

University Forum

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The myth of Trudeau Federalism

Although the harangue delivered by separatist Michel Chartrand in Winters College was filled with hackneyed clichés, peppered by anti-Trudeau witticisms and compounded by half-baked vague notions of American imperialism, (somehow all related to the so-called oppression of Quebec), he was able to establish one valid point; the poverty of the democratic process in Canada. This poverty, however, is merely one aspect of a great illusion which has been adroitly nurtured by Liberal Ottawa. If Canada is ever to see a second hundred years as a unified nation, then the myth of Trudeau federalism must be dispelled.

This myth was begun during the Pearson regime when English-speaking Canada was subjected to a saturation programme praising the merits of bilingualism and biculturalism in a desperate move to appease the French nationalists of Quebec. English Canada was constantly bombarded with the ideas of two nations, equal status and two founding races by Quebec politicians; ideas soon re-echoed by nearly every federal representative.

The weak minority Pearson government, the B and B Commission and minor terrorist acts hastened the implementation of a programme of national bilingualism. "Quebec must have equality" became the gospel of the day and it was Pierre Elliot Trudeau who was to lead Quebec to that realization.

Trudeau maintained, however, that there was only one nation in Canada, but his view of Confederation was that there existed a linguistic minority whose rights and privileges must be protected. His idea of protection soon took the form of a "two nations"

concept of Canadian federalism. That is, all federal agencies must be bilingual where applicable and that French-Canadians are to have a proportional representation in the running of the country. This concept he says will save Canadian unity and it is this which I call the myth of Trudeau federalism.

The two nations concept is a myth because too many French-Canadians reject this formula. This has become painfully clear with the invocation of the War Measures Act. Though designed to crush the FLQ, which the government has desperately tried to picture as a group of criminals rather than a political movement, it also had the intent of silencing French-Canadian opposition to bilingualism.

The FLQ not only represents a movement to free Quebec from Canada, it also represents a unilingual language movement. The French-Canadian is different because he speaks a different language. The nationalists, the so-called pro-federalists and the separatists of Quebec are not interested in a bilingual Canada, only in a unilingual French Quebec; their cause is French unilingualism.

If bilingualism has the intent of creating equality of opportunity for French speaking people, why the FLQ, why the Parti Quebecois? These organizations exist because French Quebecers have no interest in what goes on in the rest of Canada. They have looked inward ever since the Conquest, and this tradition carefully guarded by Catholicism, has isolated them and left them in a semi-impooverished state.

Though Levesque tries to cloak

himself in "fairness" by supporting English language schools in some future independent Quebec, this will soon give way to a policy of complete unilingualism when his party elects a new leader. Even now Bourassa, the so-called Federalist, is under pressure to make French, not only the working language of Quebec, but the only language of Quebec.

The low French Canadian birth rate and the desire of immigrants to speak English will in fifteen years, according to Levesque, make the French-Canadian a minority in Montreal. It is this fear of assimilation, rapidly becoming a reality, which has caused the Quebecer to reject Trudeau's bilingualism.

Trudeau though, still believing in his own myth, wants to see English language rights extended in Quebec so that these same rights can be given to French-Canadians outside Quebec. To the English Canadian this seems to be the utopian solution. Of course no one seems to see the almost incalculable cost in dollars and cents that would be needed to realize such an impractical plan. While hundreds of thousands of Canadians are out of work Trudeau has pledged \$500 million to promote bilingualism!

To the English Canadian Trudeau's concept of federalism took the form of some quasi-idea of proportional representation in decision-making for the French-Canadian. However to the Quebec politicians it means the restructuring of the government which would give Francophones "equality of partnership" in Confederation. Quebec leaders conceive equality as the complete cultural and nearly the complete political autonomy of Quebec

as well as a French-English parity in running the country as a whole. This has gone far beyond Trudeau's concept of two nations.

What Bourassa is really working for is, at the federal level regardless of the size of Quebec's French-speaking population, that province should assume the same weight in national decision-making as the rest of the country as a whole! The price English Canada must pay to keep Quebec in Confederation is federal dualism with an autonomous French Quebec all firmly entrenched in a new constitution. What Quebec wants is all the advantages of Confederation without having to face up to its linguistic realities.

Seen in retrospect the acceptance of Trudeau's concept of federalism in 1969 was in part a subconscious expression and fervent hope by English Canadians that he was the saviour of national unity. It is becoming evident now that this image no longer holds true and many English Canadians are beginning to realize this and reject the Trudeau bilingual myth. So far he has been able to dodge and bluff his way through the controversy but the myth is losing its silver lining.

The coup de grace to Trudeau federalism will come when Quebec spells out its constitutional demands for not tearing Canada apart. If Trudeau rejects or accepts French Canada's definition of equality one segment or the other of the population will turn against him. He has driven himself into a corner and either way he turns the Trudeau myth will be shattered!

