

The New Treason of Old Ideas

by Alfred Apps*

“When was it less than treason for a man to go with the drift of things?”

Robert Frost

Canadians from outside Québec have always had difficulty understanding Québec and most of their political leaders have never much worried about that. The easier path to power has always been to play to Anglophone voters who want a Canada where Québec is kept firmly in its place - just one more undifferentiated province like all the others.

Michael Ignatieff has assaulted the indifference of Anglophones everywhere by saying he is open to accepting the idea of Québec as a ‘nation’ within Canada, but only if, as and when the rest of Canada is ready to do so.

In response to Ignatieff’s candour and a similarly-oriented resolution passed recently by an overwhelming majority of federalist Liberals from Québec – one that meekly seeks ‘official’ recognition of Québec’s national character if, as and when the conditions are right - some serious political sensibilities have been aroused.

Fear is now afoot that sacred Liberal doctrine on constitutional matters has come under serious attack. For Québec’s nationalist wolves are not only at the gate again. They have come in federalist clothing.

The long-slumbering ghosts of Charlottetown and Meech have been rudely awakened. Even Trudeau’s gravediggers have begun their work.

Michel Ignatieff believes that Québec is a nation within Canada!

How could the frontrunner for the leadership of the Liberal Party of Canada say such a thing? Is he mad? Is he just a brazen opportunist, recklessly courting the Québec vote without regard to the political consequences for Liberals in the rest of Canada? Is he just another egghead theorist, so wildly out of touch ordinary voters that he is blind to the risk he is taking? Does he not know that this sort of talk can only play right into the separatists’ hands?

* Although the author is a senior advisor to the Michael Ignatieff Leadership Campaign and will be a delegate to the upcoming Liberal leadership convention, this paper is his personal contribution to the debate over the proposed resolution respecting Québec as a ‘nation’. The opinions expressed herein are those of the author only.

“Hypocrisy is a fashionable vice, and all fashionable vices pass for virtue”

Molière

Canadian voters may well be used to hearing one message in Québec and another in the rest of Canada, but the most recent duplicity of certain leading Liberal politicians is truly stunning. ‘Québec *is* a nation’, they will all say in Québec. But we must never actually tell Anglophones that we believe that. The rest of Canada, after all, will *never* tolerate the ‘n’ word. Trapped in the atrophied recesses of received orthodoxy on Québec’s place in Canada, a constitutional credo based entirely on the facts of a bygone era, Liberals with ‘political experience’ now live in open fear of the truth. Courage be damned. Better to not rock the boat.

The current Prime Minister, whose political ear is so finely tuned to the opponents of Kyoto, gun control and same-sex marriage, has proven himself worse than tone deaf to Québec. When offered the chance to embrace the new Québec on his first post-election foray to that province, Mr. Harper simply walked away from the microphone. Is Québec a ‘nation’ within Canada? Why risk it?

In response to Ignatieff’s position, many of the other candidates for the Liberal leadership are now desperately running for cover. One has completely reversed field on the issue with a wholly reconstituted version of his constitutional position. Only months ago, that candidate said this in Québec:

"I always supported the notion that Québec . . . is a nation, it is a distinct society, which we need to recognize in our Constitution and I have fought for that," Mr. Rae said. "The genius behind federalism is that we can be both a Quebecker and a Canadian." (August 2006)

And this:

“Nation, people, distinct society. It's all the same. It’s just words. It's a set of words. It means that you recognize the distinctiveness of the collectivity of Québec. It is something we should have done in 1985 in Meech and in 1992 with Charlottetown. And something we should be doing”.

Most others are on record saying much the same thing.

But suddenly, the truth about modern Québec has become so dangerous that the only possible course for any practical and experienced politician is open and shameless self-contradiction. No ‘serious’ Canadian politician – certainly no one worthy of the top job – would ever go near the word ‘nation’. Just too hot to handle. One can’t help but be reminded of the ill-fated leader of another party who once observed that an election campaign was hardly the time to discuss important issues.

Success for Mr. Ignatieff’s opponents now requires a come-from-behind win at the upcoming convention. At least one of them believes that it helps his cause if he can drive a wedge between Liberals from Québec and Liberals from outside Québec. The best campaign against a candidate of ideas and renewal, after all, is one based on fervent fear of the future and steadfast cleavage to the virtues of the status quo. Rather than actually debate ideas, it is always easier to

label them ‘dangerous’, even when one agrees with them. Stoke old tribal loyalties. Manufacture a party ‘crisis’ that proves the inexperience and lack of judgment in the frontrunner.

None of the leading candidates has yet had the courage to say that Ignatieff is wrong or that the Québec resolution is based on a false premise. Most are simply playing the same old game that Canadian politicians have always played. Attack the messenger, not the message. Do it viciously. And stifle all debate.

Liberals should worry when victory on the convention floor can only come at the cost of the Liberal Party’s soul, for the approach being taken is one that suborns honest debate over serious ideas with tactics rooted in deceit.

“There is no expedient to which a man will not resort to avoid the real labour of thinking”

Thomas Edison

In the small and cynical bathtub of Canadian leadership politics, the cause of the Cassandras on the ‘Québec as nation’ issue has been aided and abetted by the trenchant and damning analyses of some of the largest and most vigorous minds of Canada’s English-language press. As Anglophone commentators and pundits dismiss Ignatieff for his inexperience and dangerous lack of judgment, other candidates receive plaudits and a free pass for their open duplicity. One can only be left to wonder whether Ignatieff’s critics have really thought about the evolution of contemporary nationalism in Québec since Charlottetown fell apart. Did they even consider the Québec that has emerged over the past 50 years before issuing their political fatwahas against Ignatieff?

In the editorial boards of several of our leading newspapers, they are even now heaping abuse on the notion that Liberals, less than a year out of power, are achieving anything approaching the genuine renewal required to make themselves fit to govern again. Yet, in the same breadth, they lunge lustily at anything capable of stimulating genuine thought or reviving real debate within the party. When the received mantra is ‘Kyoto’, going beyond Kyoto to advocate a tax on emissions is ‘risky’. When the official party line is ‘Kelowna’, public musing about the future demise of the Department of Indian Affairs is ‘too radical’. When Middle East conflict is at issue, the suggestion that any criticism of Israel whatsoever might creep into Canadian public discourse, even when some of Israel’s own politicians have raised the very same issues, suddenly becomes an outright repudiation of established Canadian policy and alliances. And when recognizing the Québec ‘nation’ is proposed, a volley of epithets is hurled from nearly every Anglophone editorial page in the country. Whether those elements of the Anglophone press who prefer to hide their intellectual laziness behind bully-words will successfully cow Liberal delegates in Montreal into debate-paralysing fascism on the serious questions of the day remains to be seen. But the knee-jerk hostility of much of our media to new ideas has certainly become clear.

Liberal delegates should be under no illusion. While many who purport to peddle authoritative political ‘opinion’ in Canada fancy themselves as ‘liberal’, their bias is actually quite conservative and reactionary. The enduring power of the liberal idea of Canada has always been its capacity to evolve whenever Canada has changed in pursuit of it. It will always be easier for

the press to pontificate off a perch of cemented truths from a bygone era than to actually admit that the liberalism in Canada may be a dynamic idea, capable of advancing its own frontiers every time its vision is on the verge of being realized. That no living liberalism can be hostage to the status quo is a point they seem to have missed.

"I have come to think that great men are characterized precisely by the extreme position which they take, and that their heroism consists in holding to that extremity throughout their lives."

Marguerite Yourcenar

Not surprisingly, one of the few principled interventions in the debate has come from Justin Trudeau. In that charming off-hand style so reminiscent of his father, although girded with perhaps more celebrity than seasoning, the young Trudeau has tried to dispense with the matter quickly and finally: "Nationalism is an old idea" is the phrase that caught the media's attention. At least Justin Trudeau has had the courage to say something more than 'the sky is falling, I can save you'. One can hardly criticize an adoring son who finds it difficult to escape the shadow of a brilliant father, even if day has turned to night. At the same time, one could be forgiven for thinking that the young Trudeau could make a more intelligent, rather than merely intelligible, contribution to the debate if he would only read again what his father wrote, study what he did and reflect on what was accomplished.

Pierre Trudeau, in holding firm against Québec nationalism as the front-line in his life's struggle against Québec separatism, had the formula absolutely right for his time. But those who prefer to worship the power of his ideas without discerning the dramatic change they have wrought, have got it dead wrong for ours.

Liberals who are exercised that the Ignatieff proposal is a repudiation of Trudeau doctrine should pause and reflect. Pierre Trudeau's success actually made Michael Ignatieff possible. Ignatieff's openness to modern Québec is the fruit of Trudeau's vision. The world has changed since 1968. Québec and Canada have become very different places. Trudeau, himself, had something to do with that. And the national recognition that Québécois now seek is not based on the old idea of Québec nationalism at all. It is something completely new!

