ect would require several more volumes. Nor does the approach suggest that intellectual history offers some magical key that will unlock all the puzzles and problems raised by the theme. And certainly it is not intended to supersede all other approaches. Someone has said that the practice of intellectual history is like trying to nail jelly to the wall, and indeed the entities that are subject to examination are nebulous and intangible. Any exact and scientific way of measuring the force and impact of ideas, furthermore, has yet to be devised, and the question must always arise as to the connection between ideas and the motives of those active men of power who made the crucial decisions. Yet when all this is said our understanding of Canadian history would be narrow indeed if we left out of account the climate of opinion in which the battle between imperialism and anti-imperialism took place. In the accounts of the Boer War crisis or the naval debate, for example, one invariably encounters allusions to the "imperialist pressure from English Canada" for this or that policy; yet one often comes away with the impression that we are told a good deal more about how extreme positions were accommodated or compromised at the centre than we learn about the extremes themselves. If we want to understand what imperialism and nationalism meant we must look to those who were the exponents and interpreters of these beliefs and try to grasp what these convictions meant to them. Only by doing so can we appreciate why their opposition was so fundamental and why Canadian historians are still divided as to the meaning of imperialism as a factor in Canadian history.

NOTES

1. Quoted in George R. Parkin, *Imperial Federation: The Problem of National Unity* (London, 1892), 85–86.
2. Stephen Leacock, *The Great Victory in Canada* (reprint from *The National Review*, London, 1911), 12.

Article Nine

Henri Bourassa on Imperialism and Biculturalism, 1900–1918

Joseph Levitt

Henri Bourassa had a clear vision of how to bring about Canadian nationhood, and with unbelievable stubbornness he struggled to persuade both French and English Canadians to accept his ideas. Although not an original thinker, he was well read, highly intelligent, and had absorbed the principles of three of the most important ideologies of late-nineteenth-century Western Europe: Catholicism, nationalism, and liberalism. These he integrated into the coherent world outlook which underlay his conception of a Canadian nation.

Bourassa's ideas penetrated the consciousness of his contemporaries because they dealt with the fundamental difficulties that confronted the builders of a Canadian nation: the

Source: *Henri Bourassa on Imperialism and Bi-culturalism, 1900–1918* (Toronto: Copp Clark, 1970). Reprinted by permission of the author.

relations between Canada and Great Britain, the relations between French and English Canadians, and the economic and social relations between rich and poor in an industrial and capitalist society.

The reception that Bourassa's contemporaries gave his ideas was enhanced by Bourassa's formidable forensic talent and massive personality. Many saw Bourassa as a great orator who skillfully articulated the aspirations of his French-Canadian audiences. Bourassa's power as a writer is striking even today. On the one hand, with very few exceptions, he used meticulously documented facts to appeal to reason (see his pamphlets *Great Britain and Canada* and *Que Devons-Nous à l'Angleterre?*); on the other, by always giving his ideas an ethical basis, he aroused moral passion. To Bourassa a policy was always either morally *right* or morally *wrong*.

Bourassa had unusual political gifts: forceful personality, keen intellect, eloquence. When he first entered Parliament, some believed that he would succeed Laurier as the most prominent French Canadian in the Liberal party. But Bourassa possessed characteristics fatal to any politician. In him were combined a dread of forcing a decision on his reluctant supporters and a positive distaste for exercising power. "I am of such a temperament that I never feel like being a whip," he commented. "I have enough trouble in keeping myself in line: I have no desire to keep others in line."[1] He had little or no tolerance for other people's opinions. He was totally unable to compromise. This made him hopeless as a politician but superb as a critic. Because he had no need to cope with political realities, his proposals were straightforward, clear, consistent with one another, and suffused with moral rectitude.

Although Bourassa accepted the parliamentary system, he believed that party leaders, corrupted by their love of power, too often sacrificed principle to keep themselves in office; party policy was dictated by political advantage rather than concern for the good of the country. The only way to offset this weakness in parties was to arouse public opinion to the point where it would compel politicians anxious to win elections to take up patriotic policies. It was as such an educator of public opinion that Bourassa saw himself and indeed acted. Working outside Parliament and through his newspaper, *Le Devoir*, he won the following of enough French Canadians to make the policies he advocated of pivotal importance in the elections of 1911 and 1917. As the feat of an individual, this accomplishment is unmatched in twentieth-century Canadian politics.

