

over the past twenty years in the name of efficiency have actually resulted in less delivery of programs and more cost. Why? Because they are an attempt to micromanage large, complex subjects.

These contemporary false reformers should have been in the forefront of the battle for consolidation, flying the flag of ideas, intent and ethics. Instead they have defended structure and so have found themselves marginalized by those who do not believe and who use the now unnecessary complexity of the mound as an excuse to undo the actual accomplishments of the reforms.

There was a desperate need twenty years ago — a need that is now even more desperate — to take that leap into consolidation. If such a consolidation were to be successful, it would prepare the way for a whole new wave of creative reforms. And I believe that those reforms would take the shape of clear, overarching and determinedly inclusive policies. Fewer, but all-inclusive, programs would be far cheaper and far more effective.

I'm not suggesting for a moment that four to five thousand homeless people in Toronto will have to wait for those changes in order to see their situation improve. But I am certain that we would see this whole problem quite differently if we saw it in the light of clear, simple, inclusive policies. One of the hardest things to do in public policy is to marry ethics with effective programs. The cool arm's-length approach of ethics combined with simple, clear, all-inclusive policies can make that happen. And that would be an honest reflection of the trajectory that Louis LaFontaine and Robert Baldwin sent our way.

Alain Dubuc

❧ 2ND ANNUAL
LAFONTAINE-BALDWIN LECTURE

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One year ago, I wrote a series of editorials in *La Presse* on the political blind alley that Quebec finds itself in, deadlocked between two political projects: the sovereigntist movement, lacking enough supporters to set in motion a process that would lead to separation; and the reform of federalism, with insufficient numbers of Canadians willing to sponsor the dreamed-of constitutional changes.

My theory was that in order to escape the stalemate, the province would have to change paradigms, to define collective goals that fit more closely with the needs of contemporary Quebec. But the primary obstacle to this redeployment of priorities is the weight of a nationalism that has not evolved in

tune with society and that, with its dogmas, its myths, its sacred cows, its empty symbols, has become a barrier to Quebec's development.

I mention those articles because they have something to do with my being here this evening, and because they no doubt gave John Saul and the Dominion Institute the idea of entrusting me with the considerable responsibility of delivering the second LaFontaine-Baldwin lecture.

As I prepared this address, my first inclination was to elaborate on certain elements from my series of editorials. But, after careful consideration, I changed my mind.

First, because it would have been too easy: I'm sure that a critique of Quebec nationalism would be a hit with an English-Canadian audience. But this type of success wouldn't get us very far. And it would in no way mirror the spirit of my editorials, which were not meant to seduce my readers, but to force a debate on a very sensitive and very controversial subject in Quebec.

And also because it becomes tiresome, in cross-Canada forums, to be the Quebecer who presents a Quebec point of view. It's a reflection, I feel, of the sort of isolation in which Quebecers of every stripe have shut themselves up, with the result that they have taken so little interest and involved themselves so negligibly in Canadian debates that they have ceased to be relevant.

For those reasons I've chosen to speak to you not of Quebec, but of Canada. And to use my series not as a way of tackling the Quebec question, but as an analytical grid that could be used to ponder Canadian reality.

This exercise leads me to believe that the nationalisms of Canada and Quebec are close cousins, or even Siamese twins,

and, despite important differences, the similarities are dramatic. Canada suffers in many respects from the same ailments as Quebec. In fact, Canadian nationalism is also in the process of congealing under the weight of myths and dogmas that are becoming obstacles to the country's evolution.

The Ills of Quebec Nationalism

I know that Quebec nationalism worries and annoys English Canada: through its militant aspects, its flags, because of the conflicts that have brought us into opposition — but also because people often tend to confuse the nationalist sentiment shared by most French-speaking Quebecers with the sovereigntist current and with the passionate outpourings and ethnocentrism of the more inflamed militants. But there are more sober ways of defining it. And one is the sense, shared by a solid majority of Quebecers, of having a distinct identity, of constituting a nation, and of wishing that this nation be recognized and have the means to fulfill itself. On these points there is great consensus in Quebec.