Far from being the slippery slope to the "deux nations" concept of yesteryear, much less outright separatism, the unfolding debate over the recognition of the contemporary Québec 'nation' is, in fact, the first dawn of new hope for the compelling dream of 'one Canada' that Trudeau spent his entire political life pursuing. For Trudeau was among the first to imagine a Canada united from coast to coast to coast by a new form of nationalism - a pan-Canadian civic nationalism altogether liberated from the historic ethnic chains of ancestry, race and religion and forged as the common link between two dynamic Canadian diversities - its Francophone diversity, developed and contributed by the Québec nation, and its Anglophone diversity developed and contributed by the rest of Canada.

Trudeau envisioned a Canada that would be supranational or, as he would describe it, 'poly-ethnic', united by the shared values of democracy, federalism, pluralism, bilingualism, multiculturalism, tolerance, compassion and respect - not only for the rule of law but also for the

official language rights of minorities, as well as individual human rights and civil freedoms generally, both at home and abroad. One Canada - with an internationally derived citizenry living in a multi-cultural society, framed by two distinct linguistic and cultural traditions, and all bound together by the common bonds of a modern citizenship rooted in the Charter of Rights and Freedoms.

Liberals by their very nature ought never to blindly follow the accepted dogma of the past without question. We need to think about this issue before we vote. For, the sounder conclusion to be reached is that the contemporary traitors to the Trudeau legacy are those, be they coward or cipher, who would reject the aspirations of the modern Québec in his name.

“Democracy must be something more than two wolves and a sheep voting on what to have for dinner.”

James Bovard

Trudeau came of age during a period when ethnic nationalism was causing great damage to humanity. He was born when the nation-states of Europe, each with a chauvinistic fervour driven by certainty about the superiority of its people and culture, were still battling each other for dominance and territory, while ravaging the globe with their colonial presumptions. The subsequent evolution of ethnic nationalism into fascism of both the left and the right rendered desolate the entire continent of Europe and many other corners of the world, with tens of millions dead.

Against this background, with the help of some international study and, especially, Lord Acton’s writings, Trudeau came to believe that the old-style nation-state was the apotheosis of political evil and that the ethnic nationalism which lay behind it was the scourge of civilization. Classic nation states, Trudeau concluded, tend to be enemies of true democracy, militaristic and belligerent to their neighbours, highly intolerant of other cultures and particularly abusive of the minorities within their borders. There is ample evidence, both then and now, that cements the accuracy of that view. Nationalism based in race is a bad thing.

Trudeau observed that the odious tribalism of ethnic nationalism was most likely to rear its ugly head whenever any cultural hegemony – a homogenous ‘national’ grouping based on any or all of language, race or creed – was elevated to the status of a state enabling it to flex majoritarian power within defined boundaries. “It is not the concept of ‘nation’ that is retrograde,” he insisted, “it is the idea that the nation must necessarily be sovereign”. The propensities to create such states - nation states - were old evils to be defeated by a new politics.

The evils of ethnic nationalism were rooted in its inherent racism. Trudeau envisioned a state that could counter the impulse of ethnic nationalism by pursuing democracy within the context of pluralism and by securing the constitutional entrenchment of individual and collective minority rights, as both a safeguard from the majority and a trump against any state controlled by it. Canada provided him with the perfect laboratory for a great political experiment – an opportunity to build the first democratic, bilingual and multi-ethnic state.

For Trudeau, leaving too much sovereignty in one set of hands was heart of the problem. A federal system of government, overlaid and under-girded by the constitutional entrenchment of human and civil rights, might work best to accommodate differences, protect minorities and bind a non-homogeneous state together. If a diverse country's sovereignty could be divided among more than one level of government and, ultimately, between governments and the citizens themselves, the potential excesses of majoritarian rule might be avoided.

As he moved toward political prominence within Québec, Trudeau naturally considered the application of these ideas to his own contemporary reality. At the time, much of Québec was gripped by an ethnic nationalism that was authoritarian and stultifying. Almost eighty percent of the population was white, devotedly Roman Catholic and Francophone. The overwhelming homogeneity of Québec society was self-evident. In order to be a true or 'pur laine' Québécois, one had to be able to trace one's ancestry directly to one of the original settlers of Québec. Belonging was, indeed, a matter of the blood.

We have recently learned that, as a young man, Trudeau was deeply immersed in the ethnic nationalism, corporatism and fascism of his day. It was only on awakening to liberalism and internationalism, that he became concerned about the anti-democratic tendencies of the Francophone majority in his home province and the repressive approach of its political leaders, so evident under the Duplessis regime. At the same time, Québec society had fallen so far out of step with the modernizing forces unleashed throughout North America following World War II that it was at risk of becoming almost quaint and folkloric. The Québec 'nation' was a society under siege. So much so that the mere survival of the French fact in North America became a genuine and important sociological question. These factors, coupled with the reality that the Québec economy, for most Québécois, was still an oppressing world dominated by Anglo bosses and the financial barons of Westmount, meant that something had to give.

“... to insist that a particular nationality must have complete sovereign power is to pursue a self-destructive end...every nationality will find, at the very moment of liberation, a new minority which in turn must be allowed the right to demand its freedom.”

Pierre Elliott Trudeau

It has come to be called the Quiet Revolution.

Within a generation Québec was transformed. One of the most insular, reactionary and fragile societies in North America converted itself, almost overnight, into one of the most open, progressive and dynamic. Such a sea change would not have occurred without the iron will and courage of visionary leadership. Over the course of less than 50 tumultuous years, the pendulum of Québec politics was to swing through a very wide berth.

The political framework within which this convulsion occurred had two equally liberalizing but counterbalancing aspects - both determined to modernize Québec. On the one side were those, inspired by the leadership of men like Rene Lévesque, who believed that, in order to secure the future of French language and culture in North America, the Government of Québec had to use the levers of the state (including powers of expropriation and nationalization), not only to wrench

the economy and people of Québec into the 20th century, but also to preserve, promote and expand the use of French as the language of education and work. Getting language policy right became the key to ‘la survivance’ and the principal means for ensuring a renaissance of Québec’s broader cultural emanations. Their thesis – and ultimately the clarion call of the separatist movement – was that Québec required the full panoply of powers of an independent state in order to get that job done. The Québec nation needed to become a full-blown state in order to see its national project through to its natural conclusion. Or so they argued.

On the other side were those, led by Pierre Trudeau, who decried the narrowness of Québec nationalism and flatly opposed independence for Québec. Mr. Trudeau summarized his agenda in this way:

“My political action, or my theory — insomuch as I can be said to have one — can be expressed very simply: create counterweights.”

Trudeau did not shrink from the prevailing opinion in the Québec of his day. His response to the threat posed by the Québec nationalists of the 1960’s - to enter federal politics as a Liberal from Québec - was simple, direct and, ultimately, profound in its impact. For Trudeau, the reasons for engaging the separatists were always clear. First, the independence of Québec would place the cultural survival of two important Canadian minorities at risk - Anglophones in Québec and Francophones outside Québec. Second, and even more importantly, a political programme geared to achieving separation as a means of righting historic grievances and casting off the yoke of Anglo oppression would almost certainly end up limiting the potential of Québec, as well as the freedom and aspirations of individual Québécois. Trudeau was convinced that the creation of a new, unitary Francophone state in North America was nothing more than a dangerous and deluded idea in service of a small and outdated tribal agenda.

While the politicians and political philosophers continued to argue the pros and cons of Québec nationalism, the Quiet Revolution became unstoppable. Québec discovered that it didn’t have to wait for sovereignty, or even elect a separatist government, to get on with its nation-building project. Hydro-Québec quickly became a cornerstone of leverage over Québec’s natural resources. Control over Québec’s hospitals and schools was wrested from the Church so they could become the instruments of a secular public policy focused on building Québec society. The Church’s historic dominance of Québec politics, as well as its wider influence over the values and attitudes of the Québec people, soon collapsed like the Berlin Wall. Ambitious language legislation steadily revolutionized the workplace and most other aspects of daily life for the Québécois. Music, writing, film and other artistic outputs of the emerging Québec began to receive international recognition and acclaim.

“It is not necessary to change. Survival is not mandatory.”

W. Edwards Deming

But just beneath the surface of the Quiet Revolution (including the separatist movement that ultimately sought to expropriate authorship and ownership of it) lay a general disquiet about the force of the ethnic identity that appeared to impel the movement so strongly, especially in its early stages. When protest turned to occasional incidents of violence, concerns began to mount

about where such ever more popular slogans as “Maîtres Chez Nous” and “Québec Pour Les Québécois”, might ultimately lead. Thoughtful Quebecers on both sides of the ‘national question’ worried that latent ‘pur laine’ chauvinism in the population might find its way into Québec public policy; that the national project might slip backward into overt racism and intolerance.

It was just such concern over the fate of democracy in Québec that led Levesque to fashion a movement that was wary of demagoguery from the outset and profoundly imbued with democratic culture. Notwithstanding the impatient assertiveness of the Parti Québécois’ traditional ethnic base, the more radical extremism of some of its more vociferous old nationalists and considerable reliance on nationalist propaganda and historical revisionism to make its case, Québec’s separatist leadership to this day has generally demonstrated an intense respect for democratic institutions and processes, an abiding bias for tolerance and fairness to minorities and, perhaps most importantly, a clear conviction that Québec nationalism had to be open to the internationalizing realities of an increasingly globalized world. The separatists wanted their own state, but it was certainly not going to be a state based on racism or otherwise closed off to the world.

