

Family Matters

The Canadian Family and the State in the Postwar Period

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There exists a common relation between the family and the state, a relation such that whatever contributes to the welfare and strength of the family, also contributes to the welfare and strength of the state. All that is indispensable to the family is also indispensable to the state. (*House of Commons Debates*, 16 February 1942)

In 1954, one writer, contributing to *Food for Thought's* special issue on "The Family in Canada," declared that "NEVER in its long history has the human family been the subject of so much study and examination as in our generation."¹ While this statement served to underscore both the heightened interest and the ongoing concern that surrounded the Canadian family, it is arguable that this was by no means a new phenomenon. Given the historical linkages made between the 'family' and 'nation', the well-being and stability of the family has consistently been the focus of intense scrutiny. In effect, the persistent fear that the family may be threatened or in a state of crisis has often engendered an even more fundamental anxiety that the very foundation of the nation was being undermined. In this regard, the post-World War II period was no exception.

What was significant about the closing years of World War II and the immediate postwar era, was that this period witnessed a concerted attempt to restabilize the family, especially after the perceived familial disruptions caused by the socio-economic and gender dislocations of the Depression and the War. But the question of *how* the reconstitution and continued stability of the family were to be achieved became the subject of considerable discussion and controversy. Through an examination of two wartime inquiries specifically devoted to the issue of women and the family, it is evident that what emerged from these discussions involved both an ideological redefinition of the nature of marital/familial relations and an increased emphasis on the moral obligations of the state to provide the socio-economic conditions necessary to protect the welfare of the Canadian family. For state policy-makers, however, the fundamental difficulties associated with the introduction of a national family policy, as indicated by the debates surrounding the 1944 Family Allowances Act, rested largely on the very economic and cultural diversity of the Canadian family itself. Differentiated along class, rural/urban, English/French-Canadian, and ethnic lines, the concept of the 'Canadian family' tended to defy any fixed or homogeneous definition. It was precisely in light of these many centrifugal

1 Frank P. Fidler, "Spotlight on the Family," *Food For Thought* 14, 6 (March 1954), 2. It should be noted that the monthly journal, *Food For Thought*, was published by The Canadian Association for Adult Education. Frank Fidler was the associate secretary of the Board of Christian Education of the United Church.

tendencies and the growing social concerns with various deviant familial categories that the increasing preoccupation with the idealized notion of “*the happy united family*”² became most evident. In effect, this mystifying concept signified what was increasingly deemed to be the prescribed essence of the ‘postwar modern family’ and hence, became a potent ideological force.

As the most basic unit of civil society and indeed capturing the ‘common sense’ of everyday life, it is perhaps not surprising that metaphors of the ‘united’ and ‘harmonious’ family were invoked to describe Canadian nationhood both in terms of its international status and its domestic relations in the postwar period. In effect, rather than representing discrete categories, the intimate/privatized realm and the political/public sphere intersected at the level of imagery, giving the notion of Canada a particularly vivid quality. While a plethora of images were used to describe the complexities associated with Canadian nationhood, familial metaphors attempted to capture the sentimentalized and, indeed, non-politicized core of a seemingly intangible national unity. Conversely, in the face of growing national divisiveness particularly revolving around the reemergence of French-Canadian nationalism in the early 1960s, images of ‘familial’ and especially ‘marital’ breakdown surfaced in the discourse of English- and French-Canadian relations. As politicians, journalists, historians, and particularly the Royal Commission on Bilingualism and Biculturalism increasingly grappled with the difficulties of Canadian self-definition and identity, it is arguable that much of this recourse to analogy and metaphor emerged out of the seeming impossibility of defining a much sought-after national essence. In many respects, Vincent Massey seemed to encapsulate what would become an ongoing Canadian problematic when he wrote in 1948: “A discussion of Canadian unity invites an enquiry into what we are trying to unite: the essence of Canada itself. It is easier to say what Canada is not, than what it is.”³

This essay, then, will attempt a preliminary exploration of the ‘Canadian family’ in two senses — as both the social and ideological foundation of the Canadian nation, and as one metaphorical and discursive source for the construction of Canadian nationhood during a particular historical period.⁴ While both the notion of the family and the concept of Canada tended to evade easy definitions, it would seem that in attempting to capture *what it is*, the discursive interplay of notions of ‘family’ and ‘nation’ served to underscore how a naturalized and idealized meaning of the ‘family’ could provide a metaphorical microcosm for capturing the emotive essence of and

2 *Canadian Welfare*, 32, 3 (15 September 1956). This motto was presented on the front cover of this particular issue of the journal. The accompanying picture of the so-called “happy united family” (comprised typically of smiling parents with two smiling children, one boy and one girl) was to be utilized in the 1956 “united community campaigns.” The caption added that it represented the “ideal towards which their member agencies are working.” *Canadian Welfare* was the official publication of The Canadian Welfare Council.

3 Vincent Massey, *On Being Canadian* (Toronto 1948), 29.

4 This is not to suggest that these two meanings associated with the ‘Canadian family’ surfaced and intersected only during the postwar period. Rather, this essay represents a preliminary exploration of a particular historical ‘moment,’ and is part of a larger and ongoing project which traces the intersection between the notion of the family and the idea of Canadian nationhood from the time of Confederation to the present.

the sense of belonging to the 'nation.'

ONE

The CANADIAN family is Canada recorded in human terms. The snows, the winds, the spaces, the woods and rocks of Canada, have made the Canadian family ... Upon the stability of the family more than on anything else the welfare of the nation depends. (The Canadian Youth Commission, 1947)

In the closing years of World War II, concerns with the problems of postwar reconstruction became what amounted to a national preoccupation.⁵ Haunted by the memories of the economic slump, massive unemployment, and popular unrest of the post-World War I period and the Depression, the primary focus of the countless committees and commissions established in these years⁶ concerned themselves with the possible problems associated with demobilization and the transition from a wartime to a peacetime economy. For political and social advocates of a proposed "nation-wide plan of social security," the concept of reconstruction became inextricably linked with a vision of "national renewal," the building of a "total democracy," and the promises of a "new order" that would "break with the shackles of the old."⁷ Premised on the right to full employment at a decent wage for all, the promises of this new democratic order were cloaked in egalitarian notions of "equality of opportunity" for all citizens, the enjoyment of "freedom from fear and want," and the national aim of ensuring that all men, women and children would be "well nourished in body, mind and spirit." As one M.P. suggested, what seemed to be at stake was a new definition of citizenship: "Every human being that is born into our society has a right to feel that he is welcome in it; that he has a share in Canada; that he is a member of the Canadian team ... as a citizen in his Canada."⁸

One central component of this vision of postwar national renewal involved

5 As Gail Cuthbert Brandt has pointed out, by 1941 "reconstruction ... was once again a national byword; authors expounded on it, politicians promised it, and most Canadians waited impatiently for it." See her, "'Pigeon-Holed and Forgotten': The Work of the Subcommittee on the Post-War Problems of Women, 1943," *Histoire sociale/Social History* 15, 29 (May 1982), 239.

6 According to Ruth Pierson, the proliferation of committees and commissions grew so rapidly that, in 1945, the War Information Board published a directory entitled, *Dominion and Provincial Agencies on Demobilization*. See Ruth Pierson, "'Home Aide': A Solution to Women's Unemployment After World War II," *Atlantis* 2, 2 (Spring 1977), 85.

7 The intention to introduce such a plan was announced in the Governor General's Speech on 28 January 1943 and by Mackenzie King on 3 March 1943. See, *House of Commons Debates* (hereafter *Debates*) (29 January 1943), 2; (3 March 1943), 931. These notions were reiterated repeatedly in the discussions of social security particularly in 1943. See, for example, *Debates* (16 February 1942), 631; (18 February 1943), 514; (11 February 1943), 350; (2 March 1943), 910; (3 March 1943), 932. Also see *Debates* (28 January 1943), 2; (4 February 1943), 128; (11 February 1943), 351, 354; (15 February 1943), 434; (3 March 1943), 933, 995.

8 *Debates* (1 February 1943), 32.

redefining the responsibilities of the state as fundamentally necessary for ensuring the economic security and internal stability of the Canadian family. With the exception of those who, like Charlotte Whitton, argued that the “tragedy and suffering” of the Depression had ultimately served as a source of national strength and had built a “steadier” Canadian character,⁹ most parliamentarians and social commentators agreed that the economic devastation and destitution of countless numbers of rural and urban families during the 1930s had had disastrous effects on the human resources of the nation. For example, declining fertility rates among Canadian mothers had symbolized the diminished status of children as an additional familial burden rather than as a “cherished and precious possession ... greeted with happy expectancy.” Moreover, the high rates of infant and maternal deaths, the threatened physical health of an entire generation, and the subversion of the unemployed male breadwinner’s traditional familial authority were but a few of the many negative consequences associated with the economics of subsistence and reliance on sub-standard municipal relief. In effect, given the extreme economic dislocation of the Depression and the lack of any adequate response by the state in the face of this widespread deprivation, the future welfare of the family signified a central component in the process of redefining the role of the state as protector against the “major economic and social hazards of life.”¹⁰

Despite the enhanced employment opportunities generated by the wartime economy, the requirements of wartime austerity, the imposition of wage controls, and an increasingly critical housing crisis tended to mitigate against any real sense of economic security for many Canadian families. In 1941, one Canadian mother, writing in response to a speech made by an American sociologist urging women to bear more children, seemed to capture some of the personal frustrations associated with wartime motherhood, which she linked to the hopes of the ‘new order’:

If my husband whose wages are just enough to meet the needs of the ones and twos but not enough to cover the requirements of the threes and fours ... is it then really my civic duty to produce these milkless, shoeless little ones? Or isn't it the civic duty of the eminent sociologists and national administrators so to order the social system that I can gladly produce my threes and fours? ... And so we say that when the war is over, we are willing to consider the birthrate only upon our own terms ... For we

9 Charlotte Whitton, “The Baby Bonus is a Dog in the Security Manger,” *Saturday Night* (3 March 1945), 6. Whitton was one of the most important figures in the development of social welfare programmes and the social work profession in Canada, particularly in her capacity as founder and until 1942, as executive director of the Canadian Welfare Council. For a recent biographical discussion of Whitton’s career and particularly of her contradictory attitudes, which reflected an ambiguous combination of liberal feminism and strongly elitist/racist opinions see P.T. Rooke and R.L. Schnell, *No Bleeding Heart: Charlotte Whitton, a Feminist on the Right* (Vancouver 1987).

10 *Debates* (2 March 1943), 909; (5 March 1943), 1020; (11 February 1943), 352; (15 February 1943), 430; (3 March 1943), 934; (4 March 1943), 973-74, 978; The Canadian Youth Commission, *Youth, Marriage and The Family* (Toronto 1947), 37. And, *Debates* (7 January 1944), 2. For an extensive examination of the policies of various levels of government during the Depression, see James Struthers, *No Fault of Their Own: Unemployment and the Canadian Welfare State, 1914-1941* (Toronto 1983).

have had enough of poverty and congestion, of aching backs and swollen feet and of aging before our time. We have had enough of producing children who are cheated of their birthright of good food and good surroundings almost before they are born ... Summon us in equal numbers to yourselves for the planning of a new order that is worthy of the name. Ask us to help in general issues even by dragging in the personal and the 'trivial' (the price of milk, the washing of diapers, the aching feet) ... And if together we can plan world federated societies where hunger and exhaustion and remediable ill-health are unknown and war has become a forgotten evil of the past, then how gladly we will produce the threes and fours ... or even the fives and sixes.¹¹

In addition to ongoing economic constraints, the war itself generated further disruptions which engendered a new series of anxieties. While the "Canadian home" was described as "a shrine to which the thoughts and yearnings of [the] men overseas turn as to a fixed star,"¹² the prolonged separation of spouses had resulted in growing marital estrangement, the perceived proliferation of extra-marital relationships, and an alarming rise in the rates of divorce and legal separations. Combined with what was described as the loosening of the 'social control' associated with stable marital sexual relations, the recruitment of single and then married women into the war industries caused growing unease about the physical effects of the long hours and often dangerous working conditions, especially on the future reproductive capacities of Canadian mothers. Furthermore, the neglect of children due to the increasing number of working mothers, together with poor housing conditions, were considered by some to be the primary causes of rising rates of juvenile delinquency. And finally, the growing economic independence and self-reliance of married women, the perceived relaxation of sexual morals among single youths with the concomitant rise in illegitimacy rates, and the increase in hasty and unstable wartime marriages, had seemingly wreaked havoc on the prospects of future familial stability.¹³ As one press correspondent lamented, "Home life depends on peace. Home life is the first casualty of war."¹⁴

Given this growing unease around the "dark and uncertain future" of the family, it is perhaps not surprising that, amidst the flurry of postwar planning, at least two committees — the government-commissioned but short-lived Subcommittee on the Post-War Problems of Women (1943) and the independent Canadian Youth Commission's Committee on the Family (1943-1947)¹⁵ — were specifically created to

11 Pauline C. Shapiro, "World of Women: A Reply to A Sociologist," *Saturday Night* (2 August 1941), 19.

12 A. Beverley Baxter, "War Damages Family Life," *Maclean's* (15 May 1943), 14.

13 *Youth, Marriage and The Family*, 28-29, 41-6, 51-52, 56-57; Geoffrey Hewelcke, "Marriages Mended," *Maclean's* (15 November 1945), 7, 59. There was also growing concern about the problems that returning servicemen might face in readjusting to family life. See, F.N. Stapleford, "The Hazards of Peace," *Canadian Welfare* (15 October 1944), 3-9; Kathleen M. Jackson, "Back to the Family," *Canadian Welfare* (15 January 1945), 25-30. See also, for example, *Youth, Marriage and The Family*, 28-29; *Commons Debates* (5 March 1943), 999; (18 March 1943), 1383-84; (22 March 1943), 1455-56; (23 March 1943), 1505-06. Also see Bert Beaumont, "National Planning Needed for Canadian Children," *Canadian Welfare* (1 June 1943), 35-7 and Dora Wilensky, "War's Impact on Family Life," *Canadian Welfare* (15 October 1945), 8-16.

investigate and to make recommendations on issues relating to the future of women and the family in the postwar period. What seems most significant about these two inquiries was that both strongly advocated an ideological reconceptualization of the internal dynamics of marital/familial relations, but also tended to stress that economic security remained the fundamental basis for the reconstitution and ongoing stability of the family. And, while each inquiry recommended a broad spectrum of state policies designed to provide the socio-economic conditions necessary for improving and protecting the welfare of the family, this issue became enshrined in the Liberal government's major national family policy initiative — the highly controversial 1944 Family Allowances Act.¹⁶ During this crucial period, when the reassertion of the hegemony of familialism became an issue of central importance, these various discussions of the family served to underscore not only the perceived necessity for redefining marital/familial relationships, but also the seeming absence of a homogeneous entity inscribed in the notion of the 'Canadian family' particularly as an object of state policy. While the terms of reference of the Women's Subcommittee involved an examination of all aspects of postwar problems relating to women, much of the inquiry focused on the potential difficulties that would confront the estimated 1.2 million women, who, as of November 1943, were gainfully employed in various war and civilian economic sectors.

