

(1) The French Canadians had succeeded in preserving their cultural institutions in Quebec, but they had failed to have them recognized in the rest of the country. Cultural survival had been secured, but cultural expansion had been prevented. Quebec would be bilingual, but the rest of the country would not.

(2) Self-government had been won in a wide range of activities. But experience had shown that French Canadians were likely to lose, when conflicts arose, if they did not have the political control over the situation. Thus, the main concern of the French Canadians was to preserve provincial autonomy and to enlarge its scope. Taschereau, Duplessis and later Lesage, in their own ways, helped to develop and maintain that tradition.

(3) After World War I, the period of active conflict was practically over. The so-called "Quebec reserve" had been created more or less by common agreement. A great number of English-speaking Canadians were opposed to the cultural expansion of the French Canadians outside Quebec; French Canadians were conscious of their failure and stopped trying to build a bilingual Canada. The "Quebec reserve" appeared to be a temporary settlement; it meant a situation of peaceful coexistence where the two groups ignored each other.

During that long period, the main effort of the French-Canadian leaders had been devoted to the political struggle. There was little energy left to improve the cultural institutions or to develop provincial autonomy into a powerful instrument of action and control. The cultural and social institutions were left almost entirely to the clergy, which could not participate actively in the political struggle.

Church and School

The Church had the complete responsibility for the educational system at all levels and, quite naturally, exercised its control according to its own objectives. During that period, the Church sincerely believed that industrialization and urbanization were undesirable and it was seeking to keep people on the farms.

The educational system faithfully reflected those views. Technical schools were not encouraged. Primary schools were badly organized and did not go beyond the very rudiments of knowledge. Secondary schools or classical colleges were primarily designed to prepare students for the priesthood. Those students who could not be persuaded to become priests could go to the university, if they had the financial means, but their choice was limited, for all practical purposes, to two professions: law and medicine.

Church and Labour

The social movements were also controlled by the Church. When the international labour unions invaded Quebec at the end of the nineteenth century, the Church became worried and, in 1901, the Archbishop of Quebec decided to organize the Confederation of Catholic Syndicates, which were designed to protect the moral and spiritual rather than the material interests of the workers. The same applied to the Catholic Farm Union.