

What we are trying to describe is something which is uniquely Canadian and for which there is not one adequate descriptive word -- unless it is Canada itself.

In other words, the ethnic pieces are not self-contained. Multi-culturalism does not mean closed ethnic communities -- the careful reproduction of a European environment and the shutting out of North American influence. It means becoming integrated members of a Canadian society -- members who can relate to other groups on a basis of a common Canadian background, who can enrich themselves as they will enrich the wider Canadian society by drawing on their own spiritual and cultural heritage. It means knowing that their opportunities are not limited by the size or character or customs of their own community.

But on this, as in many other things, our thinking is in parallel. You have rejected the notion that a national congress or society should be a cocoon, sheltering its members from interaction with other groups. I was pleased to note that the first purpose in the Congress' statement of objectives is "To foster the evolution of a better Canadian society by promoting mutual understanding, goodwill, and cooperation between Canadians of Italian and of other origins."

I will not mislead you by suggesting that this process of relating to other parts of society and of feeling comfortably integrated with Canadian society is always easy. Most Canadians at one time or another, of whatever origin, bump against brittle or insensitive barriers. This may be a smug so-called establishment -- and they exist even in our comparatively open and mobile society -- or it may be just plain ignorant bigotry. Ours is not a perfect society and the artificial barriers are there. I do know that they seem even higher and more forbidding to the first generation Canadian. Nevertheless, there is a growing awareness and increasing respect for the values of a plural society. The barriers aren't disappearing but they are getting smaller.

There is, as I see it, a very dynamic process of change and maturing in our society. There was a time when it was common-place for the second generation to scoff at parents whose accents and whose customs identified their origins -- to be slightly embarrassed because they did not sound fully "Canadian." It is my experience, and I hope it is yours, that we have come -- not all the way -- but some distance from these narrow attitudes.

There is other evidence of this very positive change. Italian Canadians -- Polish Canadians, Ukrainian Canadians, Canadians of non-Anglo Saxon or French origins, are not anglicizing their names as much as they have in the past. This is a sign of pride in their community, confidence in themselves, and confidence in the basic fairness of the system.

How have these changes occurred? As the Prime Minister has said, it is, in part, "the vigorous life and energy of the Italian Community." But it takes more than one element for this national chemistry to work -- for the