



CANADA

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CANADA - A CULTURAL MONTAGE

The following passages are from an address by Prime Minister Pearson on April 26 at the 1964 Man-of-the-Year Dinner of the Montreal Israel Bond Organization:

...Canada is a multi-ethnic society, and to describe it as such is strictly correct. But it complicates, needlessly, an emerging plan determining the Canadian future. It is true there are many people from many lands in Canada... But "multi-ethnic" suggests the persistent demand for ethnic recognition as such. What really is involved here is something deeper; namely, the desire of all those from lands other than France or the United Kingdom, who are neither Anglo-Celtic nor French-Canadian in origin, to take their full part, as many have done now for several generations, in shaping the character of Canada; but not necessarily by presenting us with fragmented cultures in every province.

EVOLVING ROLE OF MINORITY GROUPS

It is difficult to define the evolving nature of the role of the many minority groups in Canada whose lives and cultural heritages have been fitted into the broader Canadian way. For ours is neither "melting pot" nor "mosaic", but something more like a "montage" where each culture is identifiable but blends into the basic English-French dualism which fortunately is ours. Individual identities are not lost. In the Canadian way, we have tried to preserve the outline, and the appreciation, of heritages brought from older lands, yet have them blend without being lost in the founding cultures of Canadian society, French-speaking and English-speaking.

They strengthen and enrich, we should never forget, these basic Canadian cultures as they fit themselves into the developing life of their new land....

LAYING A DUAL FOUNDATION

If I understand Canada's destiny correctly, it is to make the most of our opportunity to build, on our historic English-French foundation, a multi-racial but a truly Canadian society. We are approaching the centenary of our Confederation. But even this dual foundation is not yet firm. The acceptance and familiar use of the French language in English-speaking Canada and the ready access to English culture in many parts of French Canada cannot be forced and may take some time to develop. Nevertheless, I think the day is coming when, though his mother-tongue (and shall I call it his mother-culture?) will always have primacy for each individual, access to a second world, with another language, another cultural and social framework, will be regarded as a joy, not a gesture; a privilege, not an obligation. It will not be automatic or simultaneous for everyone or everywhere. But one day, I believe, this process will culminate in stronger and more generally appreciated separate Canadian identity, on the North American continent, than we now possess. This good prospect alone should invite a major effort on the part of the two language groups to seek the experiences and the advantages that each has to offer the other.

Now where does this hope for acceptance of two basic cultures in one national society leave other minority groups, these many ethnic entities that have come to make up the "other third" of Canada? I am

(Over)