This sense will not disappear, and must not disappear, because it rests on a verifiable sociological reality: the existence of a people, with its dominant language, its culture, its history and institutions and its difficult relationships with the majority that demand special considerations.

The sense of constituting a nation and the will to build on it can be an extremely rich source of energy, a factor of social cohesiveness that leads to progress. But again, it is necessary that this national sense be in touch with the evolution of society. If it is static, it can be a terrible check on social progress,

and if it is exalted, it can easily become a tool of exclusion rather than a window on the world. Which leads me to emphasize the necessity of distinguishing between a nationalism that is productive and modern and a nationalism that is backward-looking.

While writing my editorials, I'd thought to use the concept of good and bad nationalism and to draw a parallel, which I hoped would be humorous, with cholesterol. But friends pointed out that the world of lipids, infinitely more complex than you can imagine, does not divide cholesterol simply into the good and the bad (the example of omega-3 fatty acids will do). And when you consider the subject for any length of time, nationalism becomes a lot more complex as well.

I do not believe that present-day Quebec nationalism is reactionary. But we don't have to scratch very deep to bring those angry reflexes to life, above all in times of crisis and tension. For that force to travel in the right direction, it must be monitored, be made the subject of debate, and it must also be managed.

What struck me in the case of Quebec was that the excesses of our nationalism seemed to be explainable by the weight of history. It is normal that Quebec's national sense find its roots in the past, since the Quebec difference and the Canadian duality are the product of three centuries of history. But what is less normal is the interpretation of the history that has nourished the Quebec myth.

Our nationalism, for a long time a survival tool, was largely inspired by the numerous defeats that marked the tribulations of the French in America over the centuries, from the Plains of Abraham to Meech Lake. Its heroes are often losers: Montcalm, Dollard des Ormeaux, de Lorimier, Riel, the Patriotes, or even René Lévesque, who founded the Parti Québécois but lost his referendum.

A people must not forget where they come from. But it's not because we should be inspired by our history that we must necessarily revel in the past. This nationalism fed by history in effect created an image of ourselves that does not correspond to reality. It has perpetuated the pain of oppression long after the oppression itself disappeared. It has shaped a culture of losers, something that Quebecers have not been for quite some time. The relative oppression that French speakers have been subject to, the economic injustices they've been the victims of, a certain exclusion from the circles of power, the sense of inferiority — these have disappeared; but the memory remains, vivid enough to affect behaviours.

Wrote Paul Valéry: "History is the most dangerous product that the chemistry of the intellect ever evolved. Its properties are well known. It makes us dream, it intoxicates people, creates false memories for them, exaggerates their reactions, keeps their old wounds open, torments their rest, leads them to delusions of grandeur or of persecution, and makes nations bitter, arrogant, insufferable and vain." I have to confess that I've taken this passage to heart.

This is what we have to get rid of when breaking the chains of the past. Because the weight of history and the defeatist culture to which it gave rise continue to affect our behaviour, continue to determine our socio-political agenda, continue to colour our strategies.

For instance, remember the "humiliation" period of Lucien Bouchard, happily over. Or the contemptible "l'argent et des votes ethniques" (money and ethnic votes) that Jacques Parizeau, a man of sophistication notwithstanding, delivered himself of in a moment of despair, which had less to do with xenophobia than with the paranoia of minorities. Or again the language issue,

potentially the most emotional and explosive component of the national debate, where that same attitude of the eternal loser seems to be at work.

It is also the case with Quebec's great battles. For a half century, succeeding governments in Quebec City have fought to protect provincial jurisdictions and expand their area of authority. Along with recognition of its distinct character, this has constituted one of the two major axes in Quebec's struggle to redefine its place within the federal regime.

But the way in which Quebec conducts this legitimate struggle also reflects the weight of the years.