In addressing what it viewed as the different postwar employment and family needs of single women, rural women, married women at home, and married women

15 C. W. Topping, "The Equalitarian Family As A Fundamental Invention," *Canadian Journal of Economics and Political Science* 8, 4 (1942), 595. The rather short-lived subcommittee, appointed in January 1943 and submitting its final report on 30 November 1943, was one of the several subcommittees established by the Advisory Committee on Reconstruction. For a discussion of some of the other subcommittees appointed, see Dennis Guest, "World War II and the Welfare State in Canada," in Allan Moscovitch and Jim Albert (eds.) *The Benevolent State: The Growth of Welfare in Canada*, (Toronto 1987), 205-21. Although the Women's Subcommittee's recommendations were virtually ignored in the House of Commons, Dorise Nielson, M.P., did attempt to raise the issues involved. See, *Debates*, (4 May 1944), 2629-31. For a discussion of the composition and biographical background of the subcommittee members and the reasons for its hasty demise, see Cuthbert Brandt, "'Pigeon-Holed and Forgotten,'" 239-59. The Youth Commission was established in April 1943, and was comprised largely of social workers and members of the Workmen's Compensation Board. Despite an undated interim report, its final report, *Youth, Marriage and The Family*, was not published until 1947. See also, "The Canadian Youth Commission," *Canadian Welfare* (15 June 1943), 12-3.

16 See Canada, Advisory Committee on Reconstruction, *Post-War Problems of Women: Final Report of the Sub-Committee* (1944), 27-34; *Youth, Marriage and The Family*, 190-200. Despite all the controversy revolving around the introduction and speedy passage of the 1944 Family Allowances Act, this aspect has received relatively little scholarly attention. For the most comprehensive discussions, see Brigitte Kitchen, "The Introduction of Family Allowances in Canada," *The Benevolent State: The Growth of Welfare in Canada*, 222-41 and "Wartime Social Reform: The Introduction of Family Allowances," *Canadian Journal of Social Work Education* 7, 1 (1981), 29-54; Dominique Jean, "Family Allowances and Family Autonomy: Quebec Families Encounter the Welfare State, 1945-1955," in Bettina Bradbury (ed.), *Canadian Family History: Selected Readings* (Toronto 1992), 401-37; Jane Ursel, *Private Lives and Public Policy: 100 Years of State Intervention in the Family* (Toronto 1992), 190-198.

employed either on a full or part-time basis, the Subcommittee's recommendations reflected an underlying tension. The explicit recognition that the self-definition and status of women had been profoundly altered by the war was tempered by the perceived requirements of both the postwar economy and the postwar family. In order to overcome these contradictory tendencies and as a compensation for the "work and sacrifice" of women during the war, the committee not only introduced the notions of "choice" and "equality of opportunity" as part of the new ideological vocabulary of women's "full citizenship," but also attempted to redefine the family and especially marital relations on a new ideological basis.¹⁷

At the outset, the Subcommittee emphasized that the "right to choose" should be made available to all categories of women. In the case of single working women, this right not only involved decisions relating to their marital status and choice of vocation, but also meant the enjoyment of "equality of remuneration, working conditions and opportunity for advancement" with men. This egalitarian principle, however, underwent at least two qualifications. Given the envisaged requirements of the postwar labour market, the Subcommittee strongly recommended that single women be 'encouraged' to withdraw from the industrial labour force and undergo retraining to fill critical labour shortages in such undesirable employment sectors as farm labour and domestic service. At the same time, they confidently predicted that a considerable portion of single women would exercise the strong and "normal urge towards marriage, and home, and family life," which, in their view, would "very much simplify the postwar problems of women."¹⁸

This tension between advocating the extension of women's 'citizenship rights' and ultimately relying on the common sense of 'natural inclination' also emerged in the discussion of married women. In this regard, the Subcommittee argued that "the right to choose is not going to operate to make every woman, or even much larger groups of women want to leave their homes for the labour market." As an implicit compensation for those married women who did return to, or remained in the home, the Subcommittee advocated a ideological realignment of marital relations. By appropriating and rearticulating the egalitarian discourse of the new democratic order, the Subcommittee argued that, in the interests of "happier homes and, therefore, a happier democracy," marriage itself should undergo a process of democratization. More specifically, as articulated in the highly popular 1942 Beveridge Report, the concept of "team" or "equal partnership" were to become the defining qualities of postwar marital relations. This ideal of egalitarian marriage, which one Canadian

17 *Post-War Problems of Women*, 7-9. For the most complete discussion of the recruitment of women into wartime industries as well as women's volunteer work during the war, see Ruth Pierson, "They're Still Women After All": *The Second World War and Canadian Womanhood* (Toronto 1986). See also a published report by the chairperson of the Subcommittee, Margaret McWilliams, "Women in the Post-War World," *Canadian Welfare*, 19, 8 (1 March 1944), 3-7, 37-40.

18 In order to achieve this, the Subcommittee made specific recommendations for making rural life more desirable and raising the status of domestic employment to that of a skilled trade. See *Post-War Problems of Women*, 9, 15-19. According to Ruth Pierson, this reflected the middle class bias of the members of the committee, especially in the case of domestic service. See her, "Home Aide," 88-9, 16.

sociologist argued was an important component of the “emancipated family,” tended to offer married woman a new and compensatory ‘subject-position’. Marriage, child-rearing, and housework were to attain the positive status of a vocation “on a par with any other occupation” and equal in value to paid labour. Thus, the Subcommittee concluded:

the homemaker gives a tremendous contribution to the building up of a healthy, happy and efficient Canadian people. It follows that any government which desires to build a true democracy, of which such homes are the foundation, must do everything in its power to create conditions under which such homes can be successfully maintained. Moreover, the homemaker, though classified in the census as not gainfully employed, is engaged in an occupation which has a vital economic value to the community ... The economic value of the wife’s work becomes clear if the cost to the husband of replacing the services rendered by the wife in her purely occupational aspects is kept in mind.¹⁹

In addition, among its many recommendations, the Subcommittee strongly advocated the introduction of a system of family allowances. In their view, such a system would serve several purposes. On the one hand, the provision of monthly allowances would contribute to the achievement of “desirable conditions of family life for children” by mitigating “the poverty arising from the fact that a man’s wage must be based on the product of a man’s labour and not on the size of his family.” At the same time, the Subcommittee stressed its psychological importance, particularly for those working mothers who ‘planned’ to return to their full-time but unpaid occupation as homemakers. In this regard, the payment of family allowances to housewives/mothers would not only alleviate “the mental attitude which may result from the surrender of the double income,” but also would serve as a material recognition of the economic value of their services.²⁰ In 1947, one journalist reiterated this increasing popular notion of the housewife/mother as a ‘national economic asset,’ when she pointed out:

Everyone recognizes that the work of the homemaker is of supreme social importance but few realize its economic value. The housewife is usually regarded as being ‘kept’ by her husband and as the one who spends what he earns. In reality, housewives who assume the major responsibility for household tasks make an important contribution to their families’ real income, and homemaking is perhaps the nation’s major enterprise. A larger number of persons are engaged in the full-time job of homemaking than in any other occupation and the total economic contribution of homemakers exceeds that of the workers in any other single industry.

Meticulously calculating the “dollar” or “replacement” value of a homemaker’s unpaid services, the author noted that even though “the economic value of their work is omitted from estimates of national income,” the work of a housewife had “an

19 Topping, “The Equalitarian Family As A Fundamental Invention,” 602. For a discussion of this concept, see Marianna Valverde, “The Rhetoric of Reform: Tropes and the Moral Subject,” *International Journal of the Sociology of the Law* 18, 1 (1990), 61-73. *Post-War Problems of Women*, 9, 1, 280.

20 *Post-War Problems of Women*, 30, 13.

important bearing on ... the standard of living not only of the family but of the nation.” Indeed, according to her estimates, the full-time housewife’s services were not only worth more economically than she could earn in the paid labour force, but also meant such non-calculable benefits as “more comforts” and “more contentment” for the family.²¹ Although the author did concede that working-class wives often found it financially necessary to enter paid employment, her general position clearly represented a thinly-veiled apologetic favouring full-time homemaking as the preferred occupation for married women. At the same time, however, in this period of domestic retrenchment, the category of ‘housewife/mother’ as both ‘equal partner’ and as ‘gainfully employed’ was undergoing an ideological rearticulation and this rearticulation was a central component in the process of reasserting the hegemony of familialism.

After an extensive four-year study of the Canadian family, the Canadian Youth Commission’s Family Committee addressed the question of postwar familial democracy from a somewhat different perspective. In contrast to the Subcommittee’s report, the Commission’s approach to the postwar family was premised on a highly sentimentalized model of what it viewed as the unique qualities of the Canadian pioneer rural family. With the exception of what was described as the “statistically deviant behaviour” of families in French Canada and among certain unspecified “European immigrant groups,”²² Canada’s particular climatic and geographic features had ultimately moulded the egalitarian nature of Canadian familial relations. In their view, the patriarchal family structure and indeed even inter-familial class differences that characterized “old-world communities” had been rendered virtually obsolete by the democratizing forces of “the snows, the winds, the spaces, the woods and rocks of Canada”:

Few Canadian families are so far removed in time from pioneer conditions that the effects of those rugged conditions cannot still be seen ... in the great spaces of the Prairies and in the backwoods of the North, Canada moulds her families in ways which are her own, wielding the power of climate and space ... Life in Canada changed the family pattern. Frontier conditions introduced no small measure of democracy into family relationships and inter-family relationships. The old-world community had rigidly defined family roles; its influence was now remote, and in the new land the place of each family in the scheme of things became of relatively equal significance. Class distinctions between families were no longer so important to people faced with common hardships and the need for co-operation ... Within the family, no person was unimportant; the work of each was essential in the hard struggle with nature.

Given this nostalgic portrait of both social relations on the frontier and domestic relations within the pioneer rural family, the Commission implicitly suggested that the construction of a substantively *new* egalitarian family ideology was largely unnecessary. Rather, any ideological redefinition of the postwar familial relations

21 Lillian D. Millar, “The Dollar Value of Canada’s Housewives,” *Saturday Night* (8 November 1947), 28-9.

22 *Youth, Marriage and The Family*, 29-34.

merely required translating and rearticulating Canada's natural heritage into an increasingly modern, urban environment. Or, as the Committee argued, this meant "strengthen[ing] the tendency, originating on the frontier, towards more democratic family relationships."²³

For the Family Committee, the (English-Canadian) rural household continued to signify many of the positive qualities and essential values associated with the 'Canadian family tradition'. Despite the recognition that rural life was undergoing transformation, cooperation, partnership, and stability seemingly remained the enduring characteristics of rural family life. While wives and children maintained their role as 'equal partners' in the cooperative family economy, the familial unit also continued to discharge its duties as the primary institution for vocational and educational training, for the protection and transmission of social, cultural and religious values, and for the care of the aged and the infirm. For instance, the familial stability which characterized the agricultural and fishing communities of Prince Edward Island signified something of a statistical ideal, particularly in light of its steady birthrate coupled with the lowest incidents of divorce, legal separations and illegitimacy in the nation.²⁴ Moreover, as one commentator insisted in a 1947 article entitled, "First Aid for the Family", one of the best means of reasserting and strengthening national "family-mindedness" was by making "good old-fashioned" rural life more "attractive." In order to emphasize this point, the author cited the following description of one rural area in the prairie provinces: "There is little juvenile delinquency, but a wholesome and democratic family life, lots of reasonably early marriages, and the young couples are gradually taking over the farms on the edges of their home district and spreading these patterns. There is mighty little divorce in that part of the province!" The author also offered an explicit warning to those particularly young rural families who were contemplating migration to an urban environment, stressing that "when a family moves from farm to city it may take the first long step toward disintegration." For this social commentator, the American-influenced individualistic values as opposed to the family-based Canadian values that characterized the city were synonymous with the high risks of marital and familial disharmony and breakdown. "Only as society is based on the family", he concluded, "and uses all its powers to maintain and strengthen the family, can modern society hope to survive."²⁵

This correlation between the city and marital/familial friction and instability, however, tended to intersect most explicitly in discussions of the working-class family. Usually linked to poor housing conditions and/or shortages, and the persistent anxieties generated by economic insecurity, including the absence of a decent family wage and inadequate social security legislation, the welfare and stability of the working-class family became a central component in the discourse of the 'new social order' and in the policies of the state. For example, amidst the controversy surround-

23 *Youth, Marriage and The Family*, 1-2, 3.

24 *Ibid.*, 5-24. See also, Max Braithwaite, "Born Out of Wedlock," *Maclean's* (15 November 1947), 16, 64-6.

25 Paul Popenoe, "First Aid for the Family," *Maclean's* (1 May 1947), 19, 45, 47.

ing the implementation of the Family Allowances Act in 1944, in which both supporters and opponents of the legislation vied for the legitimate right to speak on behalf of the interests of Canadian children, the working-class family as a variously-defined object of a national family policy figured predominantly.²⁶

The legislation was premised on the declared principle that the state had a “moral obligation” not only to contribute to ensuring the minimum well-being of children, but also to elevate and preserve the standard of family life rather than leave it to the “accident of individual incomes.” This meant that every Canadian child regardless of class, racial/ethnic or religious background was to enjoy “equality of opportunity in the battle of life.”²⁷ According to the Liberal government, however, the main beneficiaries of family allowances would be those rural, and particularly working-class families, whose family wage was insufficient to provide bare necessities and who were ineligible for tax exemptions based on the number of dependents.²⁸ Consistently emphasizing that this supplement to the family wage constituted a right, as opposed to a form of charity, and thus, marked the beginnings of greater social equality, both liberal and social-democratic parliamentarians tended to welcome this extension of middle-class familial rights and benefits to the working-class family.²⁹

While justifications for this legislation were veiled in the language of democratic

