

Great Britain we are the oldest nation in the Commonwealth. We hope we have learned the lessons which diversity must teach a people; but in spite of the sincere warmth and affection with which I know you will be received wherever you go in Canada, you may discover hidden pockets of sentiment contrasting sharply with the tolerance which I believe to be characteristic of the great majority of Canadians. You may well run across the sort of person who is moved to look unsympathetically on our immigrants, particularly the two and a half million new Canadians who have arrived here since 1945 -- in spite of the fact that his own ancestors were not exactly original members of society. There is however no question that our new Canadians are making an essential and vastly important contribution to Canadian life.

Our experience of the plural society has been real and searching. But even its limited successes were not easily achieved. As the novelist Hugh MacLennan has put it, "Not only was this country formed out of the flotsam and jetsam of three or four defeated racial and political groups; some of these groups had once been bitter enemies of one another. But they had to live here, and they had to live in peace with one another." The cost of doing so has been high. We have had to do without a very clear image of ourselves, without a national culture, in the sense that these are to be found in Europe and the United States. The majority of Canadians are still not capable of speaking both our official languages (although in the last few years happily there has begun a ground swell of feeling and action to overcome this neglect), and a sizable number of Canadians from the minority groups have not yet learned either language.