Trudeau’s vision was equally principled. He believed that the greatest human good was to be found in personal freedom. He understood that democracy was essential to personal freedom. But he worried that even a democratic state could become either the servant of personal freedom or its fatal enemy. Trudeau conceived of federalism not only as a means for accommodating local diversity within one state, but as a system of government capable of ensuring that the state’s powers to curtail freedom were not concentrated in one place. Finally, he believed in a pluralist and progressive model of social organization, where the purpose of political action was to pursue the ‘just society’ for every human being, without regard whatsoever to the incidents of their personal identity, whether of race, religion, language or what have you. An heterogeneous liberal democratic state could thrive if it eliminated all irrational bases for discrimination and neutralized the political significance of collective identity.

Reason, rather than any of the usual emotions inspired by nationalism, glued the Trudeau vision all together. Wherever possible, the dangerous ‘passions’ of tribal identity were to be subjugated by the checks and balances of politics and law. For Trudeau, a more ‘just society’ would be the rational output of a pluralist federal democracy committed to expanding and protecting individual human freedom. The people’s sense of belonging to such a state would be reinforced by their engagement in the common project of building it, as well as their sense, not only of entitlement to the benefits it provided, but also of duty to the responsibilities it imposed. For a young country still emerging from its colonial past, where the matter of identity was a subject for endless confused debate, the lofty Trudeau formula grabbed the mind, if not the heart.

Trudeau's immediate strategy, however, was to put Québec its place. Ironically, many Canadians from outside Québec were attracted by that notion because it reinforced their sense that Canada ought to be one nation, accommodating of Québec but still dominated by Anglophones. After all, the French *had* been defeated at the Plains of Abraham. What many did not understand was that Trudeau’s objective in putting Québec in its proper place was to bring its leadership to the very centre of Canada’s democratic and federal structure. This, he believed, could be accomplished in several ways. First, by building an officially bilingual country such that,

whenever numbers warrant, French Canadians everywhere, including in Québec, would feel more at home in dealing with their federal government. Second, through demonstrating that Québécois could exercise real influence and power in national affairs by ensuring that Québec and its leaders had a real role in shaping the life of the entire country. This could best be done by pursuing policies and programmes in pursuit of a more 'just society' that would benefit all Canadians and resonate especially with Québécois. Third, and perhaps surprisingly for those who choose not to remember, Trudeau was committed to using federal power and resources to assist Québec in realizing its progressive, 'national' modernization project while, at the same time, vigorously preventing it from becoming the sort of reactionary 'ethno-national' undertaking to which he was so resolutely opposed. Québécois would see, in Trudeau's Ottawa, a partner for building a more just, progressive and pluralist Québec, as part of a more just, progressive and pluralist Canada.

A succession of Trudeau governments, always blessed with a strong Québec presence, followed this strategy. On the one side, this resulted in historic funding deals with Québec in a variety of areas of provincial jurisdiction including health care, as well as universities and colleges. It led to federal spending on modernizing Québec's infrastructure and on regional economic development. Provincial and individual income support programs, like equalization and employment insurance were expanded. The federal presence in the building of the new Québec could also be seen in the development of key economic sectors for Québec, including aviation, auto-parts and pharmaceuticals. Thus, while the building of 'Québec Inc.' may have been a vision of provincial and sometimes even separatist politicians, Ottawa under Trudeau made huge investments in its realization.

Québec, with a history of nationalist antipathy to immigration, had to confront the fact that its birthrate was falling dramatically. The Trudeau governments, confident in the resilience of Québec's language and culture, implemented the same 'open' immigration policy for Québec as was being applied in the rest of Canada, the same basic approach to promoting multiculturalism both inside and outside Québec, the same policy of defending and advancing minority language rights in all regions of the country and the same modernization and liberalization of the criminal and divorce law for every Canadian. Ultimately, the role that the Trudeau governments played in ensuring the development and institutionalization of a truly pluralist society throughout Canada, including in Québec, was reflected in the constitutional entrenchment of the Charter of Rights and Freedoms.

But in this journey to modern pluralism, it is not as though Québec had to be dragged kicking and screaming from the jealous bosom of its old nationalism. The spectre of Québec's old racial credo certainly appeared during the 1980 referendum campaign when Trudeau, on having his Québécois credentials challenged on account of his Scottish-Canadian maternal lineage, was able to turn a slur about his middle name to political advantage. By then, Québécois were already beginning to reject the more reactionary values and closed attitudes of the old Québec in order to embrace the progressive values and open values of the new Francophone diversity. In 1982, the agreement to entrench the Charter of Rights and Freedoms in the Canadian constitution had more popular support in Québec than anywhere else in Canada. Canadians from other provinces tend to forget that, fully six years earlier, Québec already had adopted its own broad and forward-looking Charter to protect its minority citizens from discrimination.

The declining role of the Roman Catholic Church was another essential fact of the changing dynamic in modern Québec. While still something of a force in Québec society, its active adherence has shrunk and its influence on public discourse has waned dramatically. Most Québécois now live their lives entirely outside the church making Québec society the most secular in Canada. Regular church attendance has fallen to about 10% of the population and only a minority of Québécois now partake of its sacraments. Less than half of Québec couples now marry and, among those who do, barely half seek the blessing of a priest. A hugely important part of the substance and symbolism of pan-Québec tribal culture - of its unity, identity and distinctiveness - is now only marginally relevant.

Nor has Québec been closed to multiculturalism. While its approach to immigration has been oriented, in part, to preserving and promoting the place of the French language in Québec, it has never attempted to use its political levers over Canadian immigration policy to remain 'pur laine'. Ever since 1971, when Ottawa began entering into immigration administration agreements with Québec, culminating in the Cullen-Couture Agreement of 1978 (finalized, lest we forget, under the auspices of Pierre Trudeau and René Lévesque), Québec's government has clearly shown that it is determined to build a more pluralist, albeit Francophone, society. For years now, at least half of Québec's immigration intake has consisted of visible minorities. Its population of native French-speaking citizens now includes a dominant proportion of Haitian background, African background and Asian background. A large and growing number of Québécois are now Hindu, Moslem and Buddhist. The flourishing allophone population, increasingly fluid in French, rounds out the picture. With an increasingly diverse and multicultural population base, Québécois now consistently demonstrate a level of support for immigration that exceeds the Canadian average.

This ethos of openness to a Francophone diversity based on tolerance for race, religion and, today, even sexual orientation has flourished in tandem with the success of Québec's language policies. Due to its low birthrate, the school-age population of Québec has been declining for many years. The proportion of Québec's children who can claim 'pur laine' roots has been declining even faster. Still, an ever-higher percentage of Québec's children are being educated in French, rising from about 75% in 1975 to about 90% today. As a result, the confidence of the entire society in the future of its language, as well as its comfort with the vibrant culture now springing from its new diversity, Québec has overcome the insecurity and fear of former times. The ascendancy and triumph of a genuinely Francophone business class in Québec, supported by financial and other institutions also now dominated by Francophones, has not only dissipated any lingering ethnic resentments based on Anglo economic oppression but also further cemented Québec's sense of pride and collective accomplishment. The spectacular success of Québec's cultural exports - and the remarkably dynamic and diverse culture they now represent - have increasingly drawn Québec society toward a posture of openness to what others in the world have to offer.

For all these reasons, the old Québec hegemony of race, religion and language - the Québec whose nationalism Trudeau thought posed a serious political danger - has been quietly slipping away for decades. According to Professor Will Kymlicka, in the 1960's fully 40% of Québécois believed that, in order to be a 'true' Quebecer, one had to be able to trace one's ancestry to the original French settlers of Québec. Today, he says, that figure has fallen to under 20%. While 'pur laine' identity, values and attitudes do continue to persist in outlying regions of the province,

the old Québec, where race mattered so much, has long been fading into history. A multi-ethnic and pluralist society has triumphed, particularly in most of the Greater Montreal Area, which now represents about half of Québec's total population.

Québec ethno-nationalism breathed what was perhaps one of its final public gasps in 1995 when, in the wake of the last referendum, Premier Jacques Parizeau prematurely exploded his political career by declaring that "money and the ethnic vote" were to blame for the razor-thin separatist loss. At that moment in Québec history, it became clear that the people of Québec were no longer prepared to accept any hint whatsoever of racist demagoguery in their public discourse, even from an erstwhile champion of their old ethno-national dream.

In the immediate aftermath of the 1995 referendum, as Ignatieff's critics conveniently seem to have forgotten, the Government of Canada under then Prime Minister Jean Chrétien, long one of Pierre Trudeau's most loyal lieutenants, moved to cause the distinct nature of Québec society to be formally recognized by Parliament. The essence of Québec's distinctiveness, being its enduring and evolving national character, is something that Liberals have already acknowledged.

Bu what does this all mean for the Québec 'nation'?

"One man with courage makes a majority."

Andrew Jackson

If Michael Ignatieff's only goal in this leadership campaign were to provoke controversy on the persistent question of Québec's place in Canada, he could have done so in at least two ways. Rather than propose the recognition by Canada of the modern Québec nation, he could have simply declared that "Québec, in fact, is no longer a nation" and left it at that. What a powerful rejoinder this would have been to the likes of Lucien Bouchard who once famously stoked the ire of Anglophone Canadians everywhere with the observation that "Canada is not a real country".