- 26 See for example, *Debates* (1 February 1944), 95-6; (26 July 1944), 5432; *Youth, Marriage and Family*, 14. It should be noted, however, that much of the debate both in the House of Commons and in the press revolved not only around constitutional problems and the question of whether or not the federal government was invading provincial autonomy, but also the usual bickering about the costs of implementing and administering this piece of legislation. In Parliament, the strongest opponent of the Act was the Progressive Conservative Party and outside Parliament, Charlotte Whitton and C.E. Silcox led an agitated campaign in pamphlets and in the press denouncing the Act. See Charlotte Whitton, *Canada Must Choose, Baby Bonuses: Dollars or Sense?* (Toronto 1945); “Are Family Grants the Answer We Need?,” *Saturday Night* (19 August 1944), 6-7; “Must Review Means as Well as Ways in Welfare Plans,” *Saturday Night* (24 February 1945), 6; “The Baby Bonus is a Dog in the Security Manger,” *Saturday Night* (3 March 1945), 6-7; “Will Child Bonus Cripple Provincial Revenues?,” *Saturday Night* (10 March 1945), 5; “Baby Bonus Plan Involves Waste and Duplication,” *Saturday Night* (17 March 1945), 6-7; “Other Measures Are More Urgent Than Baby Bonus,” *Saturday Night* (24 March 1945), 5; “We’re Off! To Social Security Confusion,” *Saturday Night* (31 March 1945), 10; C. E. Silcox, *Canada Must Choose: The Revenge of the Cradles* (Toronto 1945); “Are Family Allowances Unconstitutional?,” *Saturday Night* (7 October 1944), 10-11. See also, G. C. Whittaker, “Ottawa’s Pundits Shaking Heads Over Mr. King and Baby Bonus,” *Saturday Night* (1 July 1944), 10.
- 27 See for example, *Debates* (16 February 1942), 631; (28 January 1944), 27; (22 June 1944), 4052; (25 July 1944), 5329, 5331, 5356; (27 January 1944), 2; (25 July 1944), 5336; (26 July 1944), 5369, 5420.
- 28 According to the Marsh Report, a minimum annual budget of \$1,471 was required for a family of five in 1941. It was found, however, that 46 percent of male breadwinners received an income of less than \$1000. At the same time, the full tax allowance allocated to middle-class parents was \$108 per child. One-third of families received full tax benefits; one-third of families received partial benefits; and those families whose income was under \$1200 received no benefits. See for example, *Debates* (25 July 1944), 5368, 5329-31. See also Margaret Gould, *Family Allowances in Canada: Facts versus Fiction* (Toronto 1945), 2-5.
- 29 *Debates* (25 July 1944), 5329, 5335, 5356, 5358, 5367; (26 July 1944), 5399, 5409, 5413.

egalitarianism and the perceived humanitarian necessity for the “strong to assist the weak,” it was also legitimated by purely economic considerations. As several Liberal MPs argued, the provision of family allowances could best be interpreted as a sound investment both in the physical, mental, and moral development of the human assets of the nation, and as a payment to the working-class family for its services to the state. In the former case, the working-class family as a unit of reproduction would not only be assisted materially in building a “better citizenry,” but also a more “healthy, intelligent, adaptable, and productive” rising generation of workers, that would ultimately enhance the efficiency of Canada’s industrial economy. In the latter case, by narrowing the gap between the male breadwinner’s earning power and his familial responsibilities and especially by enhancing the consumptive capacity of working-class families, industrial production and employment would stabilize and expand, wages would increase, and the major sources of labour unrest would largely diminish.³⁰

On the question of wages, however, many sectors of organized labour remained skeptical, particularly in light of the introduction of wartime wage controls. Initially opposing the bill, the Trades and Labour Congress, for example, argued that the provision of family allowances would ultimately be utilized by employers as a substitute for “paying adequate wages to enable families to live in decency and health.” And, although the CCF supported the bill, parliamentary members repeatedly insisted that the family allowances scheme should be regarded as only the initial stage in the development of a more comprehensive social security programme, and that it should not be utilized “either to depress the prices of agricultural products, the floor under commodities, or to depress wages.”³¹

For the most adamant opponents of the legislation, including the Progressive Conservatives and social welfare advocates like Charlotte Whitton and C.E. Silcox, the payment of family allowances not only meant undue government intervention into what ‘God and Nature’ intended to be the sole responsibility and burden of parenthood, but also constituted a misplaced and open invitation to promiscuous working-class spending. This did not imply, they insisted, that they did not support the principle of better social and welfare provisions for enhancing the well-being of children and family life among the so-called ‘masses’. In their view, however, offering indiscriminate “cash hand-outs” to working-class parents without obligations, without a means test, or the administrative machinery to “‘screen out’ trust-worthy from incompetent or culpable parents,” all amounted to unsound social

30 *Debates* (28 January 1944), 11; (25 July 1944), 5331-33, 5336-37, 5368-69, 5393; (26 July 1944), 5394-95, 5399, 5420. See also Gould, *Family Allowances*, 12-13, 35-8.

31 “News from Parliament Hill,” *Trades and Labor Congress Journal*, 23, 7 (July 1944), 28. By June 1945, however, just prior to the mailing of the first cheques in July, the journal was publishing ads reminding families to register. See *Trades and Labor Congress Journal* (June 1945), 9 and “Family Allowances,” *Trades and Labor Congress Journal*, 24, 7 (July 1945), 40. The Canadian Congress of Labour took a more favourable stand towards the legislation, arguing that by providing assistance to working-class families, it would prove beneficial to the trade union movement particularly during industrial conflicts. See Gould, *Family Allowances*, 17-18; *Debates* (25 July 1944), 5350, 5347; (1 February 1944), 80, 95; (7 February 1944), 228.

planning and the ultimate destruction of the incentive to work. Premised on the assumption that working-class parents were tendentially irresponsible, this oppositional group claimed that, in many cases, working-class parents failed to exercise adequate control of their reproductive 'urges', especially in relation to their economic capacities. At the same time, there was simply little guarantee that working-class children would benefit from the monthly allocation of the so-called 'diaper doles'. As one Conservative M.P. argued, this would be the case particularly with those "shiftless", "lazy" and "unscrupulous" parents who would spend the allowances unwisely and then become chronically dependent on further government charity.³²

Not surprisingly, in the House of Commons debates, the CCF protested against these disparaging suppositions by pointing out that they constituted nothing less than an insult to the industrious labouring classes and the humble poor.³³ The Liberal M.P.s, on the other hand, tended to defend the working-class family not so much by emphasizing its trustworthiness, but rather by stressing that the instinctual love and protective feelings of parents for their children as well as the possibilities of a more educated parenthood would mitigate against the abuse of government funds.³⁴ In the end, the legislation reached an implicit compromise in which the construction of gender became indelibly encoded in the Act. By uncoupling the controversial notion of the 'working-class parent', the final provisions of the legislation specified that, whenever possible, the mother rather than father would be the direct recipient of the payments. This provision was premised on the suggestion that the mother, as primarily responsible for the maintenance and care of children, could be relied upon to be inherently more responsible.³⁵ While these perceived innate qualities of motherhood could be depended upon in the majority of cases, the legislation also introduced an additional safeguard which provided for close provincial and municipal surveillance of working-class families in order to eliminate any flagrant abuse.³⁶

32 Silcox, *Canada Must Choose: The Revenge of the Cradles*, 2, 12-15, 27; Whitton, *Canada Must Choose, Baby Bonuses: Dollars or Sense?*, 14-17 and Whitton, "Are Baby Grants the Answer We Need?," 6. As one writer in *Canadian Forum* noted with regard to Whitton, "... if you listen to her for a short time you soon discover that her real objection to them is that she doesn't trust working-class parents to spend their income with any sense of responsibility." "Family Allowance Feud," *Canadian Forum* 24, 284 (September 1944), 123. See also *Debates* (29 June 1944) 4339, (25 July 1944), 5335, 5341-42, 5349, 5363, 64-65. Gould, *Family Allowances*, 13-15.

33 See for example, *Debates* (25 July 1944), 5349.

34 *Debates* (25 July 1944), 5335, 5360, 5400-01. For example, in Mackenzie King's words, "There is no instinct of man or beast stronger than the parental instinct. All nature tells us that animal life seeks to cherish and protect its own. Nothing is truer of human beings than that mothers and fathers think first of their children and how they can give their children opportunities in life better than they themselves have had." See also, Gould, *Family Allowances*, 7-8.

35 *Debates* (25 July 1944), 5349, 5358; (25 July 1944), 5401-02. As Elizabeth Wilson has pointed out in the British context, "The welfare state is not just a set of services, it is also a set of ideas about society, about the family, and - not least important - about women, who have a centrally important role within the family, as its linchpin." See her *Women and the Welfare State* (London 1977), 9.

36 Subsequently, there were periodic requests for statistics on how many cases of misuse were under investigation. See for example, *Debates* (26 May 1947), 3419; (27 March 1947),

On one level, then, the family allowances debate centred around the potential implications of supplementing the family wage, which intersected with varied assumptions about the working-class family and working-class motherhood. But, in many respects, the *real* crux of much of the controversy revolved around the somewhat dubious claim that the legislation was ‘foreign’ for Canada because the nation’s population, as compared to countries such as Britain and France, did not comprise a homogeneous “organic unity.”³⁷ As a result, the introduction of family allowances was considered nothing less than a potential threat to national unity. This component of the debate itself operated on several levels. As the Leader of the Opposition argued, the unsuitability of granting monthly payments to all families on an equitable graduated basis rested on the absence of any unitary and identifiable needs among different Canadian families. In a curious twist of logic, he pointed out that this denied the “basic principles of social justice”:

Such justice calls not for the mass treatment ... but for treating ... the needs of families differently as they are different. The needs of a family in the winter in my part of Ontario are different from those in the far north. Families in a teeming slum and families in the Okanagan; families in the eastern townships and families in Cape Breton’s mining or fishing villages, have very different needs. This scheme lumps them all together and gives the same grant to all.³⁸

Charlotte Whitton, on the other hand, promoting the slogan, “intelligent maternity and responsible paternity,” was principally concerned with the question of eugenics. In her view, family allowances would merely encourage “indiscriminate breeding” among the the unfit and the feeble-minded, whose relation to, in her words, “social disease, illegitimacy, degeneration, promiscuity, and common law marriages is common knowledge.” But her most vociferous attack was reserved for certain “vicious and irresponsible parents” living in unspecified yet evidently economically depressed areas which she termed the “hinterlands”:

There are large tracts in the hinterlands of every Province, except Prince Edward Island, wherein ... children are being bred and reared too often at the standard of brute creation ... Slowly progressive deterioration is overtaking both the land and the people thereon ... The cancer is not susceptible to individual treatment and affects tens of thousands of children in the aggregate. The automatic mailing of cheques or remitting of actual cash to families of such type and areas is equivalent to pouring public money into a cesspool which will enlarge and seep through the poisoning of the life of those stable sections of the population upon which it will thrive and batten.³⁹

But perhaps the central focus of the whole controversy revolved around what was described as the “fashionable” and extraordinary “natural virility” of the French-Canadian family. In this regard, the notion that national unity was at stake was

1779.

37 Silcox, *Canada Must Choose: The Revenge of the Cradles*, v; Gould, *Family Allowances*, 1-2.

38 *Debates* (25 July 1944), 5343.

39 Whitton, *Canada Must Choose, Baby Bonuses: Dollars or Sense? 1*; “Are Family Grants the Answer We Need?,” 6-7; *Canada Must Choose, Baby Bonuses: Dollars or Sense?*, 20-21.

premised on the argument that English Canada, and especially Ontario, would be forced to bear the tax burden and subsidize Quebec's much higher proportion of large families.⁴⁰ Comparing French-Canadian parents to "the cuckoo which lays its eggs in the nests of more decent and self-respecting birds," C.E. Silcox suggested that, if Quebec's own "distinctive cultural theories create the problem; their own remedies should solve it ... as a community we must work for what we get and we must firmly squelch those individuals and groups who try to sponge on the rest of us."⁴¹ Or, as one journalist emphasized, calculated in purely economic terms, the scheme was sure to generate resentment in English Canada, which could have negative consequences for the Liberals in the impending federal election:

Total bonuses of six or seven hundred dollars or even a thousand dollars a year will be common in Quebec whereas the heads of families of two or three children in the English-speaking part of the population would be getting at most only two or three hundred dollars. The proposed reduction in the rates of allowance for families of more than four children are not regarded as sufficient to sweeten the proposition for parents of the average size English-speaking family.⁴²

The recourse to the issue of national unity also constituted a thinly-veiled yet perhaps more discreet means of resurrecting the bogey of French-Canadian fertility rates and the fears of 'race suicide'. One Conservative M.P., however, was less than discreet. Referring to Hitler's campaign to raise the birthrate in Nazi Germany, he stressed what he viewed to be the possible implications of allocating monthly payments to Canadian families:

If we are to encourage large families, then I think care should be taken that they are eugenically of the kind that will be most likely to improve our race. This bill will result in many cases in bonusing families who have been unwilling to defend their country. May I venture to suggest that our object should be quality rather than quantity.⁴³

Similarly, C.E. Silcox, armed with statistics from the latest census records, was quick to point out that while the birthrates of the English, Irish, and Scottish populations showed a marked decline, fertility rates in Quebec were on the increase. Furthermore, given that family allowances would "be used to push even higher the fertility of French Canadian women," and given that Quebec had supposedly launched various 'colonization' strategies in other provinces, he predicted that as early as 1961, Canada would be predominantly Roman Catholic, and by 1971, predominantly French.⁴⁴ Although the 'race suicide' hysteria did not wholly focus on French-Canadians but also included Central Europeans and the Japanese,⁴⁵ taken together, family allow-

40 Silcox, *Canada Must Choose: The Revenge of the Cradles*, 18-19 and *Debates* (25 July 1944), 5342, 5363-65; Silcox, *Canada Must Choose: The Revenge of the Cradles*, 18; Gould, *Family Allowances*, 10-12.

41 Silcox, *Canada Must Choose: The Revenge of the Cradles*, 15 and Silcox, "Are Family Allowances Unconstitutional?," 10-11.

42 Whittaker, "Ottawa's Pundits Shaking Heads Over Mr. King and Baby Bonus," 10.

43 *Debates* (25 July 1944), 5365.

44 Silcox, *Canada Must Choose: The Revenge of the Cradles*, 19-22.

45 George F. Davidson, "Family Allowances: An Installment on Social Security, Part II,"

ances were perceived as inevitably leading to the economic, social, and cultural submersion of Anglo-Canadian Protestant sectors of the population.⁴⁶

Not surprisingly, at least one Quebec M.P. accused those English-Canadians who vented such “narrow-mindedness and intolerance” of exacerbating and fomenting greater national disunity, while another stressed that large Quebec families served as the central institutional mechanism for the ongoing cultural survival of French Canada.⁴⁷ In general, however, many participants in this debate repeatedly stressed that it would require more than an allowance of five dollars or eight dollars a month to stimulate drastic increases in birthrates among any sector of the Canadian population.⁴⁸ And, one writer even concluded that rather than generating heightened national disunity, the family allowances scheme, by allocating payments to mothers on an equitable basis, would ultimately promote a “feeling of kinship between all parts of the country and all groups.”⁴⁹

If, indeed, the Family Allowances Act was part of the campaign to reconstitute, stabilize, and strengthen the postwar family in general and the working-class family in particular, the heated controversy surrounding its implementation became riddled with various contradictory assumptions. These assumptions not only revolved around the nature of the working-class family, but also around one seemingly essential difference between the English- and French-Canadian family. In effect, the debate tended to underscore the difficulties of introducing a Canadian national family policy given the very economic and cultural diversity of Canada’s ‘national family’. Needless to say, the furor surrounding the legislation seemed to subside after the issuance of the first allotments in July 1945.⁵⁰ At the same time, however, the French-Canadian family did remain the subject of some, albeit less heated, discussion and interest.

The Canadian Youth Commission’s Family Committee, for example, pointed out

Canadian Welfare (1 September 1944), 9. This author wrote a three-part series in *Canadian Welfare* weighing the pros and cons of the legislation. See also, *Canadian Welfare* (15 July 1944), 2-6; (15 October 1944), 11-17.

46 Silcox, *Canada Must Choose: The Revenge of the Cradles*, 22, 26; Whitton, *Canada Must Choose, Baby Bonuses: Dollars or Sense*, 35-39.

