

overstretched to the detriment of the competitive position. In a new association with the United States, there would be no reason why Canadian should not keep and improve their social services, their clean cities, their recreational facilities and all the other public amenities that create a way of life better than that available to many Americans, provided they were prepared to pay for them in taxes that would reduce their private incomes to below those common in the United States. Nor would there be any reason why Canadian systems of government, law and education should change.

National identity

The Canadian national character is supposed by romantics to be shaped by the immensity of the north, the harshness of the terrain, the severity of the climate, and the struggles of the pioneers merely to survive in such a hostile environment. But what can all that mean to an immigrant recently arrived from, say, Europe, living in a highrise apartment in a brick and cement metropolis, protected from the climate by central heating and air conditioning, working for a multinational corporation, travelling in a few hours across the country for a business meeting, holidaying in Florida, and spending most of his or her leisure hours in a world imagined by television? Similarly, American myths and values derived from the War of Independence, the Civil War and the settlement of the West can have only a limited relevance for a Puerto Rican struggling to make his way in the urban jungle of New York City. In other words, it is misleading in modern circumstances to think of national cultures and recognizable national types. In every country, some traditions, some folk memories, some particularities remain, and no doubt will continue to do so for many years, perhaps centuries, to come. Numerical minority does not mean extinction. As French Canadians have retained an identity within Confederation, Scots within the United Kingdom, Texans within the United States, so Canadians will retain identity however the relationship with the United States may develop. But as Michael Novak has pointed out in the United States, the modern pluralistic society produces the pluralistic personality:⁸

Each individual is, by right and by opportunity, responsible for choosing his or her own identity from among the many materials presented by the contingencies of human life . . . Many persons have the opportunity to become involved in many cultural traditions not originally their own, and to appropriate music, ideas, values and even a set of intellectual landmarks not native to their own upbringing.

To adapt this insight to Canadian circumstances, it is not an exaggeration to say that a person may be raised in a Protestant family, take an interest in an Eastern technique of meditation, marry into a Jewish family and in later life become an agnostic, study German philosophy in university, enjoy American television but prefer European movies and English novels; read *Macleans*' magazine, the London *Economist* and the *New York Review of Books*; wear a Canadian parka with jeans and cowboy boots; play amateur hockey, follow American football, and watch a Canadian baseball team playing in a US league; admire the work of the Group of Seven, enjoy Chinese food, and be

active politically in movements protesting against US foreign policy. He or she will still be a Canadian carrying through life some of the social customs and attitudes that that implies, and giving allegiance to the Canadian state, but he or she will not easily be identified as a Canadian type, the distinctive product of a national culture. To put it another way, cultural identity depends not so much on where one lives as on how one chooses to live.

Thus, the concept of national identity rooted in a national culture is being washed away by the technologies of transportation and communication that are producing not the uniform man in a homogenized society, but variety and diversity in an international society. To be a Canadian citizen does not signify a way of life, or a set of values beyond attachment to the community and loyalty to the national state. So the fear that closer association with the United States will erode a Canadian identity in the making or abort a Canadian culture about to be born is unfounded.

One continent

The basic argument being made here is that Canadians, both as individuals and as a political nation, are more likely to prosper and fulfill themselves in free association with Americans than they are by seeking to protect themselves from US competition and influence. The desire to escape from US influence, the desire to put distance between Canada and the United States, arises in large measure from fear of absorption by the US and from jealousy of US wealth, power and vitality. But fear and jealousy are corrosive in national as in personal life; they feed the Canadian sense of inferiority, encourage parochial attitudes, and give rise in politics to nationalist policies that are bound to fail because they are against the tide of events and against the private aspirations of most Canadians who wish to enjoy the maximum freedom to trade, invest, travel and exchange ideas. Canadians have no reason to feel inferior to Americans, or to be fearful of the United States. They have built an orderly and progressive society that is in some ways an example to the United States, and as workers and producers they are surely equal to Americans. To the extent that size, climate and geography set Canada at a disadvantage in competing with the United States, that can be corrected only by public policy and private effort; protection at the border seeks only to hide such a problem and not to solve it.

Finally, what is required is not so much a change in Canadian policies as a change in Canadian attitudes. Canada, after all, is — through GATT — already committed to the abolition, virtually, of tariffs on trade with the United States, and to the maintenance of the free flow of information and entertainment, which together ensure the continuing integration of the two societies. But instead of regarding this prospect with foreboding, as a defeat for Canadian nationalism and a threat to sovereignty and identity, Canadians should be encouraged to see it as an opportunity to knock down barriers, thereby enlarging their opportunities to compete and to demonstrate the virtues of their society. With a new association with the United States established by a treaty setting out the rules and limits of the relationship, Canada might at last get the ageing monkey of nationalism off its back and be able to turn all its energies to solving the internal problems of economic management, social injustice and political reform.