Because of the battle that's been raging for two generations, the so-called traditional demands of Quebec are moving further and further away from the true needs of Quebecers. The matter of the sharing of powers is indeed an important one, but it still does not justify the extent of emotion reserved for it, or, more precisely, it does so no longer.

But Quebec political tradition does not allow for putting things in perspective, for taking minor conflicts with a grain of salt, for distinguishing between a battle royal and a skirmish. Over five decades, Quebec has forged dogmas that no politician can ignore without fear of excommunication.

The weight of the years imposes a tradition, which is expressed in a martial vocabulary, full of superlatives — victories, retreats, penetrations, even extreme combat — that reinforce the sense of urgency and seriousness. It is a choke-hold that forces our leaders to choose the path of war, not because of the importance of the stakes, but because old battles are involved in which it is no longer possible to retreat.

Nationalism also finds expression in the pride we take in certain of its realizations. This is certainly progress. But pride,

when expressed in a rigid context, can have perverse effects. Such is the case with the achievements of the Quiet Revolution, consecrated, defined as an integral part of the Quebec identity, and therefore untouchable. Pride, interpreted this way, instead of inspiring vitality and movement becomes, on the contrary, a justification for failure to act.

The result: Quebec is imprisoned in a political debate without issue between an undesired sovereignty and an impossible reform of federalism. This much we know. But that political impasse has given rise to other constraints. Those of a province that is more indebted, more taxed than the others and that offers fewer services. Those of a province that is poorer, but incapable of acquiring the tools that would secure it greater growth.

A Nationalism Unaware of Itself

Et voilà pour le nationalisme québécois. But can we find, in this Quebec experience, useful lessons for Canadian nationalism?

First, we have to ask ourselves whether Canadian nationalism really exists. The answer should be obvious, but it seems that many Canadians tend to negate its presence and are often unaware that certain of their attitudes, their gestures or their debates are expressions of such a nationalism.

Yes, Canadian nationalism exists. It rests on an obvious identity, rooted in an attachment to a territory Canadians have pioneered and whose integrity they do not wish to see threatened by a secession. It rests on a history, on political and social values, on a culture, on the coexistence of two official languages, on traditions, on lifestyles, on a vision of the role the country plays in the world, on institutions.

This sense of a nation runs through the entire spectrum of expressions: from the elite nationalism shaped by Pierre Trudeau's vision to the grassroots nationalism of Preston Manning, from the pride in the role played by Canada on the international stage to the wonderful "My name is Joe and I am Canadian." This *cri de cœur*, spontaneous and unsubsidized, has done more for the Canadian psyche than all of Sheila Copps's flags.

But Canadians are often unaware of the manifestations of their own nationalism. How many times has the constitutional crisis been presented as the result of pressures arising from Quebec nationalism — that eternal troublemaker — rather than as a confrontation of two nationalisms, whose visions are different and sometimes incompatible?

When we examine the conflicts that have brought Quebec and Canada into opposition, and in particular the last conflict, Meech Lake, it becomes plain that the seriousness of the crisis can be explained only by the fact that the Quebec demands, in a remarkable mirror effect, met up with an obstinacy every bit as symbolic and every bit as irrational on the other side.

Meech was the confrontation of identity myths in their purest form, where Quebec turned its demands into a life-or-death issue, but where Canada was ready to be torn apart, ready to risk breaking up rather than recognize a difference that would call into question its own vision of the country, including the completely absurd cult of the strict equality of the ten provinces.

The denial of Canadian nationalism can be found as well in those attempts to grade nationalisms — to define some variants as more noble than others, to oppose Canada's civic nationalism to Quebec's ethnic one. The question is not to determine who has the better nationalism — a childish sort of exercise — but to

note that whenever it ennobles its own nationalism, a society will have a tendency to turn a blind eye to the more undesirable manifestations of it, and to disengage itself from its obligations to be vigilant.