47 *Debates* (25 July 1944), 5370; (3 February 1944), 175. It should also be noted that Quebec had studied the possibility of introducing family allowances in the late 1920s, especially as a means to alleviate the economic hardships of large working-class families. In the end, however, Quebec’s Social Insurance Commission reported against it. See Leon Lebel, *The Problem of The Large Family in Canada: Its Solution - Family Allowances* (Montreal 1928). See also a more recent feminist reinterpretation of the whole ‘revenge of the cradles’ issue in Marie Lavigne, “Feminist Reflections on the Fertility of Women in Québec,” in Roberta Hamilton and Michele Barrett (eds.), *The Politics of Diversity* (London 1986), 303-321.

48 See for example, Gould, *Family Allowances*, 9-10, 15-16; Davidson, “Family Allowances: An Installment on Social Security, Part II,” 7-10.

49 Gould, *Family Allowances*, 38; 24-25.

50 In one assessment ten years later, R. H. Parkinson argued that on the whole, the legislation had had beneficial results. See his “Ten Years of Family Allowances,” *Canadian Welfare* (1 November 1955), 195-200. See also Mae Fleming, “Family Allowances in Canada: Interim Report on its Effects,” *Canadian Welfare* (1 December 1946), 11-12. The Trades and Labor Congress took a similarly favourable position. See “Family Allowances: 10th Anniversary,” *Trades and Labor Congress Journal* (August 1955), 32-3.

that Quebec families were a sufficiently distinct cultural entity to warrant “special consideration.” Apart from emphasizing the higher fertility rates, particularly among rural Catholic French-Canadians, and the generally low incidents of illegitimacy and divorce, the Family Committee stressed that one of the main distinguishing features between the French-Canadian and the English-Canadian family was rooted in the traditional patriarchal structure and strong extended kinship ties of the former, as opposed to the democratic and egalitarian relationships, and the conjugal autonomy, of the latter.⁵¹ In subsequent decades, however, some family sociologists increasingly began to emphasize that the internal dynamics of the French-Canadian family and kinship system were neither traditionally patriarchal nor inherently egalitarian, but rather highly matrifocal. In their view, this was exemplified not only in the central figure of the French-Canadian mother, but also in the dominant position or even ‘benign dictatorship’ of the French-Canadian grandmother.⁵²

English-Canadian discussions of the ‘otherness’ and culturally distinct qualities of the French-Canadian family were not solely limited to scholarly investigations or sociological studies. Rather, many of the seemingly entrenched assumptions surrounding what was perceived as the relatively unchanging nature of Quebec family life were perpetuated in the national press in the 1950s and the early 1960s. In 1957, for instance, the 65,000-strong, “pious” and “highly prolific” Tremblay clan, that laid claim to having the “biggest single family tree in the world,” captured national attention. While the 6,000 members of the clan had gathered in Chicoutimi for a one-day family convention, the journalist, who reported the story, was principally interested in Rosa Tremblay. Somewhat reminiscent of the portrayal of Elzire Dionne, the mother of the famous Dionne quintuplets, Rosa Tremblay was not only described as both a fervent Catholic and a devoted wife, she also symbolized the French-Canadian mother who had managed to break virtually all maternity records:

Rosa Tremblay, the plumpish, apple-cheeked wife of Paul Emile Tremblay of Alma, Quebec, is typical in many ways of the average Tremblay mother. Rosa has achieved unique distinction by giving birth to seven sets of twins and three single babies in just over ten years - or more children in less time than any other woman in Canada. She is thirty-four, and her penchant for twin births is unprecedented in modern medical annals ... Most French Canadians are familiar with large families, though, and they tend to ignore the fact that Rosa's case has made medical history.⁵³

51 *Youth, Marriage and The Family*, 6, 24-34.

52 See for example, Frederick Elkin, *The Family in Canada: An Account of Present Knowledge and Gaps in Knowledge About Canadian Families* (Ottawa 1964), 64-72; Colette Moreaux, “The French-Canadian Family,” Philippe Garigue, “French-Canadian Kinship and Urban Life,” and Ralph Piddington, “A Study of French-Canadian Kinship,” in K. Ishwaran (ed.) *The Canadian Family* (Toronto 1971), 126-47; 421-33; 448-70; Monica Boyd, “English-Canadian and French-Canadian Attitudes Toward Women: Results of Canadian Gallop Polls,” *Journal of Comparative Family Studies* 6, 2 (Autumn 1975), 153-169, especially, 153; Charles Hobart, “Egalitarianism After Marriage: An Attitude Study of French- and English-speaking Canadians,” in Marylee Stephenson (ed.) *Women in Canada* (Toronto 1973), 138-56; Caroline Pestieau, “Women in Quebec,” in Gwen Matheson (ed.) *Women in the Canadian Mosaic* (Toronto 1976), 57-69.

53 Antony Ferry, “Rosa Tremblay and her Seven Sets of Twins,” *Maclean's* (28 September

Furthermore, as exemplified by a 1963 article portraying the rustic village of Saint-Omer, written at a time when many commentators tended to agree that the French-Canadian family was in the process of more closely approximating English-Canadian 'norms,' the ongoing interest in Quebec's rural parish and habitant family life seemed to remain relatively persistent. For example, when one Saint-Omer farmer was asked how many children he had in his family, he replied, "Only ten. With only one wife, you know, it's the best that can be done."⁵⁴ But perhaps one of the strongest statements indicating the image of French Canada that continued to predominate in the minds of many English-speaking Canadians as late as the mid-1960s, was the conclusions drawn in the Royal Commission on Bilingualism and Biculturalism's preliminary report. After the completion of its first nation-wide regional public hearings in 1964, the Commission suggested that the construction of French Canada as the 'generalized other', as a largely unchanging nineteenth-century rural Catholic society with all the concomitant familial patterns, was far from uncommon in English-speaking Canada.⁵⁵

Despite the relatively persistent assumptions and images constructed around the French-Canadian family, by the late 1940s, what increasingly emerged out of all the diverse and often contradictory meanings surrounding and inscribed in the whole notion of the 'Canadian family' was a preoccupation with what was termed the 'modern family.'⁵⁶ In most respects, it could be argued that, by the 1950s and the early 1960s, the defining features of this familial category had become synonymous with the common sense and normative notion of *the* family.

According to the Youth Commission's Family Committee, the modern family was not only characterized by 'internal familial democracy' and 'equal partnership' between husbands and wives, but also had lost or was in the process of surrendering most of its traditional economic, social, and cultural responsibilities to various external private agencies and especially to the expanding public institutions of the state. As the modern family was progressively stripped of its traditional functions, its

1957), 19. See Mariana Valverde, "Representing childhood: The multiple fathers of the Dionne quintuplets," in Carol Smart (ed.) *Regulating Womanhood: Historical Essays on Marriage, Motherhood and Sexuality* (London 1992), 119-46 and Ferry, 19.

54 Pierre de Bellefeuille, "A portrait of the Quebec the quiet revolution hasn't touched," *Maclean's* (2 September 1963), 18-19, 73-6.

55 Canada, *A Preliminary Report of the Royal Commission on Bilingualism and Biculturalism: Preliminary Report* (Ottawa 1965), 79-80. Moreover, at the Montreal public hearing, Mr. O'Hearn of the *Montreal Star* tried to convince the Commissioners that, "at least what is being written and published in other parts of Canada about Quebec today is not the old 'habitant' stuff." In response, Commissioner Gagnon emphasized that, "you still find people, some in Ontario and some in the western provinces who still believe that, you know." Submission of the *Montreal Star*, Montreal Public Hearing (16 March 1965), 1110.

56 The so-called 'modern family' also had a subcategory, the suburban family and Crestwood Heights, a new model suburb built in Toronto, became the subject of one of the first sociological studies of the Canadian family. See John R. Seeley, R. Alexander Sim, and Elizabeth W. Loosley, *Crestwood Heights: A Study of the Culture of Suburban Life* (New York 1956). For a recent discussion of suburbia, see Veronica Strong-Boag, "Home Dreams: Women and the Suburban Experiment in Canada, 1945-60," *Canadian Historical Review* 72, 4 (December 1991), 471-504.

primary role and indeed, its 'essence' became almost exclusively interlinked with the provision of "close affectionate relationships, personal ties, happiness of belonging and being loved."⁵⁷ In effect, as many family commentators increasingly argued, the growing impersonalized environment of the 'modern age' had rendered the natural and core relationships of marriage and parenthood of fundamental importance. And, ensuring the preservation of these emotional ties, which now served "as chief guarantee of family solidarity" and the essential basis of the "sound, harmonious family," became one of the central responsibilities of various private and public institutions.

This ideological construction of the prescribed 'essence' of the modern family was perhaps best articulated in Governor-General Vanier's message to Canada's first National Conference on the Family in 1964, a conference described in the press as "the biggest family bull session in Canadian history":

Many years of observation, experience and study have convinced my wife and me that happy and united families make a happy and united community ... Parents, united by ties of affection and devoid of self-interest ... plant the first seeds of love, generosity and selflessness and thus fashion and guide youth on the way to becoming citizens devoted to noble causes for the common good.⁵⁸

Given this increasingly idealized notion of the family, it is perhaps not surprising that a growing army of experts, including, above all, social workers, child psychologists, marriage counsellors, and family life educators increasingly emerged between the late 1940s and the early 1960s. Espousing a preventative policy against marital/familial breakdown, they supplied a wealth of advice on the requirements of stable marriages, the necessity for internal familial communication, and on how mothers were to raise their children 'more democratically.'⁵⁹ Moreover, one writer in *Food For Thought's* special 1951 issue on parent education also emphasized the fundamental national importance of democratic familial relations:

Probably the largest groups of adults in Canada united by a common bond are *parents* ... there is no form of adult education more important for the future ... We believe the democratic form of government to be the best one yet evolved on this planet. Most adults in the democracies of today were raised in dictatorship homes ... There is ground for believing that if the next generation can learn self-control by democratic methods in their youth, they may be able to do a better job at controlling the destiny

57 *Youth, Marriage and The Family*, vii, ix, 15-29, 33-4, 82. See also C.W. Topping, "The Equalitarian Family As A Fundamental Invention," 595-605.

58 Christina McCall Newman, "Vanier's Legacy: The Biggest Family Bull Session in Canadian History," *Maclean's* (October 19, 1963), 3-4. "A Message from the Governor-General on The Canadian Conference on the Family," *Canadian Welfare* (May-June 1964), 97.

59 See for example, George Kisker, "Why You Fight With Your Wife/Husband," *Maclean's* (1 August 1947), 7, 36-8; Marjorie L. Moore, "Safeguarding the Family," *Canadian Welfare* (15 January 1949), 74-6; "You Too Can Be a Perfect Parent," *Maclean's* (15 March 1951), 10-11, 37; Muriel Duckworth, "Why Educate Parents?," *Food For Thought* (November 1951), 4-8; K. Phyllis Burns, "What's Happening to Canada's Children?," *Canadian Welfare* (15 June 1955), 114-19; Jane Beatty, "Carrot River Looks at Modern Marriage," *Food For Thought* 16, 3 (December 1955), 104-08; V. Lorne Stewart, "Family Breakdown," *Canadian Welfare* (15 June 1957), 59-64.

of nations.⁶⁰

And, indeed, as the Family Committee had predicted, sound marriages and educated motherhood/parenthood had increasingly become nothing short of a “skilled trade.”⁶¹

During the postwar period, this process of increasingly constructing the notion of the family around a seemingly definable and essential core not only tended to facilitate the ideological reassertion of familial hegemony after the disruptions of the Depression and the Second World War, but also served to obscure the unequal gender relations that persisted within the institution of marriage and the family. Thus, suggesting that the postwar ideology of familialism was inscribed with such idealized concepts as ‘equal partnership’ and ‘familial democracy,’ which became interlinked with the notion of the ‘happy, united family’, does not mean perpetuating the myth of the family as a ‘haven in a heartless world’. Nor does it imply that gender relations and the unequal power relations between husbands and wives were fundamentally altered by the war. Rather, what it does intimate is that the ‘retreat to domesticity’ that characterized the postwar period was by no means an unambiguous process.⁶²

According to Ruth Pierson, for example, one of the greatest anxieties that emerged during the war was the fear of “women slamming the door on domestic dependence and assailing the segregation of jobs by sex.” Underlying this fear was the even greater anxiety that women would achieve sexual independence outside the parameters of marital/familial relations. In this regard, the government’s steady withdrawal of the childcare services and the income tax incentives that had facilitated the wartime labour participation of working mothers, and the simultaneous introduction of family allowances, clearly contributed to the retreat to the domestic sphere during the immediate postwar period.⁶³ Despite these factors, however, that housewives and mothers were offered the promise and the recognition that they were not only a ‘national asset,’ but also members of a ‘team’ or an ‘equal partnership’ — notions that were subsequently perpetuated both in the family literature and in mass media images of the ‘happy housewife consumer’⁶⁴ — became central components of the ideological package of domestic retrenchment. Moreover, given that the ideological construction of the family became cloaked in the discourse of postwar egalitarianism, it is perhaps not surprising that when Betty Friedan, in her book, *The Feminine*

60 “Our Subject,” *Food For Thought* 12, 2 (November 1951), 1.

61 *Youth, Marriage, and The Family*, 162.

62 One of the best feminist investigations of this transitional period is Denise Riley, “‘The Free Mothers’: pronatalism and working women in industry at the end of the last war in Britain,” *History Workshop* 11 (Spring 1981), 59-118.

63 Pierson, “*They’re Still Women After All*,” 20-21, 48-61. For a discussion of these issues, also see Susan Prentice, “Workers, Mothers, Reds: Toronto’s Postwar Daycare Fight,” *Studies in Political Economy* 30 (Autumn 1989), 115-41.

64 There have been several studies done on shifting media images from the war to the postwar period. See Yvonne Mathews-Klein, “How they saw us: Images of Women in National Film Board Films of the 1940s and 1950s,” *Atlantis* 4, 2 (1979), 20-33; M. Susan Bland, “Henrietta the Homemaker, and Rosie the Riveter: Images of Women in Advertising in *Maclean’s Magazine*, 1939-50,” *Atlantis* 8, 2 (Spring 1983), 61-86; Gertrude Joch Robinson, “The Media and Social Change: Thirty Years of Magazine Coverage of Women and Work (1950-1977),” *Atlantis* 8, 2 (Spring 1983), 87-111

Mystique (1963), sought to demystify gender relations within the family and to explicate women's domestic subordination and economic dependency, these aspects of women's oppression were described as "the problem that has no name."⁶⁵

At the same time, this conception of the family both as a privatized collective entity based on an assumed mutuality of interests, and as the natural and essential source of affective ties and a sense of belonging, also became an ideological feature that could potentially be shared by all families regardless of differentiations based on class and race/ethnicity. With the partial exception of the French-Canadian family, at least prior to the Quiet Revolution, one key distinction among families in much of the family literature was premised largely on the indices of 'harmony' or 'break-down'. And, as the following section will attempt to demonstrate, it was these particular definitions of the family that became the discursive source of the marital/familial metaphors that sought to articulate the various meanings associated with Canadian 'nationhood' and with issues related to national dis/unity and to forging a national identity in the postwar period. This metaphorical intersection between the private and the political perhaps surfaced most explicitly in the parliamentary discussions surrounding the 1946 Canadian Citizenship Act and during the nationwide tours of the Royal Commission of Bilingualism and Biculturalism in the early 1960s.