Bourassa and Canadian Nationhood

Nationalist, Catholic, and liberal values all went into Bourassa's conception of Canadian nationhood. Accepting the nationalist nineteenth-century idea that each nation had been given a specific task by God, he believed that French Canada's mission was to build the ideal society on Catholic principles and by its example win back to the Church millions of Protestants and free-thinkers in North America. The situation of French Canadians was complicated: not only were they under British rule, but they also lived with Anglo-Canadians, more numerous than they, in the same confederation. But Bourassa was able to reconcile his patriotism to French Canada with a genuine loyalty to Canada, a British Dominion, because he was a cultural nationalist. He wished French Canada to have a culture separate from that of English Canada, but not to be a sovereign state of its own. Thus he was both a French-Canadian nationalist and a Canadian nationalist at the same time.

Bourassa desired amity between English and French Canadians. He wished to see an Anglo–French Canadian nation, one in which each group would keep its own culture but

would be united with the other "in a sentiment of brotherhood in a common attachment to a common country."[2] The necessary legal framework for such a bi-cultural country was possible only on the basis of liberal principles: Canada must be free to choose her foreign policies on the sole basis of her own interests, not those of the British Empire, and French Canada must be free to develop her culture everywhere in the Dominion. But Bourassa's aspirations were frustrated by the majority of Canadians who believed that Canada ought to cooperate with Great Britain in imperial defence and by an English Canada that refused to accept cultural duality.

Imperial Defence

The turn of the century saw the heyday of the imperialist movement in England. Of the many causes of this complex phenomenon, we are concerned with only one: the growing vulnerability of the Empire to powerful rivals. Faced with potential threats, Imperial defence planners turned to the Dominions for help. They wished the Dominions to contribute to a system of imperial defence controlled centrally in London. But colonial politicians saw things differently. Previously, a colony had been responsible only for its own defence while Great Britain protected the rest of the Empire. Now a centralized defence would mean that the colonies were contributing large amounts of money to further policies over which they had no control.

Canadian politicians stood firm in defence of their military autonomy. At the Imperial conference of 1902 Laurier rejected any proposals for defence centralization, "not so much from the expense involved," but because it represented "an important departure from the principles of colonial self-government."[3] In 1904 his government placed all Canadian military affairs under the command of a Militia Council which itself was under the direct control of the Canadian Minister of Militia. Then in 1907, Canada helped to persuade the British General Staff to agree that Dominion officers whom it trained would be responsible to their own Cabinet ministers and not to British officials; this implied that the principle in defence relations was to be cooperation and not automatic commitment. Two years later the Laurier government was an important influence in the admiralty's decision to concede the principle of naval decentralization for the Empire. Yet while insisting on defence cooperation, Laurier did not neglect military reform. New training schemes for officers were begun and military institutions in the country were made more efficient. Such was the progress that the government accepted a plan for the dispatch of a Canadian contingent overseas if necessary.

The government's defence policy, however, aroused passionate controversy on two occasions: once in 1899 over the sending of troops to South Africa, and then again in 1910 over its decision to found a Canadian navy. At first Laurier did not believe that Canada should participate in the Boer War. He stated publicly that soldiers could not be legally sent to South Africa because the Boers did not present a threat to Canadian security. Many Anglo-Canadians, including members of his own cabinet, would not accept his decision and compelled him to change his mind; the Cabinet authorized the dispatch of troops to South Africa but emphasized that this action was not to be taken as a precedent. Bourassa, however, because he believed that the government's action was a serious step toward Canada's being automatically committed to take part in every British war, resigned from his seat in the Commons. Laurier, on the other hand, was criticized for not fully supporting the imperial cause since Canadian troops once in South Africa were to be paid by Great Britain.

As a response to the "dreadnought" crisis which had blown up in 1909 over the possibility of the German fleet catching up to the British, Laurier proposed forming a small navy which the Cabinet could turn over to the Admiralty if it thought necessary. Bourassa and his supporters opposed the Naval Bill, arguing that it would commit Canada to every British war. Many Anglo-Canadians, however, objected to Laurier's proposal for exactly the opposite reasons; it gave the Cabinet the alternative of not sending the navy and thus undermined the principle of "One King, One Fleet, One Flag." But in Quebec Bourassa's attack on Laurier's federal naval policy was so popular that candidates whom he supported in the 1911 federal election won sixteen seats from the Liberals. This loss of Quebec support contributed to the defeat of the Laurier government and the election of a Conservative administration headed by Robert Borden.