Mark Alchuk
Vanier I

Howard Halpern in review - that's all

Yesterday a student, obviously unaware of who or what I am, tells me: "You're always happy. Every time I see you, you're whistling or singing."

Sounds a bit odd. Better check with EXCALIBUR.

"Halpern," according to an editorial November 19, "has been trying to get permission to take his fourth year psychology courses on an ungraded basis and for all his efforts. . . All he's gotten is heartache and sore feet."

It doesn't figure.

Again, on March 4, according to EXCALIBUR, the issue will "have to be resolved by the full Senate. This will not come before the man in the middle, Howard Halpern, has suffered through a year of doubt and possible failure."

Sorry, I say. You must have the wrong guy.

Media accounts, however, do sometimes lead to expectations that differ from reality. Even with EXCALIBUR I have noticed a few discrepancies.

To be honest, I'm not really having that bad a time. In fact, I will say categorically that this year has been my best year at university.

Thanks to Dean Saywell, Dean Sigman, Professor Solitar, EXCALIBUR, and others, it seems I now have a reputation among members of the York community as being an "outstanding", "A", or "excellent" student.

This has not always been the case.

In my first year, at Syracuse University, I dropped out. At the time I dropped out I was failing two courses. Next year, though rejected by York, I was fortunate to be accepted at McMaster University. There I did

fairly well, but had to work my ass off and didn't particularly enjoy it.

I didn't like lectures. Nor in retrospect did I learn a hell of a lot therefrom. (Particularly in psychology where I spent two afternoons a week in a class of 1,000 watching the "chairman" on a 20x20-foot screen.) But I attended each class because I had to, thinking it would get me somewhere.

It did: York. I decided to major in psychology for two reasons of which I am not ashamed. One. I found I was able to perform well on psychologic examinations without doing very much work. Two. Though my aim was to go to medical school, I found science too difficult and thought psychology might give me some idea whether I should enter psychiatry, which I then considered a possibility.

At York I advanced from the 1,000 to the 1,800-member lecture, Modes of Reasoning, whose absence from the presently required gen-ed curricula, I think, speaks for itself.

It was not until the end of the first term, having taken a poetry course at the New Writers' Workshop and having enjoyed it more than anything at York, that I started to think about quitting.

It is precisely then that things start to happen. I manage to weasel my way into a modes counter course. I enter a T group. I find I can learn more science and philosophy by not attending lectures, and reading instead at home.

In fact, I'm so excited I even run for CYSF.

It will not surprise you, I suspect, when I say that university education, for me, began in the third year. The reason for this lies essentially in what I

did the previous summer: nothing. Except T groups. Encounters. Touchie feelies. And emotions.

No intellectual stuff. The T group was the place where I learned not to intellectualize.

What does this have to do with education? Nothing. Yet. What does it mean? It means simply that when I returned to York in the fall, I was turned on.

What good does that do? Nothing. Except that the university is a place where you're supposed to think. (Some will disagree.) If you're turned on and you start to think, maybe you'll start to think about what turns you on.

This is what happens. I start thinking about the T group. Ironically, I begin to take intellectual interest in the process whereby I learned not to intellectualize.

I'm excited. I want to learn. And I have to take courses. Why not combine the two? Perhaps it's not usually done. But it does, I think, make a bit of sense.

How do you go about doing it? Well, unless you happen to find a course that's just as you want it, you've got to choose courses without final exams. In the psychology department, that's not hard to do.

Then what? Well, first you have to decide exactly what you want to do. This is your project. Try to match courses and projects as closely as possible. And for each course, ask your professor to allow you to proceed with your plan. You may be surprised how often he will say yes.

If you tell a person you chose a course because it doesn't have a final exam, he might not like the idea. But it just might be the intelligent thing to do.

It worked for me. In third year I served a practicum at Clarke Institute, participated in a T group, organized a T group with radical students, and wrote 180 pages (I happen to like to write) on topics of my choosing. I also wrote four exams, but that couldn't be helped.

Third year wasn't bad compared to first-first, second-first, or second. But in fourth year (this year) I found a much better way of doing it: independent study. Independent study at least in the psychology department, means you can do whatever you want, period, as long as you get a faculty member to sponsor you.

I don't want to get into a long list of all the things I'm doing. But I do want to mention two things which give me special satisfaction: (1) teaching poetry at MAGU free school, North York (2) co-leading a B group (my name for a social action T group) organized specifically to effect change in the department of psychology.

Another bonus, of course, is that I am taking all my courses ungraded. I gather from (senate CEAS chairman) Professor Terry Olson's most recent letter to (arts council chairman) Professor Hugh Parry and from a recent discussion with arts Dean John Saywell, that it's quite proper under existing legislation to have all my courses ungraded and that the symbol "UC", for ungraded credited, may be entered on my transcript at the end of the year.

I just might not get my degree. That's all.

Howard Halpern.