From Britishness to Multiculturalism: Official Canadian Identity in the 1960s

*De la britannicité au multiculturalisme : l'identité officielle du Canada dans les
années 1960*

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From Britishness to Multiculturalism: Official Canadian Identity in the 1960s

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The 1960s was a tumultuous period that resulted in the reshaping of official Canadian identity from a predominately British-based identity to one that reflected Canada's diversity. The change in constructions of official Canadian identity was due to pressures from an ongoing dialogue in Canadian society that reflected the larger geo-political shifts taking place during the period. This dialogue helped shape the political discussion, from one focused on maintaining an out-dated national identity to one that was more representative of how many Canadians understood Canada to be. This change in political opinion accordingly transformed the official identity of the nation-state of Canada.

Les années 1960 ont été une période tumultueuse qui a fait passer l'identité officielle canadienne d'une identité essentiellement britannique à une identité reflétant la diversité du Canada. L'évolution des structures de l'identité canadienne officielle était due aux pressions exercées par un dialogue continu dans la société canadienne qui reflétait les changements géopolitiques plus importants qui se produisaient au cours de la période. Ce dialogue a contribué à changer la discussion politique, d'une part, axée sur le maintien d'une identité nationale désuète à une autre plus représentative du nombre de Canadiens qui comprenaient le Canada. Ce changement d'opinion politique a donc transformé l'identité officielle de l'État-nation du Canada.

What it means to be Canadian, English, French, or otherwise, is open to debate. To borrow the terms coined in 1983 by Benedict Anderson, the imagining of such communities depends on the acceptance of certain general ideas about who we are as a people, which are recurrently points of debate. While different people may see “English Canadianness” or “French Canadianness” differently at a particular moment in time, general ideas about the basis of different imagined groups, such as basic cultural symbols and rituals, are more long lasting. Yet, in the decades after World War II, even these general ideas were up for debate in Canada with the transnational and geopolitical changes that were occurring, specifically the “decline of Anglo-conformity” and the concurrent “rise of multiculturalism” (TROPER 1979: 10). Thus, the long-held, predominately British, official Canadian identity was shifting by the mid-twentieth century, moving away from Britishness and toward a more authentic expression of Canadianness centered in its diversity.

The use of *nation* in this article borrows from the work of both Benedict Anderson and Eric Hobsbawm. The nation is an “imagined community” (ANDERSON 2006) that shares specified constructs of geographical space, government and cultural institutions, and the mind. These constructs, and thereby

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the nation itself, are fluid in their conceptions rather than remaining static. Moreover, an identity can be defined as a cohesive and malleable societal construct that is embraced by the collective group sharing a common culture and language. The use of identity here, referring only to national identity, is the idea of a social construction of “collective consciousness” that shares an “attachment to the nation” (PALMER 2009: 8) in question. National identity differs from the concept of nationalism, as a national identity is less dedicated to the directly patriotic goals of nationalism even though a national identity does form under much of the same criteria, such as a shared language, culture, and ethnicity. As well, national unity refers to believed and shared commonalities present throughout the nation, which rest on the nation’s collective identity and the “construction of the symbolic order” (BRETON 1986: 31) of society. The concepts of national identity and national unity can be conflated, as the national identity is produced to enhance or create national unity as a collective identity that bonds the nation together. Miriam Richter defines national identity as “one overall identity that unites the members of the nation,” and sees multiculturalism as a “core component of Canadian national identity” (RICHTER 2011: 27-29). She links the long formation of Canada’s modern national identity to its relationship with Britain, its essentially dualistic nature, and the presence of the United States, listing these among other geo-political and cultural conundrums as impediments to Canada’s identity formation.

The many nations within Canada, such as the French Canadian and Indigenous nations, have their own expressed identities that differ from the wider Canadian nation-state variety. These identities often interact with one another – culturally, politically, and otherwise, including that of the nation-state. Furthermore, a nation’s identity is generally a reflection of its national history; therefore, the identity constructed from the nationalist historical trope of each nation can solidify the national group. However, Canadian nationalist history is not as uniformly understood nor translated into a specified identity that represents the entirety of the nation-state, likely due to the sheer amount of diversity found within it.

While acknowledging that Canada consists of many nations, each with their own identities, we will more specifically focus on the official national identity of Canada, i.e. the imaginings that Canadian politicians and policy makers promoted, as opposed any popular imaginings of Canada. This paper will consider the changing constructions of Canada’s official national identity in the 1960s, a period of intense doubts and debates, which caused the Canadian government to proclaim that the nation was experiencing an identity crisis. This crisis hit its peak at this time due to the ongoing Quiet Revolution in Quebec, the

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other, quieter revolution occurring in English Canada, and increasing American influence. We will demonstrate that the Canadian government decidedly shifted their proposed solution for the identity crisis from a bicultural to a multicultural official Canadian identity. Yet Canada's journey to a policy and subsequent identity of multiculturalism did not originate along the lines of a multicultural vision of Canada; it began with the narrower view of a bicultural Canada. The idea of a multicultural Canada arose from the hearty discussion during the preliminary and public hearings held by the Royal Commission on Bilingualism and Biculturalism (hereafter, B&B Commission). Initially, this dialogue intended to work towards the promotion of a bicultural Canada, but even in the preliminary proceedings, sustained mention of ethnic groups other than that of the English and French Canadians is evident. During these public discussions, people from all over Canada shared their views on the cultures and contributions of those other than English and French Canadians, which led those heading the B&B Commission, André Laurendeau and Davidson Dunton, to a wider understanding of Canada's national identity.