Although Canada was automatically committed to war in 1914, there was almost unanimous sentiment for participation. This did not, however, end the speculation over imperial relations. It was clear that as a consequence of their taking part in the War, the Dominions would demand a voice in imperial foreign policy; and denial of this claim would result in the shattering of the Empire. This was the thesis of a book by Lionel Curtis, the leader of a group of thoughtful imperialist-minded people devoted to building imperial unity through the exchange of information and propaganda. But it was not only these intellectuals of the Round Table (the name of a quarterly founded by Curtis in which he expounded his ideas) who were concerned with the fate of the Empire. Even while leading the Canadian war effort, Prime Minister Borden found the question important enough to help set up in London an Imperial War Conference, composed of overseas prime ministers and British cabinet ministers, to chart the future of the Empire.

Bourassa and the British Connection

The roots of Bourassa's disagreement with Laurier over imperial defence lay in their differing concepts of the British Empire. To Laurier, the British Empire represented liberty and justice;[4] to Bourassa, all empires, including the British, were "hateful," and stood in the way of "liberty and intellectual and moral progress." Bourassa believed that the Empire imposed serious constraints on the life of nationalities, preventing them from achieving the destiny that God had planned for them; thus it was necessary to choose between "British ideals and British domination."[5]

Bourassa was convinced that the aim of British imperialists was to assure the military, commercial, and intellectual supremacy of the Anglo-Saxon race. Since this could be achieved only by force, the British were led to demand military aid from the Dominions. To ensure that this help was forthcoming, Imperialists like Joseph Chamberlain, the British Colonial Secretary, and Lord Grey, the Governor General of Canada, were plotting to revolutionize imperial defence relations so that Great Britain would continue to control foreign policy but would be able to commit the colonies, including Canada, to her wars—hence the danger of Laurier accepting the premise that when Great Britain was at war Canada was at war.[6] Canada, Bourassa insisted, could go to war only by its own consent and not by some Imperial act. This reaction was anti-imperialist, not pacifist. He was ready to agree to Canada's going to war, but only if she were directly attacked or if her vital interests were in jeopardy.

Laurier's decision to send troops to South Africa had raised in Bourassa's mind the question of Canadian responsibilities in British wars. What made Laurier's action even more reprehensible to Bourassa was that Laurier had knowingly violated the existing law.

Under pressure from London, Laurier had set a precedent which, if followed, would mean that Canadian forces would be automatically put at the disposal of the British in all their future wars. The consequences would be very grave for Canada: "If we send 2000 and spend $2,000,000 to fight two nations, aggregating a population of 250,000 souls, how many men shall we send and how many millions shall we expend to fight a first class power, a coalition of powers?"[7]

Bourassa was going too far to claim that a precedent had been set, even though he offered as proof the fact that Chamberlain regarded the Canadian action as such. Influential Anglo-Canadians believed that although Canada had sent troops to fight the Boers, she had not given up the right to choose whether she would engage in British wars or not. They supported Laurier when he rejected Chamberlain's plea to Canada to accept the principle of centralized defence at the Imperial Conference of 1902.

Laurier's intention to develop a Canadian navy posed the same issue. He believed that British naval supremacy was necessary to protect the Empire and all the values it stood for; if it were threatened, Canada must aid Great Britain with all her force. But he wished the Canadian Cabinet to decide whether or not the navy should be turned over to the Admiralty. Bourassa, though, viewed the question from an entirely different perspective. The fact that the proposed fleet was to include cruisers and destroyers suggested to him that its purpose was not to defend Canadian coastal waters but to form part of the British fleet in time of war. Laurier claimed he would put the Canadian fleet under British control only if he believed the danger to Britain great enough, but Bourassa maintained that he would in fact do this for all wars in which Great Britain became involved. Bourassa did not trust Laurier: the prime minister was bound to cave in under imperial pressure in an emergency, even as he had done in 1899 over the Boer War. To emphasize his point Bourassa implied that at the Imperial Conference of 1909 Laurier had agreed that in time of war the fleet would automatically come under British control and that this commitment had been given the force of law by the Naval Bill of 1910. This was an unfair presentation of Laurier's position.

