoir* embraced French Canadian nationalism. The *Toronto Star* based its appeal on escapism.⁶

³ Owram, *The Government Generation*, xii

⁴ Page, *Canadians and the League of Nations*, 368

⁵ *Star*, June 27 1935, 6, ‘Stand by the League.’

⁶ Harkness, *Atkinson of The Star*, 239. Atkinson’s biographer, Ross Harkness argues that the reason that the ‘three super-salesman’ sold so well in the *Star*’s column was due to the breadth of their appeal and the longing in Canada for peace and stability. The same was true of the *Star* support for progressive policies, such as its support for the development of a welfare state. Harkness, *J.E. Atkinson of The Star*, 242. As a result, Atkinson and the *Star* were often attacked during the period for their supposedly socialist tendencies. Atkinson’s open support for progressive policies left the paper open to being the ‘King Street Pravda or the ‘Red Star of Toronto.’ Harkness, *J.E. Atkinson of The Star*, 290. It was by far the most colourful newspaper in Canada. Its approach is best demonstrated by the rhyme supposedly written by Ernest Hemmingway when he worked for the *Star* in the 1920s. It discusses the approach of the publisher Joe Atkinson and its editors, H.C. Hindmarsh and R.E. Knowles.

To Hindmarsh and Knowles Mr. Atkinson spoke:
If we don’t sell more papers *The Star* will go broke:
I’ve three super-salesmen who say they can sell
They’re Jesus and Dickens and Edith Cavell.

Come fill up our columns with sob stuff and sex
Shed tears by the gallon and slush by the pecks,
Let the presses revolve like the mill-tails of hell
For Jesus and Dickens and Edith Cavell...

Edith Cavell is the best of the lot
It’s always hot news when a woman gets shot.
Get plenty of pictures for those who can’t spell
Of Jesus and Dickens and Edith Cavell.

Overall, the English Canadian press failed to report the developments at the League in a consistent and coordinated way. Although the League of Nations Society as well as the Canadian delegation to Geneva attempted to persuade the Canadian press to cover the events at the League more fully,⁷ the coverage during the interwar period was far from thorough. Canadian newspapers were limited and reluctant to invest significantly in reporting on the League, since their readers often seemed uninterested, and the high cost of reporting from overseas. Many of the smaller, regional papers, in particular, could not afford to send their own correspondents to Europe, and often relied on the services of the Canadian or American Press services.⁸ As developments in Europe relating to the League increased, however, particularly after the Manchurian crisis of 1931, the major Canadian newspapers invested more substantial resources in their coverage of the League.⁹

It is important to note that even those papers other than the *Free Press* who expressed themselves in favour of the League emphasized its powers of negotiation and arbitration, rather than the coercive powers associated with Article X.¹⁰ This was seen most particularly in the *Star*'s coverage, which supported the League only in limited and inconsistent terms. At times it saw no reason to commit so much as one man or one gun to League auspices.¹¹ In contrast, the *Winnipeg Free Press*, argued in 1936 that the 'best

⁷ Page, *Canadians and the League of Nations*, 224

⁸ *Ibid.*, 399. Newton Rowell's biographer, Margaret Prang, argues that this had been the case since the establishment of a Canadian delegation to Geneva, and examines its consequences, including both American views of Canada and Canadian views of themselves in the 1920s. Margaret Prang, *N.W. Rowell: Ontario Nationalist*. (Toronto, 1975), 365

⁹ Page deals with Canadian press coverage during the earlier period, while Meehan and Story addressed the changing views in the Canadian media. Page, *Canadians and the League of Nations*, 420, John Meehan, *The Dominion and the Rising Sun: Canada Encounters Japan, 1929-1941*. (Vancouver, 2004), 168, Story, *Canada's Covenant*, 319.

¹⁰ Page, *Canadians and the League of Nations*, 407

¹¹ Meehan, *The Dominion and the Rising Sun*, 91

that individuals Canadians can do to help the peace movement is to join in building up strong public support for the League in their own country.' This could best be done, it argued, through the support of the League of Nations Society of Canada.¹²

The Winnipeg *Free Press* was the most vocal advocate of international activism. Throughout the decade, Dafoe and the *Free Press* argued consistently, particularly through editorials, for Canadian support for the League of Nations. The *Free Press* was well informed, and its news pages provided a rich source of information on regional, national and international developments. Its sources, which included certain members of the Department of External Affairs, were remarkable.¹³ Of all the Canadian newspapers, it represented the strongest voice in support for the League.¹⁴

Dafoe's influence on the direction of the Winnipeg *Free Press* was considerable. Robert Lapalme, the famous Canadian cartoonist, once described Dafoe for *Maclean's* October 1933 edition. After addressing Dafoe's early journalistic career to 1902, in Montreal, Ottawa, and Winnipeg, Lapalme turned his attention to Dafoe's current role.

Mr. John W. Dafoe is the editor of a newspaper in Winnipeg called the *Free Press*, and sometimes has to read it. He has been there now for over thirty years, and has been referred to as the Prophet of the Prairies, for which he has only himself to blame...Among his other colleagues are the three Sifton brothers, who happen to own the paper and whom he appreciates as very good with horses...He made the *Free Press* a straight Liberal party organ for a number of years...by 1925 he felt obliged to support Liberalism again as the least of the available evils...He regards Mr. Woodsworth as a very nice man. He has expressed his present greatest hope as being that Mr. Bennett will continue to lead the

¹² Winnipeg *Free Press*, March 27 1936, 11 'People Who Love Peace.' It continued by directing its readers to the next gathering. 'A meeting under the auspices of the League of Nations Society will be held in Wesley College this evening, and a luncheon will be held on Saturday at the Hudson's Bay store, both meetings to be addressed by Miss Elizabeth P. McCallum, of Ontario and New York, who is particularly well informed on the Near East, including Ethiopia and on the League of Nations affairs.'

¹³ Brennan, *Reporting the Nation's Business*, 31

¹⁴ Other Canadian newspapers, such as the Toronto *Star* supported the League only inconsistently. *Star* August 6 1935, 6, *Star* September 19 1938, 4, The *Star*, June 27 1935, 6

Conservative party until the next election campaign is over. He longs for the fun to start.¹⁵

As RTL observes, Dafoe 'refused to believe that a newspaper's editorial page has any less influence than it used to have. His method of conducting an editorial campaign is to give small doses, but to give them often.'¹⁶ Readers of the *Free Press* in the 1930s clearly knew what to expect from the *Free Press*' editorial page. Dafoe consistently championed collective security, free trade and Canadian involvement in international issues.

Dafoe's support for the League focused on a number of themes. First, he argued that the fascist regimes in Germany, Italy and Japan represented a threat to the stability of the international system.¹⁷ Further, these powers were inherently aggressive and therefore threatened Canadian interests.¹⁸ They simply could not be trusted. As the *Free Press* put it in 1936, 'Says Hitler to France: See, I tear up the treaty ensuring you against German aggression: but don't worry, I'll make another treaty with you.'¹⁹ Finally, an adherence to a true system of collective security was the only means to ensure the stability of the international order. Collective security would not only ensure peace, but would provide a means of resolving political and economic disputes.²⁰

¹⁵ RTL 'Mr. Dafoe', *Macleans Magazine* October 1933, 8

¹⁶ *Ibid*, 47

¹⁷ *Winnipeg Free Press*, March 10 1936, 10

¹⁸ *Winnipeg Free Press*, January 21 1936, 11 'Why Italy is at War, (from the New Statesmen).' Grant Dexter *Winnipeg Free Press*, November 11 1938, 11 'The European Crisis - 'Appeasing' the Nazis.'

¹⁹ *Winnipeg Free Press*, March 10 1936, 10

²⁰ For example, in 1936, regarding the Naval dispute between Japan, Britain and the United States, the *Free Press* argued that disarmament would work for Japan's geopolitical interests. 'Japan, already dominant in her own area and active and relentless in the exercise of that power...But her venture in Imperial and conquest are imposing cruel financial burdens upon Japan; in the opinion of many that country is well on the road to bankruptcy. Would it not then be a great thing for Japan if she could get this added security and power with a considerable reduction of cost?' *Winnipeg Free Press*, January 17 1936, 13.

Dafoe and the *Free Press* chronicled, with increasing frustration, the decline of the League as a political force. This paralleled its earlier frustration with the disintegration of the international movement for disarmament. The effective dissolution of the Disarmament Conference in early 1936 was only the final indication that the major powers had moved away from the post-war dream of disarmament.²¹ In fact, as the *Free Press* reluctantly demonstrated, they had returned to an extensive arms race.²²

Dafoe urged Canadians to insist on a strong policy of support for the League. This was especially important in response to the growing call for the 'reform' of the League after 1935.²³ This program, which concentrated on the League Covenant, particularly the elimination of the collective security clauses, Articles 10 and 16, was designed to 'allow' the League to return to its true purpose of the peaceful resolution of economic and political disputes through arbitration and negotiation.²⁴ The response of the *Free Press* to this program was decidedly negative, as it addressed in an editorial cartoon of July of 1936, 'Operation Successful, But the Patient Died.'²⁵

The *Free Press* argued that by failing to support the League, the great powers had undermined the establishment of a true system of collective security. Further, it condemned the 'myth' that the League's power to impose sanctions would lead to war.

Dafoe addressed the issue in November 1938 as the longevity of the Munich Accords was

²¹ *Winnipeg Free Press*, March 4th 1936, 11

²² *Ibid.*

²³ 'Operation Successful, But the Patient Died.' These clauses, which called for military and economic sanctions in the case of aggression, were increasingly controversial. Opponents of the League argued that these clauses prevented the peaceful adjustment of the Treaty of Versailles and the successful incorporation of the aggressive powers, particularly Germany, into the international system. This view of the true purpose of the League was widely supported. This included large number of Canadians, including Mackenzie King and Ernest Lapointe. *Winnipeg Free Press*, July 4 1936, 17.

²⁴ *Ottawa Journal*, June 17 1936, 6. 'About the League of Nations',

²⁵ The editorial cartoon presented several figures, labelled Britain, Italy, France, Australia and Canada, on the way to the League. They are chanting, 'We are now going to reform the League.' They are carrying an ax, a noose, a saw, and chloroform. King, who represents Canada, carries a mace. *Winnipeg Free Press*, July 4 1936, 17 'Operation Successful, But the Patient Died.'

called into question. The aggression of the fascist powers was inevitable. A true attempt at collective security through the League, therefore, was the only alternative.²⁶

Dafoe naturally attempted to influence the ways that Canadians, if only English Canadians, approached international relations. Despite the arguments of many, including the paper's publisher, J.W. Sifton,²⁷ Dafoe never wavered from his view that the *Free Press* could, and should, work to convince Canadians of the value of the League.²⁸

Dafoe's interest in international affairs, although consistent throughout the decade, became more pronounced in response to the challenge that Germany presented to international order.²⁹ The *Free Press* had followed Japanese aggression in Asia since its inception in 1931, and Dafoe had clearly been concerned with its developments.³⁰ However, even in contrast to the *Star* it never expressed the same level of interest or concern that it expressed regarding developments in Europe. Its articles were largely provided through the Canadian or Associated Press services,³¹ and, again in contrast to the *Star*, its articles and editorials never reached the eloquence displayed in those that concentrated on Europe. An article published as late as March of 1938 regarding the situation in China, commented in relatively dispassionate and general terms that 'Canada must take its full measure of responsibility [in relation to]...the whole scene of

²⁶ *Winnipeg Free Press*, November 12 1938, 11. 'Warmed Over Fallacies of Mr. Lapointe.'

²⁷ JW Sifton to Dexter, January 25 1931, Dexter Papers, Queen's University. Sifton was also concerned at times regarding the continuing support for the Liberals. While the Canadian press had been partisan for most of its history, Sifton was concerned that a continuation of the violent attacks on the Conservatives would only undermine the *Free Press*' credibility. Also see Cook's *Politics of John W. Dafoe and the Free Press*, 15 See Ross Harkness and Charles Bruce's work on the Southam publishing group for an examination of the partisan issues involved in Canadian publishing. Bruce, *News and the Southams*. (Toronto, 1968).

²⁸ Cook, *The Politics of J.W. Dafoe*, 258

²⁹ *Winnipeg Free Press*, April 19 1935, 9, 'The League of Action', *Winnipeg Free Press*, March 4 1936, 11, *Winnipeg Free Press*, February 10 1937, 11, 'Events in Spain', *Winnipeg Free Press*, February 27 1938, 13 'Fall of Austria.'

³⁰ *Winnipeg Free Press* January 20, 1933, 13, *Winnipeg Free Press*, March 4, 1938, 13 'Betrayal.'

³¹ *Winnipeg Free Press*, April 23, 1935, 7

international relations in 1938. Under the cloak of 'realism,' the world is in full retreat from all the decencies.'³² This contrasts with a *Star* editorial of four years earlier, which argued that

anything that menaces the peace of the world and weakens the position of the League of Nations is Canada's business and the business of every other nation that desires to extend the reign of the law to the whole earth. Canada agreed with China and sixty other nations to stand together against nations that resorted to violence and unless respect is shown for that covenant war will come upon all nations again and again until at last a real community of nations is founded upon pledges that are honoured.³³

For whatever reason, Dafoe and the *Winnipeg Free Press* failed to focus on the war in China other than as an indication of the general danger presented by the expansionist powers.³⁴ Although it followed the developments in the region closely, as did most Canadian newspapers, it did not highlight the expansion of Japan into China as did the *Star*,³⁵ or for that matter, neither did Montreal's *Le Devoir* or *La Presse*.

Dafoe's editorials became increasingly shrill through the 1930's. While Canadians appeared interested in the views of the *Free Press*, they seemed to pay little attention to its calls for collective security. In addition to the limited membership of the League of Nations Society, the growth of fascist societies and the support for

³² *Winnipeg Free Press*, March 4 1938, 13, 'Betrayal.' The *Winnipeg Free Press* displayed a relatively limited interest in the situation in China and its articles were often of such a general and dispassionate nature. For another example see the article of April 23rd 1935 regarding the war between the Nationalists and the Communist factions in Japan. 'The experience of Dr. and Mrs. Williams is duplicated by that of many missionaries in religious work, teachers in schools and colleges, and physicians and nurses in hospitals, and great anxiety will be felt by many hundreds of Canadian families, relatives of the missionaries and many others.' *Winnipeg Free Press*, April 23, 1935, 3, 'Manitoba Woman Flees with Young Children, by Plane, From Chinese Reds.'

³³ *Star*, March 23 1934, 6

³⁴ *Winnipeg Free Press* January 20 1933, 13, *Winnipeg Free Press* January 23 1933, 11. The situation in China was complicated by the ongoing conflict between the Japanese invaders, the Nationalists led by Chiang Kai-shek and the Chinese Communist faction under the control of Mao Tse-dong.

³⁵ *Star*, March 3 1933, 6 'The Certainties of War.'

appeasement in Canada, demonstrated the limits of the influence of the interventionist program.³⁶

Dafoe's frustration was demonstrated in his editorials in response to the Munich Accords of October of 1938. It was also clear in his editorial printed on Remembrance Day of that year. In examining the events of the previous twenty years, the editorial, entitled 'Armistice. Not Peace' argued that the Great Powers had betrayed the wish of their people for peace. Fighting to win a War to end all Wars, they had fought the Great War to see the League and the promise of collective security betrayed. Dafoe concludes, however, by reaffirming his faith in the desire of the public to rely on a true system of collective security, and a strong, vital role for the League.³⁷ The accompanying editorial cartoon, by Arch Dale, expressed the same sentiment by contrasting two scenes. One labelled 1918, depicts a global graveyard on which are placed a number of crosses. The second scene labelled 1938, depicts a similar scene, with the crosses replaced by bayonets.³⁸

The 'betrayal' of Czechoslovakia in October of 1938 was but the final incarnation of this pattern. With the United States not in the League, 'the *Free Press* has urged upon Great Britain the heavy responsibility which lay upon her to give a lead to the maintenance of League principles; and the measure of our disapproval has been also the measure of the severity of the criticism.'³⁹

Canadian leaders, however, were by no means innocent of blame.

³⁶ *Winnipeg Free Press*, April 22 1937, 13, 'Winnipeggers Honour 'Der Fehrer'.' and *Winnipeg Free Press*, July 13 1938, 11 'But It Didn't Happen,' 11

³⁷ *Winnipeg Free Press*, November 11 1938, 11, 'Armistice. Not Peace.'

³⁸ *Winnipeg Free Press*, November 11 1938, 11, 'Twenty Years After.' Cook, *The Politics of J.W. Dafoe*, 171

³⁹ *Winnipeg Free Press*, March 21 1938, 'Canada, Britain and the League.' 15. See also the earlier reporting on the Austrian putsch with the colourful title of 'Austria Merely an Appetizer,' 3, *Winnipeg Free Press*, March 19 1938 and *Winnipeg Free Press*, September 15 1938, 13

When there remains the bare chance of a last-ditch rally, it is important and necessary to set forth once more the measure of responsibility for failure which rests squarely upon Canada's shoulders...The British Government in recent years has shown great ingenuity in finding alibis for its refusal to give leadership in international causes, and Canada should do nothing that would give this Government an excuse for putting up this country any measure of responsibility for its failure to act in a situation which is its immediate concern and for the existence of which it is in great degree responsible.⁴⁰

Dafoe's frustration expressed itself in full in the famous editorial of September 30th of 1938, entitled 'What's the Cheering For?'⁴¹ It is remarkable for its description of international developments since 1933, its ironic tone and the anger expressed in the infamous 'sting in the tail'.

The doctrine that Germany can intervene for racial reasons for the 'protection' of Germans on such grounds as she thinks proper in any country in the world which she is in a position to coerce, and without regard to any engagements she has made or guarantees she has given, has now not only been asserted but made good; and it has been approved, sanctioned, certified and validated by the governments of Great Britain and France, who have undertaken in this respect to speak for the democracies of the world. This is the situation; and those who think it is all right will cheer for it.⁴²

These conclusions differed from both the official interpretation of the Munich agreements, and from the coverage found in most other major Canadian newspapers. The *Financial Post*, which was also considered well-versed on international affairs, concluded cautiously that,⁴³

There is one very significant fact about Munich that must not be overlooked. Expressed last week in a special dispatch by Floyd S. Chalmers, editor of The *Financial Post*, as the view held by thinking English people, it is this: "Peace

⁴⁰ *Winnipeg Free Press*, March 21 1938, 15, 'Canada, Britain and the League,'

⁴¹ *Winnipeg Free Press*, September 30th 1938, 15 'What's the Cheering For?' James Gray, a reporter for the *Free Press* during the period, has described how Dafoe wrote the editorial in 'desperate and angry fashion', completing it in less than ten minutes. James Gray, *The Winter Years: The Depression on the Prairies*. (Toronto, 1966), 17

⁴² *Winnipeg Free Press*, September 30th 1938, 15 'What's the Cheering For?'

⁴³ *Financial Post*, February 27 1932, 6 'Another Conference Gets Under Way,' *Financial Post*, March 17 1934, 20 'Fascist Group Now Powerful – Brazilian Affairs.'

itself is the victory. Peace provides an opportunity for the solution of many problems. Even peace-at-any-price is always less costly than war.”⁴⁴

Even the *Star* did not agree with Dafoe’s assessment of the Munich Accords. Its editorial in response to the German annexation of the remainder of Czechoslovakia in March of 1939 was regretful, but fatalistic. It was willing to concede that ‘The disappearance of the federated republic of Czech-Slovakia is saddening to those who know of the fine character of her people, the effort she has made to develop cultural values and the regard she had shown for the rights of minorities.’⁴⁵ Czechoslovakia, however, had been created only through the Paris Peace Conference and its future had never been sure. ‘Today Britain and France are not in a position to resist the will of Hitler in central Europe.’⁴⁶

James Gray, who worked for the Winnipeg *Free Press* during the later 1930s, later published his recollections of the public reaction to Dafoe’s editorial.