How official Canadian identity changed during the 1960s, from the long-held British-based identity to one centred on multiculturalism, occurred through a dialogue between federal government officials, concerned citizens,¹ and cultural producers². A combination of federal government desire, ideations of Canada from cultural producers, and input from the wider Canadian society in terms of what they saw as their cultural identity, all demonstrate how this change occurred. The government's position on Canadian identity and national unity, evidenced in the parliamentary debates from 1962-1972, demonstrates a shift from an image of a united primarily British Canada, to an attempt at a dualistic bilingual and bicultural Canada, and ultimately to a multicultural Canada. The reports of the B&B Commission are indicative of how concerned members of the public viewed their society and how that input ultimately lead to a change in federal government opinion of what the Canadian identity should be. The government's desire to maintain control of the Canadian identity does not mean that they had complete control, as the change in their view was influenced by concerned members of the wider society working to change the political discourse surrounding national identity. The views present in the B&B Commission reports, in conjunction with key academic works produced during

¹ "Concerned citizens" are individuals who expressed concern during the public meetings held by the Commission. The vagueness is due to the Commission reports not providing names or occupations of the individuals.

² Referring to the particular academics and writers who produced culture.

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the period, allow for a more accurate portrayal of the transformation of official Canadian identity, away from Britishness and towards multiculturalism, during the 1960s.

Moving Away From Britishness

Britishness still hung on as the primary cultural identity for English Canada into the 1960s, but it was during that decade when it began to disappear from its leading role in Canadian culture.

Historians such as Phillip Buckner, José Igartua, and C.P. Champion, have shown that Canada's close relationship with Britain remained strong into the 1960s, thereby enabling the official Canadian identity to retain elements of Britishness throughout that decade. Increasing economic and cultural influence from the United States during the 1950s and 1960s also had a marked effect on Canadian identity, simultaneously pulling Canada away from Britishness and pushing it toward North American continentalism (BUCKNER 2006). Despite this influence, the demise of Britishness in Canada was a slow one that took place throughout the first half of the twentieth century, with a more rapid period of decline during the 1960s.

Throughout the early twentieth century, Canadian culture was dominated by its connection to Britain and its reliance on Britishness for cultural norms, though it is clear that there was an attempt to portray a uniquely Canadian culture during this period. Paula Hastings, through an examination of early twentieth century consumer culture, has demonstrated that Canada attempted to develop a culture that was distinctly Canadian rather than relying entirely on British culture (HASTINGS 2007).

The postwar period is a typical starting point for the disillusionment of the predominately-British Canadian identity due to the transnational and geopolitical changes that occurred, specifically concerning the relationship between Britain and Canada, with a key example illustrated with the Canadian response to the Suez Crisis (IGARTUA 2005). The fall of the British Empire aided the fall of Anglo-conformity, leaving the postwar world with less tolerance for accepting notions of white-Anglo superiority, evidenced by such movements as the civil rights movement in the United States, and the Quiet Revolution in Quebec contributing significantly to this view in Canadian society (TROPER 1979: 11-13).

Historians have long noted the importance of the Quiet Revolution, which spanned the decade and caused significant changes in Quebec society,

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namely secularization and an increase in separatist political parties, and most noticeably a resurgence of nationalist Québécois sentiment. Sean Mills argues that what occurred in Quebec “cannot be adequately understood outside of [the] larger context” of the geo-political matters of the era and that there cannot be “one single, coherent story of the 1960s” (MILLS 2010: 8-10). It is the broader global developments during this era, such as the moving away from White/Anglo-superiority and the concurrent rising prominence of minority groups, that enabled the period of transition in Quebec society, and this is also true for English Canada.

The “other Quiet Revolution,” as José Igartua has termed it, was the cultural revolution that occurred in English Canada during the same period. Prior to this cultural revolution, the English Canadian identity focused predominately on maintaining a level of Britishness (IGARTUA 2006). The experience of the other Quiet Revolution was the revolt against Britishness and the consequent moving toward discovering a true Canadian identity. A critical example during the early 1960s is the flag debate, which riled nationalist fervour in both French and English Canada and demonstrated how the federal government struggled to maintain a certain level of Britishness in the official Canadian identity. This particular fervour surrounding Britishness also marked a divide within English Canada, between those favouring the inherent Britishness of the nation and those searching for true Canadianness as the foundation of the national identity (CHAMPION 2006).