It was natural that Bourassa would be interested in the discussion on postwar imperial relations. He believed that by their contribution to the imperial war effort the Dominions had left behind their colonial status. They should not put up with less say on British foreign policy than a "single cab driver in London";[8] if the Canadian people insisted on taking part in British wars they ought to have some control over the way in which their men and money were used.

Still, for Bourassa such imperial partnership was even at best a poor alternative to complete Canadian independence. Independence would mean that Anglo-Canadians would acknowledge for once and for all that Canada and not Great Britain was their homeland. This would eliminate the major reason for quarrels between the two Canadian peoples. In foreign affairs Canada's position would be safer, for she would not be exposed to attacks from British enemies. She would have a national personality of her own and would make her decisions about war and peace for her own interests.

Such practical advantage reinforced Bourassa's ideological conviction that it was right for Canada to become independent. He believed that the natural evolution of human societies was toward nationhood. A centralized Empire was ultimately impossible because each part separated from the other by the ocean would develop in its own way according to its geographical situation, its economic needs, and its temperament. Canada, like the other communities in the Empire, was progressing toward nationhood, the achievement of which would be marked by independence—the only status that could satisfy the aspirations of a free people.

In becoming independent, Canada would be also fulfilling God's design. Bourassa believed that God had wished Canada to separate herself from the old world by breaking the imperial tie to fulfill her destiny chosen by Him in North America. That Canada, by taking part in European wars because of imperial membership, was not carrying out this mission was no small reason for Bourassa's ardent desire for her independence.

Bourassa's desire to see Canada a nation was similar to that of English-speaking Liberals like John Dafoe, the editor of the *Winnipeg Free Press*, or of French-speaking ones like Wilfrid Laurier. But Dafoe believed that it was possible for the Empire to be based on the principle of autonomy and that Canada could be a greater nation for being part of it; Bourassa considered Canadian autonomy or freedom and her membership in the Empire to be mutually exclusive. Laurier, too, differed from Bourassa in his conviction that autonomy was not necessarily incompatible with retaining the British connection. To Laurier, imperial sentiment in Canada, whether reasonable or not, was a force which responsible leaders must accommodate. To Bourassa it was precisely this loyalty to the Motherland that was the main barrier to Anglo-Canadians and French Canadians cooperating to build a nation and therefore this loyalty must be opposed.

French Cultural Rights

In the decade before the war, French cultural rights outside of Quebec became a burning issue: non–French-speaking immigration to the West and French-Canadian immigration to Ontario provoked a great public debate on whether one of the functions of the schools in these areas was to further French-Canadian culture.

Responding to the demands of settlers, the Laurier government decided to form two new Western provinces. Written into the Autonomy Bill of 1905 was the legal framework for a school system that many people, including Clifford Sifton, the Minister of the Interior, believed substituted denominational for what should have been public schools. A public uproar arose; some regarded it as an attack on the autonomy of the new provinces; militant Protestants objected to turning over the direction of any schools to the Church; many Westerners favoured the idea of the melting pot and opposed a school system which would further divide a population already fragmented by ethnic origin. To satisfy these critics, Laurier rewrote the offending clause: the schools would be run by the provincial government, not by religious institutions. Catholics were free to set up a separate school in districts where they were a *minority*; however, since they clustered together, they were usually the majority in their district and thus were compelled to attend public schools. In 1905 there were only nine Catholic "separate" schools in the Northwest. French Canadians were granted two other concessions in the new provinces. They were allowed religious instruction for a half-hour after half-past-three, and could have a primary course in the French language if they desired it.

In 1912 the separate school question was briefly revived in the West when the territory of Keewatin was joined to Manitoba. A demand arose that one of the conditions of annexation would be the guarantee of the territory's right to separate schools. But Robert Borden, then prime minister, made no provision for such rights in his annexation bill and public interest soon petered out.

French cultural rights became a burning issue when the movement of French Canadians into eastern Ontario changed the relative positions of French and English in the schools. Although still the legal language of instruction, English became just another subject on the curriculum; French became the real means of communication. Toward the end

of 1910 opposition to this arrangement arose in Ontario: Canadian nationalists were convinced that a common Canadian consciousness could not be created unless English were the common language.[9] Orangemen feared that the spread of French would undermine the Anglo-Saxon character of the province and so injure the Empire; Irish Catholics believed that the identification of separate schools with French would prejudice their schools receiving public grants. What these three groups had in common was a conviction that everybody must learn English and a determination to reject any legal status for French. This point of view was accepted by the two major provincial parties, the Conservatives and the Liberals.