The reality is more complex. Canada's nationalisms are hybrid phenomena. The Canadian variety has its origins in an ethnic nationalism, essentially British, which to be sure has undergone alterations with the intermixing of populations but which, over the decades, has experienced spasms of exclusion. Quebec nationalism, on the other hand, much more ethnic when it reflected the struggle of French Canadians, has for a long time rested less on ethnic origins than on language and culture, and, to the degree that the population of Quebec is undergoing a transformation, it is itself evolving in the direction of a civic nationalism.

Their dynamics are clearly different and reflect different social realities, among them the fact that Quebec nationalism is that of a minority, one that rightly or wrongly feels itself under threat and so must exhibit a constant degree of tension in the face of the majority — but one that entertains no doubt as to its identity. Canadian nationalism does not undergo that constant pressure; however, it must take greater care in defining the parameters of an identity whose borders are less focused and more fragile, and that sometimes rests on a certain voluntarism.

Where the two come together in a remarkable way is that both of them are built on a culture of dominated peoples, Quebecers being losers and Canadians being underdogs. French speakers feel dominated by English Canada, and to a lesser extent by English-speaking North America. Canada, dominated by a British Empire from which it belatedly broke free, lives in constant fear of American domination, and in moments of crisis

is quick to mobilize in the face of threats from French Quebec. In both cases, we're dealing with reactive nationalism, triggered by threats, real or imagined, insecurity and fears: fear of free trade, fear of Quebec, fear of English-language pressures, fear of disappearing. And fear, as we know, is a collective sentiment that rarely brings a people to progress.

These obvious similarities are in large measure explained by the fact that the two nations share centuries of interaction, and, though lacking a common history, they have a common past, as well as the common values of the country they've built.

And there are instances where the two nationalisms, antagonistic though they may be, evoke exactly the same symbols to establish identities they judge to be different: the social-security safety net, for example, which is essentially the same, and which Quebecers as much as Canadians perceive as an integral element of their own identity.

But where Canadian nationalism differs markedly is in the fact that it has no guidelines. And the consequence of Canadians tending to be ignorant of the existence of their own nationalism, or not seeing its manifestations, is potentially costly. Nationalism, here as everywhere, has its dangers; it can lead to excess and loss of control. For nationalism to be a positive force, it needs managing.

In this respect, the situation is more worrying in Canada than in Quebec, because Canada has no fail-safe mechanism.

Quebec is obviously not perfect: the national question has generated its share of excesses. But we have mechanisms to limit loss of control, because we've lived so long with this national debate that we're acutely aware of its dangers. And also because we are politically divided, which provides us with watchdogs: federalist Quebecers who keep a close eye on sovereigntist

excesses; English Canadians, always extremely vigilant where Quebec is concerned; and even the self-discipline of principled or image-conscious sovereigntists. Thus, when Jacques Parizeau, on the evening of his referendum defeat, spoke of "l'argent et les votes ethniques," he survived in office for twenty-four hours.

These checks and balances do not exist in Canada, because English Canadians are not aware enough of their own nationalism and because they are not divided on the unity issue: everyone is federalist, almost everyone reacts badly to the prospect of Quebec's separation, everyone shares a love of the country. (A revealing semantic detail should be noticed. What in Quebec we call the national debate or the Canada-Quebec debate or the constitutional debate has been defined in English Canada as the Unity debate, a term that contains its own values from the get-go and provides a fine example of Newspeak, so that anyone not sharing the Canadian point of view stands, by definition, against unity.)

The result is that no mechanisms exist to control nationalist excess. Some examples?

In my arena, that of print journalism, because of the divisions within my readership it is impossible to present extreme positions. There is such an imposed self-discipline that there are no Quebec equivalents of Diane Francis. There's no one in Quebec in upper management at a respectable publication read by a sophisticated public, for example, vicious enough to call for the imprisonment of elected politicians.