TWO

I say, let us extract from the English and French characteristics and from any other culture, whatever is good in them, to achieve a distinctive, Canadian mentality — remembering ... that in order to form one big Canadian family we must include not only the French, the English, but all other nationalities. (*House of Commons Debates*, 5 April 1946)

The Canadian Citizenship Act of 1946 was literally 'born' amidst a patriotic flourish of familial discourse. As both the symbol and substance of Canada's greater sense of status and nationhood after the Second World War, familial metaphors were invoked not only to capture Canada's ongoing ties with and membership in the "British family of nations,"⁶⁶ but also to define the sense of 'familial unity' that was to become inscribed in the notion of a distinct Canadian citizenship. For example, in his opening remarks during the second reading of the bill, the Secretary of State emphasized that its intention was not only to provide "an unambiguous definition of the status of Canadian citizenship," but also that the legislation ultimately signified Canada's "aspirations as a nation for the future":

For the national unity of Canada and for the future and greatness of this country, it is felt to be of the utmost importance that all of us, new Canadians or old, have a consciousness of a common purpose and common interests as Canadians; that all of

65 Betty Friedan, *The Feminine Mystique* (New York 1963), 11.

66 See for example, *Debates* (5 April 1946), 591.

us be able to say with pride and say with meaning: 'I am a Canadian citizen' there is no finer club in the world so far as we are concerned than the club that I would characterize as the Canadian family.

In the subsequent parliamentary debates around this declared principle of the Act, both English- and French-Canadian politicians tended to agree that this new symbol of Canada's national identity would contribute to the "crystallization of Canadian nationhood," an enhanced sense of familial "oneness," and even, as one M.P. suggested, the creation of a distinct "Canadian soul."⁶⁷ At the same time, despite these shared perceptions of what arguably amounted to a newly-defined national 'we,' at least two divergent assumptions were articulated in relation to the underlying basis of the Canadian 'national family'.

Several English-Canadian M.P.s, for instance, repeatedly stressed that the constitution of a distinct Canadian citizenship was best understood as inextricably linked with forging a "homogeneous" and "unhyphenated" national community. Premised on the suggestion that "hyphenated" or "ersatz" Canadianism was synonymous with the absence of an appropriate sense of national family-mindedness, they envisioned a nation free of all "unfortunate national quarrels" and of all "clashing differences," be they on the regional, provincial, or ethno-cultural level. For example, as the Secretary of State pointed out, what was fundamentally necessary was to forge a sense of "national unity out of diversity":

If there is one thing from which we in Canada have suffered, to the detriment of this magnificent country, it is from a feeling of divisiveness—lack of that fervent and urgent unity that can make a people work together as a great community with conviction that the welfare of all is the goal of their effort. It is not enough to be a good "Bluenose" or a good Ontarian or a good Albertan. Sectional difference and sectional interests must be overcome if we are to do our best for Canada . . . No matter where we come from or what our origins, French, English, Scandinavian, Scottish, Ukrainian, Irish or whatever else, one thing at least we can all be, and that is Canadians.

Another M.P. echoed this sentiment when he stated that, "citizenship means ninety per cent of interests that we have in common comes ahead of the ten per cent of the things that divide us."⁶⁸

In order to foster this new sense of national identity, especially in the face of an evident multitude of ethnic diversities, the establishment of appropriate mechanisms for the admission particularly of so-called new Canadians into the 'national family' became one central focus of concern. As several M.P.s emphasized, the new legislation should provide for "a more effective and impressive ceremony of admission into the Canadian family." Such a ceremony, they argued, would not only impress upon new Canadians both the privileges and responsibilities of citizenship, but also symbolize their belonging to and full partnership in "the great family of the Canadian nation." This patriotic vision of national unity, however, was tempered when one

67 *Debates* (2 April 1946), 502; 505; (5 April 1946), 591; 507; 594.

68 See *Debates* (2 April 1946), 509-11; (5 April 1946), 606-07; (9 April 1946), 686-87; 691, 694, 695;

Quebec M.P. sought to remind his fellow parliamentarians that national harmony could not be achieved without “teaching all Canadians that their country, as a matter of fact and reality, is a bicultural, bilingual one.” In this regard, he emphasized “the effort made by the French-speaking population to understand its English-speaking compatriots and the lack of cooperation given in the other directions.” And, as an implicit warning to English-speaking Canadians, he added that, “unilingualism ... will not help union and understanding between the two big races.”⁶⁹

If, in 1946, the declared intention of Canadian Citizenship Act signified at least the possibility of uniting Canada’s ‘national family’ and even of creating an unambiguous and unitary national identity, it became increasingly evident, particularly by the early 1960s, that this possibility had indeed been a fragile one. More specifically, what emerged particularly during the period encompassing the nation-wide regional and public hearings of the Royal Commission on Bilingualism and Biculturalism was that the complex substance of Canadian nationhood continued to be riddled with a multiplicity of centrifugal identities. Moreover, in the midst of the growing political challenges generated particularly by the Quiet Revolution in Quebec, the reconstitution and even the redrawing of the contours of the ‘Canadian family’ had reached a heightened level of national urgency.

While the B & B Commission became the subject of growing controversies, especially with regard to the costs involved as well as the duration of its public hearings and countless research projects,⁷⁰ it has nonetheless appropriately been described as “a great examination of the Canadian psyche” or, as one participant noted, a “study of our total Canadian character.”⁷¹ In effect, for three years (1963-1965),⁷² the Commission offered the Canadian public the opportunity to subject its terms of reference to microscopic scrutiny. And, even though the ten Commissioners often displayed a marked frustration with those who deviated too radically from what virtually amounted to a pre-determined definition of Canada, these terms of reference underwent what seemed to be an endless process of debate, negotiation, and dissection. Perhaps one of the most significant outcomes of the various public hearings was that just as the so-called ‘Canadian character’ could not be identified as a homogeneous phenomenon, so too the notion of Canadian nationhood tended to evade any easy conceptualization. Perhaps Dr. Paul Fox of the University of Toronto best captured some of the problematics involved when he asked, “What do we mean by

69 *Debates* (5 April 1946), 504-05, 586-87, 589, 597, 605-06, 617, 628-30; (9 April 1946), 685-86, 694-95.

70 See for example, “The B. and B.’s Desperate Catalogue of The Obvious: What we got for our one and a half million dollars,” *Saturday Night* (April 1965), 17-19.

71 J.L. Granatstein, *Canada: The Years of Uncertainty and Innovation, 1957-1967* (Toronto 1986), 255. See also, Submission of Dr. Cohen of McGill University, Montreal Public Hearing (15 March 1965), 837.

72 The Commission’s tours of Canada included one preliminary hearing in Ottawa on 7 and 8 November 1963, 23 one-day long regional meetings between 18 March and 16 June 1964, and finally two to three day-long public hearings in fourteen major Canadian cities between 1 March and 16 December 1965. It should also be noted that the preliminary hearing and the regional meetings formed the basis of the conclusions drawn in the Commission’s preliminary report published in 1965.

Confederation? What do we mean by nation? What do we mean by binationalism?"⁷³ It was precisely in attempting to grapple with these and other fundamental questions that the language of familialism, as one of many images invoked to articulate some of the problems surrounding national dis/unity and the complex abstraction of Canada, took on a particular meaning and significance.

One central component of the Commission's stated intention, as outlined in its terms of reference, involved the compilation of an "enormous quantity of facts" in an effort to achieve some understanding of "the existing state of bilingualism and biculturalism in Canada."⁷⁴ Not surprisingly, then, many of the individuals and organizations that appeared before the Commission were largely concerned either with demonstrating their own individual or collective bilingual practices, or with addressing the technical problems and possibilities of how to promote bilingualism and biculturalism in various sectors of Canadian life. These included, above all, the federal administration and the public service, the economic and mass communications sectors, the educational system as well as public and private cultural associations. As Dr. J. Kidd of the Social Sciences Research Council and Humanities Research Council emphasized, "we would urge the Royal Commission not only to become a great national school of citizenship but that it also be a centre of rigorous, fearless, scientific inquiry."⁷⁵

But at the heart of the Commission's declared purpose, defined in the terms of reference as the possible "steps [that] should be taken to develop the Canadian Confederation on the basis of an equal partnership between the two founding races,"⁷⁶ was an attempt to grapple with and to provide recommendations to alleviate the increasingly strained and fractious relationship between French- and English-speaking Canada. As one journalist later suggested, the role of Commissioners could be likened to "marriage counsellors", who appropriately listened to and noted complaints from both French- and English-speaking Canadians.⁷⁷ And, indeed, in an attempt to promote a greater sense of national unity and family-mindedness within Canadian domestic relations, the Commission's terms of reference did offer French-speaking Canada a similar status, one revolving around the concept and principle of an 'equal partnership', to the one promised to married women in the postwar family.

This concept of building an 'equal partnership' was partially articulated and constructed through the recurring image that, in the early history of Canada and particularly at the time of Confederation as inscribed in the provisions of the British North America Act, a union of 'marriage' between English- and French-Canada had been forged. For example, P. E. Robert, the general director of the Société Saint-Jean Baptiste de Montréal, portrayed "Le Canada" as "le mariage de la Nouvelle-France

73 See Submission of The University of Toronto, Department of Political Sciences, Ottawa Preliminary Hearing (8 November 1963), 353.

74 See Opening Remarks of Mr. André Laurendeau, Ottawa Preliminary Hearing (7 November 1963), 7-12; "Appendix I: Terms of Reference," A Preliminary Report, 151.

75 Submission of The Social Sciences Research Council and Humanities Research Council, Ottawa Preliminary Hearing (7 November 1963), 170.

76 "Appendix I: Terms of Reference," A Preliminary Report 151.

77 Wendy Michener, "Expo 67 To The Rescue," *Saturday Night* (January 1967), 24.

et de la Nouvelle-Angleterre dans la vallée du St-Laurent.”⁷⁸ Similarly, A.R.M. Lower, in his book, *Colony to Nation* (1953), described the Confederation pact in comparable terms: “In Confederation, English and French, after a stormy courtship, took each other for better or for worse ... and it must, like other marriages, create a reasonable degree of equality, between the contracting parties.”⁷⁹

But it was precisely the absence of any “reasonable degree of equality” between French- and English-speaking Canada, whether in the socio-economic, cultural, or linguistic realm, that the concept of an ‘equal partnership’ was meant to redress. And that French-speaking Quebec, implicitly constructed as the ‘frustrated and impatient wife’, was in the process of rejecting her subordinate and exploited status under the original terms of the ‘marital contract’ or, indeed, was on the verge of filing for a ‘divorce’, did emerge to capture the imagination of at least some English-speaking Canadians, particularly with the rise of nationalist and separatist sentiments in Quebec in the early 1960s.

The recourse to ‘marriage’ analogies, whether in scholarly writings, in the press, or in the Commission’s various public hearings did, however, reflect subtle differences. In 1960, for instance, Lorne Pierce pointed out that achievement of Confederation had effectively defied the predictions of such late nineteenth-century skeptics as Goldwin Smith, who had consistently argued that the “fusing” or “harmonizing” of a “French and Papal and a British and Protestant community” were nothing short of an impossibility. But in describing the ‘successful’ union of 1867, Pierce utilized the more ambiguous term, ‘betrothal’, implying the *promise* of marriage, rather than the actual binding of a matrimonial tie: “In spite of small groups of colonials, in spite of little nests of annexationists, Confederation was achieved, and so successful was this betrothal of the dissimilar and the opposite that a new pattern was established in Canada.”⁸⁰

Other English-speaking Canadians, however, were more apt to derive and to construct particular meanings out of the term, ‘shotgun wedding.’ As suggested by one London resident speaking before one of the Commission’s regional hearings in 1964, this notion strongly implied that the political basis of Confederation had been premised on a mutual agreement and had not involved any form of coercion:

Canada is a marriage of two nations and it was not a shotgun marriage, it was a free and deliberate marriage. Now that divorce is in the offing, I think this is a problem for the whole family, and it is time that all the family get together and improve the situation of the family ... it is an intense national problem.⁸¹

In contrast, one French-Canadian scholar, writing in the late 1940s, described the

78 Submission of Société Saint-Jean Baptiste de Montréal, Ottawa Preliminary Hearing, Ottawa, (7 November 1963), 46-7.

79 Quoted in the Brief submitted by L’ Association Canadienne-Francaise D’ Education D’ Ontario, Ottawa Public Hearing (March 1, 1965), 4.

80 Lorne Pierce, *A Canadian Nation* (Toronto 1960), 7.

81 *A Preliminary Report*, 95. See also, Ian McDonald, “Shotgun Wedding,” *Saturday Night* (3 March 1962), 3. His use of the term was somewhat more ambiguous, but it does suggest a degree of mutuality: “Canada was born of a shotgun wedding between French-British progenitors more intent on selfish racial ambitions than in the future of their offspring.”

state of affairs established in 1867 as a “*mariage de raison*.”⁸² This notion suggested that matrimonial relations between the two Canadas were rooted in a ‘marriage of convenience,’ which was not to be confused, at least in the minds of English-speaking Canadians, with a ‘marriage of love.’

By the early 1960s, however, these diverse and cumulative shades of meanings, which all attempted to define the historical foundation of relations between the two Canadas, were seemingly overshadowed by a growing preoccupation with the possibility of ‘divorce’, the growing “danger of a disintegration of Canada.”⁸³ Although the heightened demands of French-speaking Quebec reflected a variety of ideological orientations, especially in relation to the precise economic terms and political nature of the ‘divorce’, the Commission’s preliminary report did outline what it perceived as the “common threads” inscribed in Quebec’s new sense of self as a “distinct physiognomy.” In effect, the growing sense among French-speaking Quebecers that their society or nation was “blocked in its forward thrust, torn or incomplete in its design, in a word, unfulfilled,” became embodied in certain shared aspirations, especially among young intellectuals and the new middle class:

In Quebec we in fact heard a wide range of varied opinions ... taken together they came down on one side of the scale — for a greater recognition of the ‘French-Canadian nation’, a greater role for ‘the State of Quebec’, and greatly increased scope for the French language, especially in Quebec ... the idea of the ‘emancipation’ of Quebec (economic, social, and, in varying degrees, political) was central to all their thinking... as both the means and the symbol, whether thought of as total or relative.⁸⁴

In spite of these apparent commonalities, one Quebec separatist lawyer, appearing before one of the regional meetings, clearly articulated what was potentially at stake for the future of Canada:

We do not blame the English Canadians for anything; they have behaved as all majorities do. What we want is much simpler than that. We want complete fiscal powers in order to put into effect these political powers, so that we may organize our institutions and finally attain the full development of the French Canadian nation ... If the Commission were to come to the conclusion that co-existence is in fact impossible or that the two nations do not want it, it could do what we lawyers do in

82 Jean-Charles Falardeau, “*Mariage de Raison*,” *Food For Thought* 10, 1 (October 1949), 34-8, 47.

83 Submission of The Institute of the Canadian Ethnic Mosaic Confederation, Ottawa Preliminary Hearing (8 November 1963), 457. See also Submission of The United Fishermen and Allied Workers’ Union, Vancouver Public Hearing (12 May 1965), 2114.