Given the heterogeneous and pluralist reality of modern Québec, Ignatieff could certainly have made a compelling intellectual case for an aggressive post-nationalist perspective. Had he done so, Canada's ultramontane federalists - self-described 'Trudeau Liberals' all - would almost certainly have declared victory and shouted 'Amen'. After all, there ought to be no room for old and divisive ideas like nationalism in the new Québec. No doubt, the English-language Canadian media would likewise have reacted favourably to such a declaration. Ignatieff would have been hailed not only as a contemporary apostle of the Trudeau approach to Québec, but also as the newly anointed keeper of the true flame of pan-Canadian unity. And many throughout Canada, anesthetized with fossilized facts about Québec, could have benignly watched the country drift on to its next existential crisis, blind to the ever-widening gap of understanding being allowed to fester, but secure in the comfortable notion that Canada had not given in to separatist blackmail.

To his credit, Ignatieff is not one to go with the drift of things. Rather, and in defiance of all the political experience and good judgment of Canada's Anglophone political and media elites, Ignatieff has set an entirely new direction for Canadian federalists. Remarkably, most of his naysayers seem to have absolutely no idea what he is really up to.

Those who have rushed to attack Ignatieff have perhaps forgotten that the global challenge of responding to modern nationalism is actually territory that Ignatieff has long established as his own. He, perhaps more than any other Canadian, understands the vital distinction between the ethnic nationalism that both Trudeau and Levesque so actively worked to contain and the civic nationalism that has flowered in the wake of their liberalizing and nation-building approach to public policy affecting Québec. Having witnessed the tragic consequences of unbridled ethnic nationalism first hand in places like the former Yugoslavia, Ignatieff also understands its dangers full well. Using his Canadian perspective, he has come to recognize that the planet is now home to over 5,000 national groupings similar to Québec society, but only 200 countries like Canada. In a world of multi-national and multi-ethnic states, nationalism based on pluralism, but bound together by language and a tolerant culture, is nothing to fear.

Liberals who have long believed that Trudeau's essays from "*Federalism and the French Canadians*" or his "*Approaches to Politics*" are and remain the final deposit of wisdom on the challenge to Canadian unity posed by Québec nationalism ought to read Ignatieff. When one considers both the similarities and differences between their respective worldviews, the perspective of these two extraordinary minds on the problem of nationalism and the persistent puzzle of resolving Québec's place in Canada are surprisingly compatible and, ultimately, completely consistent.

Trudeau and Ignatieff were born 30 years apart. Trudeau, a perfectly bilingual Francophone, was a native pre-depression Québécois, whereas Ignatieff, a perfectly bilingual Anglophone, is a native post-war Ontarian. Both were born to highly self-conscious families of great aspiration and mixed ethnic extraction. Each grew up with the privilege and worldly exposure naturally accruing to the sons of successful, proud and domineering fathers. Whereas Trudeau's father made himself a financial success, dying before his son had grown to be a man, Ignatieff's was able to watch his father build a stellar career in the diplomatic world from beginning to end. Both men thrived under the nurture of a sophisticated Scottish-Canadian mother. Whereas Trudeau's father was unquestionably a true son of French Canada, his maternal lineage placed him forever outside any claim to unadulterated Québécois ancestry. While Ignatieff's father, being an immigrant heir of dispossessed Russian nobility, was always something of a stranger in a strange land, it was his mother's family that provided him with a direct link to very foundations of English Canada.

From these different but similar starting points, both Trudeau and Ignatieff embarked on a life-defining international sojourn in their 20's, beginning with a Master's degree from Harvard. Trudeau left Québec to wander the world toward the end of the first half of the 20th century, when many nations were still emerging from the calamity of fascism and totalitarianism and others were falling under the grip of communism. More than a generation later, Ignatieff found himself abroad at the end of the second half of the 20th century, just as the nations that had fallen under communism were emerging from its collapse and others were succumbing to the new realities of terror and islamo-fascism.

There is one other fact that profoundly distinguishes the worldview of these two internationally-minded Canadian thinkers: Ignatieff has had the distinct advantage of being able to read what Trudeau wrote and watch his political theory put into action in the Canadian political laboratory.

And, like Trudeau, Ignatieff is ready to swim against the current of his own time.

“It takes two to speak the truth - one to listen and one to hear.”

Henry David Thoreau

Even before launching his leadership campaign, rather than succumb to prevailing Anglophone opinion about Québec’s place in Canada, Ignatieff spent time with Québec’s federalist grassroots. He listened carefully to the ordinary people of the new Québec - a Québec he first saw emerging when he researched and wrote his award-winning book and TV series *“Blood and Belonging: Journeys into the New Nationalism”* in 1993.

Ignatieff discovered a Québec whose culture and language, however dramatically evolved, is still as distinct from the rest of Canada’s as it ever had been - a Québec that still adheres to the civil code rather than the common law, that still carries on its business in a legislature known as the “National Assembly” and still celebrates its own ‘Fête Nationale’ on St.-Jean-Baptiste Day every June 24.

Ignatieff also sensed a tremendous collective pride in the fact that Québec has successfully evolved into one of the most open, progressive and diverse societies in the world. He recognized that the people of Québec have now embraced the pluralism of a Francophone diversity that is just as vibrant and tolerant as the Anglophone diversity that now defines the rest of Canada.

Most importantly, he came to understand some very important truths about the remarkable achievement of a modern and distinctive Québec within a contemporary and changed Canada. It has all been done without Québec having to separate. It has all been built without any surrender of federal power. The collective will and legitimate aspirations of the Québec people have respected and protected by the federal state and by the Canadian courts. The language and culture of Québec have been able to survive, indeed thrive, within Confederation.

And Ignatieff met a Québec whose people overwhelmingly want to believe that their nation is Québec, but their country is Canada.

What holds Quebecers back?

“In the progress of personality, first comes a declaration of independence, then a recognition of interdependence.”

Henry Van Dyke

Québec still sees itself, with all its traditions, its historical ties to its territory and its evolving vision of its collective future, as a distinct and founding nation within Canada and as the cradle of our French language and culture. The Québécois fully recognize that there may be other similar nations within Canada with similar claims, like our many first nations, but its Francophone diversity yearns to be seen and understood by the rest of Canada in the collective sense that it sees and understands itself.

Québec also wants to feel that its enormous success, in building, preserving and modernizing of a North American home for a distinct, vibrant and tolerant Francophone community, is recognized and respected by its Canadian partners as an important Canadian achievement; that Québec continues to be seen and understood by all Canadians as one of the contributing and consenting pillars of the evolving Canadian Confederation.

Neither the Québec resolution nor Michael Ignatieff is calling for more powers for Québec or for special status within Confederation. They know that Québec already has the constitutional jurisdiction required to meet its population's needs and to achieve its collective aspirations. Its evolution over the past 50 years is conclusive proof of that. They also know that federalism has always proven itself flexible enough to accommodate Québec's specificity.

Neither the Québec resolution nor Ignatieff are seeking to sever one country into two. They only want to explore the completion of Canada's constitutional architecture by binding its diversity together in a new way.

Neither the Québec resolution nor Ignatieff are intending that the recognition of Québec as a nation would weaken the protection afforded to all Canadians, including all Québécois, by the Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms.

But Ignatieff has been able to see what Québec has become in just over a generation. He knows what Canada has become over the same period. With fresh eyes and open ears, drawing on vast international experience, he has noticed something that most of Canada's Anglophone politicians and pundits appear to have missed entirely. Ignatieff has clearly understood that, while the old Québec nation may be dead or dying, a new Québec nation has emerged from its ashes. The new Québec nation wants to take its rightful place in the Canada federation .

What is holding Anglophones back?

“Everyone hears only what he understands.”

Johann Wolfgang von Goethe

Anglophones from outside Québec have always found it difficult to understand how Québec, in the collective sense, feels about itself. Notwithstanding their heritage of a multi-national and geographically delineated British state, none of Canada's British founding nations - whether English, Scots, Irish or Welsh - have ever had a territorially defined sense of its collective identity within Canada.

There has always been a dominant Anglophone diversity in every region of Canada outside Québec, based on a mix of races using a common language. Even the struggles that resulted in the defeat of the mostly-English family compact in 1837 were more about class than outright ethno-national contention. Outside of Québec, the survival of the English language against the backdrop of an inherently heterogeneous Anglophone culture has never been an issue. As a result, multiculturalism and pluralism have always been more easily embraceable concepts for the inhabitants of what used to be called 'English Canada'.

Canada's biggest challenge in grappling with Québec's self-understanding has always been made more difficult by the fact that French Canada extends well beyond the boundaries of Québec into

neighbouring provinces (Ontario, New Brunswick) and even to some remote Canadian provinces (Manitoba, Alberta). Anglophone Canadians naturally wonder why any recognition of a Francophone nation would be territorially limited to Québec. They worry that recognition of an identifiable nation in any way that is tied to identifiable boundaries will ultimately and inevitably lead to the emergence of a nation state.