But the most revealing example of the loss of control of Canadians over their nationalism is probably the partitionist movement that arose in western Quebec in the days that followed the referendum almost won by the sovereigntists, in which anglophone municipalities sought to remain within

Canada in the event of Quebec's secession. The movement, fraught with emotion, was understandable at the human level and reflected the trauma of people whose lives had almost been turned upside down.

The experience of the past decade, which has given rise to the formation of many new states, has taught us that the partitionist model, wherein portions of a new state remain attached to the previous state, has been applied in only one country, the former Yugoslavia. And that paved the way for a monstrous dynamic. Canada is, of course, not Serbia. But it is clear that the temptation of partition, in the event of a Yes victory, would lead Canada to choose the most explosive model of secession management imaginable.

And yet, that model, which should have been condemned out of hand because of the spiral of violence it risks producing, incompatible with Canadian traditions, was actually encouraged by the Chrétien government. And why? Because that partitionist movement was useful at the political level, in that its underlying thesis, the non-integrity of Quebec territory, could be used as a means of undercutting the sovereigntist cause.

This, in my view, is the typical case of a nationalist deviation whereby a nation, feeling itself threatened, develops defence mechanisms that fall outside the bounds of acceptable behaviour.

The Ills of Canadian Nationalism

The purpose of these remarks is not to launch myself on an attack of Canadian nationalism, but rather to underscore the idea that Canadians must take great pains to reflect on their identity, to define it, to trace precisely the outline of their nationalism; that

herein lies the subject of a necessary debate. This is all the more necessary in that Canadian nationalism, like its counterpart in Quebec, is founded on a certain number of myths.

Canadians, often unsure of themselves, have erected a monument that would both better define Canada and enhance their self-esteem. This was a noble and healthy process; it lay at the basis of the vision of a modern Canada so fully embodied in the person of Pierre Trudeau.

Of course, there are characteristics of the Canadian identity that are deeply rooted: a history relatively free of violence, for instance; a capacity for coexistence among different cultures. But the fact remains that the three elements that probably most accurately define the Canadian identity are not the products of spontaneous generation. They are the products of human intervention and are extremely recent creations. I refer here to the attachment to a form of justice concerned with rights that finds special expression in the Charter of Rights and Freedoms. To a respect for plurality and difference, including multiculturalism. And to the values of generosity and sharing that underlie the social-security safety net.

The Charter, so essential to Canadian identity, is less than twenty years old; the very idea of multiculturalism is thirty years old; the welfare state began to take shape fifty years ago.

We could, at first glance, see in all this a sign of modernity, the ability of a society to define new values. But what fascinates is the speed with which these new values became sacred cows, which, in my view, is a reflection of an insecurity so great that Canadians have been led to seek life preservers rather than development tools.

We find the same thing in Quebec, where here as well the sacred cows are remarkably young — should we be talking of

sacred calves? The *Révolution tranquille* — the Quiet Revolution — is forty years old; Bill 101 is twenty-five; and “le modèle québécois” is no more than about thirty.

The most striking phenomenon is that of the Charter. However much the principles of justice that it embodies derive from Canadian values, the tool — a charter in the American style and foreign to our legal traditions — is itself very recent. But this document, whose implications we have not yet digested, has already been internalized as a central element in the Canadian identity, to the point that it is no longer possible to deviate from it. In this adoption, as sudden as it has been absolute, there is something suspect that leads us to wonder how it was possible to be Canadian a quarter century ago.

Even if Canada has always had a tradition of immigration, the idea of pluralism that Canada holds to was essentially reformulated when multiculturalism became a cardinal virtue some thirty years ago, partly in response to the two-nations thesis and to the rising sovereigntist tide.

We are, I believe, in the presence of a myth here. It is true that Canada is a land of diversity, a land where tolerance has successfully taken root. But when we look at Canada's recent history, and even harder at its older history, we quite quickly discover that Canadian society stands up rather badly to the shock of difference. Canada deals well with a mosaic society, especially because the great diversity of the sources of immigration has a way of minimizing any threat. But Canada reacts quite badly when that diversity oversteps the boundaries of folklore and threatens the dominant culture.