The switchboard was flooded with calls from irate readers eager to denounce the editor as a war-monger who would not be content until the flower of Canadian manhood was again being slaughtered on the battlefields of Europe...[On a visit to city hall, Gray recalls that the reception he received] rocked me back on my heels. The mildest-mannered of the assistant city clerks, a veteran of the First World War, was reduced to sputtering incoherence by the editorial. At last he gathered his breath sufficiently to shout: ‘And I hope that you and that bastard Dafoe are first in line when they start conscripting the cannon fodder for the war you’re trying to start!’⁴⁷

Gray’s evidence is compelling. However, the letters to the editor printed by the *Free Press* that month present a more complicated picture. While most of these letters seemed to have represented the independent views of these readers, at times there were

⁴⁴ *The Financial Post*, October 22 1938, 6. ‘Peace is the Victory.’ The same was true of their views of the British leadership, and Chamberlain in particular, which the Winnipeg *Free Press* had often singled out as a focus for blame. *Financial Post* October 16 1937, 11, ‘Britain’s Fireproof Premier.’ In contrast see Winnipeg *Free Press*, February 25, 1938, 13, ‘Chamberlain Unmasks.’

⁴⁵ *Star*, March 15 1939, 4, ‘Czecho-Slovakia Disappears.’

⁴⁶ *Ibid.*

⁴⁷ Gray, *The Winter Years*, 17

some indications that certain groups had attempted to lobby public opinion through organized letter-writing campaigns.⁴⁸ The *Free Press* printed a weekly section, entitled 'Views of *Free Press* Readers' every Saturday. In October of 1938, there were only a few responses to the editorial, one printed in each of the October 8th and 15th editions. Although both were negative, they differed on their reasoning.⁴⁹

Of the letters to the editor through September and October, only one, in late September, argued for a policy of increased support for Czechoslovakia and the League of Nations.⁵⁰ The letters printed in other English Canadian newspapers demonstrated a similar pattern. They represented the continuing disagreement on Europe, Czechoslovakia and the consequences of the Munich agreements. The letters printed in Toronto's *Star* during September of 1938 demonstrate a remarkable range of views.

W.L. Smith, in a letter to the *Star* of September 22nd, argued that there was no more evidence of all the right being on one side and all the wrong on the other...One point, however, is clear. It is not a Belgium on which Germany proposes now to inflict unwilling sovereignty. She merely asks that the part of Czechoslovakia that is thrust into the side of the Germany of today shall be made a part of German property...That a likely overwhelming majority of the people of that part of Czechoslovakia which is thrust into the side of the Germany of the present and is overwhelmingly German in race, desires to follow Austria's example, is beyond question. Why, then, should Canadian blood and treasure be wasted in endeavor to prevent this national reunion?⁵¹

⁴⁸ This included the Moral Rearmament group, whose members wrote in to advocate their program. For example, the day before Donnelly's letter, another reader, Robert Bethune, wrote the *Star* to express his approval of the reports on September 9th regarding the conference held by the Oxford Group in Switzerland. *Star*, September 20 1938, 4. Other problems with letters to the editor relate to the fact, as will be seen below, was that at times they represented the views of certain ethnic groups who felt that their native countries were being unfairly treated in the Canadian press. This seemed to be specifically the case regarding the actions of the actions of Italian and German Canadian minorities.

⁴⁹ The first letter disapproved of the editorial on the grounds that the Munich Accords could not have been avoided. *Winnipeg Free Press*, October 8th 1938. The second letter, printed on the 15th, questioned the viability of Czechoslovakia as a nation. While the author, identified as a Canadian-Hungarian, supported Munich as a peaceful resolution of the crisis, he also argued that the German demands were far from unreasonable. The central government in Czechoslovakia had discriminated against the German minorities in the Sudetenland, and the Treaty of Versailles had been a 'one-sided dictat'. October 12 1938

⁵⁰ *Winnipeg Free Press*, September 24, 1938 12, 'Little Inducement to Aid Democracy.'

⁵¹ *Star*, September 20 1938, 4

In contrast, a few days earlier a 'Britisher' had responded to an editorial in the *Globe and Mail* urging King to pledge Canada's support to Great Britain. 'The support of Canada in what?' he asked. 'In licking the boots of Hitler and Mussolini, in selling out the Czechoslovakia, in backing down on every occurrence that calls for a display of backbone? ...Britain is not fighting-fighting. Chamberlain, Hoare, Simon and Halifax are making Britain crawl-crawl. Mr. King does well to keep aloof.'⁵²

Finally, a letter from C. Donnelly to the *Star* on September 22nd commented on Canadian interests in Europe. His letter was reminiscent of Gray's description of his encounter with the mild-mannered clerk in City Hall.

I read with amusement Canon Cody's commentary on what Ottawa should do about Canada's stand towards the British Empire in the present crisis. Does Canon Cody stop to consider what the people of Canada got from the last war? If he was to spend a little time going around the city streets of any city in Canada, he would see the heart-ache and suffering of many brave boys who went to the last war, who are gathering paper from garbage cans to try to make a living and also the men who have lain for years in military hospitals. I would suggest putting it to a vote of the people and see what they would say. Furthermore I think our own Canadian government will decide what is best for Canada and Canadians without any urging.⁵³

Clearly Canadians continued to disagree regarding international events and Canada's role. Dafoe and others had tried to influence their views. The response of Canadians to Dafoe's editorials, however, seemed to have demonstrated that these attempts had been far from completely successful.

As seen, contemporaries of the period struggled with the assessment of public opinion. R.A. MacKay and E.B. Rogers, in their work, *Canada Looks Abroad*, (1938) argued that Canada faced significant challenges in ensuring parliamentary control over

⁵² *Star*, September 20 1938, 4

⁵³ *Ibid.*, *Star* September 22 1938, 4

foreign policy. The most effective means for politicians of assessing and influencing public opinion, they argue, is to monitor the parliamentary debates on foreign policy issues.⁵⁴ They point out, however, that these debates are not often undertaken. The reasons for this lack of discussion include the general lack of interest on the part of the majority of Canadians, including parliamentarian, and the lack of specialized knowledge that such an endeavour would entail. In addition, the potentially divisive nature of these debates meant that neither the Conservatives nor the Liberals were eager to engage in discussions regarding Canada's international policy. When these debates occurred, they argued, they were largely the result of the actions of independents or third party groups in the House, as seen by the actions of Agnes McPhail and J.S. Woodsworth.⁵⁵

They point out, however, that this lack of discussion in the House makes an assessment of public opinion impossible. After examining the international situation Canadians faced in the period and its implications for their position in the world, they conclude that given the demographic make-up of Canada,⁵⁶ an isolationist policy would be rejected by its people. Isolationism was growing in Canada, in Quebec and elsewhere, and the memory of the Great War lingered. As a result, some groups of Canadians argued that a 'Canada First' policy, one that would include a policy of 'non-intervention' in

⁵⁴ MacKay and Rogers, *Canada Looks Abroad*, 222. The impact of public opinion on foreign policy decisions after the Great War preoccupied many. As Michael Howard argued, after 1918, any reader of the minutes and memoranda of Britain's Committee of Imperial Defence 'becomes conscious of a new sound: the heavy and ominous breathing of a parsimonious and pacific electorate.' Howard, *War and the Liberal Conscience*, 9

⁵⁵ MacKay and Rogers, *Canada Looks Abroad*, 223

⁵⁶ They concluded that despite the decline in the proportion of the British 'racial stock' in Canada, this did not necessarily mean that Canada was becoming less British in culture. Immigrants, they argued, tended to assimilate into British culture. Further, even in the western provinces, where immigration has been the heaviest, there remained a governing class which was mostly British, which tended to take the leadership roles in the business and professional communities. MacKay and Rogers, *Canada Looks Abroad*, 54

external issues, including those that affected the British Commonwealth and the League of Nations.⁵⁷ Nonetheless, MacKay and Rogers concluded that

However averse to war Canadians may be, there can be no doubt that considerable groups of Canadians, including many citizens personally influential, are not yet prepared to see the Empire in danger without Canada raising a hand to save it...In their view a policy of isolation is a policy of desertion of British peoples and British ideals.⁵⁸

The imperial connection remained a tangible factor in Canadian life. Many Canadians continued to feel a personal connection the Empire and to the British monarchy. In response to the death of George V, the English Canadian press praised his ability to maintain the prestige and relevance of the British monarchy and expressed genuine, and general, grief at his passing.⁵⁹ Canadians would also respond emotionally when George VI, took the throne later in 1936.⁶⁰

The emotional response to the abdication of Edward VIII in 1936, however, was much stronger. The Canadian attachment to Edward had only grown since his emergence as a public figure in the 1920s. His youth, vitality, and his willingness to challenge conventionality, not to mention his commitment to charitable works (and perhaps more importantly his decision to vacation at his ranch in Alberta), endeared him to Canadians. In January 1936, Edward moved out of the mourning period imposed by his father's death and started to assume the public duties of the Crown. An editorial in the *Ottawa Journal* assessed his character, and concluded

More in the mould of Edward VII than George V he has lived his years avidly, but behind all his love of sport and of congenial society there has been hard work,

⁵⁷ MacKay and Rogers, *Canada Looks Abroad*, 263-270

⁵⁸ They also point out that 'Such a policy also runs counter to the hopes of those Canadians who support the collective system as a means of establishing peace on sure foundations.' MacKay and Rogers, *Canada Looks Abroad*, 280-281. Canada would stand to gain immensely from the establishment of such a policy, they argued. MacKay and Rogers, *Canada Looks Abroad*, 324

⁵⁹ *Winnipeg Free Press*, January 25 1936, 19 and *Ottawa Journal*, January 21 1936, 6

⁶⁰ *Ottawa Journal*, May 11 1937, 20

appreciation of deeper values, sense of responsibility. No British Monarch has traveled the world more widely nor seen more of his own lands or people...It is a solemn hour, and testing, but he must be fortified by the thought that at no period in the British story has the Monarchy been based more solidly - strengthened by the knowledge that with faith for his Divine Guidance, millions of the earth pray 'God Save the King.'⁶¹

Through this period there had been concerns, as there were indications, even in the Canadian press, of Edward's increasing attachment to Wallis Simpson. There was also concern regarding Edward's unconventional approach to society.⁶² Despite this, the Canadian press and Canadians generally, were badly shocked when the abdication crisis broke in early December of 1936.

The Canadian press increasingly viewed Edward's actions in a negative light. Although they had been relatively supportive when the crisis first broke,⁶³ English Canadian editorial comment became increasingly negative.⁶⁴ Following Edward's decision to abdicate on December 11th, editorial comment in the English Canadian press was regretful but unyielding. The *Ottawa Journal* commented sorrowfully on events surrounding the abdication. At the same time, however, it glorified in the fact that with George VI's smooth accession the monarchy proved its viability once again.⁶⁵

In contrast, the letters to the editor were vastly more emotional and more divided. The *Star* printed six letters to the editor on December 8th of 1936 regarding the crisis.

⁶¹ *Ottawa Journal*, January 22 1936, 6

⁶² In addition, Canada's geographical position meant that they had access to the wide reporting of the Simpson affair in the American press. *Ottawa Journal*, October 10 1936, 6. With hindsight, this article appears ridiculous given that it defended Edward's association with Ernest Simpson and downplayed the regular presence of his wife.

⁶³ *Ottawa Journal*, December 8 1936, 8 *Star*, December 8 1936, 4. See also Grant Dexter's report from London on the crisis. *Winnipeg Free Press*, December 5 1936, 1

⁶⁴ This was largely due to their disapproval of Simpson's personal history and her reported demeanour. Coverage of the crisis in *Le Devoir* and *La Presse* was largely limited to factual commentary. *Le Devoir*, January 16 1937, 1, and *La Presse*, December 11 1936, 6. In contrast see *Ottawa Journal*, December 9 1936, 8 *Ottawa Journal*, December 10 1936, 6

⁶⁵ *Ottawa Journal*, December 11 1936, 6, 'The British Throne Still Stands.' See also the *Star*, December 7 1936, 4 and *Macleans* January 15 1937, 11

Although all six support Edward, they did so for widely divergent reasons. Only one argues that Edward had to reject Simpson or abdicate.⁶⁶ The other five supported Edward's right to marry Simpson while remaining on the throne. The letters approve of his independence of spirit,⁶⁷ his refusal to be cowed by the church and his willingness to look outside of the aristocracy for a bride.⁶⁸ They also speak of his lack of snobbery,⁶⁹ his search for alternate solutions to the economic crisis that Britain was facing and the need to change conventions to deal with new problems.⁷⁰

The example of the *Star* was repeated in English newspapers through Canada. The *Winnipeg Free Press*, the *Globe and Mail*, and other newspapers all printed a number of letters regarding the abdication crisis. The *Winnipeg Free Press*, for example, printed an entire page of the letters in its Saturday edition on December 5th of 1936.⁷¹ The letters varied in their views and in their support for Edward. They all demonstrated, however, an overwhelming interest in the crisis.

A series of letters which ran in *Maclean's Magazine* in 1937 provided an example of the emotional impact of empire and monarchy. In response to a letter by J.H. Osborne regarding British immigration, a number of readers wrote to reject any limits on this immigration. In particular, they rejected the description of British immigrants as 'foreigners'. A 'Regular Subscriber' from Cherrill, Alberta related the issue to the question of Canadian foreign policy. Osborne, he stated 'evidently forgets (or never knew) that Canada was once a British Colony...If, however, the attitude so prevalent

⁶⁶ It denies that her status as an American citizen was responsible for the negative reaction and concentrates on her character and less than spotless past. The *Star*, December 8 1936, 5

⁶⁷ The *Star*, December 8 1936, 4 'The King's Freedom.' Phil H. Eng, Chart engineer, 8 Briarcroft Rd

⁶⁸ The *Star*, December 8 1936, 4 'Not a Puppet.' James D. Rapson and the *Star*, December 8 1936, 5 'Voice of the People,' Major J Ashman

⁶⁹ The *Star*, December 8 1936, 5, 'King Should Stay.' Canadian Citizen

⁷⁰ The *Star*, December 8 1936, 5, 'His Majesty Endorsed.' Percy Walton

⁷¹ *Winnipeg Free Press*, December 5 1936, 10 'Views of *Free Press* Readers.'

nowadays - that Canada should not support the United Kingdom if the latter be attacked by a foreign power - is that of the native Canadian, then indeed I shall be proud to be considered a 'foreigner.'⁷² A second letter, from E.G. Campbell of Rousseau, Ontario reacted to the question by re-affirming his heritage before continuing, 'I think it will be high time for Canadians to hand out gratuitous insults to English, Scots and Irish when this country takes its honest share of the burdens of Empire - and not before.'⁷³

With responsibility, some Canadians argued, would come the ability to influence British policy. W.H. Bloxham wrote to the *Free Press* in 1937 to argue that it was in Britain's interest to maintain a policy of limited involvement in Europe. The maintenance of a balance of power policy was essential for the protection of British interests.

Had England gone to the rescue of Ethiopia [in 1935], she would have been playing right into the hands of her enemies - Prussia, Russia, financial Rome, and financial Jewry, who would have made common cause to try and dismember the British empire and then divide the plunder between them.⁷⁴

The Italian incursion into Ethiopia continued to be controversial after 1935, and had been the first international event to provoke a flood of letters. Archie Gillis of Toronto had written the *Star* in August of 1935 that 'All true Canadians will blame any defiant tyrant that would bring about the wholesale slaughter of humanity.'⁷⁵ Robert Ramsey, on March 28th wrote to the *Winnipeg Free Press* to address the possibility of Canadian involvement in a war involving Britain and Italy. He urged Canadians to realize that any war involving Britain would involve Canada.

⁷² *Macleans* May 15 1937, 43, 'Resents the Word 'Foreign.' Regular Subscriber Cherhill, Alb

⁷³ *Macleans* May 15 1937, 43 'British Immigrants 'Not Foreigners.'

⁷⁴ *Winnipeg Free Press*, May 28 1938, 23, 'Washing Hands.' W. H. Bloxham, Winnipeg

⁷⁵ *The Star*, August 6 1935, 6, Archie L. Gillis. The *Star*'s editorial also focused on the issue. 'No doubt Mussolini is in a difficult financial position at home. No doubt Ethiopia has rich cotton lands that Italy could use. No doubt bombing aeroplanes can do [or accomplish] terrible things. But is the League of Nations saying 'Good- night and good-by?' *The Star*, August 6 1935, 6. In contrast, see *Le Devoir*, July 5 1935, 1, 'L'Ethiopie tient l'affiche.'

How would we like to be domineered, say by Russia or Germany? Do we think we should enjoy the freedom and self-government which we have under British protection? Of course, no right-thinking person wants war or any part in it, but the old adage 'United we stand, divided we fall' has a world of truth in it, and a lasting peace can only be procured for Canada by her loyalty and unity with Great Britain and the British Empire.⁷⁶

In contrast, Frank Molinaro, an Italian-Canadian student at the University of Toronto⁷⁷, argued in his letter of August of 1935 to the *Star* that the matter did not involve Canadian interests. Further, he criticized the failure of the Canadian press to present an 'unbiased', presumably pro-Italian, report of developments in that area. Italy's attempts to gain control of Ethiopia, he argued, merely demonstrated a reasonable attempt to regain its position in the world through the establishment of colonies. British and Canadian criticism of this action was hypocritical, considering the history of British imperialism.

We Canadians of Italian extraction regard the difference of viewpoint existing between Rome and London over the Italo-Ethiopian situation as unfortunate. It can only be viewed as a temporary breach in the traditionally good relations which have always existed between Italy and England. Canada has no interest in being involved in a quarrel which does not concern her and should assume an impartial attitude. The local press, too, in the interest of justice and fair play, should print an unbiased and uncoloured version of the entire conflict because essentially there is no difference between Britain or Italy imperialism and Italy in no way therefore merits the censure and blame that has been heaped upon her.⁷⁸

A 'Naturalized German', continued this theme in his response to published criticisms of German actions in the Rhineland in 1936. These, he wrote in March of that

⁷⁶ *Winnipeg Free Press*, March 28 1936, 18 Robert Ramsey, 46 Lily St

⁷⁷ Unfortunately, Molinaro's activities outside of the University of Toronto are difficult to track. On campus, Molinaro was an active member of the two Italian social clubs associated with the University of Toronto, the Italian-Spanish Club, founded in 1925, and the University of Toronto Fratellanza, founded in 1927. Both ceased to function after 1940. In 1931 there were 40 members of the Fratellanza, 24 Canadians and 16 Americans, most of them undergraduates of St. Michael's College. Interestingly, according to the historical information listed on the club's website, at the inaugural banquet, Professor J.E. Shaw urged members to cherish the traditions of their "race" stressing that "Not only was it possible to do and yet remain good Canadian citizens, but it was highly important that it should be done." The archives are available on the website of the University of Toronto Italian-Canadian Association, <http://www.utica.ca/>

⁷⁸ The *Star*, August 1 1935, 6, Frank Molinaro

year, represented the continued attempts to prevent Germany's attempts to regain her rightful place in the European system

Telling the Germans they are bad boys for occupying their own territory is the pot calling the kettle black. The allies' failure to disarm, especially France, is the cause for the German development...France with her half-billion dollar wall did not treat her neighbour in a way that would create amicable feelings. Germany has repeatedly asked for reconciliation and France has shrieked 'security'. We must accept the German chancellor's offer of a 25-year-pact and in that way we hope create security that will be worth more than all the piling up of armaments.⁷⁹

Molinaro and the 'Naturalized German' represented the views of certain small segments of the Italian and German minorities who approved of the overseas fascist regimes.⁸⁰ In the case of German-Canadians, these views were encouraged to some extent by German consular officials. They attempted to stir up support in Canada for the establishment of a global racial-cultural empire based on the idea of a united German *Volk*,⁸¹ and later, to encourage support for the Nazi international program.⁸²

However, these themes did seem to *have resonated to some extent with Canadians*. In King's cabinet, W.D. Euler of Waterloo Country, the most concentrated German population in Canada, put forward arguments for German interests although he dismissed German 'volkisch' thought. Many Canadians, such as Maude Osborne of Winnipeg, were also concerned regarding the possibility of Canadian involvement in

⁷⁹ Winnipeg *Free Press*, March 21 1936, 25, Naturalized German, 40 Years, in Manitoba, Winnipeg

⁸⁰ See also the letter to the editor of the Winnipeg *Free Press*, May 15 1937, sent by the German Canadian Association, Quinto Branch, H.N. Statzer, Saskatchewan. Martin Robin and Lita-Rose Betcherman, among others, have discussed the strength of fascist groups in Canada, including those that targeted German and Italian communities. Betcherman, *The Swastika and the Maple Leaf*, Martin Robin, *Shades of Right*, (Toronto, 1992). For the response of the Canadian federal government to these groups, see Hillmer et al., eds. *On Guard for Thee*. The work mainly concentrates on the period following the start of the Second World War.