84 *A Preliminary Report*, 111, 114, 115, 118. For a discussion of the young intellectuals and the new middle class, see Kenneth McRoberts, *Quebec: Social Change and Political Crisis* (Toronto 1988); Peter Gzowski, “What Young French Canadians Have On Their Minds,” *Maclean’s* (6 April 1963), 21-23; 39-40 and “This is the true strength of Separatism,” *Maclean’s* (2 November 1963), 13-18. Peter B. Horsley of Calgary, writing in response to Peter Gzowski’s latter article on the rise of separatism in Quebec, did not hesitate to point out that, “In your statistics about Canadians who are for separatism . . . I was extremely disappointed to find no reference to the hundreds of thousands of Canadians who would be delighted to get rid of the financial and moral burden of Quebec.” *Maclean’s* (14 December 1963), 8. See also Submission of The Student Christian Movement of Canada, Toronto Public Hearing (30 March 1965), 1609-12.

similar situations: we recommend to married couples who cannot get along that they part for awhile and arrange their lives separately.⁸⁵

In effect, in the midst of what one journalist later described as the “divorce atmosphere” of this period, it is perhaps not surprising that some English-speaking Canadians regarded the intensification of national disharmony as having reached “critical proportions.”⁸⁶

For example, Dr. Paul Fox emphatically stated at the Commission’s preliminary hearing that, “this Commission may be the last hope of saving Canadian Confederation ... of solving Canadian federal problems in general, objectively, rationally, and calmly.” Furthermore, if the risk of ‘divorce’ as opposed to the “politics of compromise and conciliation,”⁸⁷ was increasingly on the national agenda — a situation which arguably signified the ultimate symbol of marital/familial breakdown — it is perhaps inevitable that the Commission itself concluded its preliminary report by suggesting that the “vital centre” of Canadian nationhood was being threatened:

Canada, without being fully conscious of the fact, is passing through the greatest crisis in its history... If it should persist and gather momentum it could destroy Canada ... It is not only one aspect of Canadian life that is at issue; the vital centre is in danger: we mean the will to live together, at least under present conditions.⁸⁸

It should be noted, however, that analogies to marital/familial breakdown in attempting to articulate the conflict-ridden relations between French- and English-Canada were not wholly a new phenomenon that emerged in the crisis of the 1960s. For instance, in a 1944 pamphlet entitled, *Must Canada Split?*, C.E. Silcox argued that, given what he perceived as the religious, cultural, and ideological “chasm between the French-Canadians and the Anglo-Canadians, between Quebec and the other provinces” as well as their fundamental “mutual incompatibility”, the idea of national unity was nothing more than an “insubstantial mirage.” Consequently, in a rhetorical flourish of various and somewhat contradictory familial metaphors, he argued that the only possible solution was to grant complete independence to Quebec:

To forbid divorce of incompatible nations on the ground of economic exigencies alone is stupid, is as stupid as to forbid the separation of husband and wife who have lost their love and now nurse a perpetual grudge. To forbid the latter is to turn the home into a hell; to forbid the former is to convert the country into a hell ... Canada is now clearly not one nation, but two. To pretend that it isn’t only aggravates the problem. Not God, but the British North America Act of 1867 joined them together. So why should the marriage not be annulled. In the womb of history, two distinct peoples have been conceived. Now that the day of parturition has come, we see that they are twins and not identical at that. Indeed, hardly even fraternal ... The Anglo-Canadians think of Quebec as the cross he is called upon to bear, as a family

85 *A Preliminary Report*, 92.

86 Mitchison, “Expo 67 To the Rescue,” 24; Kenneth McNaught, “It’s Time to Talk Divorce With Quebec,” *Saturday Night* (July 1965), 16.

87 Submission of The University of Toronto, Department of Political Sciences, Ottawa Preliminary Hearing (8 November 1963), 349, 356. McNaught, “It’s Time to Talk Divorce With Quebec” 16.

88 *A Preliminary Report*, 13, 135.

skeleton in the closet never to be mentioned in the presence of guests. He cherishes the impossible hope of reconciling, and apparently does not know that the only way such difficulties can be solved is by calling for a show-down...

Moreover, according to Silcox, the whole problem of French-English relations could have been avoided by one relatively simple historical solution. If it had not been for the ongoing religious and cultural differences, "the French-Canadians and the Anglo-Canadians could [have] absorb[ed] each other by marriage and creat[ed] a distinct nationality without any difficulty, and quite possibly, to the infinite enrichment of subsequent generations." Two decades later, Mrs. H. Demorest, appearing before the Vancouver public hearings of the Commission, offered a similar suggestion. In the spirit of greater communication and mutual understanding between the two Canadas, she pointed out that, "the best way to improve relations between French-Canadians and other Canadians is to have more social contacts. Young people may cement relations by choosing their mates from Quebec."⁸⁹

Apart from this largely English-Canadian construction of Canadian domestic relations as a continuum of marriage-divorce-intermarriage, the sense that the 'two founding races' had to 'get to know each other' in order to overcome the "misapprehension, misunderstanding, and ignorance of each other's natures, emotions, and feelings"⁹⁰ was perhaps the most oft-cited English-Canadian solution to the problems of national unity. Thus, for many English-speaking Canadians who appeared before the Commission, the tensions between the two Canadas were conceived less in terms of historically-rooted constitutional problems, but more in terms of an emotional or a communication crisis. In their view, attaining a "true and lasting rapprochement" between the two cultures went beyond merely developing greater tolerance or alleviating prejudices. Rather, the achievement of stronger national bonds required, above all, the cultivation of a real sense of mutual understanding and appreciation, reconciliation and cooperation.⁹¹

This emphasis on the necessity for improved communication between the two cultures was frequently articulated in familial terms. For instance, as one representative of the Edmonton Branch of the The University Women's Club stated,

89 C. E. Silcox, *Must Canada Split?* (Toronto 1944), 2, 4-5, 8, 3. Submission of Mrs. H. Demorest, Vancouver Public Hearing, (11 May 1965), 2108. See also the submission of Mr. Ralph W. Stewart, who also stated that, from his own personal experience, "one of the very good ways to get to know one another is intermarriage." Ottawa Preliminary Hearing (8 November 1963), 522-3.

90 Submission of M. J. Alphonse Ouimet, president of Radio-Canada, Ottawa Preliminary Hearing (7 November 1963), 30.

91 See for example, Submissions of The Royal Society of Canada, Ottawa Public Hearing (1 March 1965), 74; The Canadian Chamber of Commerce, Toronto Public Hearing (30 March 1965), 1704; Mr. John Woodsworth, Vancouver Public Hearing (12 May 12, 1965), 2064; Submission of L'Association Biculturelle de la Ville de Montréal, Ottawa Preliminary Hearing (8 November 1963), 420; the submissions of Mr. Ralph Stewart, Ottawa Preliminary Hearing (8 November 1963), 520; The Alumnae Society of McGill University, Montreal Public Hearing (15 March 1965), 728; The Association of Canadian Clubs, Montreal Public Hearing (17 March 1965), 1263; The Canadian Institute of Chartered Accountants, Toronto Public Hearing (30 March 1965), 1668-69; Voice of Women, Toronto Public Hearing (31 March 1965), 1877.

“communication is a way in which our understanding of each other may be improved. The members of one family must understand each other if there is to be unity and a strong, tranquil household.” Similarly, Mr. Robert Thompson, appearing at the preliminary hearing, expressed the hope that the Commission would avoid generating “greater misunderstanding between members of the original cultures of Canada” through an overemphasis on “our differences.” He also stressed that the promotion of greater ‘marital/familial’ communication should ultimately take priority over the political, economic, and constitutional adjustments necessary to address and redress many of the grievances articulated by French-speaking Canada:

I believe, however, that there are very real limits to what can be accomplished by a legalistic approach, and the greatest accomplishments are to be sought in the way of charity and mutual understanding. Essentially Confederation is a marriage — a marriage of peoples — and the type of marriage that is based on a legal interpretation of rights and duties can only end — is bound to end — in bickering, and ultimately in the divorce court. If you persuade your fellow Canadians that for the sake of this union — for the sake of their homeland — our homeland — the tolerance, the good humour, the forgiveness, the understanding, the practicality that is essential to any long-lasting association, is well worthwhile, you will have served your country very well indeed, and for which Canada as a nation will be all the stronger.⁹²

While this sentimentalized vision attempted to capture some of the essential ingredients perceived as necessary for fostering more harmonious national relations, many English-speaking Canadians also offered a broad spectrum of practical recommendations. In their view, these various proposals would create a more favourable national climate, in which an “increased awareness of each other”⁹³ could be achieved. For instance, a greater understanding of the French language and culture through the extension of bilingual public education,⁹⁴ the encouragement of student and cultural exchanges,⁹⁵ and the wider dissemination and translation of the cultural products from both English- and French-speaking Canada,⁹⁶ were often cited as

92 Submission of The University Women’s Club, Edmonton Branch, Edmonton Public Hearing (December 6, 1965), 4710; Submission of Robert Thompson, Ottawa Preliminary Hearing (7 November 1963), 69, 72.

93 Submission of L’Association Biculturelle de la Ville de Montréal, 420.

94 See for example, the Submission of the Board of Education, Welland, Ontario, Toronto Public Hearing (29 March 1965), 1448-49. Representatives of Esperanto Services, however, offered a much simpler solution to the whole problem of language in Canada. See Ottawa Public Hearing (16 December 1965), 5734-68.

95 See for example, Submissions of Sir George Williams University, Montreal Public Hearings (17 March 1965), 1159-1163; The Imperial Order of the Daughters of the Empire, Toronto Public Hearing (30 March 1965), 1579; L’Alliance Canadienne, Quebec City Public Hearing (9 June 1965), 2697-2708; Visites Interprovinciales, Quebec City Public Hearing (10 June 1965), 2905-20. For an earlier discussion of the Visites Interprovinciales exchanges between Ontario and Quebec families, see “How to win friends and really learn French (or English),” *Maclean’s* (16 August 1958), 22-4, 32-4.

96 See for example, the submissions of Mr. Ralph Stewart, Ottawa Preliminary Hearing (8 November 1963), 520-21; The Royal Society of Canada, Ottawa Public Hearing (1 March 1965), 74-5; The Credit Men’s Association, Montreal Public Hearing (16 March 1965), 896; The Canadian Book Publishers Council, Toronto Public Hearing (31 March 1965), 1757-60. In addressing the question of the absence of adequate French-English and English-French

fundamental for enhancing greater national understanding. Furthermore, the educational and unifying potential of the mass communications sectors,⁹⁷ of the arts,⁹⁸ and even of the more 'objective' teaching of Canadian history,⁹⁹ were but a few areas that were repeatedly suggested as crucial in furthering the cause of national unity.

In addition to these various formal mechanisms, many individuals and organizations also emphasized the necessity for a fundamental "change of attitudes", particularly in order to alleviate what French-speaking Canadians repeatedly described as English-speaking Canada's indifference or even hostility towards their language and culture.¹⁰⁰ Mr. Tassie of Carleton University perhaps best captured this sentiment, when he pointed out that, "underneath lies the deep feeling that you have to change something very much inside people before you can change what is outside them."¹⁰¹

translations in Canada which tended to exacerbate "mutual misunderstanding," Dr. Hayne of the Department of French at the University of Toronto remarked, "Of course it is a well known fact that translations are like women. When they are beautiful they are rarely faithful; when they are faithful they are not often beautiful." See Toronto Public Hearing (29 March 1965), 1385.

97 See for example, submissions of Canadian Chamber of Commerce, Toronto Public Hearing (30 March 1965), 1704-05; Community Arts Council of Vancouver, Vancouver Public Hearing (May 11, 1965), 1960-62; The Canadian Broadcasting Corporation, Ottawa Public Hearing (14 December 1965), 5232.

98 See for example, Submissions of The Canada Council, Ottawa Public Hearing (1 March 1965), 18; The Dominion Drama Festival, Ottawa Public Hearing (1 March 1965), 88; The Community Arts Council, Vancouver Public Hearing (11 May 1965), 1958-59, 1968. As Mr. Walter Herbert of The Canada Foundation argued, for example, "the arts are not by nature concerned with disagreements between cultural groups, but they provide a means of communication, and a constant means of communication, which encourages mutual understanding and mutual respect and mutual appreciation." See Submission of The Canada Foundation, Ottawa Preliminary Hearing (8 November 1963), 471.

99 The possibility of writing a standard Canadian history textbook was one of the recurring themes and concerns throughout the public hearings. For example, as Mr. McKenna of the Sherbrooke Chamber of Commerce pointed out, given the differences in the histories taught in English-speaking and French-speaking Canada, as well as the regional emphasis in the teaching of history, "you would never know it is the same country." Montreal Public Hearing (15 March 1965), 870-71. Mr. Martineau of the Canada Council stated that, despite the difficulties involved, "it seems to us there cannot be unity unless there is unity in history ... The same facts must be taught in all schools. Otherwise, if you wait until it is too late it seems to me that we will not attain order." Ottawa Public Hearing (1 March 1965), 18. Similarly, Dr. Andrew of the National Conference of Canadian Universities and Colleges offered the following solution to this problem: "If we are concerned about the teaching of history we have got to get the Canada Council to take Stanley House, cram it full of French-speaking historians and English-speaking historians and we shouldn't let any of them walk home until they exchange some views on the preparation of texts of Canadian history." Ottawa Public Hearing (2 March 1965), 442. See also Submissions of The Alumnae Society of McGill University, Montreal Public Hearing (15 March 1965), 735-37; The Anglican Church of Canada, Toronto Public Hearing (30 March 1965), 1635-36; The Canadian Chamber of Commerce, Toronto Public Hearing (30 March 1965), 1708-09; The Canadian Book Publishers Council, Toronto Public Hearing (31 March 1965), 1760-62; The University of Windsor, Toronto Public Hearing (29 March 1965), 1427; The Catholic Women's League, Ottawa Public Hearing (2 March 1965), 400-1.

100 See for example, the submission of the Montreal Catholic School Commission, Montreal Public Hearing (15 March 1965), 726.

