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All in the Family: The Canadian Story
Tout est dans la famille : l'histoire canadienne

Canada's ongoing effort at self-definition and the historic conflicts to which it has given rise have all the makings of a family squabble. Some 135 years later, the contract that enacted the Confederation is the object of divergent interpretation between the consenting parties. The dispute involves the identification of the signatories themselves. While some insist that there were two equal partners (British and French – call them the *parents*) that signed on to the original deal, others maintain that there several entities (the provinces – call them the *extended family*) that were contracting parties and not just witnesses to the pact of 1867. Those who joined the Canadian family at a later time (the *offspring*) have developed their own sense of identity. Not to mention the Grandparents or Elders (our aboriginal peoples) that claim that they were not taken into sufficient account by the contracting parties – however they are defined – and often remind the parents and the offspring that they have collectively erred in this regard.

For many of the children of the original French parent who have overwhelmingly settled in one part of the territory or property (Quebec), Canada will always be viewed as a forced marriage in need of a divorce. Yet others see it as a marriage of convenience in which they are constantly negotiating for more autonomy and greater recognition with the other partner. At times, the feeling that their difference has not being properly acknowledged has resulted in strong feelings of rejection, making them more open to considerations of divorce. Most, however, do not appear to prefer a break-up. Despite the frustrations, there are many in Quebec for whom being part of the Canadian family remains an affair of the heart. Recently most decided that they don't want to talk about break-up or any new contractual arrangements for a while.

Le parent britannique a subi de nombreux changements au cours du dernier siècle, si bien qu'il ressemble maintenant très peu à ce qu'il était à l'origine. Ce qui est resté s'est incorporé à la famille élargie, qui insiste sur le fait qu'on ne peut effectuer aucun changement au contrat original sans le consentement de tous. Plus encore, certains membres de la famille élargie (appelez-les les Albertains) ont éprouvé des sensations d'aliénation de plus en plus grandissantes, pensant qu'ils contribuaient davantage à l'héritage de la famille que ce dont ils recevaient en retour. Quant au contrat en soi, la famille élargie déclare maintenant qu'il s'agit d'un choix entre le divorce et le mariage (et ils ajoutent aussi que les conditions du divorce seraient vraiment excessives).

In the 1960's the *Royal Commission on Bilingualism and Biculturalism* (RCBB) warned of the possible break-up of the Canadian family. It contended that the very will of the English and French to live together was in serious jeopardy. The RCBB was mandated to look into ways of reconstructing an equal partnership between the English and the French through the implementation of national bilingualism and biculturalism. Marking the 40th anniversary of the RCBB, the texts that follow offer an assessment of the impact of the Commission on language and cultural policies, look at the influence of some of the principal intellectual and political actors of the period and provide important insights into the contemporary debate on national identity.

Since the RCBB presented its findings, the Canadian Constitution was repatriated and a Charter of Rights was introduced. There have been two Quebec referenda on the issue of sovereignty and two failed attempts (Meech Lake and Charlottetown Accords) at amending the Constitution to recognize certain collective characteristics of the Canadian population, amongst them the recognition of Quebec as a distinct society. Christian Dufour and Jocelyn Maclure respectively examine the roles of Pierre Elliot Trudeau and André Laurendeau in the debates over national identity. Dufour contends that Trudeau denied Quebec's national identity to the detriment of national unity while Maclure argues that the rejection of the binational vision proposed by Laurendeau continues to prevent a necessary reconciliation between English and French Canada. Both Dufour and Maclure remind us that the first choice of the majority of Quebecers is to remain part of Canada, but until some recognition of Quebec's specificity is conferred the debate over the country's future will remain unresolved.

Simon Langlois explains the thinking behind the commissioner's use of the term "biculturalism" which he sees as a recognition of *l'égalité culturelle* and greater asymmetry on Canada-Quebec relations. He laments that Trudeau later chose to drop the notion. Michael Oliver, research director for the RCBB, provides an account of the daunting challenge of defining the idea of 'equal partnership' as Laurendeau envisioned it. In the final analysis, Oliver contends that the major task of the RCBB was to get Canada beyond the crises it soon faced in the area of English-French relations. This author concurs with Oliver that, from the outset, the RCBB was challenged with constructing models for a new Canadian partnership based on concepts that were difficult to apply.

Dans son essai, Joseph Turi nous rappelle que les démographies du Canada ont profondément changé depuis que la CRBB, le multiculturalisme et le biculturalisme sont à la hausse. Il suggère que la CRBB a eu un impact important dans l'introduction de la législation de la langue au niveau des gouvernements fédéral et provincial. Matthew Hayday jette un regard sur l'impact de la CRBB sur l'enseignement de la langue seconde au Canada et affirme qu'en dépit de l'importance des recommandations découlant de la Commission, une telle instruction a subi une multitude d'importants défis depuis les années soixante. Plusieurs de ces défis, qui sont associés aux Canadiens anglophones vivant à l'extérieur du Québec, et qui comprennent aussi la disponibilité des ressources humaines et financières, sont examinés par James Shea, directeur général de *Canadian Parents for French*.

Michael Temelini looks at the role played by the RCBB in the eventual emergence of Canada's multicultural policies. He argues that multiculturalism was never intended to be 'rights' or 'rules' based and instead the emphasis was to be on the substantive moral commitment to diversity. Temelini correctly contends that the issue of harmonious cross-cultural relations cannot be confined to respect for the rights of the other but also require sensitivity to cultural difference.

Stéphane Dion, Canada's Minister of Intergovernmental Affairs, leads our examination by referring to the progress that the population has made in terms of the current level of support for language duality and the improved situation of minority language French schools outside of Quebec. He presents the major orientations of his recently introduced policy on Canada's official languages – *The Next Act* – which he notes are animated by much the same spirit and ideals that were identified by the *Royal Commission on Bilingualism and Biculturalism* forty years ago.

Jack Jedwab