For Quebecers, the answer to this objection is almost self-evident. From the very onset of British control over what is now Canadian territory, for almost 350 years now, the special ‘indulgences’ to enable Francophones to preserve their specific ‘patrimoine’ (e.g. language, law, education and religion) have always been limited to the territory we now know as Québec. Following the period from 1840 to 1867 when the British failed in the attempt to assimilate the French fact in Canada by uniting Upper and Lower Canada into a single province, French Canadians were explicitly given capability and, through the *British North America Act*, clear and sovereign jurisdiction in respect of matters going to their national character, but only within the territory of Québec where they constituted a majority. Perhaps most importantly, Quebecers today dismiss any relevance to the fact of the British conquest of New France and, rather, focus on Confederation, itself, as a voluntary bargain in which Québec ceded sovereignty to a new federal state in exchange for a continuing right, within its boundaries, to preserve the distinctiveness of its language and culture. For Québécois, it is almost impossible to understand why Canada, having agreed to Québec’s retention of the powers required to preserve its national character, could now refuse to recognize the much-evolved version of that national character as a constitutionally memorialized fact.

Most Anglophones outside Québec have long been under the impression that all Québec nationalists, to one degree or another, are hostile to Canadian unity. The recent resolution from federalist Liberals in Québec may have finally put that misapprehension to bed. Other non-Quebecers still find it difficult to envision how one’s patriotic feeling can be divided between one’s nation and one’s country. Yet it is clear that, for the majority of Québécois, loyalties are indeed divided. Many Anglophones are unable to draw a distinction between the recognition of a nation and the inevitability of a full-blown nation-state. Still, Québec is living proof itself that a nation can endure and thrive without the powers of a fully sovereign state. Others simply do not appreciate that for minority cultures, the concept of national identity is completely different from the notion of a nation-state. But they certainly know what it means to attend a Scottish national tattoo, or enjoy a Greek national dish or watch a Ukrainian national dance.

Francophones living outside of Québec have always understood that realpolitik of their own survival; that Québec’s continuing participation in the Canadian federation was the best guarantor of the continuing constitutional and legislative preferment of their language and educational protections over all other minority linguistic groups. They know that the fundamental vigour and dynamism of Québec’s distinct national character provides the cradle and heart of the French fact in Canada. That is why the unity of the country has always been paramount for Francophone minorities. . Settling Québec’s place in Canada once and for all is the first answer to their existential anxieties.

Wherever an identifiable culture has maintained historic links to an identifiable territory, it is clear that a ‘nation’ can be said to exist. The contemporary challenge for Anglophones when it

comes to Québec is to accept that fact in a way that does not undermine the emerging pan-Canadian sense of nationhood that all Canadians can now feel.

“Trudeau wanted to counter ethnic nationalism - the essence of the separatist movement in Québec - with civic nationalism, a definition of citizenship that would give every Canadian equal rights, including language rights, so that French speakers would be fairly treated by the state in English speaking Canada and English speakers could demand equal treatment in Québec. This vision of inclusive rights also appealed to the new generation of multicultural Canadians, many from Asia, who wanted Canada to be more than a sharing of power between the original settler groups.”

Thomas S. Axworthy

Those who have studied the long and tortuous history of ideas know that, ever since Aristotle, western philosophy has been based on the notion that all rational thought depends on the ability to draw useful distinctions.

The leading contender for the leadership of the Liberal Party in 1968 - a man who recognized Québec nationalism for what it then was - came to understand the vital importance to the unity of Canada of maintaining the distinction between the nation and the nation-state. Trudeau's conclusion: political sovereignty ought never to be conferred on an ethnic nationalist majority. And Trudeau's position, so warmly embraced by progressive forces outside Québec, ran directly counter to the then prevailing view of Québec's Francophone elites. Although respected in Québec, Trudeau was reviled by many as a politically expedient 'hero' for English Canada.

The leading contender for the leadership of the Liberal Party of Canada in 2006 - a man who appreciates Québec nationalism for what it has since become - believes that the key to securing Canada's unity now turns on understanding the distinction between two kinds of nationalism that are shaping local and global politics in the 21st century: ethnic nationalism and civic nationalism. Ignatieff's conclusion? Québec's nationalism has evolved from an 'ethnic' orientation into a 'civic' orientation and, as such, has become the Francophone aspect of the 'civic' nationalism which now binds all Canadians together. He believes that such a nationalism, if recognized, would pose no threat whatsoever to the survival of Canada or to the constitutional authority of its federal government. Not surprisingly, Ignatieff's thesis has been greeted with enthusiasm in Québec. But it has completely flummoxed the political and media elites of English Canada. They are convinced that Ignatieff is simply looking to win votes in Québec and, in so doing, has shown himself willing to jettison all that is sane and sound in the Canadian constitutional canon.

Ignatieff, like Trudeau before him, has already become a prophet without honour in his own land.

For Ignatieff, although 'ethnic nationalism' remains as dangerous and destructive as Trudeau believed it to be, 'civic nationalism' is the very nationalism that Trudeau succeeded in building - a nationalism based on shared political and social values rather than common features of ethno-cultural identity. As he describes it:

"... civic nationalism maintains that the nation should be composed of all those -- regardless of race, color, creed, gender, language, or ethnicity -- who subscribe to the nation's political creed. This nationalism is called civic because it envisages the nation as a community of equal, rights-bearing citizens, united in patriotic attachment to a shared set of political practices and values. This nationalism is necessarily democratic, since it vests sovereignty in all the people"

'Ethnic nationalism', in Ignatieff's view, operates on a principle of exclusion and division for it is the 'national community' which defines the individual. One is either in or out, but the determination of where one lands is driven by factors entirely beyond the individual's control, like race. In the case of 'civic nationalism', the orientation is altogether more inclusive for it contemplates the situation where the converse holds because individuals are able to define the 'national community' rather than be defined by it. As Ignatieff, himself concludes: "What's wrong with the world is not nationalism itself...What's wrong is the kind of a nation, the kind of home that nationalists want to create and the means they use to seek their ends".

Understanding is not advanced when theorists draw distinctions without a difference, but Ignatieff has carefully avoided this trap. Indeed, in his celebrated case-studies on contemporary nationalism, he analyses the dynamic of a re-uniting Germany struggling to replace its old ethnic nationalism - a proven harbinger of blood-based exclusion - with a new civic nationalism in the context of a federated Europe.

Trudeau and Ignatieff are in a class of their own. But the special genius of Ignatieff is the recognition that most of contemporary humanity will either never have the opportunity to assume the identity of the rootless internationalist or, having done so, will never be able to fully submerge the ties of blood and belonging which the faux Trudeau acolytes of today insist upon for everyone other than themselves. The challenge for any modern multi-ethnic society is to meld the ties of language, culture and geography, recognizing them for the valued sentimental attachments they inevitably engender, with supervening commitments to democracy, tolerance and reason. Federalism, coupled with a constitutionally entrenched Charter of Rights and Freedoms, makes it possible for multi-ethnic states to have the best of both worlds. Trudeau's own preferred devices have made it possible for the more lofty and rational framework of civic nationalism - the nationalism of the mind - to provide the essential balance and countervail to the more earthy, passionate and, when left unchecked, dangerous loyalties of the heart.

Trudeau always saw the Liberal Party of Canada as much more than a vote-getting machine. He understood it to be not only the cradle of liberal values in Canada but also the principal exponent of the evolving liberal idea of Canada. Trudeau's own version of the liberal idea of Canada was all wrapped up in a civic nationalism based on building bonds of unity around a shared political philosophy that could encompass all citizens regardless of ethnicity. Basic components of this civic nationalism - democracy, the rule of law, individual rights and equality of opportunity - would genuflect to an overall social framework - based on federalism, bilingualism and multiculturalism, extending to recognition for minority linguistic and aboriginal rights, and culminating with the Charter of Rights and Freedoms - that was intended to make all Canadians, whether post-Confederation immigrant or descended from founding peoples, feel at home. The social reforms engineered by a succession of Liberal governments (i.e. unemployment insurance, medicare, the Canada Pension Plan, regional economic development initiatives) likewise became

part of the liberal idea of Canada and embedded in the civic nationalism which Trudeau envisioned. Today, the amalgam of all these things is the very substance of the civic nationalism that Pierre Trudeau bequeathed to Canadians. For Trudeau was the first proponent of a civic nationalism based on the vision of a supranational or poly-ethnic society living in harmony with, and respect for, its sociological differences and united by a shared set of political values that transcended those differences.

Ignatieff has understood Trudeau's vision and been witness to its fruit, not only in Québec but throughout Canada. With a wide world of exposure to nationalism under his belt, he has recognized the extraordinary result of a succession of Liberal governments inspired by Trudeau's dream. If Ignatieff is right, it may be possible to envision a new kind of Canadian patriotism based on (1) respect and recognition for differences that glue an otherwise diverse society together (e.g. language and culture), (2) dismissal and disregard of any political significance to those differences that inevitably divide (e.g. race and religion) and (3) commitment to shared values which make it all possible (e.g. democracy, federalism, individual rights and pluralism), all bound together by (4) a renewed focus on equality of opportunity for every Canadian citizen.