There is an undeniable link between these cultural revolutions and the crumbling of the foundations of the earlier national imagining of a British Canada. A transformation of official Canadian identity took place during the 1960s, as a construct primarily built around the concept of Britishness ultimately disintegrated during the period. Subsequently, an identity began to form around an evolving concept of Canadianness, due to the moving away from Britishness and Britain itself. This transformation of identity was a slow process that has its roots earlier in the country’s history, with Canada consistently trying to demonstrate its own culture amid its devotion to Britain (HASTINGS 2007). However, the slow demise of Britishness accelerated under the pressures of changing public opinions and the cultural revolutions of the 1960s. An ensuing lack of interest in Britain, combined with significant American cultural and economic influence during the mid-twentieth century, and increasingly problematic relations with Quebec and Québécois national identity, all led to a more rapid period of transformation for the official Canadian identity.

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This moving away from Britishness is also evident in the contemporary academic works, which demonstrated a change from the previous cultural imaginings of Canada. Such cultural producers reflect the society around them; therefore, it is evident that at least a certain stratum within society was attempting to move away from Britishness in their understanding of Canadian identity. William Morton's *The Canadian Identity* (1961) is particularly indicative of this shift. Morton identified three causes for the identity crisis present during the 1960s: the Quiet Revolution, the decline of Great Britain in the world and in Canada, and the threat of Americanization. Specifically he saw America as "the greatest menace to Canadian nationality," (MORTON 1961: 125) the economic threat combined with American imperialism/continentalism being his foremost concern. As well, Morton saw Canadian society as having a mosaic principle, highlighting a focus on Canadian unity. The ideas of the mosaic and Canadian unity were a part of the mindset for politicians and academics alike during the period and it was within this milieu that the federal government proposed biculturalism as a reasonable alternative to Britishness for the official Canadian identity, when confronted with the growing Québécois nationalist sentiment. This was also when the Canadian citizenry began to express their dissatisfaction with the prescribed cultural identity of Britishness and the proposed solution of biculturalism.

Tackling the "Crisis of National Unity": the bicultural solution

In his January 1966 Speech from the Throne, Governor General Georges Philias Vanier commented on the situation of national unity and Canadian identity:

The preservation and strengthening of Canadian identity and unity is the most important trust and responsibility of Parliament and of my government. That unity rests on a Canadianism based upon the two main cultural strands, British and French, enriched by the contributions of other cultural groups, and recognizing the essential contributions of all to the development of Canadian identity. (CANADA 1967a: 3)

During the 1960s, enthusiasm for a Canadian identity and national symbols such as a distinctive flag and national anthem was at an all-time high. This sentiment was expressed in Parliament and across the nation, with remarks such as "Canada is not England" (CANADA 1964: 4945) being made during parliamentary debates. Member of Parliament Eric Stefansson believed that "all of us need to rededicate ourselves to the concept of one nation and national unity" (CANADA 1967b: 385) and that Canadians needed to "dedicate themselves to

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being Canadians first” (CANADA 1967b: 386) – not French Canadians, or otherwise.

The atmosphere of the early 1960s increasingly made Canadian unity of the utmost importance to the federal government and in December 1962, Liberal party leader Lester Pearson described Canadians as anxious about the future of Canada because of the ongoing “crisis of national unity” (Canada 1962: 2723). In harking back to the mythos of unifying Canadian symbols, Pearson stated that Confederation was the “rejection not only of political and economic annexation by the United States but also of the American melting-pot concept of national unity” and that Canada’s unity was “without the imposition of racial, cultural or linguistic uniformity” (CANADA 1962: 2723). He believed that to overcome the state of disunity in the country, English Canada needed to acknowledge and accept French Canada as an equal partner and view Canada as a bilingual and bicultural country (CANADA 1962: 2724). It was under this belief that Pearson, upon becoming Prime Minister, vowed to set up a Royal Commission to investigate the matter.

On 16 May 1963, Pearson established the Royal Commission on Bilingualism and Biculturalism to study Canada’s “bicultural character” as well as to recognize the “contribution of other cultures” (CANADA 1963a: 6) to Canadian life. Particularly because of concerns about Quebec, Pearson saw biculturalism as a solution to the crisis of national unity. He was intent on building a greater Canada, stating that “the greater Canada that is in our power to make will be built not on uniformity but on continuing diversity; and particularly on the basic partnership of English speaking and French speaking people” (CANADA 1963a: 6). With this, Pearson felt that the Commission would enable “all [Canadian’s] to maintain and develop our Canadian identity, the Canadian fact” (CANADA 1963a: 60). Michael Temelini argues that these parliamentary debates show “a contest between two strategies to address the nationalist and secessionist challenges of cultural pluralism” (TEMELINI 2007: 49). The first being “an exclusively intergovernmental crisis” and the second “as a crisis of understanding” (TEMELINI 2007: 49), with the solution for the latter being a dialogue between the government and its citizenry. The B&B Commission’s work would make that necessary dialogue possible.