In September 1910 at the Eucharistic Congress in Montreal, Archbishop Bourne of Westminister sparked public debate by declaring that if the Catholic Church wished to make progress in Canada, it ought to be English-speaking. Bourassa's rebuttal came in his most celebrated speech, *Religion, Langue, Nationalité*. The excitement aroused by this clash led the French-Canadian press to reveal the details of a well-kept secret: that Bishop Michael Francis Fallon, the Bishop of London, had undertaken to eliminate French in the Catholic schools of his diocese on the grounds that students were learning neither English nor French. The subsequent public furor caused the government to assign Dr. F.W. Merchant, an official of the Ontario Department of Education, to investigate the schools where French was the language of instruction. After the Merchant report found that much was lacking in the teaching of English in these schools, the Conservative provincial government issued Regulation 17 late in 1912. Regulation 17 was to apply only to certain schools, designated each year as English–French schools. In these schools French was permitted as a language of instruction only for the first two years of school. Where French had "hitherto" been a subject of study, instruction in the French language for no more than one hour each day might be provided. (Many French Canadians, including Laurier, took this to mean that French would be prohibited in all future schools.) Any school which did not comply with Regulation 17 would no longer be entitled to public funds.

Although the government claimed to be interested only in improving the quality of the English spoken by Franco-Ontarians, the majority of French Canadians saw Regulation 17 as a prelude to the complete removal of French from Ontario schools. Franco-Ontarian teachers in the Ottawa Valley refused to comply with the Regulation and their students walked out of schools. In 1915 some 150 schools outside of Ottawa refused to accept the Regulation and gave up the provincial grant. In Ottawa itself the majority of the Separate School Board defied the Department of Education. The government responded by appointing a commission to take over its duties. Meanwhile important Quebec personalities, including Church dignitaries, led a campaign to raise funds for "les blessés d'Ontario." The Quebec legislature, asserting that the Ontario government did not understand British principles, authorized local Catholic commissions to contribute officially to the fund.

Outside intervention helped to ease the crisis. In October 1916 Pope Benedict XV issued an encyclical which most Catholics interpreted as supporting the position of Bishop Fallon: the study of French was not to be pushed to the point where it endangered Catholic schools in Ontario. Significantly, Bourassa was silent on the encyclical. A month later, the Privy Council in London established the basis for a compromise by ruling that Regulation 17 was legal, but the commission which had taken over the duties of the Separate School Board was not.

For four years the controversy had raged, becoming especially violent after the Great War began. Many French Canadians believed the majority of Ontarians hypocritical in supporting a war for freedom while repressing French at home. Armand Lavergne, a colleague of Bourassa's, spoke for many of his compatriots when he cried out in the Quebec

legislature, "I ask myself if the German regime might not be favourably compared with the Boches of Ontario."[10] On their side, Anglo-Ontarians continued to support Regulation 17 because they wished Ontario to be exclusively English. Many of them believed that the French Canadians were using the question of French in Ontario schools as an excuse for not giving full support to the war and they resented what they regarded as an attempt of French Canada to compel them to change the Regulation by threatening to slow down the war effort. Either Regulation 17 or the war would have strained relations between the English and French; the conjunction of the two exacerbated hostility to a level of bitterness hitherto unknown between the two peoples.

Bourassa and Biculturalism

Bourassa became the most prominent spokesman of French-Canadian resentment. Deeply convinced that Catholics should control the schools their children attended to ensure the teaching of religious values, he also believed God had bestowed on French Canadians a particular genius, character, and temperament which could be fully expressed only through the French language. They were something more than British subjects who happened to speak French. Bourassa exhorted his compatriots to fight for French-Canadian culture. If they meekly accepted that it had no legal rights in English Canada, on what basis would they oppose the application of this false principle to Quebec itself?

For Bourassa, faith and language were inextricably united. He vehemently rejected the contention of English-speaking Catholics that it would be better for the Church to present an English image: it was the natural right of everyone to speak his maternal tongue; to use the Church as an instrument of assimilation would be "odious." There were other practical reasons for the Church to reject the argument: English-speaking Catholics themselves were open to the social influences of Protestant and free-thinking North Americans, while apostasy was rare among French Canadians, whose language served as a barrier to heretical influences.