We've seen, in the case of Quebec, how difficult it is for English Canada to accept the principle that part of the population can be different, and to formally recognize it — something

that constitutes the very essence of respect for diversity. We've seen it with the First Nations, with whom we're still painfully seeking a way of coexisting in difference. We're seeing it now with the populations of the western provinces, who try to assert themselves through values that diverge from dogmas established in central Canada.

The perception — a false one, in our view — that Canada has of its own tolerance is accompanied by another perception, equally erroneous, about the behaviours that accompany this openness. And it's the image of gentleness that has led Canada to think it can resolve its internal crises through love — what we might call a touchy-feely nationalism.

This was the approach that gave us the love-in in Montreal on October 27, 1995, a few days before the referendum, when Canadians came to tell Quebecers how much they loved them.

This was an event that left me deeply uncomfortable, first of all, for conceptual reasons. The general theme of love strikes me as an approach that, in terms of resolving conflicts among peoples, is naïve and inappropriate. It's true that Canadians of all origins, unlike what we tend to find in other binational or multinational states, carry on cordial relationships at the individual level. Montreal has never been Belfast.

It's rare for nations or communities that coexist in a single country to love one another. On the contrary, the very existence of multinational societies is usually the consequence of turbulent histories during which cultures, languages, religions and values have come into conflict. Canada is no exception: we can't help seeing that the values, the demands, the political choices of some have a tendency to, at the very least, irritate the others.

And there's nothing especially troubling about this. Love is not a functional basis of operations. It's more of an immature

response to a complex problem. Tensions in binational states are normal; the wisest path and the most effective approach consist in accepting those tensions and managing them, rather than denying their existence by means of amorous outbursts.

The Montreal love-in failed to impress me in tactical terms as well. What I saw was a purely narcissistic exercise. English Canadians, arriving in groups, demonstrated with other English Canadians, also in groups, and then took off again by bus, by car or by plane without ever having met the object of their effusions. The true gesture of love would have consisted in saying to Quebecers, "We love you, we don't want to lose you, and here's what we would do so that you could stay" — just as (to revisit interpersonal relationship analogies) a spouse would to prevent a separation. But the message in fact sounded more like this: "Don't leave, because we love Canada the way it is." What Canadians loved, that day, was not French-speaking Quebecers, but themselves.

The third pillar of this new nationalism is, of course, the culture of solidarity that finds expression in the values of sharing, a progressive tax structure, equalization policies and, above all, a social-security safety net of the European type.

The trap does not lie in these admirable policies, but in what they've generated in the collective unconscious. They have served to shape the Canadian identity because they help distinguish Canada from its threatening neighbour.

The result is a Canadian identity that is extremely vulnerable, because the soul of the people comes to depend not on the citizens, not on values, but instead on government programs, on civil servants, on budgets. A budget crisis, or even relatively innocuous acts like closing a railroad link or shutting down a regional radio station, become nation-destroying gestures. There

is the concomitant tendency towards a paralysis of choice and of decision-making processes, since every change risks being perceived as an attack on the identity.

This identity attachment, over the years, has crystallized around the health-care system, which has become the symbol par excellence of the Canadian soul, the purest expression of its difference measured against American values. This attachment enshrined itself in a Canadian law on health care that, in the early 1980s, laid out the conditions to which provincial health plans would have to submit. And thus it is that the symbol of identity boils down to a law with five conditions and one formula, almost a mantra: one-tier system.

Not only is this a dogmatic approach, but it removes us from the real world and delivers us to the land of myths. Partly because Canada, despite its attachment to the formula, has never had a truly one-tier system. But mostly because this way of organizing a health-care network exists nowhere else in the industrialized world. Every regime, including those of left-leaning countries in Europe, allows the private and the public to coexist; they accept that not all activities are provided free of charge; they accept that the state shares the management of the system with other partners. What are defined as illegal acts in Canada and perceived as morally reprehensible avenues are accepted in every country that believes in solidarity.