The Commission met with mixed reviews from Members of Parliament during its installation and throughout the years of its work. For example, the Member of Parliament for Toronto, Perry Ryan, stated that the “nation [could not] flourish as it should” (CANADA 1963a: 180) without the due consideration of Canadians of non-English and non-French origin. As well, the member for

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Vancouver, Harold Winch, felt that “biculturalism” was “too narrow” and that “the various cultures of other countries” are part of “what we call ‘Canadianism’” (CANADA 1963b: 2440). In addition, leader of the official opposition John Diefenbaker was critical of the Commission from the outset, arguing that the government should do something real, as they, not the Commission, would be responsible for providing the solution. He further stated that the Commission would not provide an answer but would “merely discuss” (CANADA 1963b: 2440), whereas the government had to provide the response. Later, Diefenbaker continued to argue that he was against “the setting up of the Commission on biculturalism” at its outset, claiming “it would not work” and further protested that the Commission had “divided [the] country as it never has been divided before” (CANADA 1967b: 44).

In July 1963, the B&B Commission began its inquiry into the problematic nature of language and culture in Canadian society, with particular respect given to English and French Canadians. In its six-year duration, the Commission produced several reports indicating their findings; the preliminary report is of particular interest, as it illustrated Canadians’ attitudes concerning Canadian identity. The intention of the preliminary report was “to bring out the contrasts in opinions” (ROYAL 1963: 41) present throughout the country concerning its dualistic national identity. Ultimately, this report provides an indication of how some citizens were thinking at the time and therefore enables us to gain better insight into the *mentalité* of some of the concerned citizenry during the 1960s.

The Commission felt that “an inquiry of this kind could not be conducted from an ivory tower in Ottawa” (ROYAL 1963: 26) and what should occur was a dialogue between Canadians. There were 404 briefs submitted to the B&B Commission, ranging from prominent individuals such as William Morton, to groups like the United Church of Canada and the Montreal Board of Trade (CANADA 1972: 13-19). These briefs, combined with a considerable number of both public and private meetings and hearings, produced an array feedback. The early regional meetings are of pertinent interest, as they were “informal and exploratory”, as opposed to the later official hearings that were more concerned with “precise questioning and thorough discussion” (ROYAL 1967: xvi). These regional meetings gave the most raw and least jaded opinions of Canadians regarding national identity, providing the Commission with an understanding of the issues surrounding Canadian identity as Canadians saw it themselves.

There were 23 regional meetings held between 18 March and 16 June 1964, hosting over 3,600 people during the daytime sessions and approximately

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8,200 during the evening sessions. All provinces were included in the process except Prince Edward Island, as there were no available locations during that time due to their centenary celebrations (ROYAL 1963: 29). Additionally, two commissioners visited the “Eastern Arctic” for the inclusion of “Eskimo” opinions (ROYAL 1963: 50). Despite the intentions of the Commission, there were limitations to these discussions. Equal representation was a problem as there were incidences where some groups far outweighed others. There was often an abundance of journalists and many motivated Ukrainian Canadians³ in attendance but relatively few farmers, for example, and some ethnic groups often lacked adequate representation. As well, the choices of the locations for the meetings were “somewhat arbitrary” (ROYAL 1963: 29). Still, the Commission felt that gathering these opinions was imperative and saw this style of public dialogue as the best tactic to do so. The B&B Commission heard a wide variety of opinions from numerous “intellectual and community leaders” (ROYAL 1963: 29) and reporters were free to report what participants had said during the evening sessions. Publicity of the meetings was a key concern, as well as contacting people connected with “various sectors of the community,” (ROYAL 1963: 155) though the commissioners knew that it was a risk that there would not be an adequately diverse sample.

The initial meetings in Trois-Rivières and Sherbrooke on 18 March 1964, showed young people to be numerous and “aggressive,” though most meetings were calmer but nevertheless lively (ROYAL 1963: 37). A common theme of Canadians uniting and working together to fix the nation’s identity problem was present at many of the meetings. A statement from a woman in London, Ontario indicates that “Canada is a marriage of two nations [...] I think this is a problem for the whole family, and it is time that all the family get together to improve the situation [...] it is an intense national problem” (ROYAL 1963: 95). An individual from Victoria stated that it was “a matter of loyalty: if Canada is a country, and we are Canadians, then we should be as one in looking for the good of Canada” (ROYAL 1963: 53).

As the Commission anticipated, there was support for the bilingual and bicultural solution for Canadian identity, as a man from London explained:

I do not think we have a chance of keeping [Canada independent] unless we do develop something which will clearly distinguish it culturally from that mass reservoir. We are going to be sucked in with or without any

³ Ukrainian Canadians played a significant role in the advent of multiculturalism in Canada. See LALANDE 2006.