But such Catholic and racial values, although acceptable to significant segments of French-Canadian opinion, made little impression in English Canada where the majority was Protestant. Yet French-Canadian culture could only survive outside Quebec if Anglo-Canadians accepted cultural duality. To persuade them, Bourassa advanced two main propositions: the Constitution was based on the principle of cultural duality and the Canadian confederation could not survive unless such biculturalism was accepted by English Canada. These arguments were not mere debating tricks with Bourassa; he believed them with total sincerity.

Bourassa viewed Confederation as the result of an agreement between English and French to accept the equal rights of each culture throughout the Dominion. The Fathers of Confederation had envisaged Canada as a bicultural country. If their behests had been followed, then the West, acquired "in the name of and with the money of the whole Canadian people,"[11] would have been French as well as English, Catholic as well as Protestant. It would have been made clear to all immigrants that the West was Anglo-French.

In the first years after Confederation, maintained Bourassa, the federal government affirmed the bicultural nature of the country by the *Manitoba Act of 1870* and the *North West Territories Bill of 1875*, each of which accepted French as one of the official languages and established a denominational school system. But in 1890, Ottawa had permitted the territorial government of the northwest to extinguish the legal status of French. Two years later, the school system began to be modified until in 1901 it was, in fact, a state school

system.[12] Because the ordinances of the Territorial Government which had changed the school system violated the spirit and text of the 1875 law passed by the federal government, a government superior in authority to that of the Northwest Territories, Bourassa considered them illegal. By accepting the Sifton amendment in 1905, the government legitimized these illegal school ordinances and ratified the limitations of the rights of Western French Canadians to schools of their own.

The bicultural compact implied the right not only to separate schools but also to instruction in French. By giving both French and English official status in Parliament, the Fathers had made it clear that they wished both languages to coexist everywhere in public life: in church, in court, and in government. These rights would be meaningless if the English provinces prevented French-Canadian children from acquiring a perfect knowledge of their own language.

Bourassa also insisted that cultural duality was necessary if Confederation were to last. The materialist ethos of the United States was penetrating Canada; the unchecked consequence of the invasion of such values would lead to the slow absorption of Canada into the United States. The greatest barrier to "l'américanisme"[13] was French Canada, because being Catholic, it rejected materialism and the American way of life. But if French Canadians continued to be humiliated, they would no longer resist Americanization, for they could see no advantage to remaining British.

Refusal to accept cultural duality threatened Confederation in yet another way. French Canadians would never feel that Canada was their homeland unless their culture was free to develop. Thus national unity was conditioned on cultural duality. The alternative was constant instability and crisis. Confederation, Bourassa maintained, would not survive without the reciprocal respect of the rights of the two races.

Such was Bourassa's general attitude toward cultural duality. He also had a number of specific points to make about each issue. The Autonomy Bill specifically forbade Catholics from organizing separate schools where they were a majority in the district. Yet they would reconcile themselves more easily to sending their children to a government school if it were called "separate" and not "public"; Catholic school boards would hire Catholic teachers and thus all lessons would be infused with a Church spirit. The new bill compelled most Catholic children to attend public schools where they could not be protected should the Minister of Education decide to suppress religious or French teaching. The advantages to Catholics of attending schools that could be called separate even though they were essentially controlled by the government were so important to Bourassa that he declared that if the Catholics were allowed to set up such "separate" schools he would withdraw his opposition to the new bill.

Bourassa denied that instruction in French in Ontario schools would harm national unity. Even if proficient in French, French Canadians had no more intention of becoming attached to France than Americans had of becoming British colonists again. Nor did it mean, if French were granted official status in English Canada that the languages of the immigrants ought to receive similar recognition: the French claim, after all, was based on the bicultural compact. Bourassa also denied that a bilingual people could not form a homogeneous nation, arguing that discord would stem only from the attempts of the majority to force their language on the minority.

Then too there were some practical advantages to French.

Outside the English-speaking world French was useful in commerce and diplomacy. More important, it was the language of cultivated minds. When Canada had developed sufficiently to appreciate art and literature, claimed Bourassa, it would turn to French as an instrument of communication with the best of European civilization.