Ignatieff, like Trudeau before him, is attempting to apply fresh thinking about the individual, the nation and the state to the problem of Québec and Canada in our own time. Applying rational argument to what he has learned about modern Québec and contemporary Canada, Ignatieff has concluded that the time has come to be open to recognizing Québec as a nation. As was the case with Trudeau throughout his political career, Ignatieff's conclusions run contrary to the prevailing intellectual and political opinion of the day, at least in that part of Canada from which he comes.

Ignatieff has been accused by some of allowing crass political opportunism to trump rational argument on the vitally important question of Québec's future in Canada. In fact, however, it is clear that it is actually the opponents of Ignatieff who are guilty of political opportunism; for they are now seeking to defeat Ignatieff by repudiating rational argument, engaging in open contradiction and abandoning logic altogether. Their real game is to appeal to the Liberal Party's passion for the policies of a much-admired leader from a bygone era, no matter how outdated or irrelevant they may now be. They want Liberals to vote for a leader in 2006 based on sentimental attachment to the pristine beauty of Pierre Trudeau's political prescription for another era, while completely ignoring his underlying method and enduring message.

"The logic of words should yield to the logic of realities."

Louis D. Brandeis

Trudeau's methods were logic and reason. He knew that no argument was sound unless its premises were true and its logical proof could be demonstrated. The error of so many who aspire to be Trudeau's contemporary apostles seems to be in believing that his arguments remain sound in all possible worlds - or if not *all* possible worlds, at least the two self-evidently different worlds represented by the facts of Québec and Canada then and now.

In fact, the only logical argument that can be sound in both possible worlds is one that is either necessarily true or one that is based entirely on facts that have not changed. A necessarily sound

argument - one that is true in all possible worlds - is one based on tautological (i.e. necessarily true) facts. Necessarily true facts are those that depend only on the meaning of words and, as such, fail to contribute to our knowledge of the world.

The question therefore is not one of the immutable truth of Trudeau's arguments; it is about whether the underlying facts have changed and, if so, whether or not such change has rendered any of his original premises untrue.

One way of formalizing the Trudeau syllogism might be as follows:

Argument One:

- Premise 1: All nationalism is inherently racist.
- Premise 2: Nationalist majorities can acquire political sovereignty within defined territories.
- Premise 3: Racism is evil.
- Premise 4: Evil is a thing to be avoided.
- Premise 5: Québec is a defined territory with a nationalist majority.
- Conclusion: Political sovereignty for Québec is to be avoided.

The best way to refute any argument is to attack the truth of its premises by providing counter-examples. Ignatieff would provide counter-examples to the first premise by pointing to the nationalism of pluralist societies like that of the United States, thereby demolishing the entire argument.

The Trudeauists could then retrench to a tighter argument, as follows:

- Premise 1: All ethnic nationalism is inherently racist.
- Premise 2: Ethnic nationalist majorities can acquire political sovereignty within defined territories.
- Premise 3: Racism is evil.
- Premise 4: Evil is a thing to be avoided.
- Premise 5: Québec is a defined territory with an ethnic nationalist majority.
- Conclusion: Political sovereignty for Québec is to be avoided.

Ignatieff would counter this more refined argument by attempting to prove that the fifth premise is now untrue; that 'ethnic' considerations have little if anything to do with the nationalism of modern Québec and, in any event, are certainly far less significant than they were 50 years ago.

But the real point, of course, is that Trudeau always understood that the first premise of the first argument was not necessarily or immutably true. He recognized and encouraged another kind of nascent nationalism - a 'civic' nationalism that had nothing to do with racism - on which Canada's future identity would depend. The whole story of his political career is one of struggle to inculcate and grow a new and 'civic' nationalism, both in Québec and in the rest of Canada - a nationalism that had nothing whatsoever to do with the race, religion or even the country of birth of any majority.

"It is hard for some of our fellow Canadians who speak the other language to accept the fact that Canada is a French state"

Serge Joyal

And what of Pierre Trudeau's message?

In considering the 'Québec as nation' issue, the pivotal question for Liberals today is whether Trudeau believed that the only civic nationalism appropriate for Canada is a single, over-arching and unitary variety which, in addition to neutering the divisive power of ethnicity would seek to nullify any political significance to local identities of founding peoples based on language and culture.

Surely, nothing could be more absurd. No Prime Minister since Confederation did more for the collective identity and security of the languages of Canada's founding peoples than Pierre Trudeau.

In fact, Pierre Trudeau's message to all of Canada, including those living in Québec, was that the preservation and advancement of French language and culture, in addition to being critical objectives for any Québec government, were important Canadian objectives; that the survival and dynamism of French language and culture in North America would be best assured not by creating a separate Québec, but by Canada remaining whole. Time has yet to refute him.

The existence of Québec nationalism was something that Trudeau neither hid from nor denied. In fact, while he thought the Québec nationalists of his day were dangerous because far too many of them were ethnic nationalists, their racist excesses were really just fodder for making a larger point. Trudeau's real argument against Québec separatism was, in fact, much more sophisticated, positive and enduring. At the end of the day, he stood for a vision of Canada which could embrace and accommodate the national character of Québec, provided that Québec's nationalism was based on a liberal idea of society and otherwise grounded solely in the distinctiveness its language and culture.

Trudeau, in fact, believed strongly in the future of the French language and of Francophone culture. He wanted to see them both survive and confidently thrive in the world, much as English had done, without having to be propped up by an inward-looking chauvinism stoked by narrow ethnic sentiment. The notion that Trudeau's brand of civic nationalism for Canada would somehow neuter or disregard the distinct Québécois aspect of the Canadian experience is as bizarre and preposterous as the suggestion that he was, in fact, only a hero of English Canada.

"We have one language here, and that is the English language, and we intend to see that the [assimilation] crucible turns our people out as Americans."

Theodore Roosevelt

The decision to make any language ‘official’ - to designate or adopt one language as the common language of learning, work and government - is itself a decision to discriminate against all others. We have come to accept the public preferment of one language not as racist, but as a necessary pre-condition of human community. Why? Because the alternative, ever since the Tower of Babel, has been clear. The division of mankind and complete breakdown of civil society entailed by the multiplicity of the world’s languages, not to mention dialects, is only overcome by the evolved ‘officialization’ of some over others. The ‘officialization’ of any language converts a potential force of division into a pragmatic pre-condition of unity.

The notion of a common language has always been embedded in our understanding of ethnic nationalism. But throughout history, the forces of religion, imperialism and colonialism have dispersed certain languages far beyond their ethnic roots, transforming them into languages of religious and/or civic life in both multi-national and multi-ethnic contexts. As a result, while one of the indicators of an ‘ethnic’ nation is almost always the bond of a common language, the prevalence of one tongue in one geographic territory is no longer sufficient to assert the existence of an ‘ethnic’ nation. Where a common civic language has been adopted by a multi-racial society, its general usage, as well as its reflection in popular culture, are not among the ‘evils’ that opponents of traditional nationalism have battled against.

Out of respect for its founding ‘nations’, Canada is one of the very few states in the world that, since its very inception (i.e. Section 133 of the British North America Act), has pursued a policy of official bilingualism as a cornerstone of its political unity. And it is the only country that has dared to do so against the complicating back-drop of a policy of official multiculturalism. This has been accomplished by strict adherence to a constitutional policy of reciprocity relative to the protection of official language minorities in its provinces and, through the Official Languages Act, by elevating the substance of the bilingual experience to a pan-Canadian right in specific spheres, including the right to deal with the federal government in the official language of one’s choice where numbers warrant. Perhaps equally importantly, no language from any other national grouping or culture present in Canada has acquired such privilege. Multi-culturalism is recognized and actively promoted but, for good reason, not to the degree that would require the ‘officialization’ of a multi-lingual reality.

Just as English has transformed itself from the ethnic language of one part of the British Isles into a civic language in Canada and across the globe, French, perhaps most notably in Québec, has also become one of the world’s civic languages. And, if that is the case, the contiguity of a dominant language with a specific territory in Québec is no more an indicator of national chauvinism than the triumph of English in most of the rest of Canada. Indeed, the greatest contribution of the Québec nation to Canada is its gift of one of our two civic languages and one of its two popular cultures. This fundamental duality is now at the core of the civic and fundamentally non-racial self-understanding of all Canadians, including a majority of those from Québec.

It follows from the acceptance of the over-arching principle of duality, not only in Canada's official language usage but also in the mass or popular culture that our country projects, the Canada should be ready to pioneer a pan-Canadian brand of civic nationalism that would be unique in the world. Contemporary Canadian nationalism reflects all of the race-neutral civic values associated with the liberal idea of Canada, including two languages with ethnic and racial origins that have since become essentially civic, non-ethnic and non-racial.

“...nightfall does not come all at once...there is a twilight when everything remains seemingly unchanged. And it is in such twilight that we all must be aware of change in the air however slight, lest we become unwitting victims of the darkness”

William O. Douglas

The need for real political change, like so many things, has a way of sneaking up on you. But the emerging problem for Canadian federalists is now clear: the old nationalism of Québec may be long gone outdated idea, but Québec sovereignty continues to live as a political option. This simple fact seems to have eluded many of Ignatieff's critics.

