

French island, it is thought, cannot avoid a gradual assimilation to the culture and language of North America. Some believe this who favour a wider use of French now. It seems from one generation to another, each time using new arguments, many people continue to hope that this massive anglicization "is just around the corner", on a continent which has been "the burying ground of so many languages and cultures".

This illusion has a noble ancestry. It obtained the support of Lord Durham one hundred and twenty-six years ago. The Lord Commissioner proposed a policy of anglicization which was partly the inspiration for the Act of Union of 1840, and which came to nothing. At that time there were half a million French Canadians; today there are more than five million.

This belief in inevitable assimilation is in sharp contrast to the feeling of most French Canadians—except perhaps of certain Quebec separatists who are in favour of secession precisely because of their fear that the federal form of government will bring about the anglicization of French Canada. Should their deeprooted anxiety ever take hold of Quebec it is very possible that almost the entire province would rush to embrace separatism.

The great bulk of English-speaking opinion seemed to us to be moderate. It has no animus against French-speaking Canadians. It would like to see French-speaking Canadians happy and participating vigorously in the development of Canada. It has general respect for the French language and would like to see it better taught to more young English-speaking Canadians. It

tends to be bewildered and often hurt by reports from Quebec.

But throughout English-speaking Canada there was tragically little awareness of the feelings and aspirations of French-speaking Canadians. Few had come to grips with the questions that Quebec's resurgence poses for all Canadians.....

ALL that we have seen and heard has led us to the conviction that Canada is in the most critical period of its history since Confederation. We believe that there is a crisis, in the sense that Canada has come to a time when decisions must be taken and developments must occur leading either to its break-up, or to a new set of conditions for its future existence. We do not know whether the crisis will be short or long. We are convinced that it is here. The signs of danger are many and serious.

The ways in which important public and private institutions now operate strongly dissatisfy a very significant part of the Canadian population, while the other part remains largely indifferent to this situation, or does not even know of its existence.

A strong impression we drew from our contacts with thousands of French-speaking Canadians of all walks of life and of all regions of the country was the extent to which, for most of them, questions of language and culture do not occur in the abstract. They are rooted in the experiences of daily life, in jobs, in meetings, in correspondence with public and private corporations, in the armed forces. They are inseparably connected with the social, economic and political institutions which frame the existence of a

people and which should satisfy their many needs and aspirations. The opinions we heard were often the result of ordinary individual and collective experiences; hence our conviction that they can hardly be changed by simple appeals to abstract ideas like "national unity". It seemed to us that the dissatisfaction and the sense of revolt came from aspects of reality rather than from doctrines that had been preached.

At the same time we were confronted constantly by English-speaking Canadians, including many expressing sentiments of goodwill, who seemed to have no realization of the daily experiences that cause the discontent among so many of their French-speaking fellow citizens. Nor do most understand the underlying trend toward the increasing autonomy of Quebec and the strengthening of the belief among her people that she is now building herself into a distinct form of nationhood with full control of all her social and economic institutions. What is grasped is frequently rejected. Thus there exists a deep gulf, with unawareness on one side, and strongly rooted feeling on the other.

We are convinced that it is still possible to rectify the situation. But a major operation will perhaps be unavoidable. The whole social body appears to be affected. The crisis has reached a point where there is a danger that the will of the people to go on may begin to fail....

What is at stake is the very fact of Canada: what kind of country will it be? Will it continue to exist? These questions are not matters for theoreticians only, they are posed by groups of human beings. And other groups

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