Bourassa's claim that Confederation was based on a bicultural pact is debatable. True, the Fathers had recognized the separateness of the French Canadians of Lower Canada: the predominately French-Canadian province would still control its French Catholic schools, and French would be an official language in the federal Parliament and courts. Such measures would enable French Canadians in Quebec both to develop their own culture and take part in the public life of the new Dominion. But on the other hand, the Fathers made no provision for the legal status of French in provinces other than Quebec; the Constitution furnished no protection for the Acadians. Professor Donald Creighton has shown that the *Manitoba Act of 1870* and the *Territorial Act of 1875* were not conscious steps in a plan to extend biculturalism to the West; instead, they were passed because of fortuitous circumstances and indeed were then quickly reversed.[14] Thus the Fathers did not object to cultural duality but neither did they determine to make Canada a bicultural country.

However, Bourassa's proposition that Confederation would not survive without cultural duality has been accepted by a large number of English-speaking Canadians. Many feel guilty about the shabby treatment given to French outside of Quebec. More important, many believe such cultural equality necessary if Quebec is to remain in Confederation.

Conscription

As the war went on, it became clear that there was a great difference of opinion between French and English over Canada's responsibility to the Allied side. Great numbers of Anglo-Canadians believed that Canada should be ready to fight to the end of her resources in both men and money. French Canadians, however, indicated by their markedly low rate of enlistment that they thought Canada should play a relatively minor role. This issue came to the fore over the proposal of the Borden government in the spring of 1917 to conscript men for overseas service. Voluntary enlistments, which were falling due to war-weariness, could not fill the gaps left by the high casualty rate suffered by Canadian troops on the Western front since the first of the year.

Borden asked Laurier to join him in a coalition government on a program of introducing conscription. The latter refused for a number of reasons: conscription was repugnant to him personally; if he took part in a coalition he would become responsible for a policy that he had no share in making; he suspected that it was a trick to split the Liberal party. But equally important, as he emphasized to friends, if he accepted conscription, he would be breaking his promise to Quebec and thus would virtually be handing over the province to Bourassa and his friends. Borden, however, succeeded in inducing a number of Liberals to join him in a "union" government which defeated Laurier in the federal election of December 1917. In contrast to the election of 1911, Bourassa now threw his support behind Laurier.

Bourassa had no objection to conscription as such. His attitude to it was conditioned by what he thought about the war. Although in 1914 he had supported Canadian participation, by 1916 he had come to modify his opinion: the war was supposedly being fought for the right of small nations to live, but in fact the great powers were smashing up the small nationalities. He followed the lead of Pope Benedict XV in calling for an end to the war, for a negotiated peace in which neither side would emerge solely victorious. Since he believed that there was no real Canadian interest involved in the war, he was logically consistent to claim that those who opposed conscription were the most patriotic Canadians; and that if French Canadians adopted this stand, it was because they were very

clear in their minds that they owed their patriotism to Canada and Canada alone, unlike Anglo-Canadians whose focus of loyalty shifted between Canada and Great Britain.

Bourassa's Achievements

Many Canadian historians have been critical of Bourassa, presenting him as the spokesman for narrow French-Canadian clerical and racial elements that had refused to do their part in building Canadian unity. Yet it would be difficult to find any statement of his in support of Canadian autonomy within the Empire or of French-Canadian rights outside of Quebec that was not logically consistent with his program of achieving Canadian nationhood.

What his critics object to, however, is not Bourassa's program but the consequence of his determination to promote it. In 1911, by attacking Laurier, he helped bring the "more Imperialist of the two national parties"[15] to power. And since many of the Quebec members who had been elected because they had been endorsed by Bourassa gave their support to the Conservative naval program, French Canadians in Borden's Cabinet soon lost popularity in French Canada. Without influence in Quebec, their voices in Ottawa became feeble. Thus the manpower crisis was met by a government that was to all intents and purposes Anglo-Canadian.

Again Bourassa used rhetoric that was so strong about the French language issue during the war that he substantially embittered French–English relations and thereby contributed to the emotional climate out of which came the storm around conscription. In sum, the charge against Bourassa is that he went too far, that he was an extremist.

Yet from his own point of view, Bourassa's tactics made good sense. What he was trying to do in 1911, he said, was to send to Ottawa a block of members (whom he called Nationalists) who would hold the balance of power between the two parties and thus force the new government to revise the Naval Bill. What is more, he would have achieved his purpose if Borden had won a few seats less in Ontario and the Nationalists a few more in Quebec.[16] Even with the number of seats the Nationalists did win, they would have formed an important force within the Conservative government had Bourassa accepted a Cabinet position. But he was not prepared to undertake the tough responsibility of political leadership.