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pressure from them. We have to become a bicultural and bilingual nation completely from coast to coast. (ROYAL 1963: 57)

In a meeting held in May 1964 a university professor in Ontario declared:

I think I am a moderate man on most civic and national issues, but on the issue of national unity I am not moderate at all. For me the preservation and strengthening of a national unity must come first if Canada as a nation, and a bicultural nation, must endure and grow! (ROYAL 1963: 94)

This declaration indicates that national unity, even a bicultural manifestation of it, was of considerable importance to some Canadians and they wished to see it flourish.

However, other solutions emerged from the public discussion and showed that many did not share the idea of a bilingual and bicultural Canada. Some desired a singular Canadian identity, as indicated by a Calgarian stating that “Our Canada is no longer made of two founding, or should I say floundering races, but through immigration is made up of numerous races, and our real problem is to blend them into one Canada, not two or more” (ROYAL 1963: 46). A discussion leader in St. John’s indicated that “the crux of the whole issue is that we have people looking on themselves as French Canadians when they should be looking on themselves as Canadians who speak French” (ROYAL 1963: 48), demonstrating that the separation of Canadians into distinctive cultural groups was a cause for the present disunity. A point that the commissioners were intrigued to find was that a first generation immigrant in Winnipeg also desired the “development of a truly unique Canadian culture,” rather than a “polycultural kind of nation” (ROYAL 1963: 53).

Some went further in arguing for linguistic assimilation. A man from Yarmouth indicated that he disliked the “hyphenated Canadianism,” while another from Winnipeg said:

If we want to have a nation there is only one way and that’s for all of us to look at each other and say we are Canadians regardless of ethnic origin and regardless of the languages you speak in your home. You are a Canadian and if English is the predominating tongue in this country then that is what we will speak. (ROYAL 1964: 53)

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Some were more direct in their desire for cultural assimilation, indicating that it was an inevitability, as an individual from St. John's stated on 8 June 1964: "The standard process of history is for a minority to be assimilated or absorbed. What we are doing [...] here is to stand in the way of that process." However, there were those who opposed this, as a man from London stated:

For an English Canadian to say that he is a Canadian without prefix involves no sacrifice because Canada for him is an enlargement of what he knows as an Ontarian, as a Manitoban or as a Nova Scotian, but when we say that a French Canadian should be a Canadian really like us [...] we are asking him to make the supreme sacrifice. (ROYAL 1963: 54)

Americanization/North American Continentalism was another prominent theme carried throughout the regional meetings. Whether participants were speaking out of fear or in support, this process was seen as being of great importance to Canadian identity and perceived as a force working against bilingualism and biculturalism. On 10 June 1964, a man from Saskatoon declared:

As time goes on there will be fewer and fewer people who will be purely French-speaking and more and more people will be English-speaking. Quebec is not only a part of Canada, it is also a part of the North American economy and there is a tide flowing that economically will force them to become increasingly industrialized in that province and to have a knowledge, and a good knowledge, of the language of commerce. That language of commerce, I think we'll have to admit, will be English in the North American economy. (ROYAL 1963: 57)

A French Canadian from Rimouski agreed, stating that "It is not because we have English-speaking people in Confederation that we have to speak English, it's because we have the neighbours to the south, the United States"⁴ (ROYAL 1963: 57-58). Some participants saw the process of Americanization as inevitable; a man from Kingston believed that "What is going to happen here, regardless of what we say or what we think, is the same thing that happened in the United States – the old melting pot theory" (ROYAL 1963: 59). Others expressed the fear of losing Canadian culture in this process, asserting that "We

⁴ The original statement in French: « ...ce n'est pas parce que nous avons des Anglais dans la Confédération que nous sommes obligés de parler anglais, c'est parce que nous avons les voisins du sud, les États-Unis ».

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must all be interested in Canadian culture for I fear if we are not, we Canadians could soon be engulfed and drowned by the American culture” (ROYAL 1963: 56). A participant from Halifax believed that “a nation with two cultures is original. The Americans have a melting pot culture and have done a darned good job of it! [...] But I think we should try something different” (ROYAL 1963: 59). Opinions such as these indicated that it was believed it was necessary to retain what made Canada culturally different from the United States, if only to prevent North American cultural assimilation and the complete disappearance of a distinctive Canadian identity.

Most importantly and maybe unexpectedly, the preliminary hearings in Ottawa in November 1963 revealed an intense interest in the ethnic groups outside of English and French, the “third element” ethnic groups. The Commissioners acknowledged that “The fact that the problem is primarily with the two founding races the French-speaking Canadians and the British Canadians, but over the years a third force, a vital force, has emerged and this force must be recognized” (ROYAL 1963: 51). As mentioned, discussion of the “third element” did not evade the regional meetings either, with an individual from this element questioning if their “freedoms” were “limited” because of not being “from one of the so-called founding races” (ROYAL 1963: 50). However, there were incidences when members of the third element perceived the significance of their numbers in an exaggerated manner, as indicated by a Winnipegger stating that “We are the third element of the population of this country, of which I think our proportion today is almost one-third” (ROYAL 1963: 50).