⁸¹ Jonathan Wagner, *Brothers Beyond the Sea: National Socialism in Canada*. (Waterloo, 1981), 29

⁸² Wagner, *Brothers Beyond the Sea*, 49. Wagner argues that this program was far more effective in the Western provinces of Canada, where the German immigrant community was less effectively incorporated into Canadian society. Wagner, *Brothers Beyond the Sea*, 16. Overall, he argues that these attempts failed due to the divisions within the German diplomatic community and the growing attachment of the majority of the German Canadian community to Canada and its traditional liberalism. Wagner, *Brothers Beyond the Sea*, 146

another world war. Her letter, printed in March of 1936 in the *Free Press*, resembled those of the many from English Canadians who wrote in to express their concerns.

Your former recognition of the injustices of other clauses of the Versailles Treaty with regard to reparations and disarmament, and of the calamities that resulted from our failure to amend them, makes it difficult for me to understand the intense indignation you expressed at Germany's action in this particular...To those like myself, who were sadly initiated by the last war into the meaning of the situation in Europe which preceded it and caused it, the present behavior of the great European nations has a terrifying resemblance to those old balance of power manoeuvres.⁸³

Other Canadians, such as N. T. Carey of Winnipeg, were also concerned with the persistence of British imperialism in Canada. On March 13th of 1937, Carey wrote to disagree with an article written by Dr. D.A. and Ida Stewart in favour of the League. Carey argued that Canada should pursue a more autonomous policy and should position itself to take advantage of its geographical and political position. Conflicts in Europe did not have to affect Canadian interests.

Have Canadians no higher aspirations than to be a reservoir of men and supplies to be sacrificed in Britain's imperial wars?...Paul Martin tells you: 'A purely European problem can best be settled by European. If they cannot settle it, we cannot.' With which I entirely agree. ...True, Canada must take cognizance of what other nations are doing and prepared to protect herself against surprise, but there is no prospect of attack upon Canada, and there will be none unless Canada deliberately makes war against other nations.⁸⁴

Whidden Graham of Halifax wrote to the *Free Press* in May of 1937 to attack rearmament program of the great powers, including the relatively limited Canadian program.

⁸³ *Winnipeg Free Press*, March 28 1936, 18, Maude S. Osborne, Winnipeg. See also, the *Toronto Star*, August 22, 1934, 6 Louise Daley; *The Toronto Star*, June 17, 1935, 6; Charley Corte; *Globe and Mail*, September 4, 1935, 4, L. Braun Bran field; *Winnipeg Free Press*, May 9, 1936, 23, Helen T. Heehaw, Winnipeg; *Winnipeg Free Press*, May 16, 1936, 25, J.P. Firth; *Winnipeg Free Press*, May 16, 1936, 36, Helen T. Heehaw; the *Toronto Star*, June 10, 1936, 4, James T. Douglas; *Winnipeg Free Press*, March 13, 1937, 16, N.T. Carey, Winnipeg; *Globe and Mail*, March 23, 1937, 8. Interested Canadian. *Winnipeg Free Press*, May 15, 1937, Hidden Graham, Halifax; the *Toronto Star*, September 20, 1938, 4, W.L. Smith; September 22, 1938, 4 C. Donnelly.

⁸⁴ *Winnipeg Free Press*, March 13 1937, 16, N.T. Carey

I was amazed to find a New York newspaper a long letter from an Episcopal clergyman living in the province of Quebec, expressing his fears that Canada will be invaded by the Germans, or the Japanese, and urging the expenditure of great amounts of money on military and naval 'preparedness.'...How much is being expended to discuss the cause of wars, mostly economic, so that by abolishing these causes the horror of war can be prevented?⁸⁵

As seen, the strength of imperialist sentiment of the English Canadian community often worried Canadian intellectuals and politicians, such as Pearson and other members of the Department of External Affairs.⁸⁶ Imperialism remained a political force in Canada, one of which politicians, particularly Mackenzie King, remained acutely aware. Imperialism may not have been universal in the entire English Canadian community, particularly amongst intellectuals. Nonetheless it was part of their heritage, and part of their cultural conditioning.⁸⁷ The *Globe's* editorial following the Canadian declaration of war later that year provides a small example.

The insignificant opposition in Parliament made a recorded vote unnecessary...The expected French Canadian rebellion vanished with Right Hon. Ernest Lap's heartfelt appeal for 'Canada's honour, Canada's soul, Canada's dignity, Canada's conscience.' Only Mr. Wilfrid Lacroix stood up with Mr. Liguori Lacombe for the non-participation amendment, two French Canadians who gained eternal distinction by an attitude unworthy of their people and country. And there remained the illusions of Mr. J. S. Woodsworth, in marked contrast with his views in militant days, a dissident figure in a party which prefers to fight for the right.⁸⁸

King received numerous letters on the subject, mostly from those who feared that King's emphasis on Canadian autonomy would result in a failure to support Britain

⁸⁵ *Winnipeg Free Press*, May 15 1937, 22, Hidden Graham, Halifax

⁸⁶ Pearson to Skelton, 9 June 1939, Pearson Papers, LAC, MG 26, N1, v. 14. The *Star*, which was itself often imperialist, observed it ironically that 'The Anthology of Empire says that 'when God wants a hard thing done He tells it to His Englishmen.' This is running Mr. Hitler a close second.' The *Star*, June 20 1935, 6. Ironically, they were also concerned by the limited interest of this group in international affairs as a whole, the growth of English Canadian isolationism, and their inability to come to an agreement on a policy for the Canadian government to follow. Pearson to Skelton, 12 March 1936, Pearson Papers, LAC, MG 26, N1, v. 14

⁸⁷ William Langer, *The Diplomacy of Imperialism, 1890-1902*. Revised ed., (New York, 1968 [1935]), 80

⁸⁸ *Globe*, September 11 1939, 6

internationally.⁸⁹ This was demonstrated in the controversy regarding the federal government's reluctance in 1937 to agree to the British Commonwealth Air Training Program (BCATP). A correspondent, F. Lansdowne Belyea of St John New Brunswick, wrote in concern to King.

I have admired your career and achievements, but this public attitude is displeasing to me as a loyal British subject ... We are also informed officially that Parliament will decide whether or not we are at war. Under any circumstances, I would make the clear statement that, if England were beaten to her knees or attacked by any aggressor that a Parliament in Canada would not exist overnight if they prevent us from going to the help of our own people... How strong England's hand for peace [at the League] would have been if we had all stood together as Empire members, but in Canada, leadership faltered.⁹⁰

Imperialism in Canada was economic, it was political and it often appeared to be based on sentimental attachment. This was apparent in looking at Canadians' reaction to the abdication, British immigration, and the BCATP. It was most apparent, however, in regards to their reaction to the Royal Tour. For a month in May and June of 1939, Canada reacted to the tour and the reports in the press. Editorials welcoming the King and Queen ran in every paper. The *Star* on May 18th 1939 wrote that

The people of Canada are thrilled by the privilege given to them of greeting the King and Queen in person. They honour their Majesty for the simplicity and purity of their home life and for the sacrifices that they are making for the state in fulfilling the duties of their exalted position. They want the world to understand they are proud of their status as a free and sovereign people in the galaxy of

⁸⁹ Frank Shinkar, Windsor to King, August, 1937, King Papers, LAC, MG 26, J1, v. 242. Shinkar's letter demonstrates one of the many reasons why King remained so aware of imperialism in Canada. 'Your praise for the newly crowned monarchs, although being late, was excellent. It not only showed your loyalty and devotion to the crown, but handed a severe jolt to many fascists and anti-loyalists who doubted your loyalty to the crown.' This criticism of King has been prevalent in historiography regarding his regime. Nicholas Mansergh wrote of King's overriding preoccupation with the preservation of Canadian national unity. 'It became fashionable to emphasize the precariousness of C's export markets, but not the value of her exports; to speak of regional and cultural tensions within but not of the growing sense of unity; of the conflicting pulls of geography and history to which indeed every 'settled country is subject, but not of the immense strength of C's position in the heart of the English-speaking world.' Mansergh, *Survey of British Commonwealth Affairs*, 111

⁹⁰ F. Lansdowne Belyea, St John NB to King, July 18 1938, King Papers, LAC, MG 26, J1, v. 245. King's letter in response politically responded that Canada was cooperating with the British to a certain extent. King to Balyea, July 23 1938, King Papers, LAC, MG 26, J1, v. 245

nations that gladly pay homage to King George the Sixth...It is to be hoped that the most favourable aspects of Canadian life will be presented to their Majesty and that they will be impressed by the harmonious relations existing between all sections of the nation and by the continuing achievement of the spirit of Confederation.⁹¹

The *Globe* had printed a similar editorial when Their Majesties had arrived the day before. It emphasized the welcome Canadians felt for their Sovereign, and their pride in their position in the British Commonwealth.

We can attend the League of Nations as an independent union and sign for treaties... [At the same time] Canada is one within the British Commonwealth over which his Majesty is sovereign. This the fact emphasized by the Royal visit and tour, and which we shall realize more fully in paying homage to the traditional head of the family of British nations and his devoted consort.⁹²

The coverage in the French Canadian press was not as extensive. However this coverage did represent a genuine interest. As *La Presse* wrote on May 19th 1939, the Royal couple seemed to have won over average Canadians in Quebec.⁹³ It printed the text of Mayor Camillien Houde's speech, included pages of pictures on the festivities and printed a number of advertisements bought by corporations to welcome the royal couple. It differed from the editorials printed above, however, in its emphasis on what the Royal Tour meant for national unity.⁹⁴ Most of the major Canadian newspapers emphasized the fact that Their Majesties were careful to speak both French and English at their public appearances in Ontario and Quebec. Nowhere was this more the case, however, than in the French Canadian press.⁹⁵

Non-interventionists, particularly in Quebec, often confused imperialism and interventionism. Their goals and their methods often appeared similar, at least at first

⁹¹ *The Star*, May 18 1939, 4

⁹² *Globe*, May 17 1939, 6

⁹³ *La Presse*, May 19 1939, 6

⁹⁴ *Ibid.*

⁹⁵ *Star*, May 18 1939, 4

glance. In addition, their rhetoric was at times very similar. An examination of their motivation and their long-term goals, however, demonstrates that these were often radically different, and their policies were often mutually exclusive.

Imperialists in Canada focused on Britain's foreign policy, while the letters received from interventionists in Canada consistently focused on the League. They also focused on the responsibility of Britain and the western democracies to ensure collective security.⁹⁶ They were disappointed with the lack of support that the federal government in Canada had demonstrated in regards to this program. They consistently argued for a more forceful and consistent program of adhering to their goal of preventing aggression overseas.⁹⁷ Overall, they were also disappointed by the lack of support that their program received in Canada. The commitment of Canadians, even English Canadians, to the League of Nations, and to collective security, was limited.

J.W. Dafoe may have been indulging in wishful thinking when he wrote in October of 1936 to Grant Dexter, a *Free Press* correspondent stationed temporarily in Great Britain. While general opinion in Canada favoured a cautious policy in response to European developments, he thought that 'Mr. King under-estimates the sentiment in Canada, particularly among Liberals of a certain type, in favour of the League, and he may easily overplay his hand in putting forward an isolationist policy.'⁹⁸ There was support for many aspects of the League program, particularly disarmament. Although disappointed by the lack of progress that the League and the Great Powers had made in

⁹⁶ Ida Stewart to J.W. Dafoe (copy), 14 July 1936 King Papers, LAC, MG 26, J1, v. 229

⁹⁷ Page, *Canadians and the League of Nations*, 498

⁹⁸ Dafoe to Dexter October 30 1936, Dexter Papers, Queen's University

the area, large segments of Canadian opinion remained committed to the idea of reducing armaments as a means of ensuring peace.⁹⁹

While they may have approved generally of the League, however, the number of Canadians prepared to devote their time and energy to the League of Nations Society was small.¹⁰⁰ Philippe Roy, a member of the Department of External Affairs wrote to King in January of 1937, arguing that Canadians were in favour of shaping policy ‘according to the people's opinion which is entirely for Peace.’¹⁰¹ Their support for the League was limited to its role as a negotiator and arbitrator of disputes, rather than as a forceful actor in preventing aggression through collective security.¹⁰²

King's correspondence did include, however, an astonishing number of resolutions arguing for a more forceful stance on the part of the Canadian government. These were often received from branches of the League of Nations societies throughout Canada. They included a resolution from the Winnipeg branch of the League of Nations Society to protest against the molestation of racial and religious groups in Germany,¹⁰³ a resolution from the Vancouver branch of the League of Nations society urging the Cabinet to declare a boycott of trade with Japan,¹⁰⁴ and a letter from a private citizen protesting against the Canadian decision to withdraw its leadership from the movement to impose oil sanctions in response to Italian actions in Ethiopia.¹⁰⁵ These are only a very small example of the private and group protests that King received in regards to Canada's

⁹⁹ *Financial Post*, July 1st 1933, 6

¹⁰⁰ Page, *Canadians and the League of Nations*, 191

¹⁰¹ Phillippe Roy to King, 20 January 1937, King Papers, LAC, MG 26, J1, v. 241

¹⁰² Interestingly, this role represented a policy which King himself was most comfortable. Ida Stewart to J.W. Dafoe (copy), 14 July 1936, King Papers, LAC, MG 26, J1, 229

¹⁰³ Jessie Maeleman, President, Winnipeg Branch, League of Nations Society in Canada, to King, 20 November 1938, King Papers, LAC, MG 26, J1, v.254

¹⁰⁴ L. G. Black, President, Vancouver Branch, League of Nations Society to King, 7 February 1939, King Papers, LAC, MG 26, J1, v. 263

¹⁰⁵ Stewart to King, 13 November 1937, King Papers, LAC MG 26, J1, v. 233

international policy. As the situation with Germany, Italy and Japan became increasingly tense, the number and the intensity of these resolutions grew accordingly.

A letter King received in November of 1935 from the president of the Vancouver branch of the League of Nations society, Robert Falconer, reflects these themes. Falconer is clearly disappointed regarding the lack of support that the Canadian government had given the League in the wake of the Ethiopian crisis.

Canadians who rely vaguely on neutrality as a way of escape for them from the present danger to the world, forget two things; first that Canada has assumed obligations as a member of the League of Nations, and secondly, that we are a member of the British Commonwealth of Nations...Fidelity to the League means not only that to throw ourselves actively on the side of world peace, but stand alongside Britain in preventing and restraining war in the company of most peace-loving actions of the world.¹⁰⁶

Supporters of the League had been concerned about the ineffectiveness of the League since the Japanese incursion into Manchuria in 1931. As the *Star* argued in 1933, it was not only the failure of the League to enforce peace, but also their failure to live up to its principles that threatened its credibility. 'The unwillingness or inability of the League to enforce its principles lessens faith in the possibility that law can be made supreme between the nations.' The *Star* foresaw only the continuation of strife until the futility of violence as a means of achieving national goals was realized. However, the possibility of such a prospect in the near future was unlikely. 'The world, in short, appears to have chosen the certain of war rather than incur the risk of peace.'¹⁰⁷

The Canadian introduction of a limited program of rearmament in 1937 provoked a flood of protests to newspapers and political leaders. King received protests from the

¹⁰⁶ An Address at a meeting of the Toronto Branch, League of Nations Society in Canada, on November 10 1935, by Sir Robert A. Falconer, President of the Society, King Papers, LAC, King Papers, MG 26, J4, v. 156

¹⁰⁷ The *Star*, March 3 1933, 6

English and French-speaking communities in Quebec, the League of Nations society and the Social Credit Group in Alberta. They protested the move given Canada's geographic position, the possibility of profiteering and the growth of militarism in Canada.¹⁰⁸

This was partially due to the problems in devising an effective policy in response to international aggression. The imposition of an economic boycott on Japanese goods by Canada, for example, was a policy that was unlikely to have much effect on checking their policy in China. Canadians themselves were unlikely to support it.¹⁰⁹ Canada's position as a minor power, especially in the Far East but also in Europe, made it unlikely that Canada would have much success in affecting the policies of Japan, Germany or Italy.

Canadians who continued to feel committed to the British Commonwealth were willing to support the League given British support for it. When these two goals diverged, however, the nature of their ambivalence regarding the League was clear.¹¹⁰ As Dafoe commented in his letter to Dexter in October of 1936, 'It is interesting to note the reaction of Conservative newspapers to King's speech. They were all for it in so far as he disowned any obligation to the League, but were much annoyed that after repudiating the League he did not take a ready-aye-ready attitude towards the British Empire.'¹¹¹

Imperialism in Canada was not without its limits. This was particularly true among the younger generation and minority groups outside of Ontario. There were often disappointed with the nature of British policy during the decade, including the move

¹⁰⁸ W.O. Rothney, Sherbrooke, Quebec, (Bishop University) to King, 13 February 1937, King Papers, LAC MG 26, J1, v. 241; W.O. Rotney, Sherbrooke, Quebec, to King, 13 February 1937, King Papers, LAC MG 26, J1, v. 241; Ida Stewart to King, 13 November 1937, King Papers, LAC MG 26, J1, v. 233; Mrs. A. Reaburn, Secretary, Big Valley Social Credit Group (Alberta) to King, 21 April 1937, King Papers, LAC MG 26, J1, v. 240

¹⁰⁹ Meehan, *The Dominion and the Rising Sun*, 168

¹¹⁰ Dafoe to Dexter, October 30 1936, Dexter Papers, Queen's University

¹¹¹ Ibid.

away from the League and towards appeasement.¹¹² However, it remained a significant factor in any assessment of Canadian politics, one that needed to be considered when determining the nature of Canadian foreign policy during the period.

Aside from this consistent focus on the controversial aspects of Canadian imperialism there seemed to be little pattern in regards to which issues caught the interest of Canadian opinion. At most, what might be argued is that in considering their international role, Canadians often focused on an awareness of these domestic considerations. For the most part, the letters to the editor reflected the general Canadian concerns with internal as opposed to external issues. Their letters also demonstrated their degree of independence in regards to their interactions with the press. They did not simply allow the media to shape their views on international issues, but also challenged them to address certain stories and challenged their interpretation of others.¹¹³

The question of the Nazi regime in Germany remained the most controversial issue during the period. Canadian readers challenged editors on the Nazi's international aspirations and on the nature of its regime. A letter that appeared in the *Winnipeg Free Press* in May of 1938 and signed 'Freedom' attacked their coverage of Germany. One of their reporters, Grant Dexter, had recently travelled to Germany. He reported back on the nature of the regime and the treatments of Jews in Germany in particular. 'Freedom' attacked Dexter's coverage.

