

A country like Canada poses an unusual degree of difficulty in this respect. The Canadian mosaic results in a kind of "non-nation" -- even "non-culture" -- image. It is true that this fact creates great problems even for Canadians who seek to define the Canadian image; but it poses extreme difficulties for the foreigner seeking a definitive image of Canada. The latter point is the one of concern in this study. After all, an accurate grasp by Canadians of the configuration of their own culture is not really a necessary preliminary to achieving an accurate understanding of the same culture by foreigners.

The best that anyone can probably do is to poll a variety of reliable experts on different aspects of this ill-defined culture. But, for a foreigner, identification of such experts is even more difficult than for a Canadian. It is extremely difficult to know where to begin and, as a result, few have the will to persist. A considerable part of the reason that Canada is imperfectly presented abroad very likely can be found in the difficulty of obtaining a reasonably concise but accurate picture of our country, or even of obtaining reasonably reliable data on any one aspect which may be of particular interest.

Out of the situation sketched above arises the next recommendation: that consideration be given to creating a central clearing-house which could provide reliable references to authentic sources of information on various aspects of our culture; or, if it is considered that such an agency already exists at least in embryo (the Canada Council might be one possibility) that steps be taken so to designate this agency and to publicize -- even advertise -- the fact. The expectation would be that such an agency would be able to clear queries about our nation and any aspect of our culture by consulting one or more individuals whose names were filed on a central registry, and that this could be done with sufficient speed to provide the response in a reasonable length of time. In return for allowing their names to be listed on this central registry, these experts should be paid