The discussion of the third element was nonetheless accompanied by an insistence on the theme of unity in diversity. Even at the outset of the Commission’s work this theme was present, most noticeably during the preliminary hearings where a commissioner vowed that “The ethnic groups in Canada are, and will continue to be, a unifying force, a cementing force in the Confederations of Canada” (ROYAL 1963: 51). At a regional meeting in Kingston a participant declared that “In the complex ethnic situation existing in Canada, the only kind of unity which can reasonably be striven for and achieved is unity in diversity: the harmonious co-operation of all ethnic groups in the Canadian country as a whole” (ROYAL 1963: 52). Many Western participants of the meetings acknowledged “the Canadian mosaic” (ROYAL 1963: 51) and certainly preferred this to the American melting pot model. While some favoured assimilation, the more popular view was for an identity that recognized difference, with the belief that unity could be found within this difference.

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Thus, a close examination of the regional meetings reveals that a large number of respondents favoured multiculturalism – or a more culturally pluralistic expression of identity, rather than biculturalism or outright assimilation. As a result, across the stratum of the regional meetings, no general consensus was found and a variety of positions were expressed, ranging from an assimilative singular identity, to support for biculturalism, and a belief in unity in diversity.

Ultimately the B&B Commission's multi-volume final report concluded that their opinion was in favour of a bicultural identity for Canada and that the "'third force' does not exist in Canada in any political sense and is simply based on statistical compilations" (ROYAL 1969: 10). The Commission declared that:

It is in our view the term "biculturalism" covers two main realities. The first is the state of each of the two cultures, and the opportunity of each to exist and flourish. The second is the coexistence and collaboration of these two cultures within our country; that is to say, the set of conditions which will enable members of these two cultures to co-operate effectively. (ROYAL 1969: 12)

The Commission's conclusion reflected what they had set out to find, a solution for the disarray of Canadian culture – and a solution based on a bicultural Canadian identity. However, this did not accurately reflect what many Canadians had been describing as the Canadian national identity. The Commission presented many recommendations to the federal government concerning the "third force" but did not see them as being an essential part of the official Canadian identity (ROYAL 1969: 228-231).

From Biculturalism to Multiculturalism

While the B&B Commission failed to acknowledge the emergence of the multicultural idea during the preliminary and regional meetings, during the same period Parliamentarians and cultural producers developed this theme.

In his 3 March 1964 speech to the Senate, Ukrainian-Canadian Senator Paul Yuzyk, in a partial response to the ongoing B&B Commission, made explicit reference to Canada's multicultural society. He saw Canada as a growing multicultural citizenry, which had "changed from a paramountly British-French with a substratum of Indian and Eskimo cultures, to multicultural, with the immigration of many European and some Asiatic peoples" (CANADA 1965a: 51). Yuzyk described the third element ethnic group as a population that was

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steadily growing and based on the 1961 census would soon exceed that of the French population in Canada, while the English population was gradually decreasing in proportion. The need for greater acknowledgement and protection of these “other” cultures and languages was at the forefront of what Yuzyk saw as important to Canadian identity, reminding Canadians that “Canada is a country of minorities, and this fact should not be ignored” (CANADA 1965a: 53). While various waves of immigration had made Canada more obviously multicultural, Canada was inherently multicultural from the start, as Yuzyk was apt to point out, consequently believing that the term “bicultural” was a misnomer as Canada was never simply bicultural. He implored his fellow senators that while it may be true that Canada was founded by two dominant cultures, to simplify it to those two groups alone would be disingenuous to the true construct of Canadian culture and identity. He furthered this by reminding them that English Canada consisted of the British, Irish, Scottish, and Welsh, while French Canada contained Acadian, French, and Québécois distinctions, not to forget the many Indigenous groups present in Canada. The addition of later immigrant groups made the idea of Canada being bicultural an even more flawed description (CANADA 1965a: 53-54).

Yuzyk saw multiculturalism as a way for Canadians to remain who they are, while allowing for a more democratic and equal society. He believed in “unity in diversity” (CANADA 1965a: 54-55) and wanted full recognition of the contribution of the three elements of Canadian society to the nation’s cultural identity, as each had helped to shape Canadian society and accordingly contributed to the modern conception of Canadian identity. Yuzyk believed the core principles of freedom, equality, and justice for all citizens would maintain unity within Canada and the acceptance of multiculturalism within Canada would only strengthen this unity (CANADA 1965a: 58). There was a level of dissatisfaction with the bicultural model proposed by the federal government, as expressed by those in attendance of the B&B Commission’s early regional meetings, and Yuzyk gave a louder voice to this view, which was increasingly becoming more central to a wide array of middle-class cultural producers. Those writing during the era expressed their desire for a more culturally pluralistic society and these views prefaced the discussion for the preference for multiculturalism rather than biculturalism.