101 Submission of Carleton University, Ottawa Public Hearing (1 March 1965), 389-90. See

In this respect, the family was often described not only as the primary institution in which the generational transmission of “national understanding” could be fostered and perpetuated,¹⁰² but also as potentially the most resistant to the envisaged evolution of a bilingual and bicultural society. Mrs. Chadsey of the YWCA’s National Council, for example, argued that this was partially due to the isolation of many Canadian mothers in the domestic sphere:

Women living and working in their homes .. are not personally involved or influenced by public or private organizations and only to a certain extent even by the mass media. This isolation from community life tends to strengthen their prejudices and they can have a strong influence on their families, particularly the young people.¹⁰³

Others participants, however, like Dr. Rae of Sir George Williams University, suggested more generally that, “where attitudes in the home are such as to depreciate the culture involved there is actually a resistance even to a thing as automatic as learning a language in school.”¹⁰⁴ But for some English-speaking Canadians, the whole issue of official bilingualism engendered deep suspicions that some form of coercive state intrusion could potentially be involved. In their view, state intervention would ultimately *infringe on their rights as parents to decide the nature of their children’s education.*¹⁰⁵

Given these apprehensions, the important symbolic value of the ‘bilingual family’, particularly one of Anglo-Protestant extraction, was underscored when the Findlays appeared before the Toronto public hearing. As the only submission presented by an “individual Canadian family,” Mr. and Mrs. Findlay described at length their “dogged determination” to get a French education for their children against what seemed to be virtually insurmountable odds. In response, the Commissioners not only praised their efforts as both “impressive” and “heroic”, but also suggested that they write “their history” and “make a best-seller out of it.” More significant, perhaps, was that this was the only presentation at the public hearings that received a hearty round of applause.¹⁰⁶

also, Submission of The National Council of Women, Ottawa Preliminary Hearing (8 November 1963), 449. There were others, however, who argued just the opposite. For example, Dr. Paul Fox of the University of Toronto pointed out that, “this is going to require rearrangements in basic structures of our constitution. We are not going to get a basic rearrangement simply by hoping that we will all grow up to be friends together.” Ottawa Preliminary Hearing (8 November 1963), 360.

102 For example, as Mrs. MacPherson of the Voice of Women emphasized, “National understanding . . . begins at home.” See Toronto Public Hearing (31 March 1965), 1875-76.

103 Submission of the YWCA National Council, Ottawa Preliminary Hearing (7 November 1963), 375.

104 Submission of Sir George Williams University, Montreal Public Hearing (17 March 1965): 1162. See also Submission of the University of Windsor, Toronto Public Hearing (29 March 1965), 1426.

105 See for example, Submission of The B.C. Parent-Teacher Federation, Vancouver Public Hearing (11 May 1965), 2030-53.

106 Submission of Mr. and Mrs. Bruce Findlay, Toronto Public Hearing (30 March 1965), 1719-42. Although not mentioned at the public hearing, the Findlay’s story had already been reported in the national press. See Bruce Findlay, “How Our Children Learned French In Spite of The School System,” *Maclean’s* (27 July 1963), 34-7.

While the general tone of the various public hearings seemed to suggest that English-speaking Canadians were indeed “waking up” to the complex problems involved in fostering an ongoing “national dialogue” with their “French-speaking Canadian brothers,”¹⁰⁷ it should also be emphasized that some associations that appeared before the Commission were decidedly less sympathetic to the rising demands of French-speaking Quebec. For example, Mr. Shephard, representing the Canadian Protestant League, appropriated the language of familialism in an effort to articulate a radically divergent meaning of the nature of Canadian domestic relations. In his view, Quebec was not to be conceived as the ‘frustrated wife’ requiring greater nuptial understanding and spousal respect as others had implicitly suggested, but rather as the ‘spoiled child’ of Confederation who, unlike Newfoundland, for example, had failed to reach maturity:

Can it be, Mr. Chairman, that we still have a family of ten provinces, nine of which must now listen to the demands of one? Many other races have long since buried their ancestral animosities. Why not this one? For years we have been listening to the complaints of one spoiled member of the Confederation family too accustomed, we believe, to getting its own way. Every time it hollers for more attention many other things must be sacrificed to keep the peace in the family, to keep Canada united. Now, if anyone suggests to me that this one member is the largest, I feel like adding it is also the oldest and should be showing more signs of adulthood. The baby of the family, Newfoundland, living next door is not making anything like the demands of its big, old, grown-up brother. I suggest that this province does not want equality but superiority as its cherished aspiration ... There is no room any longer in our Confederation family for any one of its members with special privileges.¹⁰⁸

Similarly, Kenneth McNaught, in his 1965 article entitled, “It’s Time To Talk Divorce With Quebec,” argued that the whole framework of Confederation was being systematically undermined by what he termed Quebec’s “demagogic” and “neurotic nationalism”:

The only virtue in the Canadian experiment—and it was a great virtue—was its built-in purpose of toleration. If Quebec feels that she must discard two centuries of evolutionary growth in order to return to the womb of international latin civilization or to fulfill the mythic purposes of Laurentia, then obviously she has obliterated the purpose of the experiment itself. There is no point in fighting.¹⁰⁹

While French- and English-speaking Canada clearly constituted, what the Commission described as the ‘chief protagonists’ in the escalating national crisis, the often unambiguous construction of the two Canadas as two unitary, yet conflicting cultural and linguistic units, tended to obscure the various differences inscribed within these polarized social entities. Dr. Cohen of McGill University, appearing before the

107 See for example, Submissions of the *Montreal Star*, Montreal Public Hearing (16 March 1965), 1108-13; Sarnia Junior Chamber of Commerce, Toronto Public Hearing (30 March 1965), 1743-44; Canadian Book Publishers Council, Toronto Public Hearing (30 March 1965), 1773.

108 Submission of The Canadian Protestant League, Toronto Public Hearing (1 December 1965), 3533-34.

109 McNaught, 16-17.

Montreal public hearing, for example, reminded the Commission that, “no conception of Quebec ... can be meaningful without recognizing the fundamental duality of Quebec within the duality of Canada.” In this respect, Quebec and such metropolitan centres as Montreal were frequently described as symbolic microcosms of the cultural estrangement that tended to characterize relations between the two Canadas.¹¹⁰ For instance, Mrs. Florence Stevens of L’Association Biculturelle de la Ville de Montréal described her community on the island of Montreal as “made up of two groups of people existing in seemingly watertight compartments, isolated from each other by the barriers of language, custom, and sometimes religion.”¹¹¹ Similarly, Mr. D.E. Armstrong of Montreal stated that, “our churches, our schools, our clubs, our homes are, for the most part segregated.”¹¹²

As two virtually self-contained entities, the absence of social interaction between the French-speaking majority and the English-speaking minority in the province was often articulated through such analogies as the coexistence of “two solitudes,” the “thickness of silence” that tended to isolate the two communities, “separate parts of a two-part mosaic,” and the “need for Montreal to get closer to Montreal.”¹¹³ Moreover, as one Chicoutimi resident pointed out, social relations between the two cultural groups could not be described as necessarily “good” or “bad,” but as virtually “non-existent”: “We get along alright? Oh, sure, certainly we do, like a family where the son-in-law never sees his mother-in-law.” Consequently, at least one English-speaking Quebecker expressed the hope that “if the French and English within the province can get closer together we will set a wonderful example for the rest of Canada.”¹¹⁴

At the same time, the concept of ‘French-speaking Canada’ itself was subject to at least two divergent interpretations. As suggested earlier, the Commission strongly advocated the concept of ‘equal partnership’ as defining French-speaking Canada’s status within the complexion of the Canadian ‘national family’ and as a recognition of the dual character of Canadian nationhood. But, as the Commissioners consistently reiterated throughout the public hearings, this ‘dominating idea’ not only encom-

110 Submission of McGill University, Montreal Public Hearing (15 March 1965), 804-05, 807. For example, Dr. Cohen stated that “we see in Quebec in the relationship of the English-speaking community of Quebec to the French-speaking community the very motif of the whole of the Canadian dialogue.”

111 Submission of L’Association Biculturelle de la Ville Montréal, Ottawa Preliminary Hearing (8 November 1963), 419.

112 Submission of McGill University Graduate School of Business, Ottawa Preliminary Hearing (7 November 1963), 174. This also extended to the virtual absence of any contact between English-speaking and French-speaking university students. See for example, Submission by Bishop’s College, Montreal Public Hearing (15 March 1965), 763.

113 See for example, Submissions of Professor John Hughes, Department of Education, McGill University and M.J. Alphonse Ouimet, president of Radio-Canada, Ottawa Preliminary Hearing (7 November 1963), 238, 33; Dr. Cohen, McGill University and The Alumnae Society of McGill University, Montreal Public Hearing (15 March 1965), 816, 743-44; The Community Arts Council of Vancouver, Vancouver Public Hearing (11 May 1965), 1958.

114 *A Preliminary Report*, 83. Submission of The Alumnae Society of McGill University, Montreal Public Hearing (15 March 1965), 733. See also Submission of Sir George Williams University, Montreal Public Hearing (17 March 1965), 1148-55.

passed French-speaking Quebec, but also those French-speaking minorities, such as the Acadians in New Brunswick, that had established communities in other Canadian provinces. In their view, one central component in officially recognizing the bilingual and bicultural nature of Canada revolved around an attempt to ensure that this latter group would be accorded the same special status, particularly in relation to the preservation of language and educational rights, as that enjoyed by the English-speaking minority in Quebec.¹¹⁵ Furthermore, the Commissioners also emphasized that the largely bilingual French-speaking minorities outside of Quebec held a crucial symbolic value insofar as they signified an important “bridge” between the two Canadas and, thus, a “cohesive force” within the nation as a whole.¹¹⁶

In contrast, Quebec separatists and the Communist Party of Canada, for example, defined the Canadian state in terms of the coexistence of ‘two nations,’ each with the concomitant right to self-determination and sovereignty. As Mr. Nelson Clarke of the Communist Party argued, “the state structure established by Confederation is in crisis because of a failure to recognize French Canada as a nation ... the non-recognition of a national identity of French-Canada.” Moreover, in his view, the only viable solution to the current crisis would involve the “constitutional re-organization of the state structure of Canada which would officially recognize the binational character of Canada.”¹¹⁷

While the Commissioners strongly rejected this ‘two-nations’ theory as defining the character of Canada’s national structure, they did conclude that what was really at stake was that French-speaking Quebecers and English-speaking Canadians held two radically divergent conceptions of nationhood. For the former, the term ‘nation’ was increasingly interlinked with the province of Quebec to the apparent steady exclusion of French-speaking minorities in the rest of Canada. Conversely, in the case of English-speaking Canadians, the concept of ‘nation’ tended to encompass the ‘whole population of Canada’ as part of a single national community. What this signified, above all, was that “most English-speaking Canadians don’t think of themselves as forming a separate nation ... they don’t think and act and talk as a

115 *A Preliminary Report*, 21. These issues were raised at various points in the public hearings. See for example, Montreal Public Hearing (15 March 1965), 742-43; (17 March 1965), 1156; Toronto Public Hearing (29 March 1965), 1390; Toronto Public Hearing (30 March 1965), 1592; (30 March 1965), 1664-65; (30 March 1965), 1750-51. See also Submissions of the Alumnae Society of McGill University, Montreal Public Hearing (15 March 1965), 731-32; the Anglican Church of Canada, Toronto Public Hearing (30 March 1965), 1631-32; Sociétés Canadiennes Françaises (Windsor), Toronto Public Hearing (31 March 1965), 1828-29.

116 *A Preliminary Report*, 119. Others, like Dr. Cohen of McGill University, argued that the English-speaking community in Quebec served as the “main vehicle of communication between English and French-Canada.” See Submission of McGill University, 834-35.

117 See Submission of The Communist Party of Canada, 589, 591-92. In responding to the presentation, the Commissioners seemed to be less interested in the specific recommendations of the Party, than in how they related to the “Party’s objective to overthrow capitalism and establish the dictatorship of the proletariat in Canada.” See Ottawa Public Hearing (3 March 1965), 593-95; 603-05. See also Brief of Comité Pierre-Le-Moyne-D’Iberville; Submissions of The Communist Party of Canada, Ottawa Preliminary Hearing (8 November 1963), 510-15 and Ottawa Public Hearing (3 March 1965), 589-615, especially 603-05.

nation.”¹¹⁸

This sense that English-speaking Canada did not, or perhaps more accurately, could not ‘think like a nation,’ was at least partially rooted in the strong regional and provincial loyalties as well as the diversity of the ethno-cultural identities inscribed in this highly non-homogeneous entity. Thus, while French-speaking Quebecers often referred to English-speaking Canadians as “les Anglais” or “les Anglo-Saxons,” thereby intimating the existence of an undifferentiated ‘rest of Canada,’ the Commissioners themselves concluded, after their first nation-wide tour, that English-speaking Canadians were really “united only by their common citizenship in Canada.”¹¹⁹ Moreover, when Professor Michael Oliver of McGill University was asked at the preliminary hearing whether he thought English-speaking Canadians were conscious of sharing a culture and more specifically, what was really meant by the notion of an English-Canadian culture, he hesitated and replied that he would have “to think it over.”¹²⁰

Throughout the course of the Commission’s various public hearings, the strong ties of regionalism were articulated in various ways. For instance, Mr. O’Hearn of the *Montreal Star* argued that, “in as vast a country as this physically there will always be a dominance of regional interest. I don’t think we can do anything to cure this. I think we can just attempt to ameliorate the situation.”¹²¹ Moreover, while the Maritime provinces remained somewhat marginalized in the nation-wide public hearings, one former resident of Newfoundland expressed a “unique kind of excitement” about the political developments in Quebec: “Being a native-born Newfoundlander, and perhaps having resisted the blandishments of Confederation long after Quebec, I may be called the original separatist.”¹²² But, perhaps one Nova Scotian best expressed the strong sense of regional loyalty and regional ‘familial unity,’ which he then qualified by an equally profound feeling of cultural estrangement from the

118 Submission of The Communist Party of Canada, 611. See also Submissions of The Student Christian Movement of Canada, Toronto Public Hearing (March 30 1965), 1602; The Agricultural Institute of Canada, Ottawa Public Hearing (2 March 1965), 428-31.

119 *A Preliminary Report*, 55, 48. See also Robert Fulford, “On National Unity: Why English Canada Should Applaud the Revolution in French Canada,” *Maclean’s* (2 December 1963): 79, where the author refers to the “French-Canadian habit of lumping all of us under the term ‘Anglo-Saxons,’ an uncalculable insult which ignores the great diversity of the country outside Quebec.” Moreover, Professor John Hughes, retired professor of the Department of Education at McGill University, and of Welsh descent, appeared before the preliminary hearing in order to “nail to the counter” what he described as “that odious term ‘Anglo-Saxon.’” Arguing that the comparative contribution of the British people of Celtic origin (the Scots, the Irish, the Welsh, the Manx, and the Cornish) far outweighed that of the British people of Saxon origin both in Britain and in Canada, he emphatically stated that, “I insist on the term Anglo-Keltic rather than Anglo-Saxon. Don’t mix us up, please. Any loyal Englishman will tell you that a Welshman is different from an Englishman. The Welshman would be even more emphatic on the point.” See Ottawa Preliminary Hearing (7 November 1963): 234-237.

120 Submission of The Committee of French Canadian Studies Program of McGill University, Ottawa Preliminary Hearing (7 November 1963), 59.

121 Submission of the *Montreal Star*, Montreal Public Hearing (16 March 1965), 1109-10.

122 Submission of Don Jamieson, president of The Canadian Association of Broadcasters, Ottawa Preliminary Hearing (7 November 1963), 40.