The week before an item appeared of the front page of the *Free Press* that Jews were compelled to picket their own stores and carry placards above their heads for

¹¹² Memorandum to Skelton by Keenleyside, October 6th 1938, Undersecretary of State for External Affairs, RG 25 D1, LAC v. 715.

¹¹³ The letter responded to the report that Mitchell Hepburn's plan to float a \$15,000,000 bond issue had been largely ignored by the chartered banks. The author wrote 'We are tottering under the heavy load of interest and payments...These money dealers can and do direct the flow of credit in any direction they please...Do we not need a system which will function for the benefit of mankind and not one directed by a few for their personal benefit?' The *Star*, June 21 1935, 7 D.A.

hours at a time bearing the words, "Don't Buy from Jews' and we are expected to believe such stuff as this. The writer had been informed on good authority that the authors of all such articles are Jews. Is it any wonder that Jews are discriminated against?...Hitler has never persecuted the Jews; he has protected them. He has removed them from office and stopped them from persecuting Germans. He is a friend of the Jews not an enemy...R.B. Bennett has said on his return from Germany that they were a happy, contented people. That can be accounted for. [It is the result of the]...absence of a lying press to upset and contaminate their minds.¹¹⁴

Canadians continued to be fascinated with sensational international events. They also focused on continuing internal issues. This included the role of the Jewish minority in Canada, the question of a distinctive national flag for Canada, and immigration.

The nature of the reaction to the question of Jewish immigration seemed in part to have reflected the continuing ambivalence regarding the presence of the Jewish minority in Canada.¹¹⁵

Ultimately, of course, the magnitude of the crop disasters forced the story on to the front pages of the newspapers. But at no time did it ever command the space devoted to city-provincial-financial wrangles, the search for Amelia Earhart...the New York antics of Father Divine, the Orangemen's parades, or the widespread search for George Roediger, the West's champion bigamist of the 1930s.¹¹⁶

As with the question of immigration, the issue of a 'national' flag continued to be controversial. It seemed to have represented to many the nature of Canada and its international role, as well as the way that Canada was perceived by others. As a result, the issue of a Canadian flag that did not incorporate its membership within the British Commonwealth seemed to have touched upon a number of sensitive issues. Individual Canadians wrote to their local newspapers, arguing for and against the introduction of a

¹¹⁴ The letter was signed 'Freedom'. *Winnipeg Free Press*, May 21 1938, 23.

¹¹⁵ Even those authors who wrote in support of the Jewish minority in Germany demonstrated this ambivalence towards this presence. Its author questioned the idea that the Jews were the 'chosen people' and responded that they were in fact potentially unequal in that the Jews had 'rejected the Messiah.' *Globe*, April 24 1933, 4, W.B. MacCallum, Maxville, Ont.; *Winnipeg Free Press*, March 18 1939, 20, W.H. Bloxham, Winnipeg; *Globe*, April 1 1933, 4, W. G. MacKendrick

¹¹⁶ Gray, *The Winter Years*, 10

distinctive national flag. For the most part, the split reflected the ethnic divide in Canada.¹¹⁷ However, there was some support among English Canadians for a distinctive flag to demonstrate Canadian autonomy, such as T.S. Ewart of Ottawa.

The impropriety of flying the Union Jack officially here is then apparent for Canada, being a sovereign country; it denies the supremacy of the United Kingdom and at the same time asserts it by flying the flag. To comply with national and international practice, as well as for self-respect, Canada should have her own flag distinctively Canadian.¹¹⁸

This contrasted the resolution passed by the Orange Lodge of Montreal in 1938 in favour of retaining the Union Jack, which was forwarded to Mackenzie King. It concluded by arguing that ‘whereas to us of the Loyal Orange Association the Union Jack is a symbol of civilization and religious freedom for which our forefathers fought and died, and it is the flag under which many of our members proudly and patriotically gave their lives in the Great War,’ Canada should retain ‘our beloved Union Jack’ as the national flag of Canada.¹¹⁹

King’s correspondence provides therefore an intriguing and illuminating examination of the ways in which Canadians viewed the issues. It also hints at the often widely divergent issues on which Canadians focused. King’s sense of public opinion seemed to have been intuitive and reflected the broad nature of his sources.¹²⁰ Certainly, King’s correspondence demonstrates the broad nature of his sources and his ability, and that of his staff, to determine its significance. King’s correspondence included personal appeals to the Prime Minister, the Leader of the Opposition and the leaders of the other

¹¹⁷ See the contrast between *La Presse*, June 16 1938, 6, and *Toronto Globe*, February 23 1938, 4. Interestingly, the second article was clipped by the Department of External Affairs. Newspaper clippings by External Affairs. Skelton Papers, LAC, MG 30 D33, v. 5

¹¹⁸ *Toronto Star* May 16, 1939, 4, T. S. Ewart, Ottawa, Ontario

¹¹⁹ R.H. Shaver, Recording Secretary, Loyal Orange Association, (Montreal), to King, February 24 1938, Mackenzie King Papers, LAC MG 26, J1, v. 260

¹²⁰ Reginald Hardy, *Mackenzie King of Canada: A Biography*. (London, 1949), 300

parties requesting their aid in resolving certain issues.¹²¹ It included resolutions advocating positions on specific domestic and international problems. A few examples included one to prevent the erection of a monument to Joan of Arc on the Plains of Abraham,¹²² one to turn to the League to resolve the Polish question in the summer of 1939,¹²³ and a letter arguing for a boycott on Japanese goods.¹²⁴

His correspondence also demonstrated the divided nature of Canadian views. These often reflected those emphasized by Canadian editors, such as the spread of fascism, communism and the Canadian economy. However, it also included issues that were less immediately apparent.

In December of 1937, King's staff composed an overview of his correspondence since the beginning of November. It concentrated on the federal government's program to increase the expenditure for national defence. Although the majority of the correspondence expressed opposition to the program, the policies suggested often have contradictory results. In addition, there were a number in favour of the program, and for Canadian support for Britain. The letters argued for the

nationalization of the munitions industry and the conscription of industry in the event of war, in order to prevent profiteering. The great majority of these communications have come from Western Canada...Fourteen printed forms have

¹²¹ For one example see the letter to King from A. Pomfret of Toronto in 1931 asking King, at the time the Leader of the Opposition, to ensure that the town of Scarborough pay relief in cash as opposed to food tickets. It is unclear in this letter, as in a number of others, that Pomfret was clear as to the powers and responsibilities of the prime minister, the leader of the Opposition, as well as the responsibilities of the different levels of government. A. Pomfret, (39 Byng Ave, Toronto) to King, 6 October, 1931, King Papers, LAC MG 26 J1, v. 188. There is no indication that King, responded to Pomfret's letter, which was also addressed to Bennett as leader of the Opposition. The same is true regarding a letter from a 'Liberal' that King received in February of 1932. King Papers, LAC MG 26 J1, v. 190. 'Unknown' to King, from Halifax, February 32

¹²² The letter argued that the plains should be reserved for monuments to important Canadian events. King to G.E. Turner, President, St. George's Society, Quebec, April 9 1938, King Papers, MG 26, J1, v. 261

¹²³ Warwick Chipman, Chairman, League of Nations Society in Canada, Ottawa branch, Montreal to King, August 27 1939. See also King's response. King to Chipman, Aug 30 1939. King Papers, LAC MG 26, J1, v. 265

¹²⁴ AJ Smith to King, June 3 1935, LAC MG 26, J1, v. 229

been received from British Columbia alone, protesting against any increase in the appropriation for national defence. Some expressions of approval of an extended program have also been received, three from western Canada, two from Quebec and one from Ontario. A suggestion has been received from the City Clerk of Montreal that the funds appropriated for the defence purposes should be used instead to relieve unemployment, and one from President of the same city that they be used for the establishment of a Department of Peace. A letter of protest has been received from the City Clerk of Vancouver against the proposed use of part of Locarno Park for a seaplane base. A protest has come in from the Board of Control of Toronto against any reduction in the number of militia units. A resolution has been received from the Canadian Legion of the British Empire Service League endorsing the proposals of the government to increase the national defence programme. The Christadelphian Service Committee has asked that their members be exempt from military service in case of war. The Society of Friends has requested that Parliament be consulted before Canada participates in any war. The Native Sons of Canada have asked that the expenditure be used for the defence of Canada, and should not be coupled with any scheme for Imperial Defence. A similar suggestion has also been received by a private individual.¹²⁵

It was the continuing impact of isolationist sentiment and that of the contradictory policies of imperialism and nationalism, which was seen as the most significant challenge to the federal government's policies.¹²⁶ Isolationist sentiment was influenced by the proximity to the United States, although for the most part its presence in Canada reflected nativist views.¹²⁷ Imperialism was not the only one area of international policy where Canadians disagreed. In addition, the political, ethnic and intellectual split between

¹²⁵ Many of these assessments are similar to those found in the United States – in particular those regarding the 'conscription of wealth' - and perhaps reflect the publication of the findings of the congressional investigation of war profiteers, and the prominent discussion of 'the merchants of death'. Précis of Correspondence regarding Defence. 7 December, 1937, King Papers, LAC MG 26 J4, v. 157.

¹²⁶ Stacey, *Canada and the Age of Conflict*, v.2, 233, Power, *A Party Politician*, 121. See also J.W. Dafoe 'Canadian Foreign Policy.' in R.G. Trotter et al., eds., *Conference on Canadian-American Affairs* (Boston, 1937), 224-231

¹²⁷ John Thompson and Allen Seager, *Canada 1922-1939: Decades of Discord*. (Toronto, 1985), 314. Brebner provides an interesting examination of the extent of the impact of American isolationism on Canadian views both during the earlier period directly following the Great War. Brebner, *North Atlantic Triangle*, 284-287 and the 1930s, 292-293, 322-23. For contemporary views of American influence on Canadian views see Lower, *My Seventy-Five Years*, 225, MacKay and Rogers, *Canada Looks Abroad*, 264-65. Angus argued that the American cultural influence was at most mixed. While Canadians flocked to American movies and consumed American music, news and magazines, what they consumed often reinforced existing views, of American depravity and Canadian moral superiority. Angus, *Canada's Great Neighbour*, 124-135. Angus also points out though that the issue of American cultural influence is far more complicated and that despite these concerns Canadians seemed to have been influenced by American views due at the very least to their significant exposure to these influences. Angus, *Canada's Great Neighbour*, 140

French and English Canada continued. For example, as seen, Dafoe's editorials were never as influential as later perceived, and Canadians as a whole never embraced the entirety of his internationalist program.¹²⁸ In the end, though, they also continued to be interested in what Dafoe and the *Free Press* had to say. His influence, however, failed to cross the ethnic divide.

Certainly French Canadians looked at international developments in different ways from the rest of the country. While large number of Canadians, in both English and French Canada, were sympathetic,¹²⁹ the French Canadian media, particularly *Le Devoir*, demonstrated a particular interest in developments in China.¹³⁰ French Canadians were present in significant numbers in the Catholic missions to China, often targeted for oppression on the part of Japan.¹³¹ While there were representatives of the Protestant churches in China, these missions were not as extensive, and their activities were not as widely reported in Canada.¹³² This contrasted to the weekly reports in *Le Devoir* regarding the activities of French Canadian missionaries, particularly in China.¹³³

In a letter to *Le Devoir* in 1936, the author, Pierre Legris wrote in response to J.S. Woodsworth's motion to declare Canada's neutrality. He congratulated the leader of the C.C.F on his foresight and argued, in dramatic terms, that if it was necessary for French

¹²⁸ Cook, *The Politics of John W. Dafoe*, 237

¹²⁹ Meehan, *The Dominion and the Rising Sun*, 26

¹³⁰ *Le Devoir*, April 21 1930, 3 'Les étrangers menaces à Kanchow.' *Le Devoir* June 16 1932, 1 'Lettre d'Europe, La guerre du Mandchourie.'

¹³¹ John Meehan presents an interesting commentary on the differences in how French and English Canadians gathered information on the situation in China. 'Many French Canadians learned of Asia through letters from relatives in the field. Others read or listened to missionary travelogues presented in print, at public lectures, and over the new medium of radio. The well-informed watched documentaries on the Manchurian missions...The most common way in which French Canadians learned of Asia was through the St. Enfanse movement [of the 1930s]. For a mere ten cents a year, Quebec homes received *Le messenger*, which described the China missions and included prayers for the deliverance of Chinese children from the wiles of godless communists.' Meehan, *The Dominion and the Rising Sun*, 26

¹³² Michael Bliss, *A Canadian Millionaire: The Live and Business Times of Sir Joseph Flavelle, Bart., 1858-1939*. (Toronto, 1978), 457

¹³³ *Le Devoir*, April 22 1931, 6

Canadians to ally themselves with the C.C.F. to protect their autonomy, then so be it. Neither the Liberals nor the Conservatives, he argued, could be trusted to ensure this. They both relied heavily on the support of imperialists in Canada.¹³⁴

There were those, even among English Canadian intellectuals, who agreed to some extent with Legris' views. Hugh Keenleyside, a member of the Department of External Affairs, concluded that 'If there were a real system of collective security...Canada should take part but the British Government has destroyed the League and announced the fact with satisfaction. So if Britain and the rest of Europe want to go to Hell, let them go - but let us stay out of it and try to maintain some remnants of decency on this continent.'¹³⁵

The letters King received expressed similar views. He had been in contact with Ida K. Stewart, and her husband, Dr. D. A. Stewart, throughout the 1930s. Although the Stewarts were clearly a supporter of the League, their letters, particularly Ida's, demonstrated the limitations that they put on this support. This was especially in regards to the issue of sanctions. In regards to the imposition of sanctions on Italy in 1936, at most, she shrewdly argued, that they represented the attempts of the British National government to maintain popular support by appealing to the public's simplistic view of the League. It was not the Canadian responsibility, therefore, to sacrifice its interests to 'pull the National Government's chestnuts out of the fire, even as we did another Government's twenty years ago.'¹³⁶

¹³⁴ *Le Devoir*, January 29 1937, 6, Pierre Legris.

¹³⁵ Memorandum to Skelton by Keenleyside, October 6th 1938, Undersecretary of State for External Affairs, RG 25 D1, LAC v. 715.

¹³⁶ Ida Stewart to King, 14 July 1936, King had this letter forwarded to O.D. Skelton, but requested that he return it afterwards to his residence at Laurier House. See also Ida Stewart to J.W. Dafoe (copy to King), 14 July 1936, King Papers, LAC MG 26 J1 v. 229.

Canadian support for a League war, she argued, would only be a repetition of past mistakes. The policy of collective security had failed due to the reliance of its main instrument, the League of Nations on force. The League needed to deal with the economic and political grievances that led to war. Her concerns also relate to the fact that the League's main powers, Britain and France, represented the victors of the Great War.

Militarism was evil then and is no less evil today...Flesh and blood, fatigued by prolonged hardship and loss of sleep, were pitted against the most diabolical instruments of destruction and when nerves cracked and brains gave way the soldiers, many of them mere boys, faced the firing squad. It is to that sort of thing we would be asked to send our sons in any war - League or otherwise...We are asked very often in these days to face facts. Well, here are some facts we would do well to face at once. Britain and other powers acquired their empires by force and propose to keep them by the same means...Britain and France, have laid themselves open to the suspicion that they are interested in the League of Nations chiefly as a means of maintaining the present favourable status quo. So it seems to me that true friends of the League must put forth their utmost effort to make it an instrument of genuine conciliation and for ending the struggle over raw materials, trade outlets, manipulation of currencies and restriction of migration.¹³⁷

Stewart does not mention the aspect of isolationist sentiment that many Canadians would have agreed with, namely the view that Canadians had enough to deal with at home. Some English and French Canadians, attracted to a sense of North American isolationism would have agreed with that sentiment. Certainly, however, the issue of national unity would have to be considered one of the issues of primary concern. And it was international questions above all that threatened Canadian national unity. As a result, it was international involvement that both touched off many domestic divisions. It was also the most effected by it.

¹³⁷ Although Stewart's views were fairly standard, they are none the less significant as is her ability to analyse the international scene and the Canadian position in it. Ida Stewart to King, 14 July 1936, King Papers, LAC MG 26 J1 v. 229. Stewart, along with many Canadians, would probably have agreed with one of the *Globe's* comments after war was declared on September 11th 1939. 'War is merciless. For example, Manitoba's little scheme for exchanging honey for Germany's beer has been wrecked. And there was something very interesting - almost sentimental - in this beer-for-honey plan; it seemed so sociable-like.' *Globe*, Sept 11 1939, 'Notes and Comments,' 6

Domestically, the legacy of the Great War had been difficult to for Canadians to assimilate. Canadians were uncomfortable remembering the bloody nature of the war itself. In addition, the contrast, revealed during the interwar period, between the actions of the western governments and the wartime propaganda, disturbed many observers.¹³⁸ As a result, Canadians at times attempted to sanitize the experiences of Canadian soldiers in response to the flood of anti-war literature that was printed during the period.¹³⁹ Canadians simply could not accept the revelations of atrocities on both sides that came out in the interwar period. The *Star* argued in 1930, for example, that these stories were simply the exaggerated stories that soldiers told when they gathered together. Although there had been ‘lapses’, these reports had been simply a part of these soldiers’ process of remembrance. As such they must be dismissed. Canadians, they concluded, ‘cannot permit history to set down as true the fiction spun over a glass of grog by some regimental romancer.’¹⁴⁰

Other members of the Canadian press, as seen particularly through the example of the *Star*, agreed with those who argued that a repeat of this experience had to be avoided at all cost. After an exhibit of a series of pictures of the Great War had been released in March 1934, the *Star* argued that

These pictures have revealed war in its bare bones, a horrible, dirty, murderous and stinking business, except from the point of view of the profiteers who grow rich at home and the silly people who prove their valour by cheering on the sons of their neighbours who set sail to manure the fields of foreign countries with the material quantities of their blood, meat, and bones and so inspire parlour poets to extol war.¹⁴¹

¹³⁸ Vance, *Death So Noble*, 7

¹³⁹ Vance, *Death So Noble*, 191

¹⁴⁰ The *Star* January 16 1930, 6

¹⁴¹ *Star*, March 22 1934, 6

This 'betrayal' as well as the 'flawed' nature of the Treaty of Versailles, explained, in the minds of these commentators, the failures in the post-war period, of the League of Nations and the nations it created, including Austria and Czechoslovakia.¹⁴²

The difficulty that Canadians faced in incorporating the legacy of the Great War explains in part the continuing hostility felt in Quebec towards Sir Robert Borden. When he died in 1937 *Le Devoir* printed an editorial regarding his legacy. It argued that Canadians had been eager to forget Borden and the negative memories of the war, particularly the election of 1917 and the conscription crisis. Canadians had had to forget Borden, had needed to, in order for the country to move on. In order to honour Borden as a Canadian statesman, they argued though, they had to acknowledge the cruel reality of what had happened. More importantly, they had to acknowledge the consequences of his actions. Otherwise, *Le Devoir* argued, Canada might again fall victim to the tide of unbridled imperialism present in Canada.¹⁴³

Canadians in the 1930s differed on their country's proper international role. In like terms, they also disagreed on the nature of the Canadian identity. Older issues such as racial, religious and ethnic differences and prejudices continued to linger. This was particularly problematic in regards to continuing fears among both the English and French Canadian communities that each sought to dominate the other. Further, they continued to argue that French Canadians in the federal cabinet were attempting to impose a radical agenda of regional balance, official bilingualism and the official recognition of French and the Catholic Church outside of Quebec.¹⁴⁴ This was despite the