The absolutely surrealistic nature of the thing was made clear to me in all its splendour when the former health minister Allan Rock, with whom I had shared this observation, answered me that, yes, there was in fact a nation whose system rested on the same principles as ours ... Cuba. This was not, alas, meant as a joke.

Rigidities That Come with a Price

There's a price to be paid for these rigidities, which entail numerous perverse effects.

There is first of all the fact that they deprive us of the possibility of exploring other avenues of reform. This seems to me to be the case in health care, where the choke-hold that Canada has applied to itself will make the colossal undertaking of re-engineering the health-care system, restoring the quality of care and people's confidence, much more difficult.

Similarly, the ideological framework that the Canadian government has imposed on itself will make challenges more difficult to meet, among them the necessity of raising the standard of living of Canadians and of lessening the gap that is deepening dangerously between us and our neighbour.

Another perverse effect, a much more disquieting one, is the development in Canada of an ideological orthodoxy. In Quebec there are pressures that discourage intellectuals from straying from sovereigntist dogma and thus running the risk of exclusion and mistrust. I know something about this. The same process is at work in Canada, on another basis, that of the Canadian social model. It is difficult to be a true Canadian without espousing the centre-left values that underlie our welfare state.

The idea of then premier of Ontario Bob Rae, when during our great constitutional debates he sought to have social rights enshrined in the Charter, reflects this tendency. The idea was noble and generous. But it carried with it important secondary effects, centring on the fact that for all practical purposes, the elements of a political program whose values are not necessarily universal and certainly not shared by all Canadians would have been constitutionalized.

This homogeneous political vision can also lead to abuse. For example, a federal minister told me that another former premier of Ontario, Mike Harris, was "un-Canadian," which reminds us how easy it is for nationalism to lead to intolerance.

This ideological orthodoxy contributed considerably, in my opinion, to fostering the alienation of the west and the anger against central Canada that found expression in the Reform Party and the Canadian Alliance. In effect, Canadian citizens were deprived of their democratic right, that of being *on* the right, and of expressing, in the organization of their collective life, values that differ from those of the central government. Therein lies a certain democratic deficit.

I do not support the Alliance. But I defend the right to be different, and even the possibility that other roads are capable of enriching our collective experience. And above all, I defend the inalienable right of Canadians to be able to choose.

This leads to another perverse effect that is beginning to appear in the Canadian political landscape. The ideological corridor is narrow to the point where only one political party can still embody the untouchable and unassailable values that define Canada, and that is the Liberal Party of Canada. So much so that Canada is gradually making its way towards a new situation, that of a single-party parliamentary regime.

That is why I fear that Canada is not well prepared for the challenges that the future holds in store, and that its nationalism, and the way in which that nationalism shapes the Canadian identity, risks being an obstacle rather than a positive force for progress.

The Canadian search for identity has, for some decades, instead of liberating Canada and Canadians succeeded in placing us in chains. A questioning of certain myths that are

suffocating Canada has therefore become necessary, in order that Canada embrace a nationalism that is positive and creative and that the country have at its disposal the tools it will need in the years that lie ahead.

This is a question that needs to be faced all the more urgently in light of the new types of challenge that Canada will confront, most especially the impact of globalization on economic activity, on the role of states, on the fate of peoples. These pressures, which may turn out to be enormous, will demand from societies like ours — if we wish to resist them and continue to be what we are — strong identities and a great ability to adapt. For the moment, we would have trouble exhibiting either one or the other.

One way of finding that flexibility and ridding ourselves of sacred cows is debate. Canadians reflect all too little, except in specialized circles, on their identity, on the expressions of their nationalism. Taking comfort from their dogma, rocked in the cradle of ideological orthodoxy, Canadians have lost the daring, iconoclastic approach of the man who still inspires them, Pierre Trudeau. A little more reason, a little more lucidity would not harm the Canadian debate.