It was only natural for Bourassa to take advantage of the Anglo-Canadians' claim that they were fighting for freedom abroad to demand that they show good faith by granting equal rights to Franco-Ontarians at home. If as a consequence Canada's war effort were to slacken, it would not be too serious since Canada's role was a minor one and the Allies ought to be aiming at negotiating a just peace and not at winning the war.

Bourassa then had some grounds for believing that his tactics would be successful. But even without such hopes he would have acted the same way. He was not pragmatic: that he might not succeed in persuading Anglo-Canadians to do the right thing was no reason for not trying. It was on this point that Laurier differed profoundly from him. Although Laurier agreed with a great deal of Bourassa's program of Canadian nationalism, he did not defy Anglo-Canadian opinion because he wished the Liberal party to be the instrument of building unity between French and English. As an independent critic, Bourassa proclaimed what Anglo-Canadians ought to do; as a politician with responsibilities, Laurier proposed only what they would agree to do.

Many who are sympathetic with Laurier fail to see that even if he was right to contend that satisfactory relations between English and French must be founded on the possible rather than the ideal, it does not mean that left to himself he would have found the right

point of compromise. Laurier's most significant action for Canadian unity was to reject conscription and refuse to join the Union coalition. This left the way open for the preservation of the Liberal party as an effective forum for the reconciliation of English and French in the postwar decade in Canada. But, as Professor Ramsay Cook has argued, Laurier's primary motive for these actions was his fear of handing Quebec over to Bourassa.[17] Because Bourassa would not compromise, Laurier was unable to compromise; it was the tension between the critic and the politician that determined the fate of the Liberal party.

Bourassa did a great deal to turn Canadian public opinion against any form of centralization of imperial foreign policy and defence. His greatest accomplishment, however, was to convince succeeding generations of French Canadians that their language ought to have the same rights as the English language. Thus he, more than any other individual, was responsible for making his dictum that Canada could only survive as a bicultural country much truer now than when he first enunciated it at the turn of the century.

NOTES

1. H. Bourassa, *Canada: House of Commons Debates*, Feb. 19, 1900, p. 500.
2. H. Bourassa, "Réponse amicale à la vérité," *La Nationaliste*, April 3, 1904.
3. Quoted in R. Preston, *Canada and Imperial Defense* (Toronto, 1976), 305.
4. H.B. Neatby, "Laurier and Imperialism," Canadian Historical Association, *Report* (1955), 25.
5. H. Bourassa, *Canadian Nationalism and the War* (Montreal, 1916), 14.
6. Bourassa usually ignored Laurier's qualifications. What Laurier said was this: "If England is at war, we are at war and liable to attack. I do not say that we shall always be attacked, neither do I say that we would take part in all the wars of England. That is a matter that we must be guided by the circumstance upon which the Canadian Parliament will have to pronounce, and will have to decide in its own best judgement." O.D. Skelton, *Life and Letters of Sir Wilfrid Laurier* (Toronto, 1965), 11: 125.
7. H. Bourassa, *Canada House of Commons Debates*, March 13, 1900, p. 1802.
8. H. Bourassa, *Independence or Imperial Partnership* (Montreal, 1916), 47.
9. C.B. Sissons quotes a small English boy to a French teacher: "This country does not belong to France and you must all learn English; my grandpa says so." C.B. Sissons, *Bilingual Schools in Canada* (London, 1917), 66.
10. *Canadian Annual Review*, 1916 (Toronto, 1917), 34.
11. H. Bourassa, *Canada, House of Commons*, July 5, 1905, p. 8848.
12. In the same speech Bourassa did not refer to the abolition of the rights of French culture in Manitoba, probably because he had supported Laurier's position on the Manitoba School question in 1896.
13. H. Bourassa, *La langue française et l'avenir de notre race* (Quebec, 1913), 17.
14. D.G. Creighton, "John A. Macdonald, Confederation, and the Canadian West," in C. Brown, *Minorities, Schools and Politics* (Toronto, 1969), 8.
15. H.B. Neatby, *Laurier and a Liberal Quebec: A Study in Political Management* (unpublished Ph.D. thesis, University of Toronto, 1956), 350.
16. J.M. Beck, *Pendulum of Power* (Scarborough, 1968), 133.
17. Ramsay Cook, "Dafoe, Laurier, and the Formation of Union Government," *Canadian Historical Review* 42, 3 (September 1961): 197.