¹⁴² *Star*, February 17 1938, 13

¹⁴³ *Le Devoir*, June 11, 1937, 1

¹⁴⁴ Grant Dexter, when corresponding with Dafoe concerning Charlesworth of the National Broadcasting Commission mentions the fears of many English Canadians that he and others wanted to foist French-

clear prevalence of English, Protestant and Ontario representatives in the federal government, the Canadian business establishment (even within Quebec) and Canadian society.¹⁴⁵

As Loftus H. Reid, the Grand Secretary of the Orange Association of British America, argued to King in a letter dated the 25 March of 1936,

It is clear that, constitutionally, English is declared an official language throughout the whole of Canada and that French is similarly recognized only within a restricted and well-defined area...[Many Canadians are] keenly sensitive to the receipt of communications from their own Government couched in a language which the recipients do not understand...We believe that the intrusion of the French language in this way [through the CBC] is not only useless to the people of Canada as a whole, but also is positively distasteful to the vast majority of them, including, to our knowledge, many of French origin not within the direct influence of the Province of Quebec.¹⁴⁶

The influence in the Quebec caucus in the Liberal cabinet, particularly of Ernest Lapointe and Charles 'Chubby' Power, was often singled out for blame. Power, who as one correspondent to King, put it, was 'English in name only and representative of a French constituency', was often attacked for his clear support of an autonomous

speaking programs on the English provinces. Dexter to Dafoe, September 2 1932, Dexter Papers, Queen's University. See also letters to King regarding the issue of bilingual stationery for use by the King and Queen during their visit to Canada. A copy of the letter was also sent to the Postmaster General. Alfred Brault to King 17 February 1939, King Papers, LAC MG 26, J1, v. 264; Lt-Col Gordon Magee, Vancouver, to King, 7 August 1937, King Papers, LAC MG 26, J1, v. 267. As Nicholas Mansergh has argued, these views were also influenced by the growth in the French Canadian population and the increasing likelihood of a conflict in Europe. 'It is precisely this contrast in the relative rate of increase in the population of French and English-speaking Canada which has given a sharper edge to the misgivings of the predominantly Protestant population of Ontario still deeply attached to the tradition of the United Empire Loyalists who founded it. Their emphasis on the imperial link, their resolve to stand with Britain in peace and war, stood out in sharp contrast to the negative, often isolationist, outlook of the *habitant*.' Mansergh, *Survey of British Commonwealth Affairs*, 100

¹⁴⁵ Black, *Duplessis*, 57; Wade, *The French Canadians, Volume II: 1911-1967*, 864. See also the description of Sir Herbert Holt in Peter Newman's *Flame of Power: Intimate Profiles of Canada's Greatest Businessmen*. (Toronto, 1959)

¹⁴⁶ Loftus H. Reid, Grand Secretary, Orange Association, British America, to King, 25 March, 1936, King Papers, LAC MG 26 J1, v. 351. For other examples of general attitudes towards French Canadians and the Catholic Church in general, see Clarke to King, 12 March 31, King Papers, LAC MG 26 J1, v. 184, Martin Papers, LAC MG 32 B12 v. 351. Norman Ward and David Smith's biography of Jimmy Gardiner provides an interesting examination of how these issues affected politics in Saskatchewan during his premiership. *Jimmy Gardiner: Relentless Liberal*, 91, 101

Canadian foreign policy. His political opponents encouraged the perception that he was a hostage to the fears of his French Canadian constituents and their fears regarding Canada's involvement in an imperial foreign policy.¹⁴⁷

In contrast, French Canadian nationalists in Quebec continually argued against the domination of an imperialist English Canadian agenda and of Ontario in specific.¹⁴⁸ *Le Devoir*, the voice of French Canadian nationalism, was the most consistent in arguing this point. This included the Canadian approach to international issues and federal attempts to infringe on its constitutional rights.¹⁴⁹ Certainly, however, *Le Devoir's* editors were far from completely successful in advancing their agenda, even in convincing the average French Canadian. They could not completely convince them of the need to isolate themselves from the outside influences.

As seen in the introduction, the Royal Tour was incredibly well received in Quebec. This welcome might in some ways be reflective of the continuing interest of French Canadians in the romance of the monarchy.¹⁵⁰ Even *Le Devoir's* coverage of the tour betrayed this fascination. While its coverage was not as fulsome as that of most of the English Canadian newspapers, it was significant. This was true especially when the Royal couple visited the province of Quebec and opened Parliament in Ottawa.¹⁵¹ It

¹⁴⁷ FC Ryan to Mackenzie King, November 29 1935, 'The Argument in favour of the English-speaking Catholic [in Cabinet].' Ryan recommended that King appoint an English-Catholic backbencher, John P. Barry New Brunswick to the Cabinet to fill this role. King Papers, LAC MG 26 J1, v. 211. See also Lt-Colonel Gordon Magee, Vancouver, to King, 7 August 1937, King Papers, LAC MG 26 J1, v. 237

¹⁴⁸ *Le Devoir*, December 4 1934, 1; *Le Devoir*, December 4 1934, 1 ; *Le Devoir*, January 4 1937, 1

¹⁴⁹ *Le Devoir*, March 6 1936, 'Hâtons-nous lentement! – A propos de la réforme de la Constitution.' 1 See also Raymond Cook's interpretation on the uses of nationalism by politicians in Quebec as a means of consolidating power through the argument that they alone were the true representatives of French Canadians. Cook, *Canada, Quebec and The Uses of Nationalism*, 111. In contrast, see the views of English Canadian intellectuals who wanted a strong central government to deal with the pressing domestic and international issues. Owsram, *The Government Generation*, 245

¹⁵⁰ *La Presse*, May 24 1932, 6 ; *Le Devoir*, November 29, 1934, 1 ; *Le Devoir* December 4 1934, 1 ; *Le Devoir*, January 4 1937, 3

¹⁵¹ *Le Devoir*, May 17 1939, 1, 3, 4 ; May 19 1939, 1 ; May 22 1939, 1, 3 ; May 23 1939, 3

coverage did stress, to a greater extent than the English Canadian papers, the impact of the Statute of Westminster.¹⁵² It also stressed to a larger degree the care that their Majesties took in avoiding domestic political issues¹⁵³ and of speaking French as much as possible at public affairs in Quebec.¹⁵⁴

In contrast to the English Canadian press, *Le Devoir* printed little coverage after the Tour left Ottawa for the West. At the end of the tour, though, it printed one final editorial. While French Canadians had sought, as much as their English counterparts, to welcome their sovereign, it argued, this should not be mistaken for an embrace of imperialism. 'Le roi et la reine nous ont conquis; mais non pas l'impérialisme.'¹⁵⁵ French Canadians appreciated the attempts of the royal couple to take their culture and views into consideration. They especially appreciated their consistent use of the French language and their emphasis on the ways in which Canadians as a whole shared a common culture.¹⁵⁶

However, the editors of *Le Devoir* had to wonder if this visit was not really an attempt to reinforce imperialist feeling in Canada. As they pointed out, even if the King and Queen were too polite to address the issue, many in Canada and the United States continued to speculate regarding this issue. In any case, they argued, while imperialism may work with English Canadians, the visit will have little lasting impact on French Canadian views. They were loyal to Great Britain, loyal to the crown, but that did not mean that they were willing to be pulled into common defence policies or participate in

¹⁵² *Le Devoir* May 20 1939, 1 ; *Le Devoir*, May 22 1939, 1

¹⁵³ *Le Devoir*, May 19 1939, 1

¹⁵⁴ *Le Devoir*, May 17 1939, 3 ; *Le Devoir*, May 19 1939, 1

¹⁵⁵ 'On n'empêche pas du vrais Canadiens.' Georges Pelletier *Le Devoir*, June 10 1939, 1

¹⁵⁶ This was a nice contrast, they pointed out, to the attitude of those Canadians, especially in Toronto, who always emphasize the superiority of their language, culture and history. *Le Devoir*, May 19 1939, 1

British wars in Europe. If British officials thought that this visit and the sentiment that it evoked in Quebec would lead to support for imperialism they had misread their audience.¹⁵⁷

French Canadian nationalists, including *Le Devoir*, continued their attempt to influence their readers' views on domestic and international events. They consistently attempted to counteract English Canadian and American influences. They also sought to convince their audience of the need to create a society based on traditional French Canadian values of land, family and church. They argued against the embrace in Quebec of English business practices, intellectual ideas, consumerism and media. This was especially true of American film.¹⁵⁸

They argued, however, that it was international communism, however, which represented the biggest threat to French Canadian society. They were concerned with this movement to a much larger degree than to the spread of the fascist movement.¹⁵⁹ J.N.O. Laroque of Montreal wrote to the *Financial Post* protesting Norman Bethune's visit to Canada in June of 1937. Laroque denounced the expedition, and its leader, as a communist attempt to gain support in Canada through propaganda regarding the Spanish Civil War. He complimented the *Post* on its 'common sense to recognize the campaign for what it really is and [for] the courage enough to denounce it in unmistakable terms.'

¹⁵⁷ Georges Pelletier 'On n'empêche pas du vrais Canadiens.', *Le Devoir*, June 10 1939, 1 Certainly they were not alone in wondering about the true motivations of the trip. Certain government officials, including Lester Pearson, had speculated on its purpose. Pearson to Skelton, 4 November 1938, Pearson Papers, LAC, MG 26 N1, v. 14. As well, there were English Canadian observers in Quebec who also warned the federal government that the enthusiasm that greeted the King and Queen in Quebec was unlikely to translate to support for Canadian involvement in a British war in Europe. This was especially the case should it involve conscription. May 19 1939 Claxton to Pearson, Pearson Papers, LAC, MG 26 N1, v. 14.

¹⁵⁸ Black, *Duplessis*, 56, Robert Rumilly, *Henri Bourassa*, (Quebec, 2000), 218

¹⁵⁹ *Le Devoir*, March 21 1933, 1 'Colonisation' and March 29 1930, 1 'Lettre d'Europe.' *La Presse*, June 14 1935, 6, 'Préférons La Liberté au Communisme,' and Black, *Duplessis*, 161. As seen above, many French Canadians embraced Mussolini's fascist regime in Italy as a stabilizing force, and this was true, although to a much smaller extent, of the Nazi regime in Germany. See Esther Delisle, *Essais sur l'imprégnation fasciste au Québec*. (Montréal, 2002), 33, 36

He concluded by reminding Canadians that the 'oratorical and much-photographed Dr. Norman Bethune is an avowed Communist.'¹⁶⁰

In this context, it is not surprising that at times French Canadian nationalists were sympathetic to the fascist regimes in Germany and Italy.¹⁶¹ This distinguished them from almost all English Canadians. Many English Canadians were also concerned about international communism and the influence of the Soviet Union.¹⁶² Overall, they agreed with the *Free Press* editorial of February of 1937, when in response to the Soviet purges, it argued that the establishment of totalitarian regimes, either fascist or communist, was equally contrary to western, and Canadian, values of justice, democracy and peace.¹⁶³ Fascism, however, came to be seen as a more immediate threat to the Canadian way of life, mainly due to the increasing likelihood of war with Germany.

F.W.J. of Winnipeg, for example, wrote in to the *Free Press* during the Czechoslovakian crisis of 1938. He expressed his concerns over educational trends in Germany, which he argued were used to reinforce the Nazi agenda.

[The Nazi Primer] is the text officially prescribed for seven million of the ten million boys and girls in Germany between the ages of ten and eighteen... So here, undistorted by the 'foreign lies'...is the truth about what they want the Germans of the future to think.¹⁶⁴

¹⁶⁰ *Financial Post*, June 26 1937, 6. As with French Canadian nationalists, some English Canadians also identified communism with the influence of Jewish conspirators who hid their origins by changing their names. *Globe*, Sept 17 1934, 6, Frederic Davidson

¹⁶¹ *Le Devoir*, March 9 1936, 1

¹⁶² His Excellency the Most Reverend Andrea Cassulo, Archbishop of Leontopolis, Apostolic Delegate to Canada and Newfoundland to King, Ottawa, 16 May 1936, King Papers, MG 26, J1, v. 214; *Globe*, March 21 1933, 4; *Globe*, March 16 1937, 6

¹⁶³ *Winnipeg Free Press* February 3 1937, 9. See also *Ottawa Journal*, July 31 37, 6. See also Joseph A. Clarke to Department of Justice, 30 July 1936, Night Letter, 185214; *Globe*, Sept 17 1934, 6; See also Lasswell, *Democracy Through Public Opinion*, 80. It seems to be the case that the Canadian press overall remained ambivalent regarding the situation in Spain from 1937 to 1939. The war was largely portrayed as one between fascism and communist forces. *Financial Post*, June 12 1937, 6.

¹⁶⁴ *Winnipeg Free Press*, September 12 1938, F.W.J.

The Primer, F.W.J. wrote, stressed the 'Pride of Place to 'Race Ideas' as the only means of understanding the world. It emphasized the concept of German superiority and the idea that Germans must have self-determination to join together in areas where they can be strong and uncontaminated. It concluded, he argued, by arguing that minorities within Germany and other countries must bow to this necessity.¹⁶⁵

As seen, English and French Canadians disagreed on a number of issues related to Canada's international role. They disagreed on the proper interpretation of international events, the proper Canadian role as part of the British Empire, and the nature of the Canadian identity.

There did appear to be some areas on which English and French Canadians could agree. Both groups seemed reluctant to turn their attention from significant domestic issues, and at times they seemed to have a similar approach to some issues. An example of these limited similarities could perhaps be seen when looking at the question of immigration to Canada. In November 1938 by C.A. Wartman of Waterford Ontario wrote to the *Financial Press* to protest the program allowing the admittance of Czechoslovakian refugees to Canada.

As for the educated professional class, I doubt that we want them as our colleges turn out more of them every year than the country can consume...The only class we really can take to advantage, in my opinion, is the agricultural class – peasant farmers and workers...We do not need any Jews, they are only competitors in trade and will not benefit the country. Let the British Government send them to East Africa to establish a colony of the refugees. No aliens should be in big blocks because you cannot assimilate them or make good of them. One thing we need is to advocate Canadianism and British liberty. All aliens to become good Canadians

¹⁶⁵ Winnipeg *Free Press*, September 12 1938, F.W.J The letter shares some of the views expressed by the Winnipeg *Free Press* and the *Star*. For example, see the *Star*'s editorial note, "'Substitute flour" is now being fed to the Germans. And they will have to say they like it, too. It is a wonderful system, all right.' *Star* April 30 1937, 6. Also see the *Star*'s comments on fascist definition of its program. Far 'from prohibiting free speech, under Fascism it will not only permitted, but actively encouraged, providing the speaker knows what he is talking about.' The *Star*, March 23 1934, 6

need to be educated in the British language – talk two or three languages if you like – but get educated in the language of the country or stay out. The Czechs I would think are good stuff. Germans make good settlers but I am doubtful if they would be loyal to our country. They would apt to listen too much to Mr. Hitler haranguing them and would forget where they got their liberty.¹⁶⁶

A letter written by an anonymous author in March of 1939 argued in similar terms, particularly in regards to the question of Jewish immigration.

Canada would be very unwise to entertain any scheme which would permit Jewish refugees from Germany to enter its borders, especially under present conditions. Many countries in Europe are anxious to get rid of these people, and all these countries cannot be wrong. They are not farmers and never will be; in the end drifting back to the towns and cities to become peddlers and storekeepers... The Jew makes a poor immigrant because he does not assimilate. His religion prohibits him from marrying a non-Jew, so he always remains a Jew, first and last.¹⁶⁷

These letters reflected in general terms the continuing concern in the French Canadian press regarding the prevalence of Jewish immigration, limited though it was. It also reflected their concerns over the strength of the Jewish community in Quebec. Canadians in general were concerned regarding the immigration of groups they felt undermined their values and their culture.¹⁶⁸ This included both Jewish immigration, and particularly in British Columbia, that of the Japanese.¹⁶⁹ The question of large-scale immigration was particularly controversial during the crisis years of the Great Depression. The reluctance of Canadians regarding this issue, however, was at least as much related to their sense of Canadian identity as it was to economic concerns.

It also seemed as though Canadians often agreed on a general sense of remoteness from European problems, although, as seen, this often seemed to change based both on

¹⁶⁶ *Financial Post*, November 19 1938, 6 ‘Czech Refugees’, C.A. Wartman, Waterford, On.

¹⁶⁷ *Winnipeg Free Press*, March 4 1939, 20. The letter is signed, ‘Canada First’, Winnipeg.

¹⁶⁸ ‘Comment ces Goldbergs se muèrent en Gordon.’ *Le Devoir*, February 15 1934, 1 ; ‘Suite de l’Affaire Goldberg-Gordon.’ *Le Devoir*, February 22 1934, 1

¹⁶⁹ Japanese Immigration, memorandum (undated), King Papers, LAC, MG 26 J4 Vol. 173, 122577

events and on their position within Canadian society. The sentiment that domestic issues were both more important to their daily lives and urgently needed to be addressed, though, often appeared in both English and French Canadian writings. As a result, it often seemed as though Canadians viewed the results of a local by-election as possessing far more relevance than a minor, (and ever repeating) crisis in distant Eastern Europe. In the midst of the Czechoslovakian crisis of September of 1938, a *Star* editorial cartoon, labelled 'Now if the Preliminaries Will Kindly Step Aside' portrayed a news editor in the boxing ring. His opponent, labelled 'War Scares' left the ring in order to allow room for a figure labelled 'Parkdale by-election.'¹⁷⁰ This was even more apparent when it came to situations where Canadians were preoccupied with important issues, such as the National Hockey League Playoffs¹⁷¹ or the first visit of a sitting sovereign of the British Empire to Canada.¹⁷²

This sentiment, that Canada was a small, remote, British North American nation, was perhaps the most that Canadians could agree on. Dafoe's *Free Press*, *Le Devoir* and Groulx's *action française* movement all considered themselves as influential in large segments of Canadian public opinion. However, they never achieved the degree of influence that their founders had hoped. As well, based on the ways in which Canadians responded to their works, it appears as though they were never as influential as other segments of Canadian society feared.

From the historical perspective, it appears as though a majority of English Canadians shared a general sense of connection to the British Commonwealth and a general sense of pride in their membership in the League of Nations. Similarly, a majority

¹⁷⁰ 'Now if the Preliminaries' will Kindly Step Aside'. *The Star*, Sept 30 1938 6

¹⁷¹ 'We have a 'Crucial' Season of Our Own.' *The Star*, March 15 1939, 4

¹⁷² 'Make Way For The King!' *The Star*, May 18 1939, 4

of French Canadians appeared to have responded to the prospect of a greater degree of autonomy for Quebec. The concept that there needed to be greater equality in the larger Canadian community and a general policy of isolationism, at least from political events in Europe, appeared to have been popular within this community. Again, however, these generalities were always subject to geographical and economic differences, the views of individual Canadians and the pressure of events.

These sentiments, thus, were at most very general, and their consequences were undetermined. King and the Liberals faced a situation where Canadians disagreed on Canada's proper domestic or international role. They disagreed on the ways in which Canada's participation in the British and League systems should be carried out. Further, it was unclear how English Canadian imperialism or French Canadian nationalism would affect their reaction to the potential of British involvement in a European war. Canadian politicians and intellectuals could only speculate that it was likely that English Canadians would demand involvement. It was also probable that French Canadians would resist this move, particularly if it involved the imposition of conscription.¹⁷³

Throughout the decade King had consistently enacted a policy of refusing to discuss hypothetical situations. This was especially the case regarding international affairs.¹⁷⁴ An unnecessary, protracted and precipitate debate on Canada's international role would only divide the country. It would not allow Canadians to come to terms with a proper policy. It seemed unlikely that they could, or would chose to, come to an agreement. King's often-repeated policy of stating that in a crisis 'Parliament will decide'

¹⁷³ Pearson to Skelton, 9 June 1939 and Claxton to Pearson May 19 1939 Pearson Papers, LAC, MG 26 N1, v. 14.