Even though the writing of nationalist history was waning by the 1960s, historians still accepted the nation as the frame of reference and there was growing interest in Canada’s identity, mirroring the fevered public and governmental debate of the era. For emerging historians, the perception of the nation had changed and therefore so did the writing of that history. The

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willingness to disassociate Canadian identity from “Britishness” and the British Empire occurred largely in the late 1960s when historians became interested in new concepts, believing that this would produce an outcome that could bond Canadians together (BUCKNER and FRANCIS 2006: 4). In this period, there was no longer any strong consistency in Canadian history and historians disagreed in where the focus should be in their work. Canada had always been a country of differing cultures and peoples, and historically examining the many ethnicities that Canada encompasses was a way to deepen the understanding of Canadian identity. Social historians and other academics of the era were part of this movement to broaden the Canadian identity and these cultural producers provide evidence of the popularity of multiculturalism. The work they produced demonstrates that the uneasiness with biculturalism was more general and these cultural producers set themselves the task of providing narratives that were in keeping with multiculturalism.

One such work, John Porter’s *The Vertical Mosaic*, effectively demonstrated Canada’s lack of a cohesive national identity and the presence of a divide between ethnic groups within the country during the 1960s. Porter addressed the “charter groups” in the early years of Canada, defined as being the first ethnic group in an unpopulated territory, the “possessor” group who has the most influence and input in the society. He reasoned that Canada has two distinguished charter groups, the English and French, and decisions about other ethnic groups were made by these two groups, most notably concerning the “‘right’ kind of immigrants” (PORTER 1965: 60) to allow into the country. Moreover, Porter argued that the hegemonic society that benefitted the charter groups undoubtedly constructed and reinforced an unequal relationship between cultural groups, positioning the charter groups at the apex of what would shape Canada and its identity.

The concept of “limited identities” is manifestly important in understanding the Canadian struggle for identity and the movement from Britishness to multiculturalism. It represented a disembarking from a goal of a singular identity for Canada and instead allowed for the conception of a more true-to-form identity. In 1967, Ramsay Cook published a review article pertaining to the published work from that year concerning the “great national malaise” (COOK 1967: 659), that malaise being the lack of a coherent and all-encompassing Canadian national identity. For Cook, the problem was not a lack of publications on the issue; it was a lack of new approaches in the eternal search for Canadian identity. Cook advocated moving away from “deploring our lack of identity” and instead concerning ourselves with “understanding and

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explaining the regional, ethnic, and class identities” (COOK 1967: 663) that define Canada, arguing that these “limited identities” were what made Canada Canadian.

J. M. S. Careless’s 1969 article, “‘Limited Identities’ in Canada,” further explored Cook’s concept of limited identities and discussed how the eras of historiography leading up to the 1960s help to demonstrate why the mentality of the period was a “natural consequence” (CARELESS 1969: 1). Careless saw the concept of limited identities as *the* Canadian identity and believed the Canadian nation to be an “entity, or identity, in itself” (CARELESS 1969: 8). In this light, Careless affirmed that Canada had a national identity as opposed to only having limited identities because these limited identities constructed the unified national identity, an identity predicated on diversity. In solidifying this, he claimed that the history of “a segment of Canada is an expression, an epitome, of the whole” and that the Canadian experience was one of a rather “distinctive nature” that had “produced a continent-wide entity identifiable in its very pluralism, constraints, and compromises” (CARELESS 1969: 9).

These and other cultural producers shared and added force to the view of the citizenry during the 1960s, a view that expressed a wider dissatisfaction with the bicultural model of Canadian identity. The topics and concerns addressed in the mentioned works demonstrate that the issue of identity in Canada during the period was a fraught construct. The concerns raised by these academics mirrored the anxieties expressed by the general public and the federal government, with officials and policy makers operating and making decisions in light of that wider discourse. The Canadian government played a significant role in the creation of the national identity and did what it could to maintain a level of control over that identity. In May 1966, Dennis Smith, the editor of the *Journal of Canadian Studies*, called to the government and its politicians to “carry [Canada] through the crisis” of identity and ensure that the “collective national spirit [could] endure” (SMITH 1966: 2) the test of national strength of the 1960s. A policy of multiculturalism within a bilingual framework was a way for the government to maintain a level of control over the collective identity and provide the citizenry with an identity that they felt represented a modern Canada.

It began to appear that the idea of a Canadian national identity built on biculturalism was out, and one built on the concepts of unity in diversity and multiculturalism was set to take its place. In October 1968, after reading reports from the B&B Commission and others, Senator Yuzyk believed that, as a whole, Canadians thought that Canada “is not bicultural but in reality multicultural” and “official recognition should be given to multiculturalism” (CANADA 1969:

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143). Later in 1970, he further claimed, “present-day Canada is a pluralistic society” and “during the past 100 years [Canada] has been gradually evolving into a multicultural nation” (CANADA 1970a: 560). Member of Parliament Stanley Haidasz described Canada’s history as “composed of multi-ethnic and multi-cultural contributions,” and stated that that this was “Canada’s unique identity,” and that “support from all levels of government will be necessary to preserve and develop this identity” (CANADA 1971: 8342).