French-speaking Acadian population:

The long history that we have in Nova Scotia and we have had many races here living together happily for several hundred years. I think we are all happy. Our difficulty is that sometimes we are more Nova Scotian than Canadian ... Of course, we have many Acadians in this province; a very delightful people. Few people have an opportunity to meet them and know them. Unfortunately they are in the opposite ends of the province, but the difficulty is in meeting and getting to know other people as we would like to do.¹²³

In most respects, however, the intersection between regional loyalties and ethnic identities surfaced most forcefully in the Western provinces. Both British Columbia, described as “more separatist than Quebec,” and the Prairie provinces, with their diversity of ethnic groups, were consistently referred to as those regions most indifferent or most resistant to the whole “delicate” issue of bilingualism and biculturalism. Thus, while the Commissioners persistently emphasized what they viewed as the fundamental difference between national and individual/voluntary bilingualism, a very frustrated Commission was forced to conclude that “there is a persistent fear in this area, at any rate, that there is an attempt to force individual bilingualism in the country.” Moreover, while these Western Canadian reactions were often perceived as signifying the deep regional and cultural rift, particularly between the West and Quebec, there was also the more generalized estrangement between the ‘West’ and the ‘East’. For example, as one representative of the Vancouver Community Arts Council reminded the Commission, the whole emphasis on greater national communication should be regarded as a “two-way affair,” so that “those who live beyond the Rockies to the east may have a better understanding of what we stand for in the West.”¹²⁴

But perhaps one of the main foci of concern for the Commission revolved around the various interpretations and reactions that emerged, particularly among certain increasingly politicized ethnic groups, around the second clause of its terms of reference. This clause specified that together with the investigation into “what steps should be taken to develop the Canadian Confederation on the basis of an equal partnership between the two founding races,” the Commission would also take into account “the cultural contribution made by other ethnic groups to the cultural enrichment of Canada and the measures that should be taken to safeguard that contribution.”¹²⁵

One principle concern among the countless ethno-cultural organizations that

123 Submission of Dr. Creighton, Canadian Authors' Association, Halifax Public Hearing (14 June 1965), 2937-38.

124 See for example, Submissions of The Quebec Association of Protestant School Boards, Montreal Public Hearing (29 November 1965), 3994; McGill University, Montreal Public Hearing (15 March 1965), 917; John Woodsworth, Vancouver Public Hearing (12 May 1965), 2071; The Home and School and Parent-Teacher Federation, Winnipeg Public Hearing (18 May 1965), 2641-43; Montreal Star, Montreal Public Hearing (16 March 1965), 1109; Community Arts Council of Vancouver, Vancouver Public Hearing (11 May 1965), 1959-60.

125 "Appendix I: Terms of Reference," *A Preliminary Report*, 151.

appeared at the public hearings was the fear that their cultural contribution to the “rich tapestry” of Canada was being overshadowed by the Commission’s overemphasis on the two founding cultures as fundamentally defining the character of Canadian nationhood. Consequently, these groups of so-called new Canadians consistently protested that, since the concept of ‘equal partnership’ was seemingly reserved for ‘the two founding races,’ in spite of the high proportion of non-French and non-English peoples comprising Canada’s national family, they were being marginalized as second-class citizens within the hierarchical and ‘undemocratic’ categories established by the Commission and, indeed, within Canada itself.¹²⁶ This argument was reiterated most forcefully by the very vocal and extremely persistent Ukrainian organizations. Consistently emphasizing that their ‘forefathers’ and ‘foremothers’ had been among the founding settlers of the Prairie provinces, these Ukrainian associations were not only offended by the oft-utilized term ‘new Canadians’, but also by the lack of adequate recognition of their historical and ongoing contribution to all aspects of Canadian life. For example, as one Ukrainian League stated,

Taking into account the present demographic composition of Canadian people we feel that the terms of reference ... with the stress on ‘equal partnership between two founding races’ disregards the established democratic principles in Canadian life, divides the Canadian people into two categories of citizens, introducing some sort of a concept of seniority and thus harms Canadian unity.¹²⁷

At the same time, many of the ethnic groups frequently articulated their desire to be accepted as “full and unqualified partners” within Canadian social and cultural life through the invocation of familial analogies. Describing themselves as the “adopted kids” and the “younger brothers” within the national community,¹²⁸ these groups attempted to impress upon the Commission both their sense and hope of fully ‘belonging’ to the ‘Canadian national family,’ and their strong affective ties and loyalty to Canada. Thus, in spite of their desire to preserve and safeguard their diverse cultural identities and linguistic integrity, they intimated that this perceived democratic right ultimately posed no threat to national unity. In many respects, they sought to counter the claim made in the Commission’s preliminary report that “the demands of certain ethnic groups” and their failure to recognize the fundamental duality of the nation was “aggravating the state of crisis in Canada.”¹²⁹

But perhaps the most complex question that surfaced at the public hearings

126 See for example, Submissions of The Estonian Central Council, Toronto Public Hearing (29 March 1965), 1452-1465; The Ukrainian National Federation, Toronto Public Hearing (29 March 1965), 1466-1501; Ukrainian Canadian Committee, Edmonton Branch, Edmonton Public Hearing (6 December 1965), 4755.

127 Submission of the Canadian League for Ukraine’s Liberation, Toronto Public Hearing (3 December 1965), 3750.

128 See for example, submission of United Ukrainian Canadians, Toronto Public Hearing (1 December 1965), 3508 and Submissions of The Byelorussian Canadian Alliance, Toronto Public Hearing (30 March 1965), 1839; The Regina Ukrainian Professional and Businessmen’s Club, Regina Public Hearing (6 December 1965), 4477.

129 *A Preliminary Report*, 128.

revolved around the status of native Indians and “Eskimos” within the Commission’s terms of reference and indeed within the complexion of Canada itself. Although the Commissioner’s preliminary report briefly acknowledged the historical importance and “unique position” of Canada’s native populations, this fundamental issue remained by far the most marginalized throughout the course of the public hearings. Not surprisingly, the crux of the controversy between the Commission and the various native groups that appeared at the public hearings revolved around the concept of “two founding races.” As one Sudbury woman pointed out, “Why is the Indian always forgotten? We are told that the BNA Act was between the French and the English—where was the Indian during this time?” In addition to the oft-repeated argument that Indian and Eskimo groups deserved to be regarded as the founding culture, Kahn-Tineta Horn, an Iroquois activist, attempted to create a ‘space’ for native groups within the Commission’s terms of reference by interpreting the concept of ‘race’ in strictly biological terms. She argued that, because of the many intermarriages between early French settlers and indigenous inhabitants, Quebec’s cultural complexion should be redefined as “French, French-Indian, and not French-Indian.” At the same time, she presented yet another conception of Canadian nationhood, when she stated that, “There are two nations. There is the Indian nation and the Canadian nation.”¹³⁰

The Commissioners, on the other hand, repeatedly defended their conception of the duality of Canadian nationhood by arguing that, “the present nation of Canada, which is a political entity that exists was actually not founded by Indians . . . there is a distinction between being here first and the expression ‘founding race’, namely, founding the present political entity known as Canada.”¹³¹ In effect, the Commissioners strongly intimated that, even though the presence of Indian and Eskimo groups had long predated the arrival of any European explorers and settlers, Canada’s historical narrative had effectively begun in 1867, and that the concept of ‘equal partnership’ was ultimately the preserve of those French- and English-speaking groups that had established Confederation. In the end, Canada’s First Nations were summarily excluded both from the concept of the ‘two founding races’ and from the notion of the subsequent ‘cultural contribution of other ethnic groups.’ Rendering their concerns with the Commission’s terms of reference as virtually non-issues, these native groups were simply isolated and ignored.¹³²

Given the very complexities and diverse identities inscribed in the whole ambiguo-

130 *A Preliminary Report*, 128, 49 Also see for example, Submissions of the National Indian Council of Canada, Ottawa Preliminary Hearing (7 November 1963), 144; Indian Eskimo Association, Toronto Public Hearing (2 December 1965), 3592-3625 and Submission of Miss Kahn-Tineta Horn, Montreal Public Hearing (1 December 1965), 4317, 4321.

131 See for example, Submission of Miss Kahn-Tineta Horn, 4321.

132 For example, when one Ukrainian organization included Canada’s native peoples in the second term of references involving the ‘cultural contribution of other ethnic groups,’ the Commissioners questioned this group on the accuracy of their submission. See Submission of the Ukrainian Cultural and Educational Centre, Winnipeg Public Hearing (9 December 1965), 5095. Also see Submission of McGill University, Montreal Public Hearing (15 March 1965), 842-43, in which the question of the position of Canada’s Indian and Eskimo peoples was raised, but then summarily dismissed.

ous and variously-defined concept of Canadian nationhood, it is perhaps not surprising that Dr. Andrew of the National Conference of Canadian Universities and Colleges argued that Canada's so-called "communications crisis" extended far beyond the one between French- and English-speaking Canada. In his view, the national crisis ultimately involved "the social and cultural communication of ten provinces, five regions, two founding groups," not to mention the question of multi-ethnic identities and the issue of Canada's aboriginal peoples. Indeed, as Dr. Andrews concluded, "communication is the great enemy of the Canadian society."¹³³ For other participants, however, these same centrifugal tendencies seemed to render any easy definition of Canada a virtual impossibility. Judge Lindal of The Canadian Ethnic Press Federation posed the problem as follows:

I sometimes think that the actual fact of Canada, the actual fact of Canada has no appropriate word (either in English or French). I have not been able to find it in English, and no French Canadian has been able to suggest one to me; so it is very difficult. Canada is a fact in itself, an unique fact, and therefore it is difficult to describe it.¹³⁴

But underlying this attempt to grapple with the 'uniqueness' of Canada, the fundamental question posed by the Commission was whether it was possible to achieve national unity amidst the evident diversities. For at least some participants, this possibility became inextricably linked to promoting a greater sense of 'family-mindedness' among Canadians, regardless of their regional, racial, or ethnic background. For example, Mr. Walter Herbert of the Canada Foundation, appearing at the preliminary hearing, expressed the hope that the Commission's subsequent inquiry would achieve precisely that goal:

You will . . . hear on the one hand about things and situations and conditions which tend to keep people apart, which tend to make people treat each other as strangers and at arm's length. On the other hand, you will, I hope, hear presentations about things which tend to bring people together, to bring them together to enjoy the pleasures and the tribulations of a well-adjusted family . . . I would urge the Royal Commission to make an extraordinary effort to inform itself fully on matters which tend to bring our diversified people into harmonious relationships. . . which will make Canada a happier place for our children and our grandchildren.¹³⁵

While Mr. Herbert invoked the sentimentalized image of the 'happy, united and well-adjusted family' to describe the ideal of Canadian domestic relations, Reverend Shorten of the United Church of Canada emphasized the necessity to cultivate a sense of familial belonging, which he articulated both in national and in universal terms:

Our nation was formed in part by people who came to our shores to find freedom, both political and religious. I suggest that there are many, many people in the world

133 Submission of The National Conference of Canadian Universities and Colleges, Ottawa Public Hearing (2 March 1965), 444.

134 Submission of The Canadian Ethnic Press Federation, Winnipeg Public Hearing (17 May 1965), 2300-01.

135 Submission of The Canadian Foundation, Ottawa Preliminary Hearing (8 November 1963), 470, 473-474.

today who look to us as a nation for the hope that we may give them, too - either to enable them to live where they are, or to offer them a share in our home and as members of our family. Our cultures must look beyond ourselves to see know and accept one another so that the better we may see ourselves as members of the world family which includes all men.¹³⁶

For other participants, however, the Commission itself had, through the course of its public hearings, literally opened a 'Pandora's Box'. The concomitant result had been that, rather than cultivating enhanced national unity, a multiplicity of latent grievances had been allowed to surface and feelings of discontent and disharmony had been aggravated. In many respects, this sentiment was reflected in the gradual, but decided, shift in the tone of the hearings. At the preliminary hearing in 1963, for example, many of the participants seemed to share the sentiments of Dr. Andrew Stewart of the Canadian Association for Adult Education and of M.J. Alphonse Ouimet, the president of Radio-Canada, who regarded the Commission "as potentially one of the most important in our history as a country" and as "the best memorial we could hope to erect to 100 years of Confederation."¹³⁷ Two years later, however, some participants, including one representative of the United Church, argued that the very existence of the Commission had compelled the 'Canadian family' to undergo an unnecessarily protracted and ultimately negative process of self-analysis:

We think there is value in probably emphasizing in a positive way the broad general cultural inheritance which both French-Canadian and English-Canadian share. I think there is a growing feeling, among some segments of the population at least, that probably there are inherent dangers that have been created because of the very existence of the Commission, by too long a process of self-analysis on a national basis that creates problems and probably too little emphasis upon the positive factors that united us as a people ... I think that in terms of any crisis, if you may use the analogy, a family quite often can survive a number of crises if they do not indulge in a process of long self-analysis. I have the feeling . . . that perhaps this process of self-analysis is virtually being overdone at the present moment.¹³⁸

In the end, what emerged from the Commission's prolonged effort to grapple with the question of national unity was that Canada was riddled with a multitude of centrifugal identities. These not only included the fractious relations between French- and English-speaking Canada, but also the molecular attachments of region, province and race/ethnicity. But the language of familialism, invoked in the political discussions surrounding the introduction of the 1946 Citizenship Act and during the national crisis of the early 1960s, attempted to capture the ideal and, indeed, the essence of Canadian national unity. Similar to the defining characteristics of the postwar modern family, ties of affection, mutual understanding, internal communication and, above all, a sense of belonging were the ingredients perceived as necessary to forge a

136 Submission of The United Church of Canada, Ottawa Preliminary Hearing (8 November 1963), 424.

137 Submission of The Canadian Association for Adult Education and of M.J. Alphonse Ouimet, president of Radio-Canada, Ottawa Preliminary Hearing (7 November 1963), 15, 32.

138 Submission of The Manitoba Conference and Winnipeg United Church, Winnipeg Public Hearing (18 May 1965), 2485-86.

national interest that could potentially override and compete with the divisive bonds that comprised Canada's national community. These same qualities and the symbolic linkage between the notion of citizenship and a sense of familial attachment to a long and highly-differentiated national genealogy were further signified through the official adoption of the 'Canadian family tree' motif by the Department of Citizenship and Immigration in the early 1960s and by the Multiculturalism Directorate in the 1970s.¹³⁹

It was during the postwar period, then, that the ideological construction and the discursive articulation of various meanings associated with the 'happy united family' became interlinked with an idealized notion of the 'Canadian family' as both the social foundation and the metaphorical microcosm of Canadian nationhood. If nothing else, this multifarious intersection between the 'private' and the 'political' testifies to the importance of approaching historical categories not as discrete and competing entities, but rather as interrelated parts of a complex whole.

*I wish to thank Ian McKay, Danny Samson, Adam Givertz and the readers of **left history** for reading earlier drafts of this essay and for offering invaluable suggestions. This project was facilitated by generous financial support from the Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council of Canada and the Arthur and Evelyn Lower Fellowship Committee.*

¹³⁹ See Canada, Department of Citizenship and Immigration, *Notes on the Canadian Family Tree* (1960); Canada, Citizen Branch, *The Canadian Family Tree* (1967); Canada, Multiculturalism Directorate, *The Canadian Family Tree: Canada's Peoples* (1979).