Liberals today need to understand that they are confronted with one irrefutable development that presents both a challenge and an opportunity: the traditional anti-nationalist Québec allies of progressive Anglophone federalists from the rest of Canada are a dwindling crowd. As Québec evolves, there are ever fewer Francophones in Québec who still believe that Québec nationalism is dangerous either to Québécois or to Canada, because the fundamental nature of Québec's nationalist orientation has changed in exactly the way that Lévesque and Trudeau both dreamed it would. The political checks to its potential excesses have now been put in place. The real problem is that modern Québec now perceives its national character as being much more open to a progressive and internationalist agenda than that of the rest of Canada.

Liberals who fail to recognize that Québec and Canada have changed since Trudeau emerged on the scene are damning their party to irrelevance. By steadfastly refusing to countenance the notion of recognizing Québec's modern national character in their constitutional thinking, they have become eerily reminiscent of liturgical traditionalists who continue to celebrate the high ritual of a pre-Vatican II mass replete with lace, Latin, incense, bells and, on occasion, the ethereal clarity of a castrati choir. The congregation is aging and the pews are increasingly empty, but the adored ritual goes on. The rationale for their rigidity - that a progressive Canada requires a strong federal government - is a message that, while still powerful, is being lost in the language and the trappings. No one is listening anymore.

Francophone support for the Liberal Party in Québec fell to under 15% of the Québec population in the last election. If the real challenge for the Liberal Party in Québec today is the business of conversion, it is trite to observe that there can be little chance of that if no one is coming into its church. There is, after all, another church just down the road that is still packing them in - a church with much the same progressive message but a different path to God.

If Liberals are going to keep Canada united, Canadian constitutional politics cannot be reduced to rigid performance art for our petrified elites. Liberals have to stop worrying that the recognition of Québec as a nation will dilute the force of the Canadian federation, weaken the

Government of Canada or frustrate the progressive goals of the Liberal Party. In fact, by openly acknowledging the new reality of Québec, the Liberal Party will once again find an audience that is not only receptive to its core message, but ready to re-engage in its mission.

Pierre Trudeau had his own awakening to liberalism and internationalism many years ago. Now, most of Québec has followed in his footsteps. More than any other part of Canada, Québec has embraced a vision of itself and its role in the world that any self-respecting and intellectually honest Trudeauophile today would have little alternative but to endorse. The only continuing question is whether Québec will pursue its aspirations on its own or as part of Canada.

So, just as the fundamental nature of Québec nationalism has changed, Anglophone Liberals need to understand that the threat to Canada has changed. The energy now fuelling the independence movement in Québec is an entirely new and more global set of progressive Québec ambitions, including a strong collective consensus around battling climate change and saving the environment, ending the gun culture and the arms trade, promoting and defending human rights, opposing militarism other than in defence of human rights and security and, perhaps most importantly, reducing domestic and global poverty. These are matters that modern Québec cares deeply about and wants to pursue. These are the goals that an increasing number of Québécois have come to believe that Canada, certainly under Stephen Harper, will stifle and oppose. That many Québécois are still looking to the Bloc Québécois is testimony to the fact that, whatever broadly progressive instincts the Liberal Party of Canada may have, they do not yet accept that we understand that our own liberalism and internationalism has a powerful nexus with the new, emerging 'national' feeling of the Québec population.

As distinct from the old Québec nationalism, the aspirations of Québec society today are not the sort of ambitions that Anglophone Canadians, especially Liberals, will be able to demonize in the name of Canadian unity. And Liberals will find it difficult to fight another campaign for Canada if Canada, because it has been governed for too long by the likes of Stephen Harper, is seen by Québécois as having rejected the forward-looking agenda that the new Québec has embraced. Having secured Québec's participation at the very centre of Canadian power and having assisted Québec in its evolution as a society, the Liberal Party of Canada cannot now push Québec away.

Rather, Liberals must do everything they can to win the next federal election. This is why Liberals must find a way to regain the confidence of voters from Québec as part of that victory.

Stephen Harper's reactionary, right wing vision of Canada is a threat to national unity. It will, if left unchecked, split the country in two. Québécois need to know that progressive Anglophones everywhere throughout Canada are with them.

Rather than reject the emerging national character of Québec, Liberals should be ready to embrace it. Québécois keenly want the rest of Canada to demonstrate that it understands modern Québec and, based on that understanding, wants the modern Québec's agenda to continue to play an important role in shaping Canada's future. Canada simply has to say this to Québec:- "We recognize and respect who you are, what you have become collectively and your critical continuing importance to the Canadian federation. We agree with where you want Canada to go and we embrace that vision."

Stephen Harper simply cannot say that. But the Liberal Party of Canada can say that. We simply have to find a way to be able to say the 'n' word.

Some Liberals may find it difficult to move beyond ritual devotion of constitutional icons from another era, but we need a new vision for accommodating Québec's diversity within Canadian federalism in our own time. We can change our thinking about Québec without anxiety or remorse because the facts have changed and because it no longer makes any sense to think about modern Québec nationalism in terms that are black and white.

Those who still believe there can only be one true Liberal religion for all times will be able to remember that, less than two decades ago, Liberals were opposed to free trade at a time when Québec embraced it. In fact, while Pierre Trudeau was fiercely opposed to ethnic nationalism and deeply committed to a notion of the relationship between the citizen and the state which placed primacy on individual over collective rights and identity, it is important to recall that even he incorporated collective identity - a civic nationalism - into his vision of Canada. Canadian economic nationalism, focused on asserting Canadian sovereignty, became a key driver Trudeau's foreign investment and domestic policy agenda from the 1970's onward. And, as the nature of Canada's wider 'civic nationalism' evolved - from inward-looking, fearful and protective to outward-looking, confident and expansive - the Liberal Party found a way to embrace free trade as part of Canada's new sense of itself.

Michael Ignatieff, with the support of Québec Liberals, appears ready to lead an historic rapprochement between the Liberal Party of Canada and Québec. He has understood that, for Québécois at least, belonging is both a matter of the head and the heart.

Liberals from other parts of Canada should not be afraid to explore a renewal of the Canadian compact based on confirming the mutual recognition and respect that exists between the two pluralist and progressive Canadian diversities that now define the Canadian experience. The Anglophone and Francophone diversities, together with our many aboriginal first nations, are the current reflection of our founding peoples and of the country we have built. One of those diversities, the Francophone diversity, is represented chiefly by the Québec nation, including all those people living in that portion of Canadian territory known as the Province of Québec, within which French language and culture have been preserved as the dominant sociological fact from before the founding of Canada to the present day. It is that simple.

The other alternative for the Liberal Party and for Canada is simply to cleave to the status quo - to offer no alternative of Québec other than those being proposed by Mr. Harper or Mr. Duceppe - and to continue to refuse to recognize the specificity of Québec in the way that Québec understands itself. But that approach spells near-term doom for the Liberal Party in Québec and is ultimately likely to bring about a more serious reckoning for all Canadians.

The current generation of separatists from Québec are reaching out even now to the new Francophone diversity and embracing its multi-ethnic reality with the next iteration of their 'national project'. Formerly rock-solid federalist voters from Québec's immigrant Francophone and allophone communities are already embracing the new, inclusive conception of the Québec nation which Canada refuses to acknowledge. They are increasingly self-identifying with the modern Québec that Anglophones are so reluctant to recognize. The ground is moving under the

feet of the Liberal Party of Canada in Québec. Yet, none of its leaders other than Ignatieff seems to be noticing.

In recognizing the Québec nation today, Liberals need not capitulate to a “two nation” concept of Canada nor surrender to a “special status” approach to Québec’s role in our federation. No one is giving into separatist blackmail. Ignatieff’s proposal is to do nothing more than acknowledge facts that now underscore the potential of a new nationalism for Canada - a new nationalism that Québec’s understandably conflicted patriots can endorse.

***“Neither a wise man nor a brave man lies down on the tracks of history to wait
for the train of the future to run over him.”***

Dwight D. Eisenhower

In 1984, when Brian Mulroney and Lucien Bouchard informed Québécois that they really ought to feel humiliated by what happened under Trudeau in 1982, they were simply stoking the flames of Québec resentment for their own political advantage. They were devious to do so. But despite the fact the people of Québec enthusiastically agreed with 74 out of 75 of their federal Members of Parliament to patriate the Canadian Constitution and entrench the Charter, it remains the case that the Québec legislature has never given the same voluntary assent to the Constitution Act, 1982 in ratification of the Confederation of 1867. Although this does not mean that Canada is either incomplete or illegitimate from the perspective of Québec, the fabric of Canadian unity will remain fragile and open to attack until that consent is obtained.

It is time for English Canada to recognize and celebrate Québec’s amazing achievement in building a national identity that is rooted in language and culture, but divorced from such things as race and religion. Why? Because Québec has reached a certain tipping point between its old ethnic nationalism and its new civic nationalism. The imperatives of its old ethnic nationalism are fading. But the ambitions of its new civic nationalism are calling.

Canada, including Québec, has grown up. Anglophone Canada, empowered by its own evolution and rational self-interest, can reach out the hand of recognition now to a partner that has blossomed into maturity - the once injured child that has emerged intact from the neuroses of its youth as a full-blown and self-confident adult. Or we can reject the transformation that Québec society has undergone, remain trapped in the outdated fears of our own childhood, allow the thinking of our forefathers to dominate us for generations to come, and behave toward modern Québec like one ship simply passing another in the night.