¹⁷⁴ Hutchison, *The Incredible Canadian*, 235, J.L. Granatstein, *Mackenzie King: His Life and World*. (Toronto: 1977), 127

appeared to have allowed Canadians to feel that in a crisis their views would be heard. At the same time it seemed designed to allow them to put their differences aside until it was necessary to confront them. Should that crisis not arise, an ineffective and divisive debate could be avoided. In the meantime, differences could be papered over until Canadians no longer felt that their dissimilarities were so great or that the divide was so wide.

Conclusion. Mackenzie King, the Approach of the Second World War and the Limits of National Unity.

Georges-Emile Lapalme, the future leader of the Quebec Liberal party, described the 1945 debate on the adoption of a distinctive Canadian flag. As Lapalme reported, 'Tout le parlement fédéral, embourbé dans le fanatisme des uns et le nationalisme des autres, devint une marmite dans laquelle le fanatisme latent et le racisme de surface eurent leur part de bouillonnement.' In the midst of the storm King sat quietly,

le regard vide, perdu sans doute dans la démarche de son esprit incapable de saisir le sens profond d'une éruption qu'il croyait étouffée à jamais, il restait assis, immobile et impuissant comme s'il eut assisté à l'écroulement de son oeuvre d'unité à laquelle il avait travaillé tout sa vie. Avait-il jamais deviné, sous les formes apparentes de la paix, la fragilité du système? ¹

Lapalme was disturbed by the fact that King allowed the debate to continue while his ministers were urging him to put an end to it. ² From a historical point of view, however, it is difficult not to feel sympathy for King, and for the depth of the division that he had attempted, and evidently failed, to overcome. ³ As the experiences of the

¹ Georges-Émile Lapalme, *Le bruit des choses réveillées. Tome I.* (Ottawa, 1969), 294-5. The question of a distinctive Canadian flag had been controversial throughout the period. In February of 1938, King received a resolution from the Montreal branch of the Loyal Orange Association, which protested a proposed bill in the House of Commons by Saskatchewan Liberal M.P. Cameron R. McIntosh for a national flag. The resolution's key section concludes that 'when the nations of the world are in such turmoil and British interests and prestige are being challenged, and when Britain is working so hard to keep the world from war, it is imperative that the British Commonwealth of Nations should show the world a united front, and is feared that action as suggested by this bill will be interpreted abroad as an indication of the lack of loyalty on the part of Canada to the Empire...[In addition] the Union Jack is a symbol of civilization and religious freedom for which our forefathers fought and died, and it is the flag under which many of our members proudly and patriotically gave their lives in the Great War.' R.H. Shaver, Recording Secretary, Loyal Orange Association, Montreal, to King, February 24 1938, King Papers, MG 26, J1, v. 260

² Lapalme, *Le bruit des choses réveillées*, 295

³ For another perspective, see historian William Eccles' description of his return to Canada following his participation in the Second World War. After describing the impassioned speech of welcome delivered by the Mayor of Quebec, Eccles notes 'a soldier was marching up and down the deck, shouting "When does the next train leave for Canada?"' In the background, Eccles notes the presence of a large graffiti sign on the cliff face spelling out 'Vive Pétain!' It was then, he reflected, that he realized 'it was probably a troubled country I'd come back to.' Quoted in Robert Bothwell, *Canada and Quebec: One Country, Two Histories.* (Vancouver, 1995), 78

Second World War would demonstrate, Canadian participation in a global conflict would strain the very limits of Siegfried's 'entente cordiale.' This had proven to be the case despite the fact that this participation was supported by the majority of the Canadian public and reflected Canadian interests. Even the overall post-war assessment that the war was fought to defeat an aggressive and destructive regime could not fully expunge the bitterness some French Canadians associated with participation in the war.⁴

The European crises of the 1930s brought Canadians face to face with the question of what it meant to be "Canadian" and the consequences for their international position. During the decade, English and French Canadians continued to disagree on the question of their national identity. Many continued to base it on the traditional characteristics of religion, ethnicity and language. As Canadian society spilled over such straightforward definitions, the result was a constant, if underlying, disagreement on the nature of the country. The King administration, in power during the period when this disagreement became increasingly acute, sought to paper over disputes, knowing full well that it could not solve or salve the sentiments behind them. The suffocation of debates on international issues in the name of national unity would allow Canadians to focus on the Great Depression. It might also allow them to come to a consensus on their identity without conscious thought and therefore without conscious disagreement.

⁴ Obviously this was largely related to the manpower crises during 1942 and 1944, but the bitterness appeared to go beyond this. For example, although André Laurendeau wrote after the war that he was disgusted with himself for failing to come to the aid of France in its greatest hour of distress, he argued that French Canada too knew the 'feeling' of 'occupation'. 'The English were the occupiers, they were the ones who dictated our conduct and prevented the national will from freely asserting itself. Our own politicians were collaborators. In comparison with Hitlerized Europe, it was a benign occupation. Thanks to King's moderation the yoke remained bearable...But its very existence was enough to poison one's life.' Quoted in Esther Delisle, *Myths, Memories and Lies: Quebec's Intelligentsia and the Fascist Temptation, 1939-1960*. (Montreal, 1998), 195

The controversies over international policy that plagued Canadian politics through the decade seemed shaped by the realization by Canadian leaders, particularly Mackenzie King and Lapointe, that international involvement remained dangerous. They recognized that given a war involving Britain, something that was increasingly likely after the Munich settlements, Canadian involvement was inevitable. In addition, they argued that since most Canadians had come to accept this, the key concern was to ensure that Canada's entrance into it must be managed in a way that did least damage to the country. Any successful Canadian external policy would thus have to be one based on compromise, as at best the internal conflict could be managed, not avoided.⁵

On the surface, King's approach to foreign policy resembled 'a tale, told by an idiot, full of sound and fury, [or perhaps delay and obfuscation] signifying nothing.' The key issue as King would have seen it, though, would have been to what degree his policies represented the nature of Canadian views. The problem remained that Canadians themselves often seemed unsure as to the nature of their views themselves. The questions of the 1930s forced Canadians to seriously consider the nature of their society, how they resolved internal disputes, and their approach to international relations.

King was concerned about this debate, and attempted to shape it. However, he rightly feared an in-depth discussion of international affairs and the domestic reaction during the second half of the decade. As international relations became increasingly confrontational, the stakes for Canadians, particularly for Canadian unity, increased correspondingly. A hypothetical debate on Canada's international policy would therefore

⁵ Historians continue to disagree regarding the nature of Canada's entry into the Second World War. Thomas Socknat, for example, argued that following the British declaration of war, Canada was legally at war. In contrast to the 'Ready, aye, ready' attitude of 1914, he argued that 'the Canadian government symbolically maintained a policy of neutrality for a week before it committed Canada to participating in world conflict.' *Witness Against War*, 192. Mackenzie King for one surely would have disagreed. For him, the policy of ensuring that the Canadian House of Commons would decide on Canada's policy in 1939 reflected the realities of its newly acquired autonomy. King Diary, 5th September 1939.

result in nothing more than a divisive and inconclusive argument on the nature of Canada.⁶

In 1937, Escott Reid, who had not yet joined the Department of External Affairs, published an analysis of King's foreign policy. King's policy, Reid argued, while far from emotionally satisfying, (or even at many times logically consistent), was generally appropriate. Its focus on national unity, relations with Britain and the United States, and Canadian autonomy, did represent Canadian interests. There were a number of questions that King's policy left unanswered, such as Canada's position in response to international economic grievances and its position in response to a war involving either the United States or Britain.⁷ Reid concluded though, that

If Mr. King were to give unambiguous answers to the seven questions he has left unanswered, he would raise a tremendous political storm in Canada. Parties would split. Passions would be aroused. The national unity of Canada would be subjected to severe strains. If war should break out, such a crisis will probably be inevitable...A crisis now would settle the question, and as a result there would be no crisis of any importance when the war did break out...In other words, a crisis today would be a 'preventive' crisis. But democracy and democratic statesmen hate both preventative wars and preventative crises.⁸

Perhaps they were right to do so, despite the ways that this left them open to attacks by their contemporaries and historians. With few exceptions, Canadians sought to insulate themselves from external problems. Even when the various groups in Canada all approved of the federal government's policies on various policies, the reasoning behind their approval was often different.

Throughout the decade Canadian leaders placed a premium on compromise. They focused on domestic issues and downplayed the discussion of hypothetical in regards to

⁶ Bothwell, *The Penguin History of Canada*, 338

⁷ Reid, *Radical Mandarin*, 109

⁸ *Ibid.*, 109

international affairs, arguing that 'Parliament would decide'.⁹ The fact that Parliament's decision was a foregone decision, given the Liberal majority,¹⁰ does not limit the importance of the policy in limiting controversy.

Although information on international affairs was readily available, the information Canadians accessed varied widely from region to region. This was particularly true in relation to Quebec. Although many French-Canadians were interested in international affairs, their interest often centred around issues, such as the actions of the Catholic Church and the spread of secular society,¹¹ that were not viewed as being as relevant by other Canadians. This situation changed as the 1930s continued, as the Quebec press devoted more attention to the political crises of the decade, but elements of their overwhelming concern with domestic issues remained.¹² In contrast, while there were a number of English Canadians interested in international affairs, they often disagreed on the importance of the League and the British Empire.

The divisions in Canada were reflected in King's attempts to prevent open conflict, in response to international developments Ethiopia, Spain and Eastern Europe before 1939. As Escott Reid, at the time a consistent critic of Canadian policy, wrote in his memoirs more than forty years later, the question of viable alternatives to Canadian policy available were far from readily apparent.

Any Canadian foreign policy had its costs. The price of participation in another overseas war might be some sixty thousand dead and perhaps the break-up of Canada... One possible component of the price of neutrality was also the break-up of Canada; neutrality would probably cost us our membership in the Empire; it

⁹ Stacey, *Canada and the Age of Conflict*, v. 2, 195

¹⁰ *Ibid.*, 196

¹¹ Marquis, *L'action catholique*, 80.

¹² *Ibid.*, 125

might result in our becoming a junior partner in a North American alliance armed to the teeth.¹³

Perhaps for Canadians in the 1930s, they hoped, as with King, that the situation would improve before they had to make a choice.¹⁴ For many it was this which made the policy of appeasement so appealing.¹⁵

Lester Pearson, in a letter to E.J. Tarr in December of 1937, responded to a draft copy of a paper by F.R. Scott for a Conference on British Commonwealth relations. Although Pearson sympathized with Scott's nationalist viewpoint, he argued that Scott underestimated the continuing strength of imperialism. In fact, it was possible, as Siegfried had earlier argued, that imperialist sentiment might in fact be growing through the assimilation of non-British immigrants into the greater English-speaking community.¹⁶

Hume Wrong made a similar argument to O.D. Skelton. In a letter written in December of 1938 Wrong argued that given the strength of imperialist sentiment in

¹³ Reid, *Radical Mandarin*, 106. In addition, as Reid acknowledged, his contemporary prescription for international stability, the reformation of the League of Nations to deal with global economic and territorial inequities, also had costly consequences for Canada. 'The price of peace might be an invasion of Canada's national sovereignty, of Canada's right to determine its own policies on tariffs, currency, and migration...The costs of all three policies were so great that few Canadians would ever persuade themselves that they had to choose among them.'

¹⁴ 'Munich came to King like a reprieve to a condemned man. He felt that relief far more deeply than the Canadian people because he knew better than they, or the professional soldiers, what war would mean. His congratulations to Chamberlain, always to be quoted against him thereafter, were completely honest.' Hutchison, *The Incredible Canadian*, 239

¹⁵ 'Mr. Chamberlain is firmly rooted in a belief that common sense is widely diffused. His approach to Hitler and Mussolini is the approach of one businessman to another; their phobias against communism, democracy; their anti-Semitism, intolerance, excessive nationalism and their mystical belief in racial superiority, in their glorious destinies – all these seem to Chamberlain to be unreal and nonsensical...On all points, therefore, the Chamberlain figure emerges as that of an able, well-tempered and intentioned, hard-headed executive...The Dominion delegates quickly grew to trust and respect a judgment always cool, always considerate of other viewpoints.' Although the profile, like the publication itself, was directed at the English Canadian business elite, the final assessment of Chamberlain seems in many ways designed to appeal to Canadian opinion as a whole. It's assessment of Chamberlain concludes 'He seems wholly proof against infection with the prevailing madness; he is the non-inflammable statesman in the European firetrap.' 'Britain's Fireproof Premier.' *The Financial Post* October 16 1937, 11-12

¹⁶ Pearson to E. J. Tarr, 13 December 1937, Pearson Papers, LAC, MG 26, N1, v. 23

Canada, the most that can be done is to encourage discussion in Canada of the implications of the reality of its connection to Britain, in the hopes of advancing a program of complete Canadian independence in the future.¹⁷ As seen earlier in regards to the question of public opinion, Skelton agreed, conceding that unfortunately, 'if war had come Canada would have been involved as a belligerent, technically from the start and actually after Parliament had met.' However, he felt confident for the future in that if 'the next year or so passes without a war, I have little doubt that the ripening of public opinion in the assumption of more national responsibility in questions of war as well as in questions of peace will continue at a more rapid pace than in the past ten years.' In the meantime, it was necessary to continue to educate Canadians to 'think boldly about Canada's place in the world.'¹⁸ Skelton concluded that

The plain fact is that if we go into any European war it will be simply and solely on the grounds of racial sympathy with the United Kingdom. Why obscure this fact or try to dress it up with talk about saving democracy or our League obligations? The sooner we face the actual reality the better.¹⁹

King, in contrast, appeared eager to avoid this very 'clarification' and 'education' of Canadians on the 'facts' of the Canadian situation. Since the majority of Canadians currently could not or would not change the direction of their policy, it was best to avoid the inevitable disagreement and bitterness concerning their nature. As Pearson wrote to E.J. Tarr in December of 1937, debate 'would undoubtedly arouse fierce controversy in the present state of public opinion in Canada.'²⁰ Perhaps Canadian leaders such as King attempted to focus on issues that Canadian society could resolve and avoid those which

¹⁷ Wrong to Skelton, 8 December 1938, Wrong Papers, LAC, MG 30, E101, v. 3

¹⁸ Skelton to Wrong, March 2 1939, Wrong Papers, LAC, MG 30, E 101, v. 3

¹⁹ Ibid.

²⁰ Pearson to E. J. Tarr, 13 December 1937, Pearson Papers, LAC, MG 26, N1, v. 23

would only lead to prolonged, divisive and ultimately inconclusive debate. In the end, despite internal divisions within the federal administration, it was King's approach that prevailed.

This grasp of the complexities of Canada's international position by some members of the department of External Affairs, was achieved only in limited terms and over a period of a number of years. It is unlikely that Canadians on average could not be expected to have achieved similar results given the lack of access to the type of information available to career diplomats, even had they wished to devote the time. It is also unlikely that they could have reached a consensus on the resulting Canadian policy as even the experts disagreed. There were several publics in Canada, each with widely divergent views, different readings of contemporary Canadian history and each with a different approach to domestic and international issues.

King had spent the years before the war turning down proposals for common imperial action, particularly in matters of international relations and imperial defence. Canadians, concerned with the implications of imperialism in Canada, generally agreed with this policy. However, they were often frustrated by the very nature of this policy, which concentrated on quiet diplomacy to minimize public controversy. Many, such as Reid, many members of the C.C.F. and of the League for Social Reconstruction, wanted public statements on the government's approach to foreign affairs. Public controversy, they argued, would initiate a debate on Canada's international role. National unity, they argued, 'would be better served by frankness than by obfuscation.'²¹

King and the Liberal party consistently dismissed this argument. By refusing to embrace the entirety of one of the political poles of the spectrum, King's administration

²¹ Horn, *LSR*, 153

managed to incorporate enough aspects of Canadian views to satisfy most, at least most of the time. More precisely, they managed to avoid dissatisfying most Canadians, most of the time. King might have hoped that 'with luck, the problems of Canadian participation in war would never have to be squarely and publicly faced.'²²

The very vagueness of King's foreign policy, a significant aspect of its success in maintaining national unity, left him open to the criticism. This was true of those who favored increased Canadian support for either the British or the League of Nations, as well as those who argued for Canadian neutrality. Bruce Hutchison, a contemporary Canadian journalist and a later biographer of King's, argued that he must be held at least partially responsible for the lack of Canadian preparedness for the Second World War. Indeed, Hutchison argued, King must be held at least partially responsible for the failure of the international community to come to terms with Hitler's challenge.

Having relied for seventeen years on the League, without effectively supporting it, having escaped hurriedly from its obligations through the back door of Ethiopia, and being confronted, on the League's death, with the first defence issue since 1914, Canada pulled down the blinds and hid under the bed. For this, King must be charged with major responsibility. He had been deceived by the peasant of Berlin and still more by horrors of war which made him refuse to admit its approach.²³

Hutchison acknowledged that King's policy reflected the overall sentiment in Canada, and that, indeed, the limited nature of the defence policies put forward by his government were supported by all the major parties in Canada.²⁴ Further, he acknowledged that King's mistake was shared by almost all of the democracies,

²² Ibid.

²³ Hutchison, *The Incredible Canadian*, 228. Or, as Hume Wrong wrote to O.D. Skelton in 1938, that in Canadian policy towards the League, 'the tendency has been for Canada to play a prominent role in seeking the most modest interpret of political obligations under the Covenant, and, especially in recent years, to rise from her back seat in Geneva only to draw attention to the distance separating this seat from the front row.' Wrong to Skelton 8 December 1938, Wrong Papers, LAC, MG 30, E 101, v. 3

²⁴ Hutchison, *The Incredible Canadian*, 227

particularly in Europe, whom he ultimately saw as more culpable, given their ‘immediate exposure to the storm.’²⁵ However, in the end, he concluded that ‘Considering their power and responsibility, the American statesmen must accept equal blame,’ and that King’s refusal to lead public opinion, rather than simply respond to it, ultimately negated any justification for his actions.²⁶

Hutchison’s condemnation of King’s foreign policy, as with the earlier example of his defence policy, seems disproportionate, out of step with the realities of Canadian public opinion during the period. It also assumed that there was one central public, presumably in English Canada, who could have been convinced, given the proper leadership, of a more consistent and proactive role in ensuring international peace. Given the massive divisions in Canadian society, this seems unlikely.

It was only to outsiders that Canadian policy in the event of British involvement in a war was unclear.²⁷ To Canadians, like King, the result of this debate seemed distressingly clear. The English-Canadian majority in Canada would most probably demand all-out aid to Britain. It was the stark reality of the eventual resolution of the debate, in addition to the process itself, which made it dangerous to Canada. The result of this debate would demonstrate, much too clearly, the nature of power politics in Canada during the period, and renew the too fresh memories of the consequences, particularly the recent conscription crisis in 1917.

When he was criticized by the Canadian press for not immediately declaring Canada’s support for Chamberlain’s ongoing efforts at negotiations in Munich, for

²⁵ Ibid, 228

²⁶ Ibid

²⁷ For an example, see Robert Holland’s argument that the truest expression of Canadian isolationist sentiment was based in the mid-west, due to the strength of the CCF in that region. *Britain and the Commonwealth Alliance*, 28

example, King released a carefully worded statement regarding the value of public statements and the Canadian role. The statement, written largely by Loring Christie, emphasized Canada's secondary role, and the consequences of the negotiations for the nations directly involved. It also demonstrates the concerns regarding the impact, often detrimental, of public statements.