In February 1971, Prime Minister Pierre Trudeau stated that Canada “is a multicultural country” but also a “bilingual one” (CANADA 1970b: 2983) and on 8 October he announced the implementation of a policy of “multiculturalism within a bilingual framework” (CANADA 1971: 8545). With this announcement, he acknowledged that the government accepted all recommendations from Book IV of the B&B Commission report, *The Cultural Contribution of the Other Ethnic Groups*, and that there was to be “no official culture” (CANADA 1971: 8545). He declared Canada’s national unity was “founded on confidence in one’s own individual identity” and a “vigorous policy of multiculturalism will help create this initial confidence” (CANADA 1971: 8545). Despite the B&B Commission not advocating for a policy of multiculturalism, Trudeau believed it was the best solution for the Canadian situation.

Each political party agreed that the policy of multiculturalism within a bilingual framework was what was best for Canadian national unity and identity. In addition to the federal government accepting the recommendations made by the B&B Commission, i.e. that there was to be no official culture in spite of their being two official languages, Trudeau declared that this policy of multiculturalism was “the most suitable means of assuring the cultural freedom of Canadians” (CANADA 1971: 8545). The leader of the official opposition, Robert Stanfield, agreed with the implementation of such a policy and wished it had been implemented earlier, stating that it was time to recognize that the “cultural identity of Canada is a pretty complex thing” (CANADA 1971: 8546). However, Stanfield also inferred that any emphasis given to multiculturalism was not to take away from the essentially dualistic nature of Canada. David Lewis, leader of the New Democratic Party, supported Trudeau’s announcement and agreed with Stanfield that the implementation of a policy such as this was long overdue. Lewis also makes note of the founding nations of Canada and believed that “whatever their ethnic origin” (Canada 1971: 8547) Canadians should be proud of the two founding cultures. Real Caouette, leader of the Creditiste Party, was in full support of this policy of multiculturalism, believing Canada to be “one

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nation, with two official languages, and a multiplicity of cultures” (Canada 1971: 8548).

The failure of Canadian society to embrace an official national identity based in biculturalism caused the federal government to accept the necessary compromise of an identity grounded in the more favoured concept of multiculturalism. However, this would be within a bilingual framework, thereby continuing the federal government’s promotion of the dualistic nature of Canada as a central element of its official identity. The inclusion of bilingualism in this policy announcement ensured the survival of the concept of the two dominant cultures, although in an attenuated form.

As well, in an attempt to appease Quebec’s protectionism of their language and culture, Trudeau declared that “[e]very ethnic group has the right to reserve and develop its own culture and values within the Canadian context. To say that we have two official languages is not to say we have two official cultures, and no particular culture is more ‘official’ than another” (CANADA 1971: 8581). Trudeau further stated that the two official languages and “their use by all of the citizens of Canada will continue to be promoted and encouraged” (CANADA 1971: 8581). However, the link between culture and language is crucial. If the government actively supported the two official languages, then they actively supported the two official cultures. The announcement stated that “the special role of the government will be to support and encourage those cultures and cultural groups which Canadians wish to preserve” (CANADA 1971: 8581). It thereby put the onus on the Canadian citizenry to preserve their own cultures, as it was the view of the government that they “cannot and should not take upon itself the responsibility for the continued viability of all ethnic groups” (CANADA 1971: 8581). This meant the cultures that would be preserved were left to Canadian society to decide, whilst the federal government would actively maintain the English-French dualistic identity of Canada. Multiculturalism within a bilingual framework was a way for the federal government to maintain a level of control over the collective identity while providing the citizenry with an identity that they felt represented modern-day Canada.

Conclusion

Canada’s official identity underwent significant shifts during the entirety of the twentieth century, most prominently during the 1960s when a crisis of national identity was prevalent. Politicians and government officials became aware that the foundations of the earlier British-based identity were crumbling in the years after the Second World War, due to ongoing cultural

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revolutions within Canadian society and the wider world, and set out to articulate a new vision for official Canadian identity. This shift saw the official Canadian identity moving away from a basis in a North American conception of Britishness, toward a dualistic bicultural expression of intrinsic Canadianness, while ultimately settling on a manifestation of multiculturalism. This transformation occurred in part due to the ongoing dialogue during the 1960s between the concerned citizenry, cultural producers, and the federal government and consequently changed what the official national identity would become. Part of the reasoning behind this shift lies in the tepid response government officials received regarding biculturalism during the B&B Commission. That response, in combination with a celebration of multiculturalism and “limited identities” among cultural producers and the wider society, helped shape the discourse in government circles to one focused on multiculturalism rather than biculturalism for the official Canadian identity.

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