If this tragedy of political immaturity is to be avoided, Canada needs to correct its course. If it does not, the Canadian ship of state could well hit the rocks of its own indifference, finding itself wholly unprepared if and when it becomes embroiled in what Ignatieff has recognized to be the ‘perfect storm’ - a Québec that is led by separatists, alienated from a conservative and reactionary federal government and determined to make its own progressive, liberal and internationalist way in the world .

Like never before, Liberals are now positioned to complete the last chapter of the constitutional arrangements between Québec and Canada. We could then finally close the book on all of the old battles and move on together. For, as Ignatieff himself has clearly seen, as long as Canada

continues to ignore the lack of Québec's consent to the Canadian Constitution, it will continue to be impossible for Canadians to address the other important emerging constitutional challenges of the 21st century, like the need to accommodate the westward shift of economic power in our political institutions or address the imperative of empowering the Government of Canada to "strengthen our common spine of citizenship" by ensuring a greater equality of opportunity for all Canadians, including Québécois, from coast to coast.

Under Trudeau, Liberals firmly rejected the old Québec nationalism in favour of a more just society for all Canadians, culminating in the Charter of Rights and Freedoms which encapsulated a bold, new pan-Canadian civic nationalism that could ultimately be embraced by all Canadians. Under Ignatieff, there is a way to embrace the new Québec nationalism as part of an even broader 'civic nationalism' for Canada - a civic nationalism enlarged by the sense that our collective aspirations and identity as Canadians, regardless of language or culture (i.e. national identity), are all wrapped up in achieving greater equality of opportunity for all of our citizens and a more effective voice for Canada in the world.

"I am not an advocate for frequent changes in laws and Constitutions. But laws and institutions must go hand in hand with the progress of the human mind. As that becomes more developed, more enlightened, as new discoveries are made, new truths discovered and manners and opinions change, with the change of circumstances, institutions must advance also to keep pace with the times. We might as well require a man to wear still the coat which fitted him when a boy as civilized society to remain ever under the regimen of their barbarous ancestors."

Thomas Jefferson

The Liberal Party of Canada has always been at the centre of the intellectual political action in this country. Its tourists, who come from parties more prone to dogma than debate, apparently do not understand that. In each generation, Liberals renew their thinking first by listening to the grassroots. When fate has smiled, and it has smiled often at Liberals, their party has also been blessed with leadership equipped with a coherent political vision that is able to capture the emerging sense of the times.

Canadian nation-building has always been about achieving understanding and accommodation through novel arrangements. The first reflection of that pioneering approach was in the adoption of the federal system itself. Since Confederation, we have not only implemented official bilingualism and multiculturalism policies, but also subjected the traditional sovereignty of our Parliament and Legislatures to the limits of a constitutionally entrenched Charter of Rights and Freedoms. In finding new ways to accommodate diversity, Canada has always been in the forefront.

The new Liberal vision of Canada - the Ignatieff vision - is of a single, unifying pan-Canadian civic nationalism with two distinct and complementary aspects: the aspect that springs from the nation of Québec and the aspect that springs from the rest of Canada. The two personalities of Canada, each entirely stripped of any ethnic significance, are already united by a commitment to a shared set of liberal values and would be distinguished only by the distinctiveness of their different civic environments of language and culture. We can get the formulation right!

But leadership on fundamental questions like these sometimes scares people. What if we are wrong? What if civic nationalism with a double aspect will not serve to keep Canada united?

The good news is that Canada is not altogether alone in this adventure. Great Britain, as so many political scientists have noted, has already converted the ethnic nationalism of its constituent nations into a transcendent civic nationalism devoid of political significance for race. Spain, in only recently having the courage to recognize the distinct, civic character of the Catalan nation, has successfully thrown the independentist political agenda of its Catalonian nationalists into disarray. The contemporary Canadian contribution to the political science of accommodating the new nationalism is surely a version of civic nationalism - one that has all the normative characteristics of the liberal idea of society but more explicitly seeks to empower the evolution, development and identity of the contemporary reflection of its founding cultures and languages. This may also be sort of framework in which our ultimate reconciliation with native Canadians can be achieved in generations to come.

In the face of public opinion polls that call us to cowardice and paralysis, it is important to remember that Pierre Trudeau, against a tremendous local headwind, once defied the constraints of public opinion in his own province by forging a new political consensus around a vision that united those Québécois who were opposed to the narrow old nationalism of their own province with progressives from outside Québec who believed that only a strong central government could move the country forward and keep it together. Ignatieff is now forging a mirror compact that will bring Canadians from outside Québec who recognize that the Anglophone diversity is not threatened by the new Québec nation, together with liberal and internationalist Québécois who believe that Québec must play a bigger role in Canada so that the cause of equality of opportunity for Québécois and all Canadians can be meaningfully advanced and so that Canada can make a real and progressive difference in the world.

Is the Liberal Party going to push even its most natural federalist constituencies into the arms of separatists by refusing to accept that their patriotic attachment to the new Québec is a legitimate expression of Canadian identity?

Will Trudeau's heirs allow Canada to drift to its own demise by failing to appreciate the true nature of Trudeau's success?

Or can we take the liberal idea of Canada to the next level?

“In a time of universal deceit, telling the truth is a revolutionary act.”

George Orwell

It is one thing for the Liberal Party of Canada to continue to give the back of its hand to separatists. It is quite another to attempt to muzzle the expression of the overwhelming sentiment of federalist Liberals from Québec - grassroots party members who have approached the question of modern Québec's place in Canada with commitment and good will.

Michael Ignatieff, in endorsing their cause, has not only assaulted the indifference of Canadians from outside Québec. He has asked us to try to understand our country afresh and, in so doing, challenged our sensitivity to our Québec compatriots.

For Michael Ignatieff has told us our own truth: Québec is a nation within Canada. Wherever that takes us politically, the sociological fact cannot be denied.

And there is no ambiguity in Ignatieff's message: a renewed Liberal Party which seeks to be heard by Francophones in Québec today has to be open to recognizing the distinct national character of modern Québec in the Canadian constitution at some point. He has been unequivocal in asserting that such recognition, in addition to being restricted in scope to matters of language and culture, ought not to imply any devolution of federal power or derogate from the Charter of Rights and Freedoms. He has also made clear that, in his view, the right time has not yet come; that the Liberal Party should only move on such a proposal when the conditions are right and the required Canadian consensus has been built.

To paraphrase Michel Barnier (Le Point, August 2000), we need a new sort of nation to combat nationalism.

So as Liberals gather in Montreal, they have a clear choice. It is a choice generally between renewal and ossification. But it is also a choice between relevance in Québec and irrelevance.

On the fundamental question of Canada and Québec's place in it, Liberals can either stick their heads in the sand and hold fast to the status quo or they can open their ears and minds, launch out with Michael Ignatieff where others fear to tread and face the future with serenity and confidence.

Certain of Mr. Ignatieff's opponents will continue to pander to those who live in fear of the future only because they are hopelessly stuck in the the ideas of the past. They want the debate shut down. They want to stifle the grassroots of our party in Québec. Their tactic for victory on this emotionally charged question, far from being an intellectually defensible Liberal position, is actually an outright betrayal of the Liberal Party and a wholly false fidelity to the vision of Trudeau. For those who oppose the 'Québec as nation' debate are really asking Liberals to favour passion for old ideas over reason about contemporary facts, to disregard the entire Canadian accomplishment of 20th century nation-building, to reject the method and the message of the greatest leader we have ever had, to succumb to prevailing opinion irrespective of its merits, to blindly defend the status quo in the face of clear evidence of its inadequacy and, ultimately, to go with the drift of things, come what may.

Their recommend tack can only lead to frustration and continued misunderstanding. In the event of another crisis over Québec's rightful place in the Canadian federation, however likely or unlikely that may be, Canada must never find itself in a place where its only response to the aspirations of Québec is too little, too late. Liberals now know they can no longer keep the country united just by waving flags and posting bumper stickers

Whether a fully debated resolution on Québec passes or fails in Montréal will be of no lasting significance. Either way, the sky will not fall. What matters is that the party remain open to an honest dialogue. Broad acceptance of innovative ideas in a democratic context always takes time and discussion. Any new pan-Canadian consensus may only emerge years down the road, or not at all.

However and whenever Liberals decide the question, those who love their country must be careful not to shut the debate down, for that is the certain prescription for drift. And drift in important things, as the poet wrote, is nothing but treason. There is nothing more important for Liberals than preserving the unity of Canada. Those who advocate drift should be defeated.

Liberals know they can lead once again.

They want a Canada that builds on Trudeau's accomplishments, rather than one which ignores his transforming political achievement and, worse, perverts his remarkably embracing vision into an historic and irrelevant relic.

They know that their party has always been strong enough to deal with the truth about Canada. We don't need to start a revolution in order to do so.

And whatever view Liberals may currently hold on the political wisdom of recognizing Québec as a nation, Liberals should be ready to elect Michael Ignatieff as their next leader because theirs is not a party that runs from new ideas. It listens to them. And when the conditions are right, it embraces them.