It must always be borne in mind where the real risks and sufferings that would result from a miss-step would fall. In this particular case, if these delicate negotiations had failed, the brunt of the disaster and of the unimaginable sufferings would have fallen, not upon the Canadian people and Canadian cities, but upon the peoples and the cities of those countries on the spot whose governments were responsible for the conduct of the negotiations.²⁸

The limitations of Canadian influence were only enhanced by the inability of Canadians to agree. The contrast of views seen in King's correspondence, particularly on the question of foreign policy, is even more striking than that regarding domestic issues.²⁹ The LSR publication of 1935, *Social Planning in Canada*, for example, included a statement on foreign policy, largely written by Frank Underhill. It argued that Canadians should be educated on the need for a more equitable society and the ways in which international tensions prevented the establishment of such a society.

Mere nationalist aloofness and mere pacifist spirit...will not be enough to keep us out of the next European war...Until we grasp the fact that war is an inherent institution in our present capitalist civilization, we shall always be liable to storms of irrelevant emotion; and we shall be unable to resist when we are invited to fight for democracy or freedom or parliamentary institutions or international law or collective sanctions.³⁰

²⁸ Notes for Speech for King re: European Crisis, 10 November 1938, Christie Papers, MG 30 E44, v.27

²⁹ One exception seems to be the question of the presence of communist and fascist influence in Canada, and even this domestic question in particular seems to have international implications.

³⁰ Horn, *LSR*, 148 As Horn argued, for several members of the CCF, 'The introduction of socialism in Canada required peace; peace required non-involvement in international capitalist rivalries which the League of Nations was doing nothing to resolve. And the best service which Canada could render to the cause of peace abroad was to introduce socialism at home. Horn, *LSR*, 156

In contrast, in July 1937, King received a letter from a constituent in Winnipeg, R.F. McWilliams. McWilliams, a lawyer and a member of the Liberal party, wrote to congratulate King for his performance at the Imperial Conference of 1937 and to inquire as to the possibility of being named to the Rowell Commission. In the letter he concludes that

If a war should ever come again in which the fundamental issue is one between liberty and democracy on one side and either fascism or communism on the other side, I do not think there is any doubt that the people of Canada will be ready to go to war again as they did in 1914.³¹

His letter coincided with a discussion of the ongoing civil war in Spain. In his memoirs, Escott Reid quoted Hugh Thomas' argument that at the beginning the war appeared to leftist intellectuals in the west as 'the great moment of hope for an entire generation angry at the apparent cynicism, indolence and hypocrisy of an older generation with whom they were out of sympathy.'³² Although Reid's views represented those of the minority in Canada, they were more than influential than their numbers alone might suggest. In contrast, the majority of Canadians interested in the war, particularly in Quebec, saw the conflict as one wherein their cultural and religious values were threatened. This majority, while not as vocal, also continued to influence the Canadian discussion on the Spanish Civil War.

The concerns of many French Canadians regarding the situation in Spain were expressed in their correspondence with their federal leaders. Ernest Lapointe received a large number of letters from French Canadians in response to the Spanish Civil War.

³¹ R.F. McWilliams to King, 31 July 1937, King Papers, LAC, MG 26, J1, v. 237

³² Reid, *Radical Mandarin*, 121

Most were in favour of the Spanish fascist faction led by Francisco Franco.³³ They condemned the National government in Spain as communist, and were concerned regarding its anticlerical leanings and actions. They protested against the decision of the federal government to allow sympathizers of this regime to enter Canada to canvass for political and financial support. A letter Lapointe received in 1936 from a French Canadian intellectual from Montreal, Anatole Vanier, argued that

Non seulement l'Europe, mais le monde entier, est aujourd'hui divisé en deux inspirations nettement tranchées, comme à la chute d'Adam. Il y a une inspiration d'ordre et un mouvement de révolte. Eh! bien, les éléments d'ordre n'ont pas le droit de laisser, par faiblesse, se préparer les inévitables chocs violents qui laissent après eux les dévastations et la mort. Devant la faillite en Europe du libéralisme et de la démocratie, il faut, abstraction faite de fétichisme des doctrines et des écoles, prémunir courageusement notre société des dangers du pillage et des assassinats.³⁴

However, in contrast to McWilliams and Vanier, the majority of Canadians observed the Spanish Civil War with only limited interest. It involved the two ideologies, fascism and communism, which they found equally disturbing. The letters King received, for example, which originated almost entirely from English Canada, were divided in their views.³⁵ However, many English Canadian correspondents argued that at best, the two sides represented equally disturbing ideologies and Canada should therefore adopt a hands-off approach.³⁶

³³ Lapointe's file of letters regarding the Spanish Civil War represents overwhelming sentiment in favour of supporting Franco. Those letters that do argue for greater support for the nationalist government are almost all written by English-speaking residents of the province. Even these do not come out in favour of the nationalist government. For an example see W. Gorman, 1493 City Councillor Street, Montreal, to Lapointe, 1 February, 1937. For an exception see Eugene Torsey, Montreal, to Lapointe 3 November 1936. Lapointe Papers, LAC MG27, III B10J, v. 22

³⁴ Anatole Vanier, of Vanier & Vanier, Avocats, 57 Ouest, Rue Saint-Jacques, Montreal to Lapointe, 22 October, 1936. Lapointe Papers, LAC, MG27, III B10, v. 16

³⁵ Mgr. Andrea Cassulo, Vatican representative, to King, 16 May 1936, King Papers, LAC MG 26, J1, v. 212

³⁶ Alfred Mansfield, Victoria, to Lapointe, February 16 1938, Lapointe Papers, LAC, MG27, III B10, v. 22

This attitude persisted despite the attempts of the League of Nations Society and others throughout the decade. They continued to lobby the Canadian government to support the League and collective security. As late as November of 1938 the Winnipeg Branch of the League of Nations Society in Canada forwarded its solemn and unanimous protest against religious and racial persecution now taking place in Germany. The outlawing of human beings because of their race, the proscription of religious leaders because of fidelity to their faith and their conscience, the molestation of worshippers and the desecration of houses of worship are repugnant to the moral instincts of mankind and unworthy of the government of a people which expects to be included in the community of civilized nations.³⁷

They expressed their 'earnest hope that the Dominion Government will take such appropriate and sympathetic action as may be feasible to alleviate the tragedy of these victims of religious and racial persecution.'³⁸

It was a conflict involving Britain, however, which represented the most likely possibility of Canadian involvement overseas. Canadians concerned by this possibility therefore concentrated on limiting Canada's international commitments.³⁹ This was the position taken by the National Council of the CCF after 1937.⁴⁰ It was also the case of the Native Sons of Canada, who argued throughout the decade for a more autonomous policy. They were particularly concerned regarding the issue of imperial defence. At

³⁷ Jessie Maeleman, President, Winnipeg Branch, League of Nations Society in Canada, to King, 20 November 1938, King Papers, MG 26, J1, v. 254

³⁸ Jessie Maeleman, President, Winnipeg Branch, League of Nations Society in Canada, to King, 20 November 1938, King Papers, LAC, MG 26, J1, v. 254

³⁹ Walter Young, *The Anatomy of a Party: The National CCF, 1932-1961*. (Toronto, 1969), 94, Horn, LSR, 156

⁴⁰ Lenarcic, *Where Angels Feared to Tread*, 214, 215. As one member of the CCF wrote, 'The thing that boils me up about the 'Intelligentsia' group in the East,' wrote R.F. Williams, a prominent member of the Manitoban caucus in February of 1940, 'is their continuous attempt to foist upon the C.C.F. an Isolationist policy.' Williams to MacInnis, February 7 1940, quoted in Young, *The Anatomy of a Party*, 94. This conflict only increased as it became increasingly apparent that not only was it being questioned by members of the C.C.F. itself, but that it was also politically unpopular in Canada. It also pointed to the different ways that the members of the CCF conceived the party. 'For Woodsworth and his supporters, the C.C.F. was primarily a movement and within the operating framework of a movement clear consistency of principle was possible. For [David] Lewis the movement was also a party and devotion to pacifist principle or to socialist principle such that the war would be defined as impossible and therefore be insupportable, was simply not consistent with the role of the C.C.F. as a party within the Canadian party system.' Young, 95

most, they argued, any commitment to an imperial defence policy should be prefaced by a national plebiscite and a public assurance by the Canadian government that exclusive control of its forces would be maintained by the Department of National Defence. Finally, any policy of conscription would only be complete through the addition of a policy of the conscription of wealth in Canada.⁴¹

There were Canadian groups who went further, advocating a policy of Canadian neutrality. Following the signing of the Munich accords, a non-interventionist group, had circulated a twelve-page pamphlet titled *Canadian Unity in War and Peace*. Largely drafted by Scott, it demanded ‘the immediate declaration by Parliament of Canada’s right to decide issues of War and Peace.’ It was signed by seventy-five respected members of Canadian society, composed mostly of the professional class, in English and French Canada.⁴² It concludes that ‘To assert this final democratic right is a natural conclusion to [Canada’s] development into a sovereign nation, linked by feelings of sentiment and a common crown to other British peoples.’⁴³

Most groups realized, however, that any suggestion of Canadian neutrality would provoke a violent response in Canada. Certainly, the flood of letters that King received in response to any perceived weakening of the imperial connection hints at the continuing strength of this sentiment in Canada. In 1938, F. L. Belyea of St. John, New Brunswick wrote to express his concern in response to speculation that the federal government had refused to agree to the establishment of Royal Air Force depots in Canada. Belyea concluded that

⁴¹ Native Sons of Canada to Lapointe, Telegram, March 10 1936, Lapointe Papers, LAC, MG 27 III B10 v. 23

⁴² Horn, *LSR*, 152

⁴³ *Canadian Unity in War and Peace* Frank Scott Papers LAC, MG 30 D 211, v. 21

We are hearing a great deal too much about autonomy these days as though anyone is endeavouring to attack our native rights. We are also informed officially that Parliament will decide whether or not we are at war...if England were beaten to her knees or attacked by any aggressor that a Parliament in Canada would not exist overnight if they prevented us from going to the help of our own people. They would not be replaced by political opponents, but thrown out instantly by the people.⁴⁴

In addition, the fact that Scott's group attracted the support of only a limited number of French Canadians, demonstrated the extent of the divide in Canada. It was they who were the most concerned with the consequences of the British connection to Canada. In March 1939 a number of French Canadian associations telegraphed King. They were concerned regarding the statements made by Mitchell Hepburn and a resolution in the Ontario legislature urging the Canadian government to declare its support for Great Britain in the event of the war. They viewed this proposal as 'extrêmement dangereuse pour l'union nationale au Canada, comme contraire aux intérêts canadiens et à son Statut d'Etat libre,' and informed King of 'l'opposition absolue de la population de la province de Québec à toute participation du Canada aux guerres extérieures.'⁴⁵ Lapointe received similar protests following the Canadian declaration of war in September of 1939. Joachim Cornellier of Montreal on September 12 concluded his letter by stating 'Vous ne représentez pas, comme vous l'avez dit, l'idée

⁴⁴ F. L. Belyea, St John NB to King, July 18 1938, King Papers, LAC MG 26 J1, v. 245. It was perhaps sentiments like these that encouraged King to write to Sir William Mulock in September of that year, asking rhetorically 'P.S. Is the *Globe* and Mail determined to have Canada involved in every European war, regardless of the pros and cons?' King to Sir William Mulock, September 21 1938, King Papers, LAC, MG 26, J1, v. 255

⁴⁵ Telegram received by The Right Hon. W.L. Mackenzie King from a group of leading French-Canadian organizations, with reply, 286-7. March 21 and 22 1939. F.H. Soward, J. F. Parkinson, N.A.M. Mackenzie and W. L. MacDermot, eds. *Canada in World Affairs: The Pre-War Years*. (London, 1941), 286-287. The signatories of the telegram included La Société Saint-Jean Baptiste, La Ligue d'action nationale, l'Union catholique des cultivateurs, Le Bloc Universitaire, La Confédération des Travailleurs catholique du Canada, Le Conseil central des Syndicats catholiques de Montréal, and L'Association catholique de la Jeunesse canadienne-français, among other leading French Canadian social and professional organizations.

de vos compatriotes au sujet de la participation du Canada à la présent guerre de l'Angleterre.'⁴⁶

Still despite the expectations of both internal and external observers,⁴⁷ Canada entered the war on September 10th of 1939 with very little active resistance on the part of French Canadians or their representatives in the House of Commons. The *Globe and Mail*, although disappointed that the declaration had not immediately followed that of Britain, happily reported the overwhelming support for the motion. J.S. Woodsworth, the former head of the C.C.F., broke with the policy of his party and his vote was the only one recorded against the main motion.⁴⁸

This unanimity contrasted with the earlier fears of Canadian leaders that a declaration of war in support of Britain might lead to revolt in Quebec. It also demonstrated the limited impact of the resistance of French Canadian nationalists to Canadian involvement in another 'imperialist' war. Paul Bouchard, the editor of the corporatist (and arguably fascist) *La Nation*, attempted to whip up supporters at a Montreal rally on September 9th, 1939, by declaring

⁴⁶ Joachim Cornellier to Lapointe, September 12 1939, Lapointe Papers, LAC, MG 27 III B 10, v. 22

⁴⁷ Neatby, *The Prism of Unity*, 290. This included a large number of British officials. For an indication of this confusion see Owendale, 'Appeasement', 328

⁴⁸ In regards to the actions of J.S. Woodsworth, who alone voted against the bill, the *Globe* manages to dismiss and diminish him simultaneously. 'And there remained the illusions of Mr. J. S. Woodsworth, in marked contrast with his views in militant days, a dissident figure in a party which prefers to fight for the right. The aged C.C.F socialist alone in Parliament rose to vote against the main motion.' *The Globe* September 11 1939, 6. The reception of Woodsworth's speech by his colleagues is open to question. Woodsworth's biographer, Kenneth McNaught argued that it was greeted with 'respectful silence.' McNaught, *A Prophet in Politics*, 310-311. In contrast, Terry Copp argues that Woodsworth's speech simply represented the culmination of his 'left-book club views of capitalism.' In particular, Copp argues that Woodsworth was far from well-received, and was often interrupted. Copp, 'Ontario 1939: The Decision for War,' in *A Country of Limitations: Canada and the World of 1939*, eds. Norman Hillmer, Robert Bothwell, Roger Sarty and Claude Beaugard, (Ottawa, 1996), 116. Certainly Hansard supports Copp's contention that Woodsworth was interrupted several times, as unnamed members questioned his loyalty and Tustin shouted 'Shame!' Address of J.S. Woodsworth, 8 September 1939, Canada, *House of Commons Debates*, (1939), 41-47

Je suis résolument, énergiquement et carrément opposé à la participation du Canada à la guerre en Europe parce que je ne veux pas que des milliers de jeunes Canadiens aillent crêver au delà des mers pour sauver la finance judéo-internationale. Nos aïeux ne sont pas venus ici pour que leur postérité la plus lointaine aille périr sur les champs de bataille qu'ils ont quittés. Je suis opposé à la guerre parce que le Canada n'est plus une colonie, mais une nation libre. Les Canadiens français se refusent à la guerre, non pas lâcheté, mais par patriotisme, par clairvoyance canadienne. Ils sont Canadiens avant d'être citoyens de l'Empire.⁴⁹

The theme reflected in Bouchard's last comment, that French Canadians were Canadians first, rather than citizens of the Empire, sometimes struck a chord with English Canadians unsure of Canadian policy in support of Britain. As a non-interventionist, for example, Lower seemed to have approved of the nationalist strain in French-Canadian thought. In his memoirs Lower noted approvingly that André Laurendeau

had the advantage of a clear-cut allegiance, not to Britain, not to France, and – this is the big point – not to humanity! His responsibility began and ended with French Canada. His psychology, that is, was just about the same as the average American's at the time, but entirely different from that of English Canadians, few of whom were without the conviction that they must do their bit in helping set the world to rights.⁵⁰

Despite the concerns of Bouchard, Lower, Laurendeau and others, the debate ended with an affirmation of the government's policy to declare war on Germany. French Canadian nationalists were clearly disappointed with the results of the vote. Robert Rumilly later chastised the French Canadian members of Parliament, who, he claimed, failed to vote against the Canadian declaration of war due to political motivations.⁵¹

Merveille de l'organisation, de la discipline de parti! La province de Québec est opposée à la guerre dans la proportion de 90 per cent, ainsi que Maxime Raymond l'a dit à un journaliste ontarien. Et les députés de la province de Québec votent la

⁴⁹ Robert Rumilly, *Histoire de la province de Québec, Tome XXXVIII: La guerre de 1939-1945*. (Montreal, 1968), 14.

⁵⁰ Lower, *My Seventy-Five Years*, 225

⁵¹ Since there was no chance of defeating the motion, they voted for the motion, due to, Rumilly argued, their fear of aggravating the powerful, English Canadian majority. Rumilly, *Histoire de la province de Québec, Tome XXXVIII: La guerre de 1939-1945*, 24. Rumilly's political agenda is unclear, however. At the time, he was a French Canadian nationalist, but at times, his writings seem to demonstrate support for the federal Liberals.

guerre dans la proportion de 62 sur 65, c'est-à-dire de 95 pour cent! Expression de la volonté populaire.⁵²

However, the persistent efforts of the British government, to find a peaceful solution to the conflict, and, more importantly King's pledge of no conscription, perhaps had a more significant impact, than the lack of will that Rumilly claims.⁵³ French Canadians seemed to have decided to acquiesce, if only reluctantly, due to their realization of the determination of English Canadians to involve themselves in the war, as well as in response to King's policy of limited liability.⁵⁴

At the time of the Munich crisis, the Canadian cabinet readily came to the conclusion that Canada would be at Britain's side if war came. The decision in many ways caused a more complete consideration of Canadian views as a whole. C.G. Power, at the time Minister of Pensions and National Health, reported his surprise at the reaction of some prominent French-Canadians, including Cardinal Villeneuve. Power now concluded that he 'believed that Quebec opinion would be much less antagonistic than he had hitherto thought.'⁵⁵ At the time it seemed as if the earlier concerns regarding the

⁵² Rumilly, *Histoire de la province de Québec, Tome XXXVIII: La guerre de 1939-1945* 24

⁵³ This is certainly more realistic than the High Commissioner, Sir Gerald Campbell's assessment of French Canadians that they decided to acquiesce in aid to Britain due to their 'a clear conviction that the forces which have been brought on the present struggle are raising issues to which no democratic people...can remain indifferent.' Owendale, 'Appeasement,' 313. In any case Owendale is one more solid ground when he discusses the English Canadian support for the war. He concluded that 'Perhaps, as had been evident during the Munich crisis, when it came to the choice, imperial solidarity still counted in Canada...Canada did not fight for a vague conception of collective security, but for the values of the commonwealth.' Owendale, 'Appeasement,' 313

⁵⁴ Lenarcic, *Where Angels Feared to Tread*, 217

⁵⁵ Neatby, *The Prism of Unity*, 290 King's papers provide similar, although less direct, evidence. His files contain a note on a report in the *Globe and Mail* by reporter Judith Robinson on September 28th 1938. It quotes Viscount Castleross, of the Daily Express. 'Last week I talked to the Prime Minister of Quebec, Maurice Duplessis, a French-Canadian. There is no body of men in the world more jealous of their rights than the French-Canadians. They insist on managing their own affairs, with their own schools, their own language, their own religion. Their blood is French, not English, yet I found Mr. Duplessis boiling over with anger at the thought of the Prime Minister of England having being rebuffed by Hitler. He had taken the insult to himself.' 'Honourable Maurice Duplessis and the European Crisis,' King Papers MG 26, J4, v. 161. Duplessis certainly never fully accepted Canadian involvement in the war in the same way as

situation in Quebec seemed to have been overblown. However, in the entire context of the 1930s national unity remained a serious concern.