Another liberating tool is regionalization. I have no wish to talk here about the decentralization of power, or of the workings of federalism — however much I happen to be a supporter of decentralization. I will talk about something deeper, a state of mind, a way of perceiving the Canadian dynamic whereby the regions can play a role as a setting for initiative and for identity definition.

In Canadian history, the initiatives of regions, the competition that takes place among them and imitation have been major factors in national progress. I know there are some who associ-

ate modernity with a stronger central role, capable of countering what they see as provincial deviancy. But the regions are a source of creativity and energy that a sclerotic centre with an aging leadership cannot ensure. These regional identities exist in Canada, they are rich, and they should not merely be encouraged but showcased. They should be perceived as factors that enrich the national identity rather than pressures from outside that constitute a threat to it.

Betting on regions seems to me more the order of the day as globalization comes to have a greater impact on the architecture of states, creates networks that transcend the traditional logic of borders and deprives people of frames of reference to which they've grown accustomed. These upheavals tend to lead citizens to reinforce their sense of identity at the regional level. This phenomenon of regional reinforcement, obvious in Europe, will take shape in Canada as free trade imposes a north-south logic. Canada is obviously not prepared to facilitate this process.

To this may be added another pressure linked to globalization, less obvious, more distant, that could be characterized as a long shot but that seems to me to be important to prepare for. And that is the impact of continentalization, which to this point in time has found expression mostly at the economic level.

North America — and soon simply the Americas, with the Free Trade Area of the Americas — lags behind Europe in terms of political integration. But the fact remains that Canadians, and the younger ones especially, will progressively develop what can be called a continental awareness, a certain sense of belonging, a modification of what is their implicit space. The mobility of students, of researchers, of management, the growth of transnational Canadian firms, the circulation of ideas — all this will have the effect that a growing number of Canadians, while

remaining Canadians, will be North Americans as well in certain areas of their lives. This can now, unfortunately, be seen in some aspects of cultural life, but in time it will certainly come to affect other components of everyday living.

A new reality will emerge from this process: double identity, the mere evocation of which is bound to produce a shudder in many Canadians. But if the state is complex, it can nonetheless be managed — as we are beginning to see in Europe, where Germans, French and Italians are learning to be European citizens as well. This is something that Quebecers are very familiar with, being Quebecers and Canadians at one and the same time. Someday it will be your turn.

It can work — on the condition, of course, that the national identity is firmly grounded to begin with.

I'm not a specialist on the Canadian question — I'm not even Canadian in the same way that you are, given this double identity of mine. And that could possibly lead me to a degree of oversimplification. But my impression, despite certain misgivings, is that the Canadian identity is strong, in lifestyle, in the attachment to institutions, in values, in behaviours, in certain components of cultural life — much more than Canadian leaders, heirs to and caretakers of cultural insecurity, seem to believe.

The finest example, once again, is that of health care. It is not Jean Chrétien or Joe Clark or Stockwell Day or Gilles Duceppe or Alexa McDonough who is the custodian of the system; rather, it is Canadians themselves, who, without their politicians, have expressed in a thousand ways their objection to seeing a regime of the American type installed in Canada.

The rigidity of Canadian nationalism and of its symbols can be explained in large part by that obligation felt by our

elites to furnish a bulwark protecting the Canadian identity. But that identity is strong enough to express itself without the artificial protection that the central power deems it its obligation to supply.

That paternalistic approach can have the opposite effect. In desiring to protect Canadians from themselves, in imposing on Canadians crutches for which they have no need, in instilling in them a sense of insecurity unjustified by reality, the risk is rather that the country as a whole will be enfeebled.

This, in essence, is the message I delivered to my readers in Quebec one year ago. It's a message, I believe, that applies equally well to Canadians, almost word for word.