As seen, the national unity question then reflected not only disagreements on Canadian politics and its international situation but also regarding the nature of Canada itself. Many English Canadians indicated their continuing concerns regarding the presence of Catholicism in Canada, particularly outside of Quebec, where its presence was tolerated if not accepted. Their views often represented an intolerance of any deviation from their conception of Canada. In April of 1929, W. Redford Mulock of Winnipeg forwarded a petition denouncing Catholic charities benefiting from the Winnipeg Community Fund. Mulock's petition concluded

Rome has become and is now a foreign power. She has no right in Canada to establish or carry on colonies or agencies, whether they are called Schools, Nunneries, Orders, Monasteries or the like, and through the and their offices and services, carry on propaganda in her favour. It is treason to the State. These Colonies or Agencies are so strictly Roman that their Officers wear distinctive garbs or uniform of Rome, and they are so exclusive in carrying out their opinion that they avoid having intercourse with their fellow citizens.⁵⁶

French Canadian nationalists as well often demonstrated intolerance for other cultures that deviated from their views of an 'ideal' French Canada. This was particularly the case when they dealt with the question of the Jewish minority in Quebec,⁵⁷ but this was also seen at times in their attitudes towards English Canadians.⁵⁸ These views,

Villeneuve, but the report remains intriguing, if only for the way that cultural identities often mixed together, and at times contradicted each other.

⁵⁶ Copy of letter from W. Redford Mulock to Winnipeg Community Fund, 19 April 1929 King Papers, MG 26, J1, v. 171

⁵⁷ Gouin to Séraphin Vachon, April 25 1935, Gouin Papers, LAC MG 27 III D1, v. 5. *Le Devoir* March 20 1936, 1, Rumilly, *Histoire de la province de Québec, Tome XXXII : La depression*, 128.

⁵⁸ It is interesting that, in many cases, French Canadian nationalists expressed their disapproval of members of their society by referring to them as 'étaient français de nom, anglais de mentalité', as Rumilly does in reference to the actions of Colonel L.R. Laflèche and the Anglo-Canadian arms contracts of 1938. He dismisses Laflèche in these terms and since he was active in 'la Canadian Legion et ne parlait pas le

expressed by Abbé Lionel Groulx in his novel *L'appel de la race*, published in 1922. In his discussion of the relationship between his hero, Jules de Lantagnac, and his English Canadian father-in-law, Davis Fletcher, Groulx concluded

le vieillard comprenait moins que jamais. Son orgueil de race, ses préjugés n'admettaient point la possibilité ni les droits de la survivance française au Canada. De très bonne foi il ne pouvait comprendre que la minorité dépouillée eût encore à se plaindre, dès le jour où la majorité repue venait lui offrir le rameau d'olivier.⁵⁹

In an article in *L'Action nationale*, Abbé Groulx, in response to Francois Hertel's work *Le beau risque*, argued specifically against political compromise. This would only delay a serious consideration of the national question. This alone would allow the establishment of a true democracy, representative of on a national faith that existed in the hearts and minds of the Quebec people.⁶⁰

This division was not limited to Canadian politics. It extended as well to the question of Canada's economic connections. Even in regard to the small minority of determined English Canadian non-interventionists, most were not as concerned with economic ties to other countries. Indeed they often argued that these would mitigate the chance of political conflicts.⁶¹ It seems likely that a majority of English Canadians saw their nation's economic dependence on the export of natural resources. They welcomed the growing ties to both Britain and the United States through the Ottawa Agreements of

français a son foyer.' Rumilly, *Histoire de la province de Québec, Tome XXXVII: Premier gouvernement Duplessis*. (Montreal, 1967), 118

⁵⁹ Lionel Groulx, *L'appel de la race*, (Quebec, 1980), 80

⁶⁰ English, *Citizen of the World*, 53

⁶¹ Ida Stewart to King, 14 July 1936, King had this letter forwarded to O.D. Skelton, but requested that he return it afterwards to his residence at Laurier House. See also Ida Stewart to J.W. Dafoe (copy to King), 14 July 1936, King Papers, LAC MG 26 J1 v. 229.

1932 and the trade agreements of 1935 and 1938. The same appeared to be true of the continuing cultural ties with these nations, if not always with European society.⁶²

In contrast, the impulse in French Canada to ‘insulate’ their society, (or at least non-Catholic aspects of it),⁶³ from outside influences, included not only political and cultural influences but economic ones as well. French Canadian nationalists often argued that economic linkage led to the incorporation of other influences, political and cultural.⁶⁴ This is demonstrated in their reaction to the growing cultural influence of the United States,⁶⁵ (although they seemed divided on the question of American investment in Quebec),⁶⁶ and their highly negative reaction to the continuing English Canadian economic dominance.⁶⁷ It also seemed to at least partially explain their reaction to the growth of industry in Quebec, as well as the drive for the elimination of ‘Les Trusts’, as seen in the ‘achat chez nous’ movement.

The split over the question of Canadian policy was not limited to ethnic divisions. The largest and most intriguing split occurred within the ranks of the Canadian socialist movement. During the interwar period, many socialists had returned to their prewar pacifism. They argued that societies truly responsive to workers and the people would

⁶² Memorandum to Skelton by Keenleyside, October 6th 1938, Undersecretary of State for External Affairs, RG 25 D1, LAC v. 715. This also seems to be the case based on the resounding approval of the Canadian trade agreements in 1935 with the United States and with both the Americans and the British in 1938. Stacey, *Canada and the Age of Conflict*, v.2, 230.

⁶³ They were interested, extraordinarily so, in the events of the Catholic world, particularly the experiences of Canadian missionaries and the activities of the Papacy. *Le Devoir* had a recurring section on the Canadian missionary experience. For one example see *Le Devoir* February 19th 1930. There also seemed to be a consistent interest in the activities of the Papacy. *Le Devoir* March 23 1937. See also Rumilly *Histoire de la province de Québec, Tome XXXII: La dépression*, 204

⁶⁴ Piche to Gouin, April 28 1935, Gouin Papers, LAC, MG 27 III D1, v. 6. See also Gouin’s correspondence re: Harpell’s Sun Life Controversy, v. 5.

⁶⁵ Horton, *André Laurendeau*, 59. At times this would extend to the question of American investment, although French Canadian nationalists were divided on the question. Oliver, *The Passionate Debate*, 136, 148.

⁶⁶ French Canadian nationalists seemed divided on the question. Oliver, *The Passionate Debate*, 136, 148.

⁶⁷ Gouin to Garceau, 2 November 1938, Gouin Papers, MG 27 III, D1, v. 3

avoid involvement in international conflict. Public opinion would force national leaders to resolve international issues through peaceful means. This argument was enhanced by the simplistic explanations for the origins of the Great War that were so prevalent during the interwar period.⁶⁸ The coverage also focused on the misery of the ordinary soldier and the question of wartime atrocities.⁶⁹ Others Canadian socialists, particularly those associated with the small Communist party, faithfully followed the party line that emanated from Moscow. They, like Communist parties globally, thus ‘flip-flopped’ with the Soviet Union when the Nazi-Soviet Non-Aggression Pact was signed in August 1939. As a result, the treacherous fascists became faithful comrades in the fight against imperialism.⁷⁰

It became clear to contemporaries of the period that this policy could not provide a viable policy for avoiding international conflicts. This made the question of foreign policy difficult, for social democrats in particular, to resolve. The Spanish Civil War, which represented both a case of totalitarian aggression and the struggle to preserve a social democratic state, demonstrated the implications of the contradictions between their internationalism and their pacifism.⁷¹

As seen, in September of 1939, J.S. Woodsworth was one of the few who voted against the Canadian declaration of war, after he turned over the leadership of the C.C.F. to M.J. Coldwell. Woodsworth was an exception in the CCF, whose members had increasingly come to a decision to fight the Nazis, which throughout the decade had

⁶⁸ These concentrated on the negative and significant influence of international arms dealers, the instability of balance of power politics, and the negative consequences of the policy of ‘secret’ diplomacy. *Toronto Star*, March 22 1934, 6, *Winnipeg Free Press* April 30th 1935, 9, *Maclean's* April 1st 1934, 3

⁶⁹ *Toronto Star* January 16 1930, 6

⁷⁰ J. L. Granatstein, ‘Commentary,’ in *A Country of Limitations*, 290

⁷¹ Socknat, *Witness Against War*, 163. See also Lower, *My Seventy-Years*, 178

embarked on a violent campaign in Germany to consolidate power, particularly at the expense of social democrats. Coldwell agreed that the war had resulted from the ‘bungling’ of capitalists, but it could not be lost without destroying any advances socialism had made. The C.C.F. programme would be postponed indefinitely by war. Defeat at the hands of the Nazis though could end any hope of it ever being achieved.⁷²

A similar struggle took place within the Canadian pacifist movement itself. During the interwar period, it incorporated a wide number of groups including socialists, religious organizations and internationalists. Conflict with the totalitarian powers, therefore, forced elements of the pacifist movement, especially those who argued for social and economic justice, into an impossible position.⁷³ These groups came into conflict with militant pacifists themselves, such as the members of the pacifist churches, who continued to believe that ‘war was absolutely and always wrong’. By the end of the 1930s, the peace movement had narrowed so much that in many ways it was composed largely of religious pacifists and associate members.⁷⁴

An overview of the period leaves the impression of a country with a fragmented political system, whose members disagreed, often enthusiastically. They appeared unwilling even to listen to one another, let alone attempt to comprehend the others’ perspective. In retrospect it appears to be held together by political and historical precedent, and by the expertise of Canadian politicians, who smoothed over the cracks in the hopes of gaining time to build a Canadian community, and, even more so, to convince Canadians of the need to do so.

⁷² Hutchison, *The Incredible Canadian*, 256 See also Kenneth McNaught for Woodworth’s views on war and internationalism. *A Prophet in Politics*, 201

⁷³ Socknat, *Witness Against War*, 163

⁷⁴ *Ibid.*, 191

The numerous publics in Canada retained their differing perceptions of Canada's past, future, and its international role, despite the attempts of many to forge them together. The Canadian approach to international relations arose out of the specific Canadian situation. No issue threatened the Canadian agreement on domestic questions, (limited at best) more than the pressure of international events. Canadians, therefore, were often tempted to wrap their society in the comfort of North American isolationism, a shield from Dandurand's 'inflammable materials,' (and inflammable ideas), which emanated from Europe.

These limitations also hint of the limited effectiveness of the Canadian intellectual community to act as a significant force in affected Canadian opinion. English Canadians continued to embrace imperialism to an extent that made their intellectual and French Canadian counterparts increasingly uncomfortable. For their part, French Canadians continued to embrace outside influences, especially cultural ones, to an extent which their intellectual and political leaders often felt were dangerous to their society's continued viability. In the end, Canadians as a whole seemed much more willing to pursue a compromise position. If a war could not be avoided, Canada should pursue a policy of limited participation. This should include an emphasis on economic, as opposed to military support and would therefore allow a clearly enunciated pledge by the federal government that conscription would not be enacted.

These conclusions are compelling in retrospect, but it is impossible not to be moved by a memo written by O.D. Skelton response, 'Canada and the Polish War, A Personal Note,' to Canada's declaration of war. Skelton's conclusions, and his frustration, were unlikely to have been embraced by most Canadians. Still, his

conclusions hint at the implications of involvement in a global empire, and although he might not have admitted it, the international limitations of a small power.

The first casualty in this war has been Canada's claim to independent control of her own destinies. In spite of a quarter century of proclamation and achievement of equality and independent status, we have thus far been relegated to the role of a Crown colony. We are drifting into a war resulting, so far as the United Kingdom's part is concerned, from political and diplomatic actions initiated months ago without our knowledge or expectation. An Ottawa paper has gloated over the fact that the foreign policy of Canada is in the hands of the Prime Minister of Great Britain; it has not yet called attention to Inskip's sideshow, 'the Dominion Office as the Foreign Office of the British Empire.'⁷⁵

Skelton was not alone in his frustration or in his sense of remoteness from developments in Canadian opinion. The Canadian intellectual community, in Quebec and in English Canada, was disappointed with their results of their attempts to educate Canadians. They might have agreed with Skelton that had Canadians failed 'to think boldly about Canada's place as a nation in the world.'⁷⁶

It is possible, that despite Skelton's concerns, Canadians had in fact spent some time considering the issue. A Canadian historian once asked 'Is there anything in democratic theory that implies that even when the people are wrong they are right?'⁷⁷ During any examination of Canada in the 1930s, the same question springs to mind. The truth is that Canadians in the 1930s, largely because they were forced to, seriously considered, on a systematic basis, what it meant to be Canadian. The fact that the conclusions they reached regarding this role represented their continuing embrace of a connection with both Britain and the United States *and* the maintenance of Canadian autonomy, did not reflect a failure to 'think boldly'. Rather it reflected their realization,

⁷⁵ 'Canada and the Polish War, A Personal Note.' Skelton Papers, LAC, MG 30 D33, v. 5

⁷⁶ Wrong to Skelton, 'The Canadian Position in the Light of the September Crisis.' December 7 1938, Wrong Papers, MG 30 E101, v. 3

⁷⁷ P.J. Fitzpatrick, 'New Brunswick: The Politics of Pragmatism' in Robin Martin, ed. *Canadian Provincial Politics: The Party Systems of the Ten Provinces*. 2nd edition, (Scarborough, 1978), 135

whether they thought in those terms or not, that a continuation of these policies would best reflect their national self-interest.⁷⁸

The Canadian desire to insulate their society from these issues was an impulse, rather than a reality. They seemed well aware that they could not avoid the consequences of a European war, particularly one involving Britain. However, this does not diminish the importance of their attempts to do so. It was this impulse that gave outside visitors such a mistaken sense of provincialism while visiting Canada. As they traveled up the St. Lawrence, visitors to Canada, as well as returning Canadians, would likely have experienced the ways in which the society wrapped itself in the comfort and the controversy of local events. As a result, the impression was that a local by-election was by far more relevant than a civil conflict in a distant Eastern European nation.⁷⁹ Canadian society may have been often provincial, poor, and combative, but at least it was safe. C.P. Stacey, at once a contemporary and a historian of the period, once wrote that it was pleasant 'to turn from the anxieties and terrors of Europe to what seemed by contrast the irenic simplicities of international affairs in North America.'⁸⁰

⁷⁸ Stacey, *Canada and the Age of Conflict*, v.2, 269. As Stacey points out, Canadians were acting in their own interests when they decided to go to war in 1939, even if they were not entirely aware of the ways in which they did so. The North Atlantic situation of 1939, including the British and French control of Western Europe, ensured that Canadian goods could move freely to open markets, including British ones, which still represented her largest trading partner. Stacey, *Canada and the Age of Conflict*, v.2, 269. At the same time, the relationship with the United States, and the trade agreements of the 1930s, ensured that Canadian exports in this area were increasingly lucrative. In contrast, a German victory over Britain and France would have meant the end of open markets in Europe, an increasing dependence on the United States and the potential absorption into what would likely have become 'Fortress America', with the consequential limitations on its economic growth and its civil liberties. Stacey, *Canada and the Age of Conflict*, v.2, 268. 'they arrived by instinct at a conclusion sounder than that of the isolationist intelligentsia (to use Mackenzie King's word) in the Department of External Affairs.'

⁷⁹ This sense of contrast is given vividly when contrasting Anthony Jenkinson's *Where Seldom a Gun is Heard*. (London, 1937) and Robert St. John's *From The Land of the Silent People*. (Garden City, 1942)

⁸⁰ Stacey, *Canada and the Age of Conflict*, v.2, 224 See also *Toronto Star*, September 30th 1938, 6, and March 15th, 1939, 4.

In this context, the Royal Tour of 1939 assumes increased relevance. The visit of the King and Queen that summer was therefore more than a ‘royal spectacle’, or even an imperial one. It was more than an attempt to reinforce imperialist ties in a vital British dominion, although it was also that. For many contemporary Canadian observers, it demonstrated the extent to which their country had come of age as a nation. This is clearly seen in one memorandum, entitled, ‘Constitutional Considerations Bearing upon Royal Visit,’ which concluded that

The presence, in Canada, of His Majesty the King will serve, more than all else, to throw into bold relief the position of the nature of the British Commonwealth in relation to each other and, in particular, their equality of status.⁸¹

Many argued that that it would also provide an opportunity for Canadians to rise above the trivial (and not so trivial) problems that had dominated public life for the previous decade and realize their true potential. In particular, they argued, it would provide, an opportunity to forge a cultural identity, one that merged ethnic differences into a Canadian identity. The *Winnipeg Free Press* on May 6th triumphantly anticipated the consequences of the Royal Tour. ‘The Canadian Crown’ it argued,

provides a rallying point round which every Canadian, be he of French, Saxon or Ukrainian origin, can stand...It is the symbol, too, of...the heritage of the great British tradition of freedom and self-government which has been earned since the day when Wolfe lay dying on the Plains of Abraham.⁸²

⁸¹ ‘Constitutional Considerations Bearing Upon the Royal Visit.’ 9 June 1939, King Papers, LAC, MG 26, J4, v. 156

⁸² *Winnipeg Free Press* May 6 1939, 21 In some ways this the *Free Press*’ progressive view is open to question given the recent Canadian events in terms of immigration and civil liberties, but the spirit that the editors wished to express is equally important. Ninette Kelley and Michael J. Trebilcock, *The Making of a Mosaic: A History of Canadian Immigration Policy*. (Toronto, 1998). In terms of the theme of the tour enhancing national unity, see also the *Globe and Mail*, May 18 1939, 7, the *Toronto Star*, May 18th 1939, 4, *La Presse*, May 19th 1939, 6 *Le Devoir*, May 17th 1939, 1.

In retrospect, however, one of its most significant consequences seems to be that it reinforced the Canadian awareness of global realities. In this way, it brought the world to Canada at the same time that it brought Canada global attention.⁸³

The Royal Tour, therefore, which proceeded, at the very time of rising international tensions, was not only a summertime diversion, but also a microcosm of Canada's ties to the outside world. In many ways it appears in retrospect to mark the last moment of Canada's 19th century historical experience. At the same time, however, it seemed to mark the first moment of its 20th century realities, with all the possibilities and limitations that this would entail.

⁸³ *Toronto Star*, May 18th 1939, 4. Lester Pearson wrote to Skelton from London that the British press was publishing satisfactory reports on every aspect of the Royal tour. He reported that there had been more British coverage on Canada than there had been for the past five years. He also indicates that there were reports in the British press that 'German diplomatic officials throughout the British Empire have been told to forward to Berlin analytical representations on how the King's Empire Day speech was received. Hitler thinks its reception will provide a key to the degree of unity in the Empire.' Pearson to Skelton, 9 June 1939. As the *Globe and Mail* argued on May 18th 1939, 'All Eyes are on Canada.' *Globe and Mail*, May 18th 1939, 6. See also the *Toronto Star*, May 19th 1939, 6, the *Winnipeg Free Press*, May 20th, 21, and 23rd, 1939, 4. The same was true of a number of editorial cartoons printed in the *Toronto Star*, one entitled 'Empire Day', which depicted various members of the Empire, in often stereotypical terms, tracing the route of the Royal tour across a map of Canada. *Toronto Star* May 23rd, 1939, 4. The *Star* also published another cartoon, with a caption which read 'Oh Boy! This Ought to Impress Our Gang.' It depicted a charming girl, 'Miss Canada' who prepared her front yard for the royal arrivals while the representatives of the America continent, including Uncle Sam, watched enviously. *Toronto Star*, May 